

### **Recipe #3**

It is commonly accepted that when cooking a dragon, only the very young ones are truly edible. In the account of the conversation between Smaug and Bilbo, the Great Wyrmling himself makes reference to when he was "young and tender"; but after centuries of lying upon his hoard, he had absorbed a great deal of the gemstones and precious metals, causing himself to become as tough as "ten-fold shields", and making him quite unchewable. While it is true that the overabundance of these precious metals and such develops a robustness and richness of flavour in mature dragons that is not found anywhere else in nature, the side effect is that their flesh is quite indigestible, and can cause great discomfort and sickness if consumed. The sole exception to this, of course, is the liver. Dragons, being natural bullies, are never able to develop true fortitude of the liver, no matter how much gold and gemstones are incorporated into their tissue. Therefore, the absolute pinnacle of fine dining, both in the decadent richness of flavour as well as the the ultimate expression of a chefs artistic skill, is mature dragon liver. And this is how it must be prepared :

Firstly, the liver must be washed. Liver is a filter for the blood, and it is well known that dragon blood is highly caustic. As is documented in the matter of Turin slaying Glaurung, when the gout of blood touched Turin's hand he was burned and poisoned by it, and fell into a swoon. Therefore, wash the liver thoroughly under cold running water. Knead it with your hands and wring it out like a sponge, and keep doing so until the water squeezed out of it runs clear.

Next, trim away the silverskin membrane. As we know, this tissue in a mature dragon will be composed of literal silver, and will be quite impossible to bite or chew. Slice the trimmed liver into individual serving sized pieces.

Now it is time to scald the liver by pouring boiling water over it. This reawakens the organ's memory of fire, and restores just the tiniest bit of life and vitality back to it, which is noticeable in the improvement of flavour that this step brings.

After scalding, prepare a mixture of flour seasoned with black pepper, ground sage, and just a bit of salt. Dredge the pieces of liver in this mixture until well and evenly coated.

In a deep sided skillet, heat a thin film of oil on medium high until it begins to shimmer (but not smoke), and gently brown the floured pieces of meat until golden, but don't worry about trying to cook all the way through, yet.

Remove and set aside the meat, reduce heat to medium low, and to the skillet add : condensed tomato soup, chopped celery, diced white onion, sliced mushrooms, and diced green pepper, along with more black pepper, ground sage, and red chili flakes to taste. Mix all this together well, and then add the pieces of meat back to the skillet (ensuring each piece is well coated in the sauce and fully submerged). Cover with a lid, and let this simmer for 45 minutes to an hour. If the sauce begins to spit and boil too vigorously, reduce the heat further.

While this is simmering prepare your rice; whether you prefer a simple long grain white, or if you enjoy the satisfying texture of wild rice, either will do nicely.

A robust green, such as asparagus roasted with garlic and parmesan; or fiddleheads boiled with lemon juice in the water and then buttered and salted, pairs exceptionally well with this dish.

When everything is ready, serve on a wide plate, and spoon the tomato sauce from the skillet over your rice.

The meat will be fork tender, smoothly rich and buttery. The flavour will be sweeter than expected of normal liver, with the trademark boldness and decadence of mature dragon flesh as well as the subtle mineral tang of the precious metals. There should also be a gentle, smoldering heat from the chili's, just enough to kindle a spark of the memory of the fires of Angband.

All in all, this dish is the penultimate expression of the culinary experience, and is a must try meal for every Dragon Slayer!

