

Florence's Tarragon Chicken

CheckMate winemaker Phil McGahan grew up in Western Queensland, Australia, as the youngest of 10 children. His parents, Jack and Florence, supported their large brood by raising their own chickens and keeping a quarter-acre vegetable garden. “Most Saturday mornings, my dad and I would kill and dress two chickens for our family’s dinner. One of my mom’s specialties was this tarragon chicken recipe, made with fresh tarragon picked from my dad’s vegetable garden. The licorice character of the tarragon was always a great pairing with the chicken. This dish is deeply connected to the land I grew up on and makes the perfect post-harvest celebration.”

Serves 4

1 (3½ lb) free-range chicken

Salt and pepper

4 Tbsp chopped tarragon leaves,
plus additional to garnish

¼ cup butter

1 clove garlic, minced

⅔ cup chicken stock

⅔ cup CheckMate Little Pawn
Chardonnay

1 Tbsp flour

⅔ cup cream

Chive blossoms, to garnish
(optional)



Pair with: CheckMate Little Pawn Chardonnay. This wine has a captivating floral nose with hints of rose petal, cinnamon spice and lemon zest. On the palate, subtle richness, hints of cream and a beautiful oak integration create a wine of restrained elegance with substantial length.

Preheat the oven to 390°F.

Pat the chicken dry with paper towel and season with salt.

Mix 3 Tbsp of the tarragon with half of the butter and the garlic, and season with salt and pepper. Form into a ball and insert into the bird cavity.

In an oven-safe pot or Dutch oven over low heat, melt the remaining butter. Brown the chicken on all sides, then remove it from the pot and set aside. Add the chicken stock and wine to the pot and simmer for 1–2 minutes to evaporate the alcohol. Return the chicken to the pot, cover and roast in the oven for 80 minutes or until the juices run clear when the thigh is pierced with a skewer.

Remove the chicken to a plate, holding it over the pot to allow all the juices to drain into the pot. Cover the chicken with a tea towel and allow to rest.

Skim most of the surface fat from the juices in the pot, leaving about 1 Tbsp. Return the pot to the stove over medium-high heat and mix in the flour, whisking quickly, until the sauce boils and thickens.

Strain the sauce into a clean saucepan and add the remaining tarragon. Simmer for about 2 minutes, then stir in the cream. Season with salt and pepper and heat without allowing it to boil.

To serve, carve the chicken and spoon the sauce overtop. Top with more tarragon and fresh chive blossoms, if you like.