

Johnny & Damian say . . .

J: I love the name the Tuscans hang on this dish – pigeons in prison. Like they're supposed to just be flying around the square and, you know, sitting up there on phone lines and everything. But these particular pigeons decided to knock off an armored car instead.

D: No, these particular pigeons decided to make somebody a terrific dinner. And for them, it's kind of a one-time-only performance.

J: And if the whole idea of eating pigeon sounds funny to you—it shouldn't, but if it does—feel free to use any small game bird. This recipe works great with those game hens sold at the supermarket, or even with the doves the hunters love to bring home in the Texas Hill Country.

D: Those hunters need to wait for dove season, though. Or they might be the ones who end up in prison.

“Pigeons in Prison”

Colombacci in Galera

Serves 6

3 pigeons or Cornish game hens, cleaned

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 pound pearl onions, blanched and peeled

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon tomato paste

6 whole cloves

1 cup dry white wine

¼ cup white wine vinegar

1 cup water

To Prepare

1. Season the pigeons with salt and pepper, and then brown the birds and the onions in the olive oil over medium-high heat in an ovenproof, 12-inch sauté pan.

2. Lower the heat and add the tomato paste, cloves, wine, vinegar and water; stir until blended. Season with salt and pepper. Cover the pan and simmer for about 1¼ hours.

3. When pigeons are cooked, transfer them to a cutting board and slice them in half.

To Serve

Arrange the halves on 6 warmed dinner plates, surrounded by the onions. Spoon the cooking juices over the top.

