

Recipe: Duck Breast with Black Currant Sauce

Recipe courtesy of Hank Shaw, 'Duck, Duck, Goose' (Ten Speed Press, 2013) San Jose Mercury News

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Duck Breast with Black Currant Sauce

Serves 4

1 1/2 to 2 pounds duck breasts

Kosher salt

1/4 cup minced shallot

1/3 cup cassis or port

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

1/2 teaspoon dried thyme

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1/2 cup duck or beef stock

1/4 cup black currant preserves or jelly

Potato crisps:

2 russet potatoes

2/3 cup duck fat or oil, such as peanut or olive

1. Sprinkle duck with salt; set aside at room temperature. Place a rack on a baking sheet and place it in the oven. Preheat oven to 200 degrees.
2. Meanwhile, start the potatoes. Use a mandoline or sharp knife to slice potatoes crosswise, 1/8-inch thick; drop them in a bowl of ice water.
3. Heat duck fat in a saute pan to 325 degrees. Pat potatoes dry. Working in batches, fry potatoes, salting as they cook and turning them once or twice, until golden brown, 5 to 8 minutes. Drain and transfer to the rack in the oven. Let oil return to 325 degrees before frying the next batch.
4. Pat duck breasts dry. Use a sharp knife to score the skin (not the meat) in a crosshatch, with slashes an inch apart. For fatty ducks, lay breasts skin side down in a large, cold saute pan; turn heat to medium. For Muscovy or wild duck, heat pan over high heat first for 1 minute; add 1 tablespoon duck fat or unsalted butter; heat 1 minute more. Lay duck skin side down in pan. Use a spatula to press down for first 30 seconds to a minute to get good contact with the pan. Cook on medium heat until skin is a crispy, golden brown -- domestic ducks may take 6 to 8 minutes, wigeons 3 to 5, and teals about 3.

5. Flip breasts, lightly salt now-exposed skin, and cook until slightly firm to the touch: 4 to 6 minute for large wild ducks, 3 to 5 for domesticated and 1 to 2 for small ducks. Stand the breast halves next to each other, thick edge down, for 30 to 90 seconds. Remove from pan and tent loosely with aluminum foil to rest while you make the sauce.

6. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of fat from pan; set pan over medium-high heat. Add shallots; saute 90 seconds. Pull pan off heat and add cassis. Return pan to stove, turn heat to high and deglaze, scraping up any browned bits. Let cassis boil down for 1 minute; mix in vinegar, thyme, pepper, stock and preserves. Boil until sauce thickens, 8 to 10 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve or use as is.

7. Divide potato crisps among the plates. Slice the duck breasts and divide among plates. Drizzle with sauce and serve.

-- Hank Shaw, "Duck, Duck, Goose" (Ten Speed Press, \$24.99, 234 pages)