

Seared Duck Breast Recipe

I think one medium-sized breast per person is plenty. One of the key elements to an excellent duck breast is crisping the skin properly. The skin needs to be scored so the fat can quickly render away. Cook the breasts slowly with the skin down, pouring off the fat as it cooks. Never, ever throw duck fat away. I keep mine in the fridge for months or freeze it and use it on my red cabbage or fried potatoes—and anything else I can think of. In this recipe, the duck breast is cured for up to 24 hours (adding spices and aromatics for the last 12 hours).

Ingredients:

Serves 2

2-3 duck breasts (depending on size)

1 thyme twig per breast

1 bay leaf per breast

1 TBS orange zest for 2 breasts

balsamic vinegar

grated nutmeg

1 tsp canola oil

grey salt or other coarse sea salt

½ cup of white wine

Directions:

One day before serving the breasts, defrost them. After they are defrosted, wipe the breast dry and put them on a plate uncovered skin up in the fridge for about 12 hours. To score the skin, the breasts have to be cold. Use a sharp knife, cutting a ¼-inch crosshatch pattern in the skin being careful not to pierce the meat. Season the flesh side of each breast with salt, pepper and a little bit of grated nutmeg. Sprinkle the orange zest and a few drops of balsamic vinegar over the breasts. Lay a thyme twig in the middle of each breast and cover it with a bay leaf. On a plate covered with a paper towel, turn the breasts over and put them on the paper towel. Sprinkle the skin side with salt, pepper and a pinch of nutmeg. Refrigerate, uncovered, for 1-12 hours (but at least one hour). I prepare mine the morning before I cook them, about 8 hours.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.

Discard aromatic spices, blotting away any moisture from the duck breasts. Season both sides of the breast with a pinch of salt.

In a large frying pan, add canola oil and the duck breasts duck skin-side down. Sauté at low-medium heat. After about 5 minutes, the fat should begin to gently bubble. Maintain this bubbling, removing excess rendered fat with a large spoon by tilting the frying pan. Be careful not to burn yourself. If the fat hits the flame, it will cause a flare-up. Cook the duck breasts until most of the fat has been rendered: the skin will be golden brown and crisp. The internal temperature should read 115 degrees Fahrenheit. Flip each breast to the fleshy side and cook it for 30 seconds. Put the duck skin-side down in the oven and cook for about 5 minutes. The temperature should be 125 degrees for a rosy medium rare. Take the duck breast out of the pan, cover it with foil and let it rest for 5 minutes. In the meantime, deglaze the frying pan by adding half a glass of white wine. Add any juices that have accumulated on your plate with the duck breasts to the sauce. If you like, add a little orange juice and swirl some butter into the sauce. (This step is optional)

Guten Appetit!

Recipe by Thomas Keller

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