

 Seasonal cook


Photo: Domino Podgigone

Bills of fare

Pluck up the courage to experiment with duck, writes **STEVE MANFREDI**.

White duck is the most commonly available duck meat. It's usually a cross between the Chinese Pekin and English, Aylesbury ducks, a marriage that dates back to the British Empire's trade with China. The former was introduced in 1873 to improve the English duck's ability to breed.

White duck is the glistening mahogany lacquered duck you see hanging up in Chinatown restaurant windows. It is easy to cook and can be roasted whole, like a chicken. Mild in flavour and tender in texture, this the perfect breed for the novice duck cook.

Then there's the Muscovy duck. This is an altogether different proposition in the kitchen. It has darker, denser flesh than the white duck. The flavour is rich and full. Not everyone likes it, as the texture is not chicken-soft like the white version, but when grilled or roasted with care and given an extended resting period to relax and soften, it's by far the superior of the two.

Muscovy is particularly good for braising and I would urge you to use it, if you can find it, for the duck sauce recipe.

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PICI WITH DUCK SAUCE

2 medium red onions
1 medium carrot
1 celery heart
1/2 cup sage leaves
500g duck marylands, skin on
Salt and pepper
2 tbs extra virgin olive oil
375ml dry white wine
60g tomato paste
4 juniper berries, lightly cracked with flat side of knife
600g of picci or substitute with thick spaghetti
Grated parmesan, to serve

Pulse onions, carrot, celery and sage in a food processor (or mince finely with a knife) and set aside. Season duck marylands with salt and pepper. Heat olive oil in a braising pan and brown duck legs well, rendering as much fat from skin as possible. Remove duck legs and transfer to a tray, keeping all the oil in the pan. Fry minced vegetables gently in the pan for 5-6 minutes until softened. Add wine, tomato paste and juniper berries. Bring to the boil then reduce to a simmer. Keep simmering until liquid has reduced by half. Place duck back in pan with enough water to just cover the pieces. Season lightly and simmer for 2 hours until duck meat comes off bones easily. Remove duck pieces from liquid. Cool slightly then remove meat from bones. Chop meat, then return to the sauce. Cook pasta to al dente, drain and toss with sauce. Serve with grated parmesan.


Serves 6 as a first course (pictured)
Wine White "natural" malvasia or red mourvedre, grenache, shiraz blend

ROAST DUCK WITH CELERIAC AND ROAST GARLIC PUREE

500g celeriac, peeled and cut into quarters
100g butter
Salt and pepper
1 bulb of garlic
6 duck breasts, skin on

Cook the celeriac by simmering pieces in water until softened. Drain and pulse in food processor with butter. Adjust seasoning. Roast garlic bulb whole until cloves have lost their firmness but have not turned to a puree. Peel cloves, cut into chunks and fold through puree. Preheat the oven to 220C. Sprinkle duck breast skin with salt. Heat heavy skillet and fry breasts skin-side down on medium heat for a few minutes. This will crisp the skin as well as removing most of the fat. Discard fat and, keeping the duck pieces skin-side down on skillet, place in oven for about 6-8 minutes, depending on size. Rest for 5 minutes after removing from the oven. Serve sliced or whole with puree.

Serves 6 as main
Wine Pinot noir

 Full bottle

TRYING

ZACCAGNINI IKEBANA
2011, \$28



Zaccagnini is a well-known producer in Italy's Abruzzo region. Its key red is the juicy Montepulciano d'Abruzzo that it makes into many different wine styles. Some are built for ageing, while others, such as the novello-style Ikebana, are to be enjoyed as a zesty young drink. It's super-bright and bursting with summer fruits, such as strawberries, raspberries and cherries, as well as spice, plus a hint of fruit sweetness, although this is a savoury dry red. It's ready to drink now with a plate of prosciutto.

CELLARING

MARQUES DE RISCAL
BARON DE CHIREL RIOJA
RESERVA 2005, \$124



There's much to contemplate in this rich rioja, which is dominated by tempranillo and quite perfumed, with dusty, savoury, earthy notes. This very youthful and appealing full-bodied wine is only produced in the best years. It's as fragrant as an old cigar box and cedar, too, with warm spice, menthol, mocha and an almost soy-sauce aspect matched to a core of ripe dark-plum fruit, with super-fine, grainy tannins. This rioja will continue to mellow for the next eight or more years.

CELEBRATING

GOSSET GRAND ROSÉ
BRUT, \$125



Gosset's non-vintage grand rosé is a rich, full-bodied champagne. It's a fabulous drink on its own but is a perfect foil to exquisite Asian steamed buns filled with chicken, chilli and pickles. What a combo.

The wine has an enticing onion-skin hue. It's tangy and grapey, with loads of red fruits, wafts of spice and some tannic grip on the finish. There's a bulbous bead and creamy mousse. Plenty of finesse.

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