

Caneton aux Navets

A French country classic. I had a swift panic recently because I thought I might have lost this recipe. Fortunately, I hadn't; I found the old Time-Life book, *The Cooking of Provincial France*, from which it comes. However, for future protection, I thought I should document it.

Turnips are wonderful and it's great to have a recipe that features them in centre stage. They give a wonderful earthy character to the sauce in this duck recipe.

Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	15 mins
cooking time:	3 hrs

Ingredients

2kg duck (preferably with giblets)
3 carrots, peeled
3 medium onions, peeled
1 celery stick, coarsely chopped
500-600g medium turnips, washed & peeled (peel reserved)
1 bay leaf
a few stalks of fresh parsley
6 whole black peppercorns
1 tbs olive oil
15g butter
juice of ½ lemon
Salt & pepper

Method

First, heat the oven to 150°C/gas 2.

While the oven is heating, get the brown duck stock underway. Fortunately, at the time of writing, most ducks are supplied with their giblets whereas chickens rarely are. Do not use the liver (this would make the stock bitter and, anyway, is much better used as a canapé on toast). Chop up the neck, gizzard and heart. To this add the wing tips and middle wing sections, each cut in half. I cut off the parson's nose and add that, too. Without adding oil, brown these pieces of duck in a cast iron pan over moderate heat. When they begin to caramelize, add a carrot, onion and celery stick, all roughly chopped, and continue browning. When everything has a nice brown tinge, add water to cover by about an inch. Add a bay leaf, half a dozen black peppercorns and the turnip peelings. Simmer for 2 hours.

Once the stock is simmering, begin braising the duck. Slash the duck skin all over, underneath and sides, too, with a sharp knife to allow the fat to run. Try not to cut into the duck flesh beneath the skin. Season the duck inside with salt and pepper. Heat a suitable roasting pan and add the olive oil. Brown the duck all over, or as much all over as you can. A considerable amount of the duck fat should melt and run out into the pan.

While the duck is browning, roughly slice the remaining two onions and two carrots. In a casserole just large enough to hold the duck, melt the butter and sweat the vegetables until they are becoming soft. Add a bay leaf and a few stalks of parsley. Place the browned duck on top of the onion and carrot bed, season it with salt and pepper, cover with a close-fitting lid and pop into the oven for about 75 minutes.

While the duck is braising, quarter the turnips. If you are feeling particularly posh, you can turn the quarters into olive shapes - great for a dinner party.

Remove the casserole from the oven and lift out the duck. Strain the braising juices into a container, pressing down on the vegetables to extract as much flavour as possible. Let the juices settle and remove as much of the fat removed as possible. Discard the braising vegetables. Your stock should

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have had about two hours by now - strain it and throw away the bits. Return the duck to the casserole and surround it with the turnip quarters. Pour in the braising liquid and enough stock to barely cover the turnips. Return the casserole to the oven for another 20 minutes, or until the turnips are tender when pierced with a sharp knife. Remove the casserole from the oven.

Now magic is required - we are supposed to crisp up the duck skin. Good luck! Personally, I don't think the duck ever gets truly crispy, having been braised, but give it a go. Increase the oven to 225°C/gas 7. Place the braised duck in a roasting pan and bang it back in the now hot oven for 15 minutes or so.

Meanwhile, remove the turnips from the cooking liquid. Boil the liquid to reduce it, thicken it slightly and intensify the flavours. Add the juice of half a lemon to give it a lift and adjust the seasoning.

The 15 minutes in a hot oven should have made the duck skin somewhat crisp. Remove it from the oven for the final time and serve, surrounded by the turnips with the sauce in a boat on the side.