

Wild Duck with Grapefruit and Port Sauce

Bred-for-the-table ducklings tend to have a high proportion of frame and fat and a low proportion of actual duck meat. The antidote is wild duck - mallard - which has little fat, almost as much meat and a good flavour. This is my favourite way of cooking it. The sauce compliments it very well.

Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	20 mins
cooking time:	1 hr

Ingredients

2 wild ducks (mallard), oven ready
6 parsley sprigs, roughly chopped
4 shallots, peeled and halved
3 oz butter
2 grapefruit (preferably pink fleshed)
3 fl oz ruby port
2 fl oz brown stock (preferably duck)
salt & pepper

Method

Preheat the oven to hot, gas mark 7.

Melt the butter in a roasting pan large enough to hold both ducks. Salt the duck's cavities lightly and put half of the parsley and shallots in each duck. Place the ducks in the roasting pan, brush with the melted butter and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast them near the top of the oven for 10 minutes basting once or twice.

Meanwhile, pare the rind (avoiding the pith) from half of one grapefruit. Trim this and cut into julienne strips. Blanch the strips in boiling water for 1 - 2 minutes. Halve both grapefruits and extract the juice.

When the ducks have cooked for the initial 10 minutes, reduce the oven to moderate, gas mark 4. Pour the grapefruit juice over the ducks, sprinkle with a little more salt and pepper then return them to the oven and cook them for another 30 minutes or so. (Adjust this time according to your preference.) Baste the ducks frequently with the grapefruit juice during the cooking.

Remove the ducks from the roasting pan. Scoop the parsley and shallots from within the ducks and add them to the pan juices. Keep the ducks warm while you finish the sauce. Stirring constantly, boil the pan juices to reduce and concentrate the flavours slightly. Strain the juices into a saucepan and add the port and brown stock. Add the blanched grapefruit strips. Bring the sauce to the boil and allow it to reduce and thicken slightly. Season to taste.

Carve the legs and breasts from the ducks. Pour a little of the sauce over the duck pieces, crowning each breast with a few of the grapefruit strips. Serve the remaining sauce separately.