

Norfolk duck putting us firmly on the food map



In the latest of his monthly seasonal food features, **ANDY CLEGG**, of Norwich's Last Wine Bar, examines a bird that is produced in great volume here in Norfolk — and no, it's not turkey.

September is the month of the Norfolk Food Festival, so it is a real pleasure to feature as our seasonal ingredient this month something which is produced in volume here in the county — duck.

Although Aylesbury in Oxfordshire used to be the centre of duck production in the UK, the development of the Gressingham duck has put Norfolk firmly on the map.

The Gressingham is a relatively small bird, ideal for two people, which is lean and full of flavour, and is very popular with chefs and restaurateurs.

It is actually a cross-breed between a mallard and a domestic duck.

The Aylesbury duck name is still widely used, although no pure Aylesburys have been bred commercially since the 1950s.

Almost all the ducks you buy today will come from wither Norfolk or Lincolnshire. Duck meat is dark and full of flavour, and has much more fat than a chicken, for example — although modern breeding and husbandry techniques are now producing leaner birds with less fat.

I'm not sure why you would want that, as the fat helps baste the meat and keep it moist, and gives you a lovely pot of duck fat at the end of cooking, in which you can roast the potatoes for your next Sunday lunch.

What's not to like?

If you are roasting a whole duck, prick the skin and the layer of fat just under the skin with a skewer, all over the bird, and cook it on a rack.

This way all the fat will run out during



Pan-Fried Duck Breast With Five-Spiced Spinach, Fondant Potato And A Madeira Jus

Serves 4

- 4 duck breasts
- 500g baby leaf spinach
- 1 tsp 5 spice
- 4 baking potatoes
- 250g unsalted butter
- 700ml beef stock
- a splash of Madeira

• Peel the baking potatoes, and then using a metal ring, cut out your fondants. I reuse the leftover potato for mash, rosti or bubble and squeak. Put the fondants in a oven dish, season and cover with the butter. Cook at 180°C for 30 to 40 minutes, until soft in the middle.

• Salt a dry, pre-heated pan and place the duck breasts fat side down in the pan. Cook on a high heat for one minute, then turn down

to low and cook for a further six minutes. Turn the breasts over and cook for a further minute. Set the duck breasts aside to rest for five more minutes.

• Toss the spinach and five spice in a hot pan with a little of the duck fat from the breasts.

• For the sauce, flame the Madeira in a pan, then add beef stock and reduce down to a quarter of the original volume.

• To serve, put the fondant and spinach on a warmed plate, slice the duck into as many slices as you can, and place over the spinach. Finally, nap with the sauce.



Also In Season

- **Fruit/veg:** Apples, beetroot, runner beans, turnips, artichokes, figs
- **Meat/fish:** Goose, guinea fowl, crab, rabbit, mackerel, plaice

Smoked Duck Breast, Paw Paw And Stem Ginger Salad

Serves 4

- 2 smoked duck breasts
- 1 paw paw
- 2 balls of stem ginger
- rocket
- 1 tsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 tps olive oil

• De-seed, peel and slice the paw paw. Cut the ginger into small batons, and slice each duck breast into ten thin slices.

• To make the dressing, combine the oil and vinegar. I find the easiest way is to put them in a empty jam jar and shake.

• To serve the salad, combine all the ingredients in a bowl and then transfer to a cold plate.



cooking, and you can collect it every 20 minutes or so while the duck is cooking (so it doesn't get too hot and burn) and save it for later use.

Although most of the duck we eat today is farmed, wild duck is a game bird like any

other, and will have a deeper, gamier flavour.

The mallard and teal season both start this month, so look out in game butchers for freshly-shot wild duck — delicious.

• **Next month: Blackberries**