

Spiced duck legs braised with preserved lemons

Makes 4 main course servings

1 tablespoon ground coriander

½ teaspoon allspice

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1 tablespoon fennel seeds

4 duck leg quarters

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 small white onion, chopped into ½ inch dice

1 stalk celery, peeled and chopped into ½ inch dice

4 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped

¾ cup dry white Vermouth

2 ½-3 cups chicken stock

1 preserved lemon, pulp removed and discarded and skin rinsed and cut into ¼ inch slices

¼ cup golden raisins

1 cup small unpitted green olives, such as Picholine or Lucques, (you can pit them after measuring if you prefer unpitted olives)

3 tablespoons chopped basil

1. Trim the edges of the duck legs of any excess fat or skin and reserve.

2. Mix the spices together in a bowl. Add the duck legs and toss well. Season all over with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate several hours, or overnight. Remove from the fridge and pat dry with paper towels if any moisture has accumulated.
3. Preheat the oven to 450° F.
4. Using an oven proof sauté pan, just large enough to hold the duck legs comfortably, cook the reserved fat and skin over medium heat until rendered. Remove the browned bits and discard. Increase the heat to medium-high. Add the ducks legs, skin side down, and cook until the skin is golden brown, about 10 minutes. Turn the legs and cook on the second side for 5 minutes. Pour off the fat as the legs are cooking. (I save rendered duck fat in the freezer to use when roasting vegetables.) Transfer the legs to a plate. Leave a tablespoon of fat in the pan.
5. Add the onions and celery, season with salt and pepper and cook for 5 minutes, or until golden brown and tender. Add the garlic and cook an additional minute. Add the Vermouth and reduce to a glaze. Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil. Return the duck legs, skin side up, to the pan. The stock should come just half way up the legs.
6. Put the pan in the middle of the oven. Reduce the temperature to 325° F and braise 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours. Check the stock level in the pan every half hour or so. Add more stock as needed. After 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours, add the preserved lemon, raisins and olives, and braise an additional 30 minutes.
7. At this point the meat should be very tender and the skin should be quite crispy. If the skin is not crispy, transfer the legs to a broiling pan, preheat the broiler and crisp the skin under the broiler just before serving.

8. Strain the cooking juices through a strainer into a glass measuring cup. Allow the fat to rise to the surface. To speed up the process, put the measuring cup into the freezer. Spoon off the fat at the top and discard. Return the juices to a sauce pan with the contents of the strainer. Heat through. Stir the in the basil, taste and adjust seasonings, and serve with the duck legs.