

Whole Roast Ducks with Cherry Sauce

SERVES Serves 8

TIME 3 hours, plus 6 hours salting



Why This Recipe Works

The qualities that make duck special to eat—it contains all dark meat that's rich in flavorful fat—also make it a challenge to cook well. We began by trimming the birds thoroughly of excess fat around the neck and cavity, and then scored the skin extensively to create channels for rendered fat to escape. Salting the ducks for at least 6 hours helped keep them juicy and thoroughly seasoned the rich meat, highlighting its full flavor. We also used a two-part cooking method: We gave the tougher legs a head start by submerging the bottom half of the ducks in water in a roasting pan and vigorously simmering them on the stove until the leg quarters registered 145 to 160 degrees. Meanwhile, because the breasts didn't have contact with the water, they cooked more slowly. We then moved the birds to a V-rack and finished them in the oven, glazing them first with a soy sauce—maple syrup glaze to encourage deep browning. A bright, fruity cherry sauce made for a vibrant accompaniment that balanced the rich meat..

Gather Your Ingredients

Ducks

- 2 (5½- to 6-pound) Pekin ducks, necks and giblets reserved if making stock
- ¼ cup kosher salt, divided

Before You Begin

- * Pekin ducks may also be labeled as Long Island ducks and are typically sold frozen. Thaw the ducks in the refrigerator for 24 hours. Use a roasting pan that measures at least 14 by 12 inches. This recipe was developed with Diamond Crystal kosher salt. If using Morton kosher salt, use 25 percent less. Do not thaw the cherries before using. If desired, pulse the cherries in a food processor until coarsely chopped. In step 4, the crumpled aluminum foil prevents the rendered fat from

2 tablespoons maple syrup

1 tablespoon soy sauce

Cherry Sauce

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup maple syrup

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup red wine vinegar

4 teaspoons soy sauce

2 teaspoons cornstarch

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper

2 sprigs fresh thyme

18 ounces frozen sweet cherries, thawed and quartered

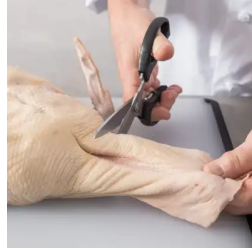
smoking. Even when the duck is fully cooked, its juices will have a reddish hue.

Instructions

- 1. FOR THE DUCKS:** Working with 1 duck at a time, use your hands to remove large fat deposits from bottom of cavity. Using kitchen shears, trim excess neck skin from top of breast; remove tail and first 2 segments from each wing, leaving only drumette. Arrange duck breast side up. With tip of sharp knife, cut slits spaced $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart in crosshatch pattern in skin and fat of breast, being careful not to cut into meat. Flip duck breast side down. Cut parallel slits spaced $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart in skin and fat of each thigh (do not crosshatch).
- 2.** Rub 2 teaspoons salt into cavity of 1 duck. Rub 1 teaspoon salt into breast, taking care to rub salt into slits. Rub 1 tablespoon salt into skin of rest of duck. Align skin at bottom of cavity so 1 side overlaps other by at least $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Use sturdy toothpick to pin skin layers to each other to close cavity. Place duck on rimmed baking sheet. Repeat with second duck. Refrigerate uncovered for 6 to 24 hours.
- 3.** Place ducks breast side up in roasting pan. Add water until at least half of thighs are submerged but most of breasts remain above water, about 14 cups. Bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to maintain vigorous simmer. Cook until thermometer inserted into thickest part of drumstick, all the way to bone, registers 145 to 160 degrees, 45 minutes to 1 hour 5 minutes. After 20 minutes of cooking, adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Stir maple syrup and soy sauce together in bowl.

4. Set V-rack on rimmed baking sheet and spray with vegetable oil spray. Remove roasting pan from heat. Using tongs and spatula, lift ducks from pan one at a time, allow liquid to drain, and transfer to V-rack, breast side up. Brush breasts and tops of drumsticks with approximately one-third of maple syrup mixture. Flip ducks and brush remaining mixture over backs and sides. Transfer braising liquid to pot or large bowl to cool. (Once cool, defat liquid and reserve liquid and/or fat for another use, if desired.) Rinse roasting pan and wipe with wad of paper towels. Crumple 20-inch length of aluminum foil into loose ball. Uncrumple foil and place in roasting pan. Set V-rack on foil. Roast until backs are golden brown and breasts register 140 to 150 degrees, about 20 minutes.
5. Remove roasting pan from oven. Using tongs and spatula, flip ducks breast side up. Continue to roast until breasts register 160 to 165 degrees, 15 to 25 minutes longer. Transfer ducks to carving board and let rest for 20 minutes.
6. **FOR THE CHERRY SAUCE:** Whisk maple syrup, vinegar, soy sauce, cornstarch, and pepper together in small saucepan. Add thyme sprigs and bring to simmer over medium-high heat, stirring constantly with rubber spatula. Continue to cook, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens, 2 to 3 minutes longer. Stir in cherries and cook, stirring occasionally, until sauce has consistency of maple syrup, 5 to 8 minutes. Discard thyme sprigs and season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to serving bowl. Carve duck and serve, passing sauce separately.

How to Prep Duck



1. Using kitchen shears, trim excess neck skin from top of breast.



2. Remove tail and first 2 segments from each wing, leaving only drumette.



3. With tip of sharp knife, cut crosshatch pattern in skin and fat of breast. Cut parallel slits in skin and fat of each thigh. Rub salt into cavity and deep into scored skin and fat.

Tips for Crosshatching: 1.

Use the tip of your knife:

This allows you to feel exactly where you're cutting.

2. Make multiple strokes per cut: First slice through the skin and some fat, and then run the knife tip through the slit to get down to the meat.



4. Align skin at bottom of cavity so 1 side overlaps other; use toothpick to pin layers to each other to close cavity. Repeat steps 1 through 4 with second duck.

Refrigerate for 6 to 24 hours.

A Two-Part Cooking Method: Braise, Then Roast



1. Place ducks in roasting pan and add water to submerge thighs at least halfway. Simmer until thickest part of drumstick registers 145 to 160 degrees.



2. Using tongs and spatula, lift ducks from pan one at a time, allow to drain, and transfer to V-rack, breast side up.



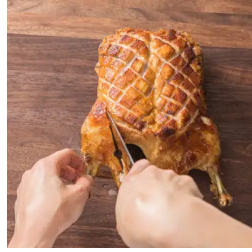
3. Brush breasts and tops of drumsticks with one-third of maple syrup mixture. Flip ducks and brush remaining mixture over backs and sides.



4. Roast until breasts register 140 to 150 degrees. Flip ducks and continue to roast, breast side up, until breasts register 160 to 165 degrees.

How To Carve Duck

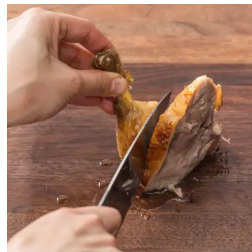
Ducks have blockier shape than chickens or turkeys, so carving our Whole Roast Ducks with Cherry Sauce is a little different from carving these other birds. Our method ensures results that look company-worthy.



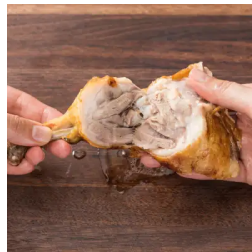
1. Use tip of knife to cut through skin and fat where leg meets breast.



2. Pull leg quarter away from breast while pushing up on joint. Cut through joint and skin to remove leg quarter. Repeat on other side.



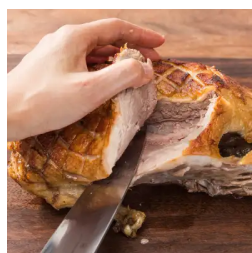
3. Hold leg quarter upright so joint rests on cutting board. Cut down between drumstick and thigh until you reach bone.



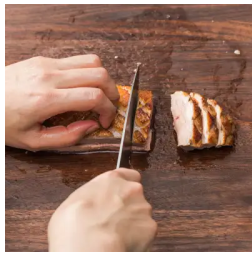
4. Using your hands, bend thigh and drumstick away from each other to expose joint; cut through joint. Repeat with second leg quarter.



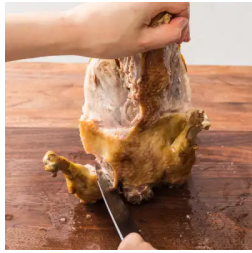
5. Arrange duck so cavity faces you. Draw tip of knife along side of breastbone, making sure knife stays against bone, to separate meat from breast bone. Rotate duck 90 degrees.



6. Starting at pointy (cavity) end of breast, draw knife along rib cage, lifting meat as you separate it from ribs. Repeat on other side.



7. Slice each breast half crosswise $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick.



8. Stand duck on cutting board with cavity end facing up and drumettes facing you. Using your hand to steady duck, cut through joint between wing and rib cage to separate drumettes.