

# Spiced Orange Duck

By Clare de Boer

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**Total Time** 3½ hours  
**Prep Time** 10 minutes  
**Cook Time** 3 hours 20 minutes  
**Rating** ★★★★★ (97)



Kate Sears for The New York Times.

These braised duck legs — spiced with ginger, thyme, anise and orange — are festive and ideal to cook ahead. Unlike traditional orange duck, which is cooked pink and served in a syrupy sauce, this version is savory, fragrant and confit-tender. Make sure to top up the pot with stock if it looks like it’s drying up at any point (don’t be fooled into thinking your pot has enough stock just because you see plenty of the fat that will render during the braise). And do save the duck fat for something special when you spoon it off at the end. If you’re making the dish ahead and reheating it, add the fresh orange juice right before you serve.

## INGREDIENTS

**Yield:** 6 servings

- 6 whole duck legs (4½ to 6 pounds total)
- Kosher salt (such as Diamond Crystal)
- 6 medium shallots, peeled and quartered
- 2 navel oranges
- 1 (3-inch) piece fresh ginger, unpeeled and sliced into three pieces
- 8 thyme branches
- 2 whole star anise
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 to 2 cups chicken broth, as needed

## PREPARATION

### Step 1

Season the duck legs on both sides with a tablespoon of salt.

### Step 2

Working in batches, place the duck legs skin-side down in a large heavy-bottomed pot. When the duck legs are in, turn the heat to high to begin to render their fat. When the pan is sizzling, reduce the heat to medium and cook until the legs are a deep chestnut brown, about 15 minutes. Flip the legs over and brown the second side, about 10 minutes more. Remove the legs to a plate, drain the fat (reserving it for another use) and repeat until all the duck legs are rendered and browned.

### Step 3

Drain off and reserve all but ¼ cup of duck fat from the pan. Add the shallots and cook, stirring occasionally and without browning over medium heat. Meanwhile, using a peeler, remove the zest from the oranges (not the white pith) and reserve the flesh. When the shallots are translucent, after about 10 minutes, add the orange zest, the ginger, thyme branches, star anise, cinnamon and red pepper. Stir and fry the spices until fragrant, a few minutes, before returning the duck legs and any juices that have run out of them to the pot. Arrange them in a snug layer (or two layers if they don’t sit flat) with some of the zest and aromatics on top.

### Step 4

Pour in the wine and 1 cup of broth. Bring the liquid to a simmer, and clamp on the lid of the pot. Simmer over low heat, checking from time to time and adding more broth if it reduces to less than an inch (tilt the pot to pool the liquid for a clear view of broth and fat levels). Cook until the duck legs want to fall apart but don’t (you’ll be able to break them apart with a spoon), 2 to 2½ hours.

### Step 5

Turn off the heat, remove the lid and skim the fat. You will be able to spoon off about a cup of duck fat from the surface (combine this with the already reserved duck fat and save for another occasion). Pick out the branches of thyme that have shed their leaves and discard. (See Tip.)

### Step 6

Squeeze in the juice of one zested orange and swirl it into the sauce. Taste the sauce and add more juice or salt, or both, as needed. Serve the duck legs with their sauce and spices spooned on top.

### TIP

*The duck can be prepared to this point up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated in the pot or in an airtight container. Reheat and add the fresh orange juice right before you serve.*

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