

Skillet Duck with Red Oak Lettuce Salad

Serves 4

Easy and delicious, this duck is cooked in much the same way as Southern fried chicken — fried in its own fat in a covered pot so steam develops, making the meat very moist and tender and the skin crisp. Be sure to use a very large skillet or a lidded saucepan. Some of the rendered fat, a bonus from this recipe, is used in the salad dressing. (You can use the rest for sautéing potatoes.)

1 duck (about 5 pounds)
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup fruity dry white wine

DRESSING

1 medium garlic clove, crushed and minced (½ teaspoon)
1 tablespoon chopped shallot
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
3 tablespoons duck fat, peanut or olive oil, or a mixture of the fat and oils
1 teaspoon light soy sauce
1 head red oak leaf lettuce, leaves washed and dried (about 6 cups)
1 bunch arugula, trimmed, washed, and dried (about 2 cups loosely packed)

GARNISH

2 teaspoons unsalted butter
2 large eggs, beaten with a fork
Pinch each of salt and freshly ground black pepper

Reserve the duck neck, gizzard, liver, and heart for another purpose. Using a sharp heavy knife or poultry shears, cut the duck lengthwise in half, slicing through the carcass bones. Then cut each half into 2 pieces: the leg and the breast, with wing attached.

Heat a large skillet or saucepan, either nonstick or heavy aluminum, until hot. Place the duck pieces skin side down in one layer in the pan, sprinkle with the salt, and cook over high heat for 5 minutes. Lift the pieces to dislodge them from the bottom of the skillet and then lay them, still skin side down, back in the skillet. Add the duck neck and gizzard, cover, reduce the heat to medium, and cook for 15 minutes. The duck should be cooking in a deep layer of fat and its skin should be very brown at this point.

Reduce the heat to very low, cover, and cook for 30 more minutes. (The duck pieces should be almost immersed in the fat.) Add the liver and heart, cover, and cook for 5 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 170 degrees.

Remove the duck pieces to a large baking sheet and keep warm in the oven. Pour the fat from the skillet into a bowl and let cool. (Covered and refrigerated, the fat can be used as needed for up to 2 months for sautéing potatoes or other vegetables.) There will be a small residue of glaze, or solidified juices, in the bottom of the skillet. Add the wine to the skillet and stir to melt the solidified juices. Keep warm.

FOR THE DRESSING: Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and stir gently. The dressing should not be homogenized but should look separated.

Toss the salad greens with the dressing and arrange the salad on four serving plates. Place a piece of duck in the center of each and sprinkle the pan drippings on the pieces of duck.

FOR THE GARNISH: Heat a skillet for 1 minute. Add the butter, and when it is hot, add the beaten eggs and stir gently over high heat to scramble. Season with the salt and pepper. The eggs should still be runny.

Arrange spoonfuls of the egg around the duck on each salad. The pieces of duck will be lukewarm to warm, the salad at room temperature, and the eggs warm. Serve.

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