

BIG IDEAS

Instead of a sugary glaze, this duck is all about crisp skin and spiced sauce.



PHOTOGRAPHS: TARA FISHER; FOOD STYLIST: RACHEL WOOD

THE GASTRONAUT FILES

Duck à l'Orange

Chef Ludo Lefebvre modernizes a French classic with orange blossom water and ras el hanout.

ICONOCLASTIC CHEF LUDO LEFEBVRE has an unexpected soft spot for old-school French classics—he loves them sincerely, not ironically. At Petit Trois in Los Angeles, he celebrates stalwarts like sole meunière and escargot. But no dish captures his imagination like duck à l'orange. “I love to twist it,” Lefebvre says. For the genius recipe on the next page, inspired by North African flavors, he cooks duck breast and tender leg confit separately, then serves them in an astonishingly delicious sauce of orange juice simmered with buckwheat honey, orange blossom water and the spice blend ras el hanout. —SARAH DIGREGORIO

Spiced Duck à l'Orange

Active: 1 hr; Total: 1 hr 30 min plus overnight drying; Serves 4
Ras el hanout is a North African spice mix. It's delicious in this sweet-tart sauce, which can be refrigerated for up to five days.

5 Tbsp. dark honey, such as buckwheat	Kosher salt and white pepper
1 cup fresh orange juice	4 confit duck legs
1/3 cup chicken stock or low-sodium broth	Four 8-oz. duck breasts, refrigerated uncovered on a rack overnight
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar	2 blood oranges or oranges
2 Tbsp. orange blossom water	2 cups amaranth leaves or baby spinach leaves
1 Tbsp. ras el hanout	Mint leaves, for garnish
4 Tbsp. unsalted butter	

Make the Sauce

1. In a small saucepan, bring the honey to a boil over high heat. Add the juice, stock, vinegar, orange blossom water and ras el hanout. Return to a boil and cook over moderately high heat until reduced by half (to about 1 cup), 16 to 18 minutes. Off the heat, whisk in 2 tablespoons of the butter. Season with salt and pepper; keep warm.

Cook the Duck

2. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 425°. Place the duck legs on a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet and roast until heated through and browned, 14 to 16 minutes. Transfer to a plate, and tent with foil to keep warm.

3. Using a paring knife, deeply score the skin of each duck breast every 1/2 inch in a crosshatch pattern; season with salt. In a large skillet, arrange the duck breasts skin side down. Place the skillet over moderately low heat and cook, without turning, until some of the fat has rendered and the skin is golden brown, 14 to 16 minutes. Turn the breasts and cook until medium rare (130° internal temperature), 2 to 3 minutes longer. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest. Drain the fat from the skillet and save for another use; reserve the skillet.

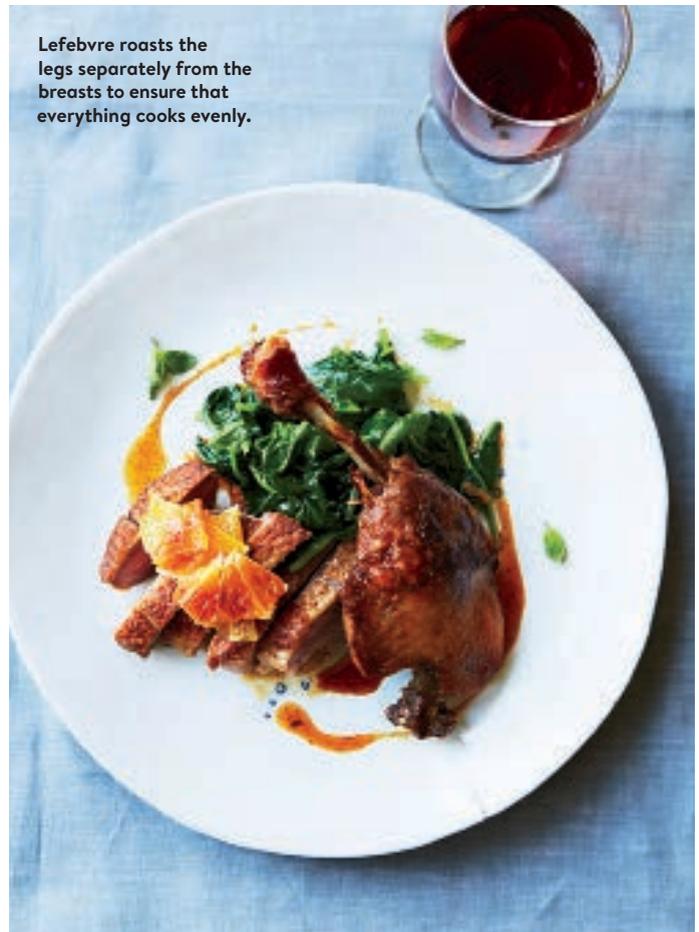
Finish the Dish

4. On a cutting board, trim the ends from each blood orange and then slice away all the peel and pith. Cut each orange crosswise into 1/4-inch slices, then halve the slices.

5. Return the skillet to high heat and melt the remaining butter. Add the amaranth leaves and swirl the skillet until they are wilted and fragrant, 20 seconds. Slice the duck breasts. Arrange the breasts and the amaranth on plates and drizzle with the sauce. Top with the duck legs and orange slices and garnish with mint leaves.

WINE Spiced, red-berried southern Rhône red: 2013 J.L. Chave Mon Coeur Côtes du Rhône.

Lefebvre roasts the legs separately from the breasts to ensure that everything cooks evenly.



Technique Tips



1

AIR-DRY THE DUCK
Refrigerate the breasts uncovered on a rack overnight to remove moisture from the skin. It will get supercrisp and golden when cooked.



2

CUT THE PEEL AND PITH
from the blood oranges by slicing along the curves of the fruit. Then cut crosswise to make neat slices.