

Papie's Roast Duck with Sage and Onion Stuffing (Irish Traditional Cooking revised edition)

My maternal grandfather, whom we called Papie Tynan, was very fond of his food. He reared ducks, geese, chickens and guinea fowl for the table. The ducks and geese had a happy life, puddling about in the pond and pecking at the windfall apples in the orchard, and they tasted exquisite. Every scrap of the ducks and geese was used, including the blood which was made into a soft pudding and eaten on bread. The feathers were kept for pillows, and the down for quilts.

Put the neck, gizzard, heart and feet into a saucepan with the carrot and onion. Add the bouquet garni and celery stalk. Cover with cold water and add peppercorns, but no salt.

Bring slowly to the boil, skim and simmer for 2 to 3 hours. This will make a delicious broth which will be the basis of the gravy. Meanwhile, singe the duck and make the stuffing: melt the butter on a gentle heat, add the onion and sweat for 5 to 10 minutes until soft but not coloured. Remove from the heat and add the breadcrumbs and sage. Season to taste. Unless you are cooking the duck immediately, allow to get cold.

When the stuffing is quite cold, season the cavity of the duck and stuff. Roast in a moderate oven, 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4, for about 1½ hours. When the duck is cooked, remove to a serving dish and allow to rest while you make the gravy.

Skim the fat from the broth (keep the duck fat for roast or fried potatoes). Strain and add to the juices in the roasting pan, bring to the boil, taste and season if necessary. Strain the gravy into a sauceboat and accompany the duck with Apple Sauce (see below).

Serves 4

1 free-range duck, about 1.8kg (4lb)
salt and freshly ground pepper
Apple Sauce (see below), to serve

STUFFING

50g (2oz) butter
85g (3oz) onion, chopped
100g (3½oz) soft white
breadcrumbs
1 tablespoon finely
chopped sage

STOCK

neck and giblets
1 carrot, sliced
1 onion, sliced
bouquet garni
small celery stalk
2 or 3 peppercorns

How to render a duck

Remove the remainder of the duck fat from the raw carcass – particularly the pieces near the tail end inside the carcass. Cut it into small pieces and put on a roasting tin in a cool oven at 110°C/225°F/gas mark ¼. The liquid fat will render out slowly over several hours. Warm as an accompaniment to the duck.

Apple Sauce

Peel, quarter and core the apples, cut the pieces into two and put in a stainless steel or cast iron saucepan, with sugar and water. Cover and put over a low heat. As soon as the apple has broken down, stir and taste for sweetness. Serve warm.

Serves 4

450g (1lb) Bramley cooking apples
1-2 dessertspoons water
about 50g (2oz) sugar
(depending on tartness
of apples)

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