

## Seared Duck Breasts with Cumberland Sauce

Serves 4 as a main course

*This dish is especially good served atop potato and celery root puree. Cumberland sauce is traditionally served cold with cold venison and other cold cuts. This variation features the ingredients of Cumberland sauce in a pan sauce. The addition of ground ginger is credited to Auguste Escoffier. Suggestions for substituting venison for the duck breast in this recipe are included after the recipe.*

4 (5-6 ounce) duck breasts  
Kosher salt, to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
2 tablespoons cold butter  
1 medium shallot, minced  
½ cup tawny port  
Zest and juice from one orange  
Zest from one lemon  
2 heaping tablespoons of red currant jelly  
2 tablespoons veal demi-glace  
¼ teaspoon dry mustard  
1/8 teaspoon ground ginger  
Garnish: Handful of fresh red currants (optional)

Remove the duck breasts from the refrigerator at least 20 minutes before cooking to allow them to come to room temperature. Use a sharp knife to score the skins of the duck breasts into a diamond pattern. Cutting the skin in this way helps render the fat and keeps the skin crisp during cooking. Pat each duck breast dry with a paper towel then season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Add the butter and the duck breasts, skin side down, to a cold pan. Heat the duck breasts and butter over medium heat for about 10 to 12 minutes to render the fat and crisp the skin. Reduce the heat to medium-low and turn the duck breasts over. Cook for another three to five minutes (cook to an internal temperature of 130 to 135 for medium rare) then transfer the duck breasts to a plate and cover with foil while you prepare the sauce

Remove all but 2 teaspoons of fat from the skillet (duck fat can be saved for other purposes). Add the minced shallot and cook, stirring constantly, for about 1 minute or until softened and golden brown. Add the port and the orange juice and bring to a simmer. Stir in the orange zest, lemon zest, red currant jelly, veal demi-glace, dry mustard, and ground ginger. Continue to stir over medium heat for about 2 minutes until the sauce thickens slightly. Taste for seasoning. Remove the sauce from the heat and toss in the fresh currants if using.

Slice the duck breasts on the bias and serve immediately drizzled with the Cumberland sauce and a few of the fresh currants (if using).

**Substituting Venison:**

Venison tenderloin or backstrap may be substituted for the duck breasts in this recipe. To cook, remove the tenderloin(s) (about 1 lb) from the refrigerator at least 20 minutes before cooking to allow it to come to room temperature. Pat the tenderloin dry with paper towels and season generously with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat until hot. Add two tablespoons duck fat or butter to the skillet and heat until melted. Add the tenderloin(s) and sear for about 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Don't overcook the meat; ideally you want each loin to have an internal temperature of about 130 degrees. Remove the loins from the skillet and set aside covered with foil to rest while you prepare the sauce.

Note that the best meat comes not from the trophy buck, but rather smaller specimens. Trophy bucks tend to have a surplus of testosterone that affects the flavor of the meat. Bigger deer are also older which means the meat is often tougher than that of a younger deer.