



# Braised duck legs with pickled rhubarb, roast squash & lentils

What I like about this recipe, which is all just an elaborate vehicle for the rhubarb, is its neatness. The duck makes the stock while it cooks and then the stock cooks the lentils. Each stage of cooking adds something to the next and everything gets used in the final dish. The efficiency is very pleasing.

It is also the absolute business when you have people for dinner. You can make it all in advance then whack the duck in the oven to crisp up 20 minutes before serving as you heat up the lentils and squash. Totally faff free.

Serves 4  
1 1/2 hours

Preheat the oven to 190°C and boil the kettle.

*For the duck:*

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 6 sprigs of thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 duck legs, skin-on, bone-in

Warm the olive oil for the duck over a low heat in an ovenproof casserole dish for which you have a lid and which is big enough to accommodate the duck legs snugly. Add the onion and sweat for 15 minutes until very soft. Add the garlic, together with the thyme sprigs and bay leaf. Cook for another 5 minutes.

*For the lentils:*

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red onion, diced
- 3 small carrots, diced
- 2 celery sticks, yup, also diced
- 275g dried puy lentils

Nestle the duck legs into the dish on top of the onion base. Pour in enough hot water from the kettle to just cover the duck, then clamp on the lid and transfer to the oven for 1 1/2 hours. The duck is ready when the meat has shrunk away from the bone, leaving it exposed.

Once cooked, lift the duck out of the cooking liquor, then trim the legs of any messiness and lay them on a baking tray, skin-side up. Strain the cooking juices, discarding the onion and herbs, and keep the stock to cook the lentils later. You can do all the above the day before and keep the duck and stock in the fridge until ready to serve.

Continued overleaf...



# Braised duck legs with pickled rhubarb, roast squash & lentils

## *For the squash:*

1 small squash (approx. 1kg)  
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

## *For the rhubarb:*

250g forced rhubarb  
150g apple cider vinegar  
150g caster sugar

Radicchio leaves, to serve.

For the lentils, which I also prepare in advance, once I have the duck cooking stock strained, warm the olive oil in a large saucepan then add the diced onions, carrots and celery plus a little salt, pop a lid on, and sweat for 8-10 minutes. Add the lentils and the strained stock from the duck, bring to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes until just cooked. The liquid should have almost evaporated, concentrating its flavour, but some juice is lovely. Check the seasoning and set aside until needed.

Next the squash. De-seed, no need to peel, and cut into wedges. Toss in the olive oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Arrange on a baking tray in a single layer with plenty of space and roast at 200°C for 30-40 minutes or until pleasingly charred. Set aside.

Finally, the rhubarb, the star of the show. In a small pan, dissolve the sugar in the vinegar over a low heat. Remove from the heat and leave to cool. Dice the rhubarb whilst you wait then add the rhubarb to the cooled pickling liquor and, yup, you guessed it, set aside. Prep done.

When you are ready to assemble the main course, preheat the oven to 210°C and roast the duck legs for 20-25 minutes until the skin is crispy and golden brown. About 10 minutes before the duck is ready, pop the squash on a tray at the bottom of the oven to warm though and set the lentils over a low heat on the hob to do the same.

Once hot, spoon the lentils into a wide serving dish, nestle the wedges of squash amongst the lentils and pile the crispy duck legs on top. Serve the rhubarb alongside or spoon over the duck. I like this with some crisp, bitter radicchio leaves on the side too.