



USA Duck Team

Cookbook

Duck, Rabbit, Native Plants, & Desserts

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Duck

Cooking duck is easy. If you can cook an amazing chicken or beef dish then you can make duck.

Since duck isn't a common meal in American cuisine, we have turned it into a mysterious, daunting experience. Many of us have looked up how to spend an entire week attempting to make the perfect Peking Duck or poured over all of the steps in a duck a l'orange.

This cookbook is meant to do away with the idea that duck is too fatty or too difficult to become a staple meat. In reality, most heritage duck breeds are leaner than the Pekins found in the grocery store, but with more fat than would be found on a wild duck. The taste is extremely similar to beef, making them an excellent substitution for people with dietary restrictions that still want to enjoy a good steak or ragu.

Or for the many of us who would like to grow our own food but do not have the set up, space, or desire to keep cattle. Ducks are a sustainable little feathered cow herd that produces manageable amounts of meat without needing to keep a massive deep freezer.

Our hope is that this will be the encouragement you need to experiment with your own family version of duck ravioli, burgers and more.

Breaking Down Your Duck

There are five basic categories when cooking duck: whole, parted, ground, bones and skin.

Whole Duck

A beautiful roast can be made out of a whole duck, with a rich crispy mahogany skin that makes a wonderful centerpiece at any meal. Roasted duck options are the same that you would find with chicken. You can cook them bone in, deboned and rolled, or butterflied. Season them simply or use your favorite beef seasoning blends to help make that rich flavor pop.

Parted Out Duck

Parted ducks are traditionally broken down into breasts and legs. Breasts make an amazing substitute for steak. Leg quarters can be confited, roasted or pan fried.

Ground Duck

By removing the skin and deboning your duck into chunks of meat, you can make ground meat to use in any way you would use ground beef. To do so, first mostly freeze the chunks of meat. While meat can be frozen solid, this method seems to work best with mostly frozen but still pliable chunks. Season the meat for your desired use (Mexican seasoning for tacos, Italian seasoning for meatballs, Steakhouse seasoning for burgers) and run the meat through a manual or electric meat grinder.

No meat grinder available? You can also substitute a food processor or blender. Just pulse in batches to get the desired texture. You don't want to make a smooth puree. Try a little bit at a time until you get a feel for the texture that works best for you.

Ducks mostly keep their fat layer under their skin and out of the meat, so duck meat is surprisingly lean. This makes it amazing for simmering recipes such as Swedish meatballs or a rich bolognese sauce.

Duck Bones

Don't toss the bones: reserve them to make a wonderful healthy stock. These bones are oiled, roasted with vegetables, and simmered gently to extract all of their flavor and nutrients. This stock makes a great base for French Onion soup or a rich stew. After simmering for a few hours the bones can be removed from the stock and picked clean of meat. With a little additional seasoning this shredded meat works great in sandwiches and tacos.

Once you are done cooking the bones, the chalky, crumbly remains can be baked again until dried then ground up and used in your garden on plants that want more calcium like tomatoes. If you don't want to grind it up into a powder you can put the bones in a bag and lightly crush them with a rolling pin. The finer the powder the quicker your plants can take up the nutrients, but don't worry about larger pieces in the mix. Those will slowly release into the soil throughout the year.

Duck Skin

The Holy Grail of cooking duck is the crispiest skin imaginable. Peking duck is a week-long process specifically to make the skin crackle as much as possible. While you can make a beautiful skin with a simple roast duck, by separating the skin from the meat you have more control over what you are wanting to make.

The skin is versatile and can be turned into cracklings, a thin crisp chip, a bacon substitute, or chopped up and added to soups and salads.

Sauces

Traditionally duck has been served with fruits – either as a glaze or sauce – but there is no reason you can't expand on the usual. Experiment with in-season or local flavors with a homemade blackberry or raspberry sauce, a plum, cherry, or peach salsa, or a savory apple or aronia berry BBQ sauce.

Sides

Since we have turned duck into a luxury dish, many suggested sides lean into the fancier side of cooking but almost anything pairs nicely with your meal. Consider what you would enjoy with beef and go from there. Roasted vegetables, fries, breads, seasoned rice, simple salads, and braised greens all go well.

Desserts

You have made an incredible meal and a job well done deserves a reward. Desserts can come immediately after the meal or after you have rested and enjoyed a good book or good company. There are many quick and easy desserts that pair well with duck and we encourage you to look into what fruits may be in season in your area or what you have lovingly canned up for later.

Traditionally duck pairs extremely well with citrus and sweet-tart fruits, but don't limit yourself. Baked or fried apples and pears, fruit crumbles and salads, parfaits and gelatin or rich mousses. Or break out the biscuits slathered in your favorite jam or marmalade.

We don't always have the time to make something special. When we do, go all out and treat yourself.

Duck Breast Steaks

Unlike chicken and turkey, duck can (and arguably should) be cooked to lower internal temperatures, and is traditionally served medium or medium rare. Duck steaks are individual de-boned duck breasts cooked mostly skin-side down to give you a beautiful crunchy skin combined with the savory meat. The steak flavor is so spot on that you can use your preferred steak seasoning and sauces to make this meal.

Duck steaks are a simple fast dinner, going from pan to plate in under ten minutes. You can use any type of pan you like, but our preference has been a cast iron skillet that snugly fits the meat. This allows for the rendered fat to pan fry the skin while cooking, and also gives you a better layer of duck fat on the surface if you decide to serve your steaks with sauteed greens, potatoes, sweet potatoes, or pan fried Texas toast.

Very lightly score the skin – you don't want to reach the meat so don't go too deep. You are simply opening the skin up to help render the fat beneath. Season your meat as you would a steak, or simply add a pinch of salt and pepper to taste.

In an unheated, non-oiled pan, add the duck skin side down and turn on the heat to medium. If you have a meat press or weight, placing it on top of the steak will help create a better, crispier crust. Using a meat thermometer, cook your duck to an internal temperature of around 125-127 F, which should take around 6-7 minutes depending on the size of the steak. Flip it over and cook it for around 30 seconds, just to sear the flesh, then take it off the heat and let it rest for a couple of minutes. The meat will continue to cook while it is resting and should reach an internal temperature of 130-135 F.

If your duckling was particularly lean and the pan seems too dry, add a splash of water or your preferred wine to deglaze the pan and reduce until thick enough to coat a spoon. This reduction can be poured back over the steak or another side of your choice (it goes really well on top of seasoned rice).

Sides

While the meat is resting, put any rendered fat to good use. Previously parboiled potatoes or sweet potatoes can be set in the pan over medium-high heat to develop a crust and soak up the remaining liquid flavor. Alternatively, a thick slice of bread can be set in the pan to do the same. Leafy greens from spinach, amaranth, collards, kale, or daylily shoots can be seasoned and added to the pan. In each case, add a splash of your preferred oil to the pan if the remaining liquid isn't enough to cook everything.

Dessert: Fried Apples

This is a steak dinner and it deserves something special. If you have any room left over, fried apples served over biscuits or ice cream is a great steakhouse dessert.

Simple Roast Duck

One duck

A pinch of salt and pepper

Stepping away from the rigors of the perfect Peking duck, a roast duck is far easier than the perfect roast turkey, and is only slightly more labor intensive than a roast chicken. The goal of a roast duck is crispy skin with the fat fully rendered beneath, and tender succulent meat. Nothing more, nothing less.

Since ducks vary a lot in size, a meat thermometer is going to be your best friend when roasting a duck. You don't want dry, overcooked meat. Since duck is safe at pink temperatures, don't be afraid to aim for a little pinker than what you would like to err on the side of caution.

If you do overcook your duck a little, it isn't the end of the world. It should still taste good and can always be deboned and used in a delicious soup or stew where it will soften and absorb the flavors of the broth.

While this recipe is a simple salt and pepper roast duck, feel free to experiment with flavors you enjoy. A pinch of garlic, onion powder, or cayenne isn't against the rules. Remember to focus on seasonings you would like on a good beef roast and you won't be disappointed.

If you have the time, it is best to dry your duck off and place it in an uncovered bowl overnight (or before you go to work in the morning) to help the skin to dry off. Dryer equals crispier, and at least eight hours is recommended. If you don't have the time then even an hour will help.

Remove the duck from the fridge an hour before cooking to bring it to room temperature. Trim away any excess fat or extra bits. You can remove the tips of the wings for stock, or remove the wings entirely to debone and use for other recipes. If you don't want to remove the wings, fold the tips under the back of the duck where they should rest in place naturally.

Using a knife, prick or slice the skin to help render the fat. You only want to pierce the skin – avoid cutting into the meat. Feel free to be as plain or decorative as you want. You can score in a crosshatch diamond pattern or simply poke the skin all over.

Rub the entire duck down with salt and pepper. Feel free to add your favorite extra garlic or herbs inside the cavity. Avoid stuffing, potatoes, or anything else with substance. They won't be inside the duck long enough to cook and will negatively impact the overall cook.

Place the duck on a roasting pan breast side up and put into a preheated 425 F oven on a middle rack for 30 minutes. If needed, rotate the roasting pan midway to help with even roasting. After 30 minutes, insert your meat thermometer in the thickest part of the thigh, being careful to avoid touching the bone. Reduce the heat to 350 F and cook for another 30 minutes.

You are aiming for an internal temperature of around 130-135 F depending on your preferred doneness. The temperature will continue to rise when you take the duck out of the oven to rest for 20 minutes, so anticipate the internal temperature increasing another five degrees during its rest.

During that rest you can make a quick pan gravy or use the pan juices to cook a side dish in.

Sides

Your duck is your beef roast: think maple glazed carrots or parsnips, braised cabbage with apples, roasted green beans or asparagus, steamed broccoli or cauliflower, seasoned rice, garlic mashed potatoes, cranberry or aronia berry sauce. Roasts love bread, so a crusty piece of sourdough or Texas toast, or fresh out of the oven Yorkshire pudding to sop of the gravy is key to many roast dinners.

Desserts

A rustic cobbler pairs well with any roast and duck is no exception. The recipe included is for a peach or persimmon cobbler for a cozy summer or fall meal.

Duck Stroganoff

1lb duck meat sliced thin

Splash of oil of your choice (you can also play with bacon grease, duck fat, schmaltz, etc)

2 TB unsalted butter

Half a medium diced onion

Half pound of sliced mushrooms

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 TB flour
1 cup beef, lamb or duck broth
¾ cup heavy whipping cream
¼ cup sour cream
1 TB worcestershire sauce
½ TB dijon mustard
Pinch of salt and pepper
16 oz egg noodles

When making this dish you have a few options when it comes to how to include the duck meat.

If you are looking for a fast way to use up bits of meat that you deboned from your duck roast or stock then you can skip the first step and reserve a pound of shredded duck meat to add in later. This is an especially great way to use up any shredded duck meat you have saved in the freezer for a rainy day.

Your second option is to utilize the rest of the duck once you have used up the breast and legs. Deboning the wings, the oysters located on the back, and little bits you find left over can add up fast. This version takes more time, but will give you a different texture to the meat when cooked versus the pre-cooked shredded option. If you go this route, start with step one in the recipe.

Lastly is your traditional stroganoff meat, which would be thinly slicing the breast or deboned legs and cooking those. Slicing against the grain will make the meat more tender.

Each of these provide a slightly different finished product and we find that all three are delicious.

Instructions:

Before cooking the sauce (or while cooking your sauce in another pot), boil a pot of salted water and cook your egg noodles. Once cooked, these will be strained and set aside to be added in at the end.

1. Place a deep pan or dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add enough oil or fat to coat the base and add your raw duck meat when the pan is hot. Cook until just browned on each side, which should take 1-2 minutes depending on size. Don't worry about cooking until well done – you are browning for flavor. The meat will continue cooking while resting and when added back in later. Once browned, remove from the pan and set aside.
2. In the same pan, add 2 TB of butter (or oil or fat of your choice), and add your diced onions and sliced mushrooms back in. Sautee for around 6-7 minutes until the onions are translucent and the mushrooms are soft. A little color on both is fine if desired.
3. Add your minced garlic and sautee for 1-2 minutes. Sprinkle in your flour and mix everything together to create a roux. This should take another minute or two for the flour to absorb all of the moisture in the pan and cook out the raw flour taste.
4. Now add your one cup of broth to deglaze the pan. Add a little bit at first to coat the bottom of the pan and start scraping up all of the browned bits that have cooked on. If the first round doesn't scrape it up, add a little more and try again, then pour in the rest of the stock and stir until mixed.
5. Mix your sour cream and whipping cream in a bowl and drizzle in a ladle-full of cooking liquid into the bowl. This will temper your cream so that it mixes better into the hot dish. Add a second ladle-full to it and stir again, then pour the whole mixture back into your pan, stirring while adding. Cook this for a couple of minutes until it thickens up again.

6. Now you can add your worcestershire, mustard, salt, and pepper. Cook it for a few minutes until everything is creamy and thoroughly incorporated then try it and see if it needs anything. If it does, add a little less than you think it needs and stir again to incorporate before adding anything more. You can always add more, you can't take away.

7. Once it tastes the way you want it to, add the cooked egg noodles, duck meat and any juices back into the pan and simmer until the duck is heated through.

Sides

Straw potatoes are a great side that can be served in a mound directly atop of the stroganoff. Easily make them by cutting potatoes into julienne strips and deep frying them until lightly golden at 370 F. Rest them for a few minutes, then deep fry them again until they reach the desired golden brown.

You can also opt for a soup and salad combo. Pick your favorite side salad mix – you can't go wrong. Greens really work well with a rich heavy sauce.

A beautiful thick piece of toast or biscuits goes great with the stroganoff to sop up all of the remaining sauce.

Desserts

If you want to keep the Russian theme going, pair your soup with soup with a fruity Russian Kissel that can be served hot or cold. Or make a rich Berries and Cream in advance.

Duck Burgers with Chicharrone Bacon

These burgers use ground deboned duck meat with the skin reserved to make a crispy bacon substitute. To make, flip the duck over breast side down and slice down the back to open up the skin. Inserting the tips of your fingers, push gently to separate the skin from the meat and begin to peel the skin off. Don't worry if it doesn't come off in one big piece. You will be slicing it down to your preferred size later on when cooking, and any particularly tiny pieces can be turned into bacon bits for a salad or soup.

Once the skin is removed, set it aside and debone your duck aiming for cubes of meat. They don't have to be entirely uniform, you are just looking at avoiding giant pieces that may be hard to grind. Once done, make a single layer of cubed meat on a baking sheet and put it in the freezer for 15-30 minutes. You are looking for mostly frozen but not rock hard.

A pound of meat should make you 3-4 good sized burgers. These will be lean burgers unless you opt to mix in a small percentage of fat into the grind. Good fat options are pork fat trimmings from pork chops and roasts, bacon ends, or beef fat trimmings. For a pound of duck meat you only need 2-4 TB of fat.

When ready, put the chunks of mostly frozen meat into a meat grinder, food processor or blender and grind on your preferred plate with the grinder or, if using the latter two appliances, pulse until you get the desired consistency. Remember, you want it to be a coarse grind – not a smooth paste. But if you make a mistake and make a paste, consider going all-in and adding spices to turn it into skinless duck hot dogs – no harm done.

Form into patties and put them back in the fridge until ready to cook. If you are making multiple burgers, put a piece of parchment paper between each one so they don't stick to each other.

To make your bacon chicharrones, slice your duck skin so it lays flat in a single layer in your pan. This works best if you have a weight to sit on top of the skin, so make sure the size of the weight is roughly the same as the size of the chicharrones.

Once you have sliced it the way you like, mix 1 TB kosher salt, 2 TB sugar, 1 TB pepper, and 1 tsp smoked paprika together. Once mixed, add a dash of liquid smoke if you want to and mix again. Then massage the mixture into both sides of your duck skin. Depending on the amount of skin, you probably won't use the whole mixture. Store the rest in the fridge to use on another batch or to turn into another seasoning blend for a different project.

In a preheated medium-high pan, lay the skin fat-side down (the part that was touching the meat). If you mix a few up it isn't the end of the world. Fat-side down helps to render quicker and allows the chicarrones to pan fry more evenly.

Cook with a weight on top, checking after a couple of minutes. You are looking for a nice golden to dark brown color without it turning black. The longer you go, the crunchier it will be. If you prefer a little chew, then go with a lighter color. You are definitely encouraged to sample little pieces along the way to make sure everything is going according to plan. When cooked, set it aside and oil the pan if needed then get your burgers right in to take advantage of the rendered fat.

When ready to cook, we prefer the smash burger method. Season the burger right before adding it to an oiled or buttered preheated pan and press it down flat with a burger press or clean flat bottomed jar or can. Let this sear under the weight for 30-40 seconds then remove the weight and cook it for another minute before flipping and cooking for around two minutes on the other side.

Once flipped, add your preferred cooked burger toppings: cheese, caramelized onions, or fire roasted peppers. Remove the burgers and lightly toast your buns in the same pan with the same fats.

Then build the burger the way you would any other, with your favorite condiments, sauces, and vegetables. Don't forget to add the layer of duck bacon.

Sides

Sides are easy with burgers. Go with what feels right: fries, sweet potato or otherwise, mashed potatoes, steamed garlic-butter broccoli, or a salad with extra duck bacon sprinkled over the top.

Dessert

For dessert, back when fast food restaurants were in their infancy they discovered that the perfect combination for a rich salty burger was an incredibly sweet drink – which is how sodas and shakes became the staple drink for your meal today. Try a delicious chocolate aronia shake or a quick rich cold chocolate mousse with berries.

Duck Stock

1 deboned duck
1 medium onion
½ carrot
1 celery rib
Splash of your preferred roasting oil

Spend the day simmering duck stock and make your house smell amazing. Afterward, duck stock can be used for gravies and soups.

For the adventurous: If the duck you started cooking came with the head and feet, adding those to the stock will increase the flavor and health benefits from bone broth and gelatin. Thoroughly clean the extra bits you are not planning on using for other recipes and add them into the roasting pan. The feet and the bill can be blanched in

boiling water for 30-60 seconds which will remove the outer layer of skin if desired, but this step is not necessary if everything looks clean.

While this can definitely make some people squeamish, it is good to remember that part of local eating and homesteading is respecting the whole animal. The more you use, the more appreciation you are showing. If it makes you uncomfortable to see feet floating in your soup, after you have roasted these parts, add them to a food safe cheesecloth bag and tie it up. The bag will help hide the worst of it until you are more comfortable with the idea.

But remember, you are already making stock at home with your own deboned duck. You've got this.

The secret to good bone stock is roasting your bones and your vegetables before simmering them. Start by separating your bones. The more you can lay flat the more even everything will cook. Toss your bones, one medium quartered onion, half a carrot, and one celery rib in an oil of your choice (or duck fat if available) and lay it all out on a baking sheet to roast in the oven at 400 for around 30 minutes. Turn everything halfway through to roast evenly on both sides.

You want a deep, rich brown color – not black. It is better to err on the side of being too lightly colored than too dark. Burnt bones can add a bitterness to the liquid.

Once roasted, add to a pot with enough water to cover the bones and vegetables. Add a generous pinch of salt and let this simmer gently for 4-6 hours. You can go longer if you'd like to, but if you do, remove all of the vegetable matter and only cook the bones. Everything you can get out of the vegetables you will get in six hours – after that they will break down into a flavorless mush that can be difficult to remove from the final product.

We simmer our stock in a slow cooker to free up the stove while it cooks. If you start this in your slow cooker, boil a pot of water on the stove and add that as your liquid to jump start the cooking process to avoid low temperatures that bacteria could grow in. Be careful when adding hot water to the slow cooker – you don't want to crack a cold insert with boiling water. Adding a little warm water to the base first and letting it heat up while you are boiling the water will help avoid temperature shock.

This stock can be used immediately for soups, frozen, or canned. If canned, a pressure canner is a must. Duck stock is a low-acid food that cannot be safely water bathed. In a pressure canner, heat pints to 10-15 PSI (depending on your altitude) for 75 minutes with a one inch head space.

Don't forget to reserve the bones to dry, crush, store in a jar, and use as bone meal for your garden.

Egg Dishes

If you are keeping your own flock of layers then creative egg recipes are vital. Especially during the spring flush when it can be difficult to keep up with the abundance.

Russian Egg Salad

6 hardboiled eggs
½ cup mayonnaise

½ cup sour cream
2 cloves minced garlic
¼ tsp prepared mustard
pinch of salt and pepper
2 TB finely chopped chives or green onions
½ a shredded carrot
pinch of paprika

Peel the eggs and slice them thinly. Traditionally, these egg slices were arranged overlapping each other on a plate in rows or in rings. They should look like fallen Dominos with the top of one egg slice laying over the bottom of the one before it. Feel free to do individual serving size overlaps in the shape of flowers or small circles to make a more decorative serving on a plate.

Combine the mayonnaise, sour cream, garlic, mustard, and salt. Give it a quick taste for seasoning then spread this mixture over the eggs. Sprinkle the top with the chives and carrot then finish with a sprinkle of paprika over the top.

Eat as is or serve on top of crackers or toast.

Mushroom Stuffed Eggs

4 hardboiled eggs
4 TB butter or sauteing oil of choice
1 minced onion
½ lb minced mushrooms
2 TB parsley
½ tsp dill
pinch of salt and pepper
3 tsp mayonnaise
3 tsp sour cream
8 pickled pepper rings
pinches of paprika

Saute your minced onion in half half the butter until translucent then add the remaining butter and minced mushroom and cook for around five minutes more or until the mushrooms are soft. Remove from heat and set aside.

Peel the eggs and cut them in half lengthwise. Scoop out the yolks and add them to a separate bowl with the parsley, dill, salt and pepper. Mash to your liking, either turning this into a smooth paste or simply crumbling the yolk. The more chunky the stronger the yolk flavor in the mix. Once happy, add the mayonnaise, sour cream, and the mushroom mix. Fold everything together until combined.

The cleanest way to add the mixture to the egg is a piping bag. Put the mixture in a bag and cut a hole in the tip then squeeze and slowly lift the tip to create a little mountain. Or just scoop a large dollop onto each egg for a quicker, more rustic look.

Top each peak with a banana ring, pepperoncini ring, or jalapeno ring depending on heat preference.

Best served chilled after an hour in the fridge to allow the flavors to all meld together.

Rabbit

Rabbit has been the go-to meat for thousands of years. When America was involved in WWI and WWII, the government actively encouraged Americans to raise their own rabbits in their backyards as a sustainable source of protein. Rabbits are healthier than chickens, grow faster than chickens, and can do so on a diet of greens that many people were able to supply from their yards and the popular Victory Gardens.

This patriotic self-sufficiency fell out of favor as factory farming came around, making cheap, plentiful meat. But with today's factory farming practices and the local foods movement, people are rediscovering why rabbit should still hold an honored place at the table.

If you are looking for a healthy meat in your own backyard, rabbit is the meat for you. Best when cooked braised, it can be used in almost any recipe that calls for chicken – especially skinned chicken breast. Rabbit is a meat that can easily dry out and overcook, just like a chicken breast. As long as you keep that in mind while cooking then your meals will turn out fine.

These meals are assuming that you are cooking with a young fryer rabbit that does not need low and slow cook times. If you have an older animal for the table then increase the cook time and keep a closer eye on the meal. Older rabbits have a stronger chicken-rabbit flavor, so you can also use more herbs and spices if desired to balance that out.

Braised Rabbit in Cream of Mushroom Sauce

1 fryer, quartered
butter or cooking oil of choice
1 diced medium onion
1 minced garlic clove
1-2 TBs flour
1 cup cold rabbit or chicken stock
Salt and pepper to taste
½ lb of mushrooms *
1 cup heavy whipping cream *

*Alternatively, you can use a can of cream of mushroom soup instead of mushrooms and cream.

Start by browning the rabbit on all sides in your cooking oil of choice then set aside in a baking dish that holds the pieces snugly. Then add a bit more oil back to the pan if needed and toss in your diced onion. Cook until translucent then add your mushrooms and minced garlic. Your onions and mushrooms should sweat enough in the pan to create a thin layer of stock. After you have cooked them until the mushrooms are tender, sprinkle a tablespoon of flour over the top and mix to bring it all together to form a roux. If one tablespoon doesn't incorporate all of the pan juices then sprinkle on a second.

Cook this roux for a minute or two, then add a cup of cold stock and stir again until it thickens. Add the cup of heavy whipping cream and salt and pepper to taste. Once heated up, pour this over the rabbit and bake in a preheated oven at 350 F for 20-30 minutes or until the rabbit is fall-off-the-bone tender.

After dinner, don't let the cooking sauce go to waste. It can be reserved in the fridge for up to three days to use for other meals. It can be added to a bowl of ramen, or add browned sausage to it and serve it over biscuits for breakfast the next day.

Sides

This meal is great over a bed of seasoned rice or served with mashed potatoes. Thyme roasted carrots or sweet potatoes adds a sweetness to the meal and a nice crusty piece of toast to sop up the juices is never a bad idea.

Dessert

For dessert, try a light, cool lemon meringue pudding topped with your favorite fruit sauce. The meringue is a great way to use up any egg whites stored in the freezer. Use a pudding mix or make your own with your preferred pudding recipe.

Bourbon Street Rabbit

1lb fryer quartered
cooking oil of choice
1 medium onion minced
½ a small bell pepper minced
2 minced garlic cloves
¼ tsp ginger
pinch of red pepper flakes or dash of hot sauce
¼ cup honey
2 TB brown sugar
½ cup teriyaki sauce
splash of soy sauce and pepper to taste
Splash of apple cider vinegar (optional)

Heat oil in a high sided skillet or dutch oven and add your rabbit pieces to brown all sides. Set the rabbit aside into a baking dish the pieces fit snugly into and add more oil if needed plus the minced onion and bell pepper. Cook until onions are translucent then add the remaining ingredients and cook until simmering. Try the sauce and adjust for taste (if it is sweeter than you prefer, add a tiny splash of vinegar until it is to your liking). To make it salty, try adding splashes of soy sauce to give the sauce more depth or simply add a pinch or two of salt until it tastes the way you like.

Once you are happy, pour the mixture over the rabbit and bake at 350 F for 30 minutes or until tender.

Sides

Traditionally this is served over a bed of seasoned rice. You also can't go wrong with steamed peas, greens, broccoli, cabbage, or bok choy to help cut through the richness of the dish.

Dessert

For dessert, try pairing this with poached pears or poached persimmons for a lighter end to the sticky-sweet richness of the Bourbon sauce.

Rabbit Cacciatore

1 fryer pieced
4-6 strips bacon diced
1 TB thyme
½ tsp rosemary
¼ cup flour
2 TB cooking oil of choice
1 medium onion diced

2 cloves minced garlic
½ lb chopped mushrooms
3 cups diced tomatoes
2 diced red peppers
2 bay leaves
12 pitted olives
noodles of your choice

Add your chopped bacon to a pan with high sides or a dutch oven and fry until mostly cooked then add your pieces of rabbit. If needed, add a little more cooking oil to help brown the rabbit or leave as-is. Brown rabbit on all sides then set aside the rabbit and the bacon.

Add onions, mushrooms, and peppers to the pan and cook until onions are translucent.

Return the rabbit and bacon to the pan and cover with the garlic, tomatoes, and bay leaves. Add a lid to the pot and reduce the heat to low, simmering gently for around 30 minutes.

Check the rabbit for tenderness. If it doesn't seem tender, let it simmer for another 10-15 minutes and check again. Repeat until you can pierce it with a fork and twist and the meat twists with it.

Once you have reached this point, uncover the dish and add the olives. Turn the heat up and boil off the excess liquid to reduce the sauce.

Set aside and boil your preferred pasta noodles. Strain and bowl up the noodles, ladling the cacciatore over the top.

Sides

Garlic toast, cheesy bread, and focaccia goes especially well with this dish, as does fried zucchini chips. If you need more greens for the day, a side salad is a great before-meal pairing.

Dessert

Roasted grape crostinis are a sweet and savory combination that finishes the meal off perfectly.

Desserts

This book has a dessert section because you deserve it. Fruit desserts tend to be quick and easy and many can be harvested out of your own backyard or farmer's market. So we have included quick and easy fruit-forward dessert options to pair with your dinner. None of these should be too messy or time consuming to make and will really elevate your already amazing meal.

Also, don't fear creativity. Many of these recipes work well with different fruit substitutions with minor tweaking. If you feel comfortable in your kitchen then try a stone fruit kissel or an apple cobbler.

Homemade Frozen Custard (Ice Cream)

6 duck egg yolks (reserve whites for another recipe)
1 cup sugar
2 cups whole milk

2 cups cream
Splash of vanilla extract or a squeeze of vanilla bean paste

This is not a fast treat, but this is a worthwhile treat that can be made in advance and enjoyed after all meals. Frozen custard is an egg-based ice cream, with the eggs adding a much richer mouthfeel than typical ice cream. You make a simple custard on the stove then chill it. You can tweak this recipe for any sort of ice cream maker you might own, or simply freeze it in cubes to take out and turn into quick shakes.

If you are using an appliance to make your ice cream, follow the instructions for use in advance to be prepared then make the custard.

Set your saucepan on the counter and whisk together the egg yolks and sugar until smooth and glossy. Once you reach the glossy stage, pour in your milk a little at a time, still mixing everything together, until everything is thoroughly combined.

Place the pot on the stove on a medium low heat and keep stirring until the custard thickens, which should take about 10-15 minutes.

If you are concerned about any cooked egg pieces in the custard you can run the mixture through a fine-meshed sieve to ensure it is completely smooth. Then stir the cream and vanilla into the custard until everything is combined.

Cover and refrigerate overnight or until fully chilled before putting it in your ice cream maker, or freeze for 4-5 hours before serving.

Peach or Persimmon Cobbler

4 cups sliced peaches or persimmons
1 cup sugar (divided)
pinch of salt
6 TB butter
1 cup flour
1 cup sugar
2 tsp baking powder
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk

For dessert, why not a quick and easy peach or persimmon cobbler? Five minutes of prep time for a truly five star dining experience.

Preheat your oven to 350 F. Slice up four cups of peaches or persimmons (or use canned peaches if out of season), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar, and a pinch of salt and add them to a saucepan. Cook on medium heat and stir until combined and soft. If you are using canned or frozen fruit they should already be soft. Just heat up enough to dissolve the sugar and combine.

Melt 6 TB of butter and pour into the bottom of a 9x13 baking dish.

Next mix the flour, a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar, baking powder, milk, and a pinch of salt in a bowl and stir until barely combined. Pour this over the butter in the baking dish.

Spoon the peach or persimmon mixture of the top of the batter and sprinkle cinnamon generously over the top. Bake for around 40 minutes, checking on it at 35 minutes in. Serve warm with a scoop of ice cream.

Russian Cream and Berries

3 cups heavy whipping cream
1 ¼ cups sugar
pinch of salt
1 TB gelatin (unflavored or a flavor your choosing)
1 cup boiling water
1 ½ cups sour cream
1 TB vanilla extract
½ cup fruit of choice (blackberries, raspberries, aronia berries, cherries)

In a pot, heat the cream, sugar and salt over medium heat, stirring constantly until the sugar has fully dissolved. Once done remove it from heat and set it aside. In a separate bowl, combine the gelatin with boiling water and stir until fully dissolved.

Combine the boiling mix with the simmered cream, stirring constantly and going at a slow pace to keep from curdling.

Cool the mixture completely by setting the bowl into another pot of chilled water and stirring occasionally to keep it from forming a film across the top and to evenly cool it. After a few minutes in a chilled water bowl, skip to a bowl of ice water to speed the process up.

Once cool, whisk in your sour cream and vanilla until smooth. Fold in your fruit, cover the bowl and refrigerate for at least four hours and up to 24 hours.

Russian Kissel

4 cups mixed berries
8 cups water
6 TB potato starch
Pinch of salt
Sugar to taste
Optional: Pinch of cinnamon, allspice or cardamon, splash of lemon juice, vanilla or almond extract

Kissel is a lovely fruit soup you can serve hot or cold depending on your preference. It is a quick and simple dessert that works well with all berries and most other fruits. You do you.

All you need to make it is fruit, water, sugar, potato starch, and a pinch of salt. Other add-ons are all optional and would be measured with your heart, such as vanilla and cinnamon.

For a basic recipe, mix four cups fruit with eight cups water and simmer until the fruit is soft. Once soft, add sugar to taste a few tablespoons at a time until it is the desired sweetness. Stir until dissolved then mix six tablespoons of potato starch into a separate bowl with cold water and stir until the lumps are gone then pour into the simmering pot, stirring while pouring. It should begin to thicken almost immediately. Add a pinch of salt, taste for sweetness, then either serve hot or cold with whipped cream or ice cream.

For a less traditional crunch, this can be topped with crumbled shortbread cookies or a sprinkle of granola.

This dessert is amazing poured over biscuits like a dessert version of biscuits and gravy (and feel free to still add that scoop of ice cream with it).

Chocolate Aronia Mixed Berry Smoothie or Shake

¼ cup frozen aronia berries
¼ cup frozen raspberries (or other fruit of choice)
1 cup yogurt for a smoothie or 1 cup ice cream for a shake
2 TB cocoa powder
Splash of milk
Sugar to taste (start with a ¼ cup if needed)

Add a splash of milk to your blender then top with the remaining ingredients and blend until smooth. Add another splash of milk if the mixture seems too thick. Sweeten to taste to balance out the bitterness of the cocoa and tartness of the fruit.

Quick Chocolate Mousse with Fruit

1 box instant chocolate pudding
2 cups heavy whipping cream
½ cup of fruit
Optional: a splash of your desired extract or mini chocolate chips

Add one box of instant chocolate pudding to two cups of heavy whipping cream to a bowl and, using a hand mixer, beat until light and fluffy. Halfway through, feel free to add a flavoring of your choice to pair with mini chocolate chips or a fruit topping that is in season. Examples would be almond, cherry, or mint extract. Once mixed, it can be served immediately or chill until after dinner and serve topped with mini chocolate chips, persimmons, raspberries, strawberries, cherries, bananas, or another fruit of choice. This serves six and can be kept in the fridge in an air-tight container for up to a week.

Lemon Meringue Pudding with Berry Sauce

1 box lemon pudding
4 large egg whites at room temperature
6 TB white sugar
½ tsp cream of tartar (or you can substitute a splash of lemon juice)

Preheat the oven to 350F and set aside 4-6 oven safe ramekins.

Add the cream of tartar to the egg whites in a very clean bowl and whisk with a hand or stand mixer on medium until the mixture turns into a bubbly foam. Increase the mixer speed by one and continue beating until you reach the soft peak stage, where the eggs turn white and begin to hold a shape. While still mixing, add the sugar a little at a time until fully incorporated and increase the mixer speed again until you reach the stiff peaks stage. Stop mixing as soon as you feel you are at this stage so you don't risk it falling apart on you.

Make your pudding and add it to your ramekins. Add a large dollop of meringue to the top and make an indentation on the top (which will hold the berry sauce after cooking).

Cook until the meringue is set and has barely begun to brown at 5-7 minutes.

Let the mixture cool down and chill in the fridge for a couple of hours. Serve with your favorite berries sprinkled over the top.

Poached Persimmons

5 peeled persimmons

3 cups pineapple juice, plus one cup crushed pineapple
2 TB dark rum or a ½ tsp of rum extract
1 tsp ground ginger
splash of vanilla extract
zest of one orange
2 TB cornstarch
optional toppings: crushed nuts or ginger snaps

Core the persimmons and add all the ingredients except for the cornstarch and crushed pineapple to a small pot to simmer for 20-30 minutes until soft. Depending on the size of your pot, you may not need all three cups of pineapple juice – just use what you need to poach.

Once soft, remove the persimmons and mix the cornstarch in a small glass of cold water, then pour that into the hot poaching mixture. Stir until it thickens – usually just a few minutes.

Serve warm, not hot, with a persimmon in a bowl surrounded by its syrup and spoon the crushed pineapple into the core of the persimmon.

Top with whipped cream or a scoop of homemade ice cream. If you want a little crunch to the dish, sprinkle the top with nuts or crushed cookies.

Roasted Grape Crostinis

Brie, cambazola, or blue cheese (room temperature)
crackers or crostini
grapes
honey
salt
cooking oil of choice

Preheat the oven to 450 F.

Place grapes in a pan in a single layer and drizzle with olive oil and salt. Bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes, or until they look caramelized.

Once done, smear each crostini with cheese, top with a grape, and drizzle with honey.

These make a great appetizer, after dinner dessert, or part of a charcuterie board.