



Ingredients

Serves 4 as a main course

- 4 large unpeeled banana shallots
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Duck fat or vegetable oil
- 50g unsalted butter
- 100g fresh or frozen peas
- 4 duck breasts, such as Gressingham or Barbary – 180–200g each
- 2 rashers of smoked streaky bacon or pancetta, cut into lardons
- 100g fresh girolles, cleaned
- ½ tsp fresh thyme leaves
- 100ml Madeira or port
- 100ml chicken or beef stock
- 1 bunch of fresh flat-leaf parsley, leaves picked

Bruce's Cookbook

Duck breast with roast shallots, girolles, peas and pancetta

This is a good dish for late spring and early summer when both English peas and Scottish girolles start to arrive. At other times of the year, simply use other wild mushrooms and omit the peas, or use frozen peas, which are excellent. The pancetta lends a pleasantly smoky aroma, but go easy on it, as it can have a tendency to outmuscle the other players in the game.

Set the oven to 175°C. Without peeling the shallots, cut each in half lengthways. Set an ovenproof frying pan over a medium heat. The pan needs to be big enough to accommodate all the shallots comfortably. Season the shallots well with salt and pepper. Add a dessertspoon of duck fat or vegetable oil to the pan and place the shallots in carefully, flat-side down. Cook the shallots until they have coloured perceptibly – this will take about 5 minutes. Add about half the butter to the pan and put in the oven without disturbing the shallots. Roast for about 35 minutes. Turn off the oven and leave the shallots inside with the door ajar.

Put five plates in the oven to warm. Boil the peas in salted water and refresh under a cold running tap. Drain and set aside. While the shallots are roasting, season the duck breasts well on both sides. Put them into a cold, non-stick frying pan, fat-side down, and place the pan over a medium heat. As the pan heats up, fat will render from the duck breasts. As this happens, turn the heat down and baste the duck often with this fat. When the skin has reached a golden brown, after about 10 minutes, flip the breast over and cook on the flesh side for another minute or two.

Turn the heat off and leave the breasts to rest in the pan. Transfer the duck breasts to one of the warmed plates to keep warm while you cook the mushrooms. Put the vacated duck pan back on to a medium heat. Add the lardons and cook for a couple of minutes until they release some of their fat – for 2–3 minutes only. Add the girolles and thyme and turn up the heat a little. Sauté the mushrooms and bacon together and lightly season the pan. After about 5 minutes add the Madeira or port and cook away the liquid. When this is done, add the stock and reduce by half. Turn the heat down, add the peas, parsley and the remaining butter. Try to avoid boiling the sauce at this stage and check the seasoning. Keep it warm over the merest thread of heat.

Remove the duck breasts from the oven and add any meat juices that have collected on the plate to the sauce. Carve each breast into five or six pieces and keep warm. Spoon the girolle and pancetta sauce on to the plates and top with the carved duck breasts. Add the halved, roasted shallots and serve.

A whole multitude of carbs will go well with this: mashed potatoes, polenta, baked small Rosevale potatoes, gratin dauphinois, chips, sauté potatoes, and so on.



Bruce's Cookbook by Bruce Poole

This is an edited version of Bruce's recipe, see Bruce's Cookbook for the full recipe.

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