

Easy Duck Confit

Skip the mess and time of making duck confit the hard way. With our easy method, you get mind-blowing results from nothing but duck legs and salt in 2 hours, not 2 days. It's a game-changer. Bonus by-product: plenty of glorious duck fat.

Ingredients:

Duck legs (at least 1 per person)
Kosher salt

NOTE: Do not preheat the oven for this recipe.

Directions:

Pat the duck legs dry with paper towels. Find a needle or a very pointy knife and prick the skin of the duck all over. Focus on the skin that covers fat. Do your best to avoid piercing the meat itself by pricking the skin at an angle over the drumstick and the center of the thigh. (You are doing this to give the fat that lies under the skin a place to seep out. If you don't do this, it will be far more difficult to get crispy skin.)

Salt your duck legs well. Let them rest at room temperature for at least 20 minutes and up to 1 hour. You can even salt the duck and refrigerate it, uncovered, up to 8 hours ahead of time.

Put the duck legs in a small casserole, skin side up. You want it just big enough to hold the legs. Put a thin sheen of oil or melted duck fat on the bottom of the casserole, then place the duck legs in close together but not overlapping.

Put the casserole in the oven and heat it to 300°F (150°C). You want to cook the duck as gently as possible. How long? Every duck has a different level of fat, so I can't tell you exactly. But it will be at least 90 minutes, and 2 hours is better. After 90 minutes, check the duck: It should be partly submerged in melted fat and the skin should be getting crispy.

When the skin is starting to look crispy, turn up the heat to 375°F (190°C). Check after 15 minutes. You're looking for a light golden brown. If you missed some spots with the needle and there are places where the skin won't crisp that's okay — better that than burnt skin elsewhere.

Remove from the oven and let cool for 10 to 15 minutes before eating. Save the accumulated fat for cooking vegetables, other meats or for keeping your skin shiny. I strain the fat through cheesecloth, but you really only need to do this if you are saving the fat for several weeks or months; strained, it will keep for 6 months tightly covered in the fridge. Well wrapped, the duck meat itself will last up to 2 weeks in the fridge.

You can just gnaw on the legs and let the luscious fat dribble down your chin, or pick off the skin and eat it—it is hard to re-crisp it later—and then strip the meat from the bones and use it in a salad, with beans or rice, or in with pasta.

