

# Duck confit with caramelized shallot sauce a superb winter dish



Duck confit

Photo Susie Iventosch

## By Susie Iventosch

During college, I spent a summer session at the Sorbonne in Paris and fell in love with France, the French and especially French cuisine. On the rare occasion that my best friend and I could afford such a meal on our slender student budgets, (we normally grabbed a crepe at the street stand — also delicious), we managed to try both duck confit and boeuf bourguignon during our stay. There really is nothing like a slow cooked French meal filling the air with all sorts of fabulous aromas! While I've made beef bourguignon over the years, I had yet to attempt duck confit until this year. Although I was slightly intimidated, it is much easier than I ever expected, but it does take some time to prepare and to cook the duck. And it's kind of fun going to the local butcher to order the meat.

As I put in my order for five duck hindquarters (leg and thigh attached) the butcher laughed and said, "How is that poor duck going to get around on just one leg?" It was hilarious, until my husband went to pick up the duck I'd ordered, and came home with not five, but nine hindquarters! I am still not sure how all that translated in butcher lingo, but after making my first batch, I was so happy to have extra duck on hand for the next time. This recipe is delicious, and though the sausage is normally an accompaniment to duck confit in a different French dish called cassoulet, I added tarragon chicken sausage to the recipe in order to start the shallot sauce, and it was perfect. If you can't find tarragon chicken sausage, chicken-apple,

turkey or pork sausage would accompany the duck beautifully. Cassoulet is a typical French dish made with duck confit, sausage, pork ragu and white beans. Maybe we'll visit that recipe in another issue.

The term "confit" comes from the French verb "confire" which literally means "to preserve." The original idea of the dish was to salt-cure the meat and then cook it in its own fat, which allowed the meat to be preserved for several months when completely submerged in the fat. The fat, once congealed, acts as a barrier to protect the meat from any further bacteria. This was necessary before the days of refrigeration. Though you may wish to store your duck confit in the refrigerator for a second meal, nowadays, we can easily obtain duck, duck fat and begin the process anew whenever we desire. The primary reason to confit duck these days is because it tastes divine and the meat is "fall off the bone" tender.

Duck fat can be stored and reused. There are said to be many uses for it in everyday cooking, such as roasting potatoes or vegetables in it, including it in salad dressing, or even tossing it on popcorn. I haven't reused the fat yet, nor have I attempted rendering my own, but you certainly can and I will sooner or later. There are a couple of links in the information box below on how to do that, but you can usually find duck fat in the freezer section of most grocers, which is so easy. The one I've used is Fabrique Delices and it's also available online. There are several brands available if you aren't interested in doing that process at home.

## Duck confit

(Serves 4)

### For duck:

- 4 Pekin or Long Island duck hindquarters (legs and thighs attached)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 large shallots, peeled and sliced
- 2 tablespoons pink Himalayan salt, or sea salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 8 sprigs fresh thyme
- 4 springs fresh rosemary, plus 1 tablespoon snipped into small pieces
- 4 bay leaves
- 10 ounces (give or take) duck fat (I used store-bought duck fat, so I didn't have to render my own)

The initial preparation for the duck must be done at least 24 hours prior to cooking. Mix the garlic, salt, pepper and snipped rosemary and rub on both the top and bottom of the duck quarters. Place half of the shallots and half the thyme springs on the bottom of a glass dish. Now place the duck in a single layer on top of the shallots and thyme. Place remaining shallots and thyme on top of duck. Tuck bay leaves and rosemary sprigs in and around duck. Cover tightly and refrigerate 24 hours prior to cooking.

When ready to cook duck, rinse the meat in cold water to eliminate most of the salt, herbs and shallots and pat dry with paper towels. This step is very important, otherwise the meat will be much too salty. Tuck tightly in a single layer into a deep casserole dish. Melt duck fat in a saucepan, and once melted, pour over and all around duck. Bake in 225 F oven for 2 hours. Turn up heat to 325 F, and cover loosely with foil. Continue cooking for about 30 minutes. Meat should be tender and fall off the bone.

To serve, slice sausage and add to sauce. Heat sauce over medium heat until hot. Plate duck quarters and spoon sauce and whole shallots over each serving.

### For sauce:

- 4 uncooked sausages (I used chicken-tarragon)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2-3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 large shallots, sliced
- 12 small shallots (about the size of large garlic cloves) peeled and kept whole
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, minced
- ½ cup white wine
- 1 cup duck or chicken stock (I used 1 tablespoon "More Than Gourmet" Roasted Duck and Chicken Stock paste plus one cup of water)
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter

In a large cast iron skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil, add whole sausages and brown, turning several times. When just cooked, remove from pan and wrap in foil. Set aside.

In the same pan, add remaining oil, sliced and whole shallots, garlic and herbs, and cook until shallots begin to caramelize. You want the whole shallots to be golden-brown. Add more oil as needed. Once the shallots are browned, add wine and cook until reduced in half. Add duck or chicken stock and continue to simmer over low heat until slightly thickened and reduced to about half. Add butter and stir until melted. Remove from heat and set aside until ready to serve.



Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com). This recipe can be found on our website: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com). If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

**How to render your own duck fat:** <https://www.saveur.com/article/Recipes/Rendered-Duck-Fat> or <https://www.dartagnan.com/how-to-render-duck-fat.html>

If you can't find duck fat at your local market try these sites: <https://tinyurl.com/y5rmxmnu> or <https://tinyurl.com/y4ktx3bu>

[http://fabriquedelices.com/wmm\\_product/rendered-duck-fat-small/](http://fabriquedelices.com/wmm_product/rendered-duck-fat-small/)

To buy More than Gourmet Roasted Duck and Chicken Stock: <https://www.morethangourmet.com/poultry-stocks-and-sauces-classic-roasted-duck-and-chicken-stock>

# Young artists display work at Orinda Library



Photos Kara Navolio

Moraga art teachers Larysa Larson and Moose Wesler, and Moraga Superintendent Bruce Burns attended the Arts Ambassadors opening with Moraga students proudly showing their work.

## By Kara Navolio

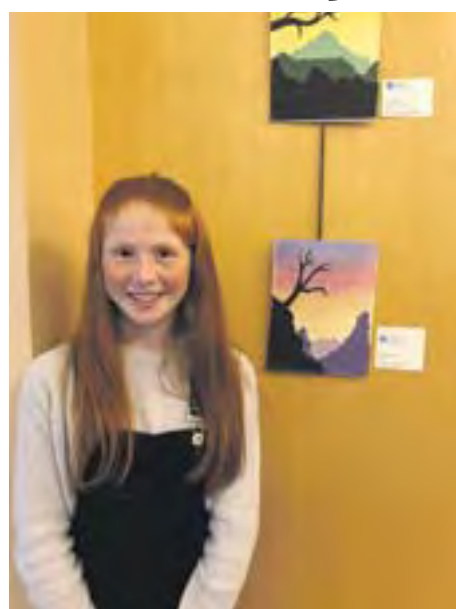
For many of the Moraga and Lafayette young artists, the first time they experienced showing their art in a gallery setting was during the first two weeks of February.

For the second year, the Lamorinda Arts Council hosted the Lafayette and Moraga Arts Ambassadors at the Orinda Library Art Gallery. Over 100 public school children, whose works were chosen for their excellent use of the art skills taught, had the opportunity to see their work displayed and shared with the community Feb. 3-13 at the gallery. As Rachel Levine, a fourth-grader at Los Perales Elementary School, stated of her pastel drawing inspired by the work of Georgia O'Keefe, "I worked really hard on it,

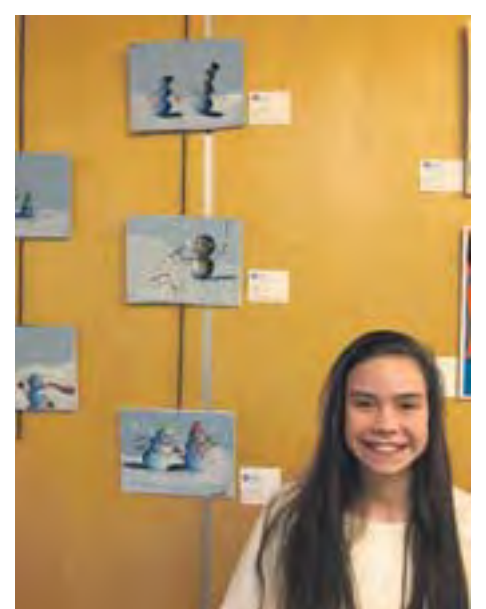
and now it's worth it to see it here."

Jake Pineda, a third-grader from Camino Pablo, had two pieces chosen by art teacher Larysa Larson and was happy to share his work with his family and community members who attended the opening reception on Feb. 4. Larson chose the art from the three Moraga elementary schools on a blind basis, with no artist names revealed until after the works had been selected. Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School art teacher Moose Wesler chose the pieces to be shown from the middle school.

"It's an amazing opportunity to highlight student art work," stated Moraga School District Superintendent Bruce Burns. "This is a desirable space with a long waiting list, so to dedicate it to student art is phenomenal."



Lily Jones, Stanley Middle School eighth-grader, shows her piece using layered paper and pastels to show atmospheric perspective.



Julia Olegar, a Stanley Middle School student, hopes to continue taking art in high school.

Robert Anke, Stanley Middle School art teacher, selected the works by Lafayette sixth- through eighth-graders, and parent volunteer Karen Moe of Lafayette Partners in Education hung about 50 pieces by artists from the middle school. Eighth-grader Julia Olegar said, "I like expressing myself with art. It's like a mirror of your personality." Her whimsical piece, a pastel drawing of a snowman lifting weights, showed her mastery of shading and blending and proper use of a light source.

Next on tap for the Lamorinda Arts Council is the annual High School Visual Arts Competition running Feb. 14 to March 14 in the same space at the Orinda Library. Organizer Denise Nomura explained that a panel of nine judges will award cash prizes totaling up to \$2,400 to many high school students.



Jake Pineda, a Camino Pablo third-grader, shows his work of sea life on an orange background.