

CHAPTER 2 EAT

Duck Ragu with Bay Leaves and Sage

Gabriel is blessed to have a wife who is not only beautiful, but also a great cook. The descriptions of her meals are mouthwatering and place you in the kitchen enjoying a glass of red wine.

In chapter 13, Chiarra and Gabriel quip back and forth about a bartender that has an obvious crush on her. She pours him a generous glass of Barbaresco while working on a rich duck ragu seasoned with bay leaves and sage. They sample the dish on a crostino as the aroma fills the kitchen.

Gabriel and his family moved to Venice from Israel upon his retirement. The city of Venice is well known for its architecture and the many canals and waterways throughout the city. Venice's middle eastern heritage is evident in its cuisine too - spices like cinnamon, saffron, and nutmeg are common in Venetian cooking.

Few dishes are more representative of the area than the classic Venetian duck ragu, which blends rich duck meat with red wine, and cinnamon. Pour yourself some wine and follow along.

Ingredients

- 2 duck breasts (skin off and cut into smaller pieces)
- 29 oz. chopped tomatoes
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 1 ½ cups of good red wine
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2/3 cup onion, finely chopped
- 2/3 cup carrot, finely chopped
- 2/3 cup celery, finely chopped
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- Sage leaves, finely chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Pappardelle pasta

Instructions

- 1.) In a large Dutch oven, heat olive oil and add the onion, carrot, and celery. Sauté over a medium heat until softened, then add the garlic and sage leaves.
- 2.) Add the duck breast. Cut all the pieces about the same size. The smaller, the quicker they will brown. Cook until golden, but do not overcook as the duck will continue cooking with the other ingredients.
- 3.) Deglaze the pot with your wine. Allow the alcohol to cook off, before adding your tomatoes, stock, cinnamon, bay leaves, salt, and pepper.
- 4.) Reduce the heat, place the lid on the pot and allow the mixture to gently simmer for 1 ½ to 2 hours, stirring occasionally. As noted above, if using smaller pieces of duck breast, it will take less time for the meat to become tender.
- 5.) Remove the lid from the pot - the sauce should have been reduced to a rich and thick ragu. Taste for seasoning and adjust as necessary. Remove the bay leaves.
- 6.) Boil water and follow directions to make the pappardelle. After draining, add the pasta to the ragu and mix.
- 7.) Finish the dish with a generous helping of *Parmigiano Reggiano* and enjoy!

CHAPTER 3

DRINK

Barbaresco

Barbaresco is one of Italy's top wines despite being in the shadow of the more famous Barolo. It is made from Nebbiolo grapes and many wine lovers consider it world class. Wine Enthusiast describes Barbaresco as "boasting enticing scents of violet, red berry, and earthy sensations like leather and underbrush. It is full bodied and intense." The somewhat complex wine pairs well with braised beef and several pasta dishes.

I purchased Rocca Felice Barbaresco from Total Wine and luckily it did not taste like underbrush 😊. It was not as heavy as I expected and was quite nice to sip. My bottle was a little over \$30 and there were only two others to choose from.

Burgundy glasses are ideal for Barbaresco. They have a wide bowl which allows the wine to breathe and release its aroma. The design enhances the flavor and makes for a more enjoyable drinking experience.

There is a misconception that big reds like Barbaresco need to be served at 70 degrees Fahrenheit. The proper temperature is 65 degrees. Remove from the wine fridge, open, and let it sit for 20-30 minutes or use a decanter to aerate.

Vi auguro il meglio.