

## Duck confit

*Of course you can buy this in tins (especially easy in southwest France), but the home-made version tends to be less salty and more delicious. While it does take some time, it is far from difficult. It will keep in the fridge for several weeks.*

*Serve with crispy fried potatoes or braised flageolet beans. I like to garnish with a drizzle of zingy green sauce made from lovage leaves whizzed up in olive oil and mixed with minced parsley, fried rosemary, crushed garlic, diced shallots, vinegar and chopped olives.*



### **Makes: as many as you want**

duck legs

salt

black peppercorns

allspice berries

cloves

dried bay leaves

dried thyme leaves

fresh thyme sprigs

strips of pared orange zest

duck fat, lots (and/or goose fat and/or olive oil)

1. Prepare the duck legs by scoring down to the bone all the way around just above the knee joint. (I'm assuming they've already had their feet removed.) This allows the skin and muscles to shrink back later when they're cooking, revealing the leg bone and making it easier to tidy it up if you should so wish. Also, if there are large globs of fat stuck to the sides, just under the skin, scrape them out. (You could render these down for some extra duck fat.)
2. Lay duck legs out on a baking sheet and season generously with an even sprinkling of salt. Turn the legs over and season the other side. Using a mortar and pestle, or an electric coffee bean grinder if you have one, grind a generous amount of black peppercorns with a few allspice berries, a couple of cloves, a few dried bay leaves and a large pinch of dried thyme if you have it. The ratio is up to you, and the quantity depends on the number of duck legs you have. Now season the duck legs again on both sides with a light sprinkling of the pepper mix.



3. Layer the seasoned duck legs in a container with a few fresh thyme sprigs and strips of orange zest tucked in. Cover and leave in the fridge for 24-48 hours.
4. Nestle duck legs in a large pot big enough to hold them all in several layers. Pour over fat until they are all covered. Bring up to a simmer, then reduce to the barest little blip of a simmer and cook until the duck is tender, probably 2 to 4 hours at least. To test, stick a wooden skewer into a leg and lift it up. If the leg immediately slides off, it is done. If it sticks to the skewer, it needs longer. Always test several.
5. Let duck legs cool in the fat. When cool enough to handle, carefully remove legs without damaging them and nestle them snugly and neatly in a container. Let fat come to a complete standstill, then carefully pour it over the duck legs, leaving behind any meaty, watery residue at the bottom of the pot. Make sure the legs are completely submerged by the fat. Store in the fridge for at least a week and preferably several.
6. To serve: Place container in a warm place so that the fat liquefies. Carefully remove legs without damaging them and let excess fat drain off. At this point you can rub off the unsightly skin and gristle around the knee joint if you wish, so that the protruding leg bones look neat. Place on a baking sheet, skin side up, and roast in a hot oven (220-240C) until hot through and the skin crispy, 10-20 minutes.