



Podcast Script
Season 1 / Episode 9 -
[Duck Breast / Controlling the Heat / Knowing the Basics]
Record Date: 11/11/24

Opening

What's up my chefs, today we talk crispy skin duck breast with blackberry gastrique, controlling the heat and knowing the basics. I am Mark Grigsby, your chef and guide through this experience and this... is the incrEDIBLE Discourse.

Introduction

Hello and welcome! I am Mark Grigsby, here again at The IncrEDIBLE Discourse and today we're cooking up somethin fancy.. Duck breast with blackberry gastrique.

But before we get that far I thought it would be nice to give an episodic update of what we've been up to here at the show. So I have decided to put the youtube channel on the back burner for the time being. I think between launching the show, building the site and social channels and then dedicating enough time to produce a quality show through these outlets it would've made the entire project mediocre. I don't have a production team yet as my wife and I do all of the production and promotion, but I am accepting applications.. So if you have experience in producing podcasts, love a high quality of life and absolutely no pay.. you may be a perfect fit with us!

My goal here for the show is always to provide our listeners with the best quality show here first. So for now, we're focusing on the podcast. I usually have several shows already written and recorded so I'm weeks ahead. This is how I make sure you get an episode when you're supposed to. You're welcome.

Now onto the duck...

Duck is one of my favorite proteins to cook and to eat. The breast, when executed correctly, is one of the tastiest things you'll ever eat. The skin is rendered to a crisp and then seared on the underside in its own fat. It's usually served medium rare and must be rested before you cut through it. The blackberry gastrique is a great component because it helps cut through the richness of the duck fat. It provides the sweet, tart and tang elements to the dish. Pair this with a nice Pinot Noir and boy you're in for somethin special.

Just so we're on the same page here..

A gastrique is a classic french sauce. You start with a caramelized sugar base, mix that with a wine vinegar and then infuse it with fruit and herbs that creates a nice balance of sweet and sour. I'd say that one of the most common gastriques is made with blackberry and is classically paired with duck.

Fall-centric dishes are this week's inspiration folks.

But as always... Before we get into the kitchen we always do our culinary history lesson.

So... let's pack our bags cause we're headed across the pond!

Duck breast, particularly Magret de Canard, has deep roots in French cuisine, but the use of duck goes waayyyyy back. Like ancient times way back. Ducks, both wild and domesticated, have been part of human diets for thousands of years. In ancient Egypt and in China, ducks were raised for their meat and eggs. The domestication of ducks began over 4,000 years ago primarily in east Asia.

Duck was also often consumed in medieval Europe, primarily by the wealthy, as it was considered game meat. The use of duck in feasts and elaborate banquets became common among the upper classes. In England, roasted duck was served with fruit sauces... see where we're going here. Blackberry gastrique anyone?

The culinary use of duck breast as we know it today like the Magret de Canard originates in Southwest France, especially around the Gascony region. Magret refers specifically to the breast of Moulard ducks which is a breed raised for foie gras. If you've never had foie before; it's something that you should have before you die. It's the harvested enlarged liver of a force fed duck. Now I'm not here trying to stir the pot and cause a controversy.. That's not what we do here on the InCrEDIBLE Discourse, but I will say it is delicious. I used to work in a really high end fine dining restaurant where they did a prix fixe menu that featured a different accompaniment and dish for a seared foie every single night. Anyway, I'll have to do an entire whole other show about it... I'm veering farther and farther away from today's featured ingredient.. The duck breast.

Ok, back on track...

Duck breast became popular in the 20th century, shout out to Chef Andre Daguin, who first seared the breast to medium rare, presenting a more tender and more rich flavored piece compared to the previously common methods of roasting the whole bird. French cuisine is known for its precision and respect for ingredients, and duck breast became a culinary centerpiece, typically served with fruit-based sauces like orange or blackberry gastrique.

In modern times, duck breast has become a favored dish in fine dining and contemporary cuisines across the world. The method of preparing duck breast with crispy skin and tender,

medium rare meat has spread far beyond France with chefs in various countries adapting it to their own local flavors and techniques.

French cuisine had a pretty big impact on American cooking, especially after the early 20th century with the rise of fine dining restaurants in major cities like New York and Chicago. Chefs trained in France or had classical French training which contributed to bringing duck to the spotlight in the USA. As farm-to-table started gaining popularity in the late 90s and early 2000s, American chefs began experimenting more with duck. Duck farms, especially those raising Moulard and Pekin ducks became more and more common. Before New York banned foie production in 2019, The Hudson Valley played a significant role in popularizing magret duck breast as the same ducks used for foie were also used for their prized breast meat. Duck breast began appearing more frequently in farm-to-table concepts and fine dining settings paired with seasonal and local ingredients in dishes that reflected the American culinary landscape's shift toward sustainability and creativity. Chefs like Thomas Keller and Jean-Georges Vongerichten helped popularize duck breast as part of modern American menus, oftentimes with a French or Asian influence.

All this talking about duck has made me super hungry so I think it's time we get in the kitchen and get it.

Topic 1 - Crispy Skin Duck Breast with Blackberry Gastrique

Yield: 1 portions

Ahhh yeahhh one of my favorite parts of the show. The cooking part.

This is a pretty simple technique, but does take a few tries to master. If you're in a restaurant, my suggestion is to render the duck breast skin before hand, chill them and then cook them as you get the ticket. The reason I say this is because the rendering process takes time... like 10 minutes so unless you're in a fine dining setting and have that time, you're gonna need to find ways to save yourself a minute. This is how you do it.. Another pro tip from yours truly. Again.. You're fucking welcome.

Let's talk about the equipment you're gonna need to make this dish. You're gonna need a few simple items that you should already have by now... but if you don't my guy Jeff at Amazon will bring it to your house on the 2 day.

This episode is brought to you by Ama... just playing. Haha.

Equipment:

Anyway.... Let's start with your cooking equipment.

We're gonna need a stainless steel saute pan and the size doesn't really matter for this dish because we're only going to make 1 duck breast. Obviously if you're going to feed more than yourself you need to adjust the size to accommodate. You're also going to need a very small 1qt

saucepan, we're going to use this for the gastrique... again we're making 1 portion on the show that's why we're going with smaller equipment today. Regardless you should have an assortment of different pans, pots and sizes so you're versatile in your kitchen.

Next you're going to need a chinois or a fine mesh strainer. This piece is also for the gastrique. We need to strain it because blackberries have a shit ton of seeds and they ain't very palatable. The rest of the equipment is all smallwares.. Tongs, measuring spoons, whisk, paring knife and chef's spoon.

Pretty easy stuff so far right? Stay with me my young apprentices. Let's talk ingredients.

Ingredients:

Today's shopping list will be an example of a pretty elegant dish that doesn't require a load of ingredients. Let's see what we're working with.

Obviously you need a duck breast. I'd say somewhere between 6 and 8oz and must have the skin on.

Now for the blackberry gastrique...

1/4C fresh blackberries
1T balsamic vinegar
1T red wine vinegar
1T port wine
2T granulated white sugar
1T water
1/4ea shallot, finely chopped
1/2ea fresh rosemary sprig, just the leaves
And a 1/2t of whole butter.

At the end we're going to taste it for salt, so you'll need this handy as well.

And that's it. Now if you can't find duck breast in your grocery stores my home chefs, they usually sell the duck whole frozen in the meat section. It's not super common in miami to see the duck already butchered in the grocery store so you may have get your hands dirty here... and if you can't find blackberries or you don't like them you could easily substitute blueberry in this recipe as well.

Method:

Let's start with the blackberry gastrique first. This will hold for a while and takes a little time to complete.

I'm going to start with the small 1qt saucepot and I'm going to add the sugar and water into it. I'm going to heat this to medium heat and dissolve the sugar and cook it until it turns an amberish color. I'm going to swirl the mixture around occasionally to prevent it from burning. Once I reach that amber color I'm looking for, I'm going to add both vinegars and the port wine and stir it to incorporate well. I'm going to leave this on the heat for about a minute and heat it up to a bare simmer. Then I add my blackberries and rosemary and then I bring this up to a true simmer. Now we're going to simmer this and reduce it for about 10 minutes allowing the berries to soften and the sauce to thicken. When the berries soften I'm going to take my chef's spoon and mash these berries. Cook this for another minute or so and then I'm going to strain it through the chinois, plunging it to make sure I get every bit of juice out. Now I'm going to give my saucepot a little wipe to clean it and make sure there are no seeds or pulp left in it. Then I'm going to add that blackberry juice mixture back to the little pot and bring it back to medium heat and a simmer. Reduce this for about a minute and then remove from the heat and whisk in that knob of butter until it has completely melted. This will provide a little shimmer and gloss to the sauce. I'm going to taste it for salt and add it if necessary. And that's that for the sauce, reserve until the duck breast is done.

Now it's time for the star of the dish.. The duck.

This is a really easy process. First I'm going to take a paper towel and I'm going to pat dry the duck on all sides and kinda soak up all the juice, especially on the skin. We want that skin to be super crispy so we need it dry.

Next I'm going to take that paring knife or a chef knife and I'm going to score the skin of this breast. In culinary terms, scoring refers to making shallow cuts or slashes on the surface of food with a sharp knife. This technique is used to enhance both the appearance and cooking process of the food. It promotes even cooking by helping thicker cuts of meat cook more evenly allowing the heat to penetrate better. When you're cooking duck breast that has a thick and fatty skin, scoring allows it to render easier, resulting in a crispy texture.

So.. after I score the skin I'm gonna season it well with kosher salt and coarse black pepper.

Now for the good part.

Heat the stainless steel pan on medium-low heat and place the breast skin side down in the cold pan.

Here's a pro tip.. If you wait until the pan is too hot, you'll sear the skin and it'll be fatty and chewy. You gotta render the skin to crisp it.

The rendering process will take about 6-10 minutes depending on just how fatty the skin is on your piece. I'm going to check it frequently and adjust the heat as needed to make sure that it renders all the way through and doesn't cook too quickly. The pan will start to pool with fat, just like when we render bacon. I'm gonna spoon some of this fat out of the pan and into a

container. This is legit one of the best fats to cook with. It has a high smoke point and has such a great flavor. I like to collect this fat and freeze it so I can use it for whatever I want later.

Anyway.. Once the skin is crispy, I'm going to flip the breast over and sear the bottom side for about 2 minutes. I'm going to serve this medium-rare so it should temp to about 130 degrees. I'm going to take it out of the pan and rest it for about 5 minutes and let all those juices reconstitute. It's very important to rest the breast so it doesn't dry out. Now I'm going to take my sharpest chefs knife and I'm going to slice this being super careful not to pull the skin off.

Now I center plate it and spoon some of that beautiful blackberry gastrique over it. Now if you wanted to make other components with this dish to make it more of a complete dish, this one pairs well with a lot of shit. Roasted root vegetables, mashed potatoes, rice, farro, brussel sprouts.. All of these fall-ish type accompaniments are really good options with this protein and sauce.

As always, send me photos of your work or send me messages on how you did with this dish on theincrediblediscourse.com. All of the recipes we've done so far are on there for your reference. Remember that we're here to get you where you wanna go, so reach out and we'll respond. And if you haven't visited us at theincrediblediscourse.com.. Get your ass over there. Chef says so. Always do what your chef tells you to do.

Topic 2 - Controlling The Heat

Controlling the heat is a very important skill for chefs both amateur and professional. Not everything is cooked on high heat and there are great reasons for it.

First is flavor development. Different heat levels bring out different flavors of ingredients. Searing on high heat creates a savory crust through the Maillard reaction, while lower heat preserves more delicate flavors.

Here's an example.. Say you're going to sear a filet. You would need high heat and fat so that you could get that nice crust all the way around. This locks the flavor in and gives you a color on the outside. Remember color means flavor. And no color doesn't mean black. If you don't use high heat in this situation the meat would release its juices and you would end up boiling it rather than searing it. Now on the flip side, let's say you're reducing a sauce... if you use high heat it's very possible that you could A. over reduce the sauce; and then you have a thick mess that you either have to try and fix or you have to start over.. Or B. you scorch the sauce and then you're really fucked. Controlling the heat means knowing the situation you're in and knowing what it is you need to do.

Texture control is the next element that heat impacts and it impacts it significantly. For instance, proteins in meat tighten and become firmer as they cook, but overcooking it can and will make them tough. Proper heat levels also allow vegetables to be tender crisp rather than mushy or

raw; and if you have the heat too high with vegetables you'll burn the outside and they'll still be raw on the inside.

Food safety is a big one with heat control. You need a certain temperature to kill harmful bacteria or pathogens. You can't eat chicken raw because the risk of getting sick is very high. Knowing your heat allows you to cook the chicken so that it doesn't burn on the outside, but still cooks all the way through on the inside. It is extremely important for you to know and understand internal cooking temperatures. It's the difference between serving someone a great meal and potentially killing them.

Don't kill people; you're a chef, not a hitman.

Proper heat levels can bring out visually appealing colors, like golden brown crusts in your hashbrowns or vibrant colored vegetables. Poor heat control can lead to burning or undercooking. And green vegetables don't like heat like that. If you cook them too long at too high of a heat, or you blanch them for too long in boiling water and you don't shock them in an ice bath, they turn gray and mushy and gross. Vegetables are supposed to be bright and vibrant. That's what makes them appetizing. Not to mention it destroys all the vitamins, minerals and nutrients inside. So now you're serving a very visually unappealing item that does absolutely nothing for your body.. Double whammy.

Lastly.. Consistency and even cooking. Keeping the heat consistent prevents food from cooking unevenly, ensuring the entire dish reaches the correct doneness simultaneously. No one likes eating a dish where they have one mushy carrot and the next is crunchy and raw. You should have contrasting textures, yes.. But this ain't what they're talking about. You want to make sure that you have consistency throughout the entire dish.. In every component.

Remember when I said that cooking is an accumulation of many things happening at the same time? The part where I said "prepared well through technique" .. this is what I'm talking about! This is a huge component of technique! And the only way you get good at mastering the heat is by practice.. I think that's another show from the past.. check that out if you haven't already.

You see? You should subscribe to this podcast.. It teaches you a whole bunch of shit... you know like a discourse.. But this one is edible.. It's fucking INCREDIBLE.

Alright enough of that. Moving on.

Topic 3 - Knowing The Basics and Taking The Time To Master Them

This next topic is for my professional chefs...

Well I guess it could be for my homies too. Like how I did that? My Homies.. Like my home chefs...

Anyhow..

Knowing the basics.. AND taking the time to master them. Super important.

Knowing the basics gives you a foundation that you can expand on.. Many techniques and recipes build from other techniques and recipes; But you can't run before you can crawl. It takes years to master technique, develop your palate and understand AND expand flavors and their prospective combinations.

Understand consistency and control. Skills like knife handling, measuring and controlling heat allow you to achieve consistent results. When you know the essentials, you're less likely to over or undercook, making your meals reliably tasty. And you'd be surprised how many people don't know how to use a measuring cup or spoon. It's actually incredible. I've run into too many people who don't know the difference between a tablespoon and a teaspoon. And you can't get much more basic than that.

If you don't know the difference between a tablespoon and a teaspoon; we can't work together for long. That indicates that there's some bigger shit you don't know and I don't have time for that.

Efficiency and safety. Basic skills like how to chop vegetables correctly or how to handle hot pans safely, makes cooking faster and safer. These skills minimize waste, reduce accidents and help you with more precision. And look.. Accidents happen.. That's life. But you're in a much better position if you know how to reduce or avoid them.

Understand flavor and techniques. Basic shit like seasoning.. Balancing flavors.. Learning the primary cooking techniques.. These things enable you to prepare a wide variety of dishes because you have more in your wheelhouse to work with. With this solid foundation, you are more apt to explore and adapt more complex recipes with a higher success rate. Salt and pepper can be a double edged sword. Know how to use this basic ass shit. It makes your fucking food taste good, but it shouldn't be the centerpiece of flavor. And how many of my new or young chefs here know all of the primary cooking techniques? If you don't.. Don't you dare wait.. Right after you finish listening to this show, you're gonna google that shit and figure it out. I shouldn't have to do a show on that.. Cmon.

Mastering the basics teaches you to make smart substitutions, how to use ingredients creatively and how to adapt recipes to your taste or dietary needs. Ever went to the store to get everything you need to make a recipe.. Only to get home and have forgotten a key ingredient? Well being savvy with what you have on hand could save your life in this situation.

Ok maybe not save your life, but at least save your ass from another trip to the grocery.. Or even worse if you're in a restaurant and the truck has already been delivered and you realize you didn't order a component.. That's the fucking worst.. But if you know how to make smart substitutions.. You could set yourself up to look like a fucking genius.

Knowing the basics increases your confidence too. Everyone gets the jitters when they're unsure of what they're doing. It's only natural. When you're comfortable with the fundamentals, cooking feels less intimidating and you can tackle more challenging recipes with ease. Confidence in basic skills makes you more willing to experiment and try new things. And that's when the real fun gets going. When you have sound fundamentals during the experimentation process, you have a lot less variables to account for.. Who's out there saying "this combination would've been explosive if i knew how to sear properly." no one, that's who. Especially not you.. Cause you listen to the incredible discourse and chef told you not to do dumb things.

Advanced techniques and complex recipes are built on basic skills. By learning the essentials, you create a foundation that enables you to try new recipes, cook more intuitively and develop your own style in the kitchen. You can't have your own fighting style if your ass doesn't know how to fight in the first place. You'd be getting your ass kicked a lot. Same in the kitchen. If you struggle with the basics, you'll never develop. Fundamentals, is what it's all about.

When it all comes down to it, it's about respecting what we do. Be fucking respectful enough to thoroughly learn the basics. Write things down, study and be patient. Read some books. Our friends at amazon have an enormous library of cookbooks.... Be interested. It's a process.. Enjoy the journey and learn every day that you're in that kitchen. When I was up and coming, I used to work the 12 hours days, go home and shower and sit on the couch and read.. Research and write. I was obsessed with the craft. I wanted to be the best. I lived and breathed it because I had such a hunger to take over the world. Starts with the mentality.. Do you wanna be the best? Do you have that hunger? When you're tired and beat up, do you still want to be the best? Those are the moments that define who you are in the kitchen. Do some soul searching.

Outro

Now go make yourself some duck and let me know how you do. I hope you get the skin just right and don't forget to rest it.. You have to fucking rest it or it'll suck. And think about what I said about controlling the heat and knowing the basics. These are fundamental components of a successful chef home or pro. 1% better than today, tomorrow guys.

Like this episode and subscribe so you don't miss the next episode.. I'm trying to publish a show every week for you all so you can listen to me rant about chef stuff.

And if you want to support the show there's a link in the description and be sure to leave me 5 stars on spotify or a great review wherever you're listening to this.

Visit us at theincrediblediscourse.com as well as all of our social platforms. I appreciate your time as always. I'm Mark Grigsby and you've just been put through The IncrEDIBLE Discourse. Till next time... cue the theme music.