

Cider-Braised Duck Legs with Leeks, Prunes and Apple

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Recipe source: Robin Mather for [Chicago Tribune](http://ChicagoTribune.com)

Prep: 30-40 minutes

Cook: 2 hours, 40 minutes

Makes: 4 servings



INGREDIENTS:

- 4 large duck legs, about 12 ounces each, or 6 smaller ones
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 2/3 cups apple cider, divided use
- 2 medium leeks, white and tender green parts chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1 rib celery, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 stems fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup pitted prunes
- 2 sweet-tart apples, such as Fuji or Braeburn, cored, chopped into ½-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons good quality apple brandy, such as Calvados
- Polenta, gnocchi or spaetzle

DIRECTIONS:

- Trim excess fat from duck legs and reserve for another use. Prick the skin on the legs all over with a fork, which will help the legs render their fat. Season the legs generously with salt and pepper.
- Heat a large Dutch oven over medium heat. When the pan is hot, add the duck legs and cook on each side until browned, working in batches if necessary. Remove duck legs and set aside. Pour off all but 1 tablespoon fat.
- Deglaze the Dutch oven with about 2/3 cup of the cider. Add leeks, carrot, celery and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, until vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes.
- Return duck legs to Dutch oven. Add remaining cider, thyme, bay leaves, cinnamon, cloves and chicken stock. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover the Dutch oven and simmer until duck legs are extremely tender, about 2 hours.
- At this point, the braise may be cooled and refrigerated for up to two days.
- At serving time, skim as much fat as possible from the Dutch oven, then remove the duck legs from the braising liquid. Place the Dutch oven on medium heat and bring to a merry simmer.
- Stir in the prunes, apples and brandy; simmer while you strip the meat from the duck legs, 8 to 10 minutes. (Use your fingers to tear the duck meat into bite-size pieces.) Discard the skin and the bones, if you're not saving the bones for stock.
- Return duck meat to the Dutch oven to warm, reducing the heat if necessary, so that it doesn't boil away.
- Follow package instructions for cooking the polenta, gnocchi or spaetzle. When it's done, drain it and portion it among four plates or bowls. Divide the duck among the four plates or bowls and serve immediately.