



Bring in the cold weather with this hearty, healthy spin on duck

寒冷的冬日，还有什么比酒酿鸭的香味更诱人的？

Walk down your average Beijing street and you're sure to find an abundance of neon-lit restaurants draped with lines of waxy ducks waiting to be roasted. As even Chinese food neophytes know, duck is the star of one of the China's best-known dishes—Beijing Roast Duck (北京烤鸭 *siang stoou*), known archaically in English-

speaking countries as Peking Duck.

Though it isn't known for its health properties—indeed, the crisp skin and slick layer of fat means that roast duck is an occasional delicacy for many—duck isn't necessarily an indulgence that will have you reaching for the cholesterol medication. There are plenty of ways to cook a duck, and one of the best ones for chilly fall weather is the mouthful-of-a-dish,



HUTONG COOKING CLASSES

The World of Chinese is teaming up with Beijing cultural center, The Hutong, to bring you delicious dishes along with cultural enrichment. Chef Sue will be teaching recipes from our *Chi Le Ma* column while telling the fascinating stories behind the dishes. Find out more at www.theworldofchinese.com.

"fermented glutinous rice steamed duck" (酒酿鸭 *jiǔniàng yā*), or more simply, rice wine duck.

The dish was immortalized in the seminal work "A Dream of Red Mansions" (sometimes also translated as "The Dream of the Red Chamber"), one of China's Four Great Classical Novels. Written in the 18th and 19th centuries, the novel focuses on two 18th-century aristocratic clans, and features an encyclopedic catalogue of dishes, paired with mouthwatering vividness. The rice wine duck is one of the many dishes used to demonstrate the opulence of the era's aristocratic lifestyle.

Literary merit aside, the dish is renowned throughout China for its health benefits. Duck skin is said to promote skin cell growth, imparting skin with a smooth healthy hue, while the fermented rice strengthens and purifies the blood. Though nutritionists might balk at excess consumption of duck fat, the meat is an excellent source of iron, selenium and niacin, and steaming allows some of the excess fat to drip away prior to consumption. This doesn't mean you have to waste the fat; thrifty cooks can reserve the render for use in another dish like fried rice or congee. The health-conscious can also trim the excess fat from the bird prior to cooking.

The health benefits don't stop with the duck, however. Goji berries (宁夏枸杞, *wēigō qǐdǒu*) in recent years have gained traction as a holistic food in the West, and are sure to be a kicker for those seeking a power-packed punch of nutrients. Eyesight improvement,

liver protection, a boost in sexual function and fertility as well as overall longevity—what's not to like?

Fermented glutinous rice (酒酿 *jiǔniàng*) and the wine made from it have also long been associated with health in China. "In some areas in Southern China, fermented rice wine is first used to nourish new mothers in the first month after giving birth," says Chef Sue Zhou. "So it's very nutritious."

Dating back to the Shang Dynasty (1600BC-1046BC), the thick milky liquid boasts a low alcohol content as well as a light sweet taste that complements the strong flavor of duck. "The rice wine removes the gaminess of the duck, giving it a sweet flavor and making the duck (which is quite fatty) easier to digest."

While the cooking process might seem daunting, pre-seasoning is vital to ensure depth to the dish, as duck is a meat that works best with robust, hearty flavors. Steaming the duck until tender ensures an unctuous melting texture to the flesh, and the addition of glutinous rice wine with its tequila-tasting rice grains in the final ten minutes of steaming adds depth and complexity to the dish. If you don't have a steamer, you can improvise one by placing a metal rack over a wok full of steaming water, ensuring that the duck doesn't touch the water. A tight lid and seal using aluminum foil will ensure the greater majority of the steam stays inside the wok. Given the bigness of duck, when serving more than three people you might consider doubling the recipe or serving it with several sides. —CATHERINE CHAN (陈精美)

It's What's Inside That Counts



SKIN

Duck skin is not only rumored to promote skin-cell growth, it's full of monounsaturated fats—the kind of “good fat” found in olive oil that raises good cholesterol. Duck skin also contains high levels of linoleic acid, which is essential for healthy hair and boosting your body's healing abilities.



GOJI BERRIES

Also known as the Chinese wolfberry, red Goji berries are mainly produced in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Dried Goji berries are often steeped with chrysanthemum flowers and/or red jujubes to make herbal tea. The berries are also added to rice congee and soups.



GLUTINOUS RICE WINE

Glutinous rice wine has a strong fragrance and is rich in nutrients. The wine is popular both as a drink and as an ingredient for cooking. In winter, people usually drink it warm; in summer, they add ice. Some even mix it with soda to make a “glutinous spritzer.” When cooking meat adding rice wine can reduce the gamey taste and add a bit of zest.



MEAT

Duck meat is rich in vitamins B and E, which help promote healthy hair and skin, increase metabolism and boost immunity. The meat also contains minerals such as iron, selenium and niacin, which are key for preventing cell damage and maintaining the heart, stomach and kidneys. According to TCM, it also helps treat coughing and phlegm.



THE PERFECT DUCK

Depending on how you are cooking your duck, you either want tough or tender meat. For stewing you want your duck tough, recognizable by its rough skin. Tender ducks have smoother skin. Use them for steaming, stir-frying and roasting. Don't forget to blanch in boiling water to remove the gamey flavor.

4 SPRING ONIONS
香葱 xiāngcōng

1 WHOLE DUCK
整鸭 zhěngyā

3 STAR ANISE
八角 bājiǎo

40g GINGER
姜 jiāng

800ml STICKY RICE WINE
containing rice
糯米酒 nuòmǐjiǔ

4 TABLESPOONS
of cooking wine
料酒 liáojiǔ

1 TEASPOON
of salt
盐 yán

2 TABLESPOONS
of goji berries
枸杞 gōuji



酒
酿
鸭

Rice Wine Duck

(RECIPE SERVES 3)



1



2



3



4

I

Trim excess fat from duck. Split duck on one side and press down to flatten. Wash the duck and blanch in boiling water for one minute. Remove from water and let cool.

2

To make marinade, mix cooking wine with 20g sliced ginger, star anise, salt and half of the spring onion cut into half-centimeter pieces. Rub marinade into the duck flesh and cavity and leave for 30 min.

3

Remove star anise from the marinade and replace the ginger and spring onions. Add the Goji berries and 300ml of the sticky rice wine, then place the whole plate on your steaming rack. Steam for 30 min.

4

Add the remaining wine with rice and steam for another 15 min. When juices run clear, the duck is done. Finish with a sprinkling of salt to taste and garnish with chopped spring onions.



Learn how to make more dishes in Chef Sue's regional cuisine series at the Hutong, Beijing's premiere cultural center