



Sautéed Duck Breast with Green Peppercorn and Morel Cream Sauce

Morilles à la crème is a classic French preparation found in Périgord and Lyon. Here we update the sauce by adding tangy pickled green peppercorns, and pairing the sauce with a simple sautéed magret de canard. The magret is a portion of the breast of the duck with the skin and underlying layer of fat still intact. The Barbary duck is traditionally fattened for foie gras, and the breasts make for an especially rich and tasty dish. Our own [Hudson Valley producers](#) ship exceptional duck breasts for use in this dish. Despite the fancy sounding names, this dish is fairly straightforward and will really impress your guests.

4 servings

Ingredients

4 6-8 ounce boneless duck breasts, skin intact (or 2 larger duck breasts, 8 ounces per person)
2 tablespoons unsalted butter or goose fat
Kosher salt and pepper

For the sauce:

8 ounces fresh morels, or 2 ounces dried morels
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 shallot, finely minced
1 tablespoon green peppercorns plus 1 tablespoon of brine
¼ cup dry white wine
¾ cup heavy cream
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Equipment

2 heavy-bottomed stainless steel sauté pans.

Preparation

Sauté the duck breasts:

Lightly season the duck breasts with salt and pepper. In a heavy bottomed sauté pan, melt the butter or heat the goose fat over medium high heat, and brown the duck breasts with the skin side down. You may want to lightly score the skin to help render the fat, being careful not to cut all the way through to the flesh. Once they are golden brown and the skin has crisped nicely, turn them over and reduce the heat, cooking the other side. Cook for an additional 12-15 minutes, or until done. Tent with foil and keep warm in a 200° F oven while you prepare the sauce.

[Chef's Note: The duck breasts should register 155-160° F on a meat thermometer inserted in to the thickest part of the meat. Be sure to insert the thermometer between the skin and flesh so as not to pierce the skin. The duck will continue to cook while resting in the warm oven, so be careful not to overcook.]

Prepare the sauce:

Clean the morels. If using dried morels, first rehydrate them in ¾ cup hot water. Soak for 20 minutes, then drain and follow the instructions for fresh morels. If using fresh morels, wash them under running water and dry thoroughly with paper towels.

[Chef's Note: Because of their hollow body and distinctive arched cap, morels are the perfect hiding place for little critters of the forest, who love morels as much as we do. It's important to clean them thoroughly to avoid adding any unwanted additional "protein" to the meal. If soaking dried morels, do

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so before preparing the duck breasts, so as not to throw off the timing of the dish. You can drain the soaking liquid using a coffee filter to remove the grit, and use this flavorful liquid to enrich a stock or sauce.]

If the morels are large, cut them in half. If they are small, leave them whole.

Use 1 tablespoon of the rendered cooking fat from the duck breasts, or melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a separate sauté pan over medium heat and add the minced shallots and morels, along with salt and pepper, to taste. Sauté for a few minutes until the shallots are translucent and the morels begin to soften, then add the lemon juice, white wine, green peppercorns and their brine (replace 1 tablespoon of liquid with some soaking liquid, if using reconstituted morels), and braise the morels for about 5 minutes. Add the heavy cream to the pan and reduce until the sauce thickens. Remove from the heat and mount the sauce with additional cold butter, if necessary, and adjust for seasoning with salt and pepper, to taste.

Service

Remove the duck breasts from the oven and place on warmed plates. Spoon the sauce over the duck breasts, being sure to distribute the morels and peppercorns evenly amongst the plates. Serve immediately.

[Chef's Note: This dish would be lovely with steamed baby vegetables.]

Variations

The morels in cream can be used to sauce any meat: veal scallopine, pork loin, beef tenderloin, or chicken breast.

The sauce can also be combined with mixed sautéed vegetables, and used to fill a *vol-au-vent* shell. This is known as a vegetable *jalousie*. See our recipe for [Minted Pea Purée](#) for the technique for making a puff pastry shell.

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