

# Wine Spectator

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## Peppery Duck Steaks for the Holidays

Whether it's a cocktail party or intimate dinner, this simple, thoughtful dish will satisfy your guests

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The holiday entertaining season is in full swing and will remain so for the next few weeks. Whether you're hosting an all-holiday open house, a reunion of old friends, a Hanukkah celebration, Christmas dinner or a New Year's bash, a duck dish—like the peppery duck steaks with parsley salad from veteran cook and award-winning author David Tanis' latest book, *One Good Dish*—is special occasion-worthy without being too much work to source or cook.

The recipe is written as a main course, but Tanis notes, "This is a dish that can take many forms; it's very versatile in a holiday setting. If you're doing stand-up drinks and snacks, make miniature one-bite duck sandwiches with toasted baguette or ciabatta. As a first course, combine slices of duck with shaved fennel or persimmon or curly endive (or all three). It's a good main course for a crowd, because it's just as easy to cook 3 or 4 breasts as it is one. They can rest for as long as half an hour before carving, so you can serve the duck hot or at room temperature."

Tanis suggests serving the dish with a chard gratin, potato galette or Moroccan-spiced carrots; recipes for all these sides also appear in *One Good Dish*. Syrah makes a fine wine accompaniment, and below we have provided a list of recently rated selections from Australia, Chile, France, Italy and the United States. Alternatively, Tanis says that the garlicky parsley salad allows the dish to stand up to California Zinfandel or Malbec from Argentina.

### Peppery Duck Steaks With Parsley Salad

Excerpted from *One Good Dish* by David Tanis (Artisan Books). Copyright © 2013. Photographs by Gentl & Hyers.

The method below will yield medium-rare meat. Tanis says, "This is the traditional French way to cook duck or squab, what is called *rosé*, pink, and it is delicious. It looks and tastes like a steak on the rare side. It cooks like a steak, too. To see if it's done, look for juices beginning to show on the surface. Because it is so lean, once the breast meat goes past medium rare, it is apt to get a bit dry, but there is some leeway. Seasoning it well in advance of cooking will also help it maintain juiciness."

- 1 Muscovy duck breast (about 1 pound)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 garlic cloves, smashed to a paste, with a little salt
- 1 tablespoon coarsely crushed peppercorns
- Parsley salad (recipe follows)

1. With a sharp knife, remove the tenderloin from the underside of the duck breast and reserve for another purpose. (Tanis suggests searing it and eating it as a "cook's treat," or using a number of tenderloins, chopped, in a spicy stir-fry.) Trim any ragged bits or gristle. Turn the breast over and trim any excess fat from the edges. Score the



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*This dish is easily adapted from a main course into a cocktail-party snack or a first course with greens.*

### Other Helpful Information:

[Cooking at Home with Daniel Boulud for the Holidays](#)

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skin by making shallow diagonal cuts, 1/2 inch apart, in one direction and then repeating in the other direction, creating a diamond pattern.

2. Season on both sides with the salt, then massage with the garlic paste. Press the crushed peppercorns evenly over both sides. Put the duck on a platter and leave to marinate for at least 1 hour at room temperature, or refrigerate overnight (if the latter, bring to room temperature before cooking).

3. Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. After 5 minutes, when the pan is hot, carefully add the duck breast skin side down and let it begin to sizzle. Using tongs, check to see that the skin is not browning too quickly, and reduce the heat as necessary. Be careful: The duck breast will render a fair amount of hot fat. The skin should be golden and crisp after 6 or 7 minutes. Turn the breast over and cook for 2 minutes more. Remove to a carving board and let rest for 10 minutes. (When the rendered duck fat has cooled a bit, strain into a jar and save for future use). Cut at an angle into 1/4-inch-thick slices and arrange on a platter. Top with the parsley salad and serve. *Serves 2 to 4.*

### **Parsley Salad**

- 1 large bunch flat-leaf parsley
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- Salt and pepper
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- A chunk of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese for shaving (optional)

Pick the parsley leaves from the stems—you want about 2 cups. Wash and gently dry with a clean towel. In a small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, salt and pepper to taste, garlic and olive oil. The parsley leaves must be dressed at the very last minute. Season with a sprinkle of salt, then toss with the dressing to coat lightly and serve in a fluffy pile. Garnish with shavings of Parmesan, if desired.

### **RECOMMENDED SHIRAZ AND SYRAH**

**Note:** The following list is a selection of outstanding and very good wines from recently rated releases. More wines can be found in our [Wine Ratings Search](#).

#### **MONTGRAS Syrah Colchagua Valley Antu Ninquén 2012 Score: 91 | \$19**

Ripe and rich, with smoky notes to the dried raspberry and dark plum flavors. Meat accents linger on the cream- and chocolate-filled finish. A harmonious style that finely balances the fruit and savory components. Drink now through 2019. 7,200 cases made. —*K.M.*

#### **PENFOLDS Shiraz South Australia Kalimna Bin 28 2012 Score: 91 | \$30**

Fresh and vibrant, with juicy blackberry and plum fruit, playing against tart balance and finishing with intensity. A pleasant mineral note adds to the aftertaste. Drink now through 2025. 7,040 cases imported. —*H.S.*

#### **CHARLES SMITH Syrah Columbia Valley Boom Boom! 2013 Score: 90 | \$15**

Fresh, lively and sleek, with red berry, raspberry and spice box flavors in a neat package, lingering expressively. Drink now through 2017. 34,740 cases made. —*H.S.*

#### **JACOB'S CREEK Shiraz Barossa Reserve 2012 Score: 89 | \$13**

Dark and polished, with spice and saffras notes weaving through the blackberry and black olive flavors, finishing with restraint. Drink now through 2018. 50,000 cases imported. —*H.S.*

#### **CUPCAKE Shiraz Barossa 2012 Score: 88 | \$11**

Supple, expressive and well-balanced, showing cherry and spice flavors without density, offering hints of jasmine and cream as the finish lingers. Drink now. 22,509 cases made. —*H.S.*

#### **FOUR SISTERS Shiraz Central Victoria 2012 Score: 88 | \$14**

Red pepper and tobacco overtones weave through the lean core of blackberry and licorice flavors, focusing the lingering finish on a mix of savory and fresh elements. Drink now through 2016. 10,000 cases made. —*H.S.*

#### **THOMAS GOSS Shiraz McLaren Vale 2012 Score: 88 | \$17**

Ripe, with blackberry and plum fruit, this is meaty in texture and flavor, finishing polished and expressive. Drink now through 2018. 7,500 cases made. —*H.S.*