

## Blueberry Gin Aperitif

- 4 bottles with stoppers or caps (reuse wine bottles with caps, or purchase bottles with stoppers)
- 4 c [blueberries](#), rinsed (wild are great, if you can wait until the summer, regular will do)
- 2 c sugar
- 8 strips lemon peel, 1" long (without the white pith)
- 2 lemons, supremed and chopped
- 1 40 oz bottle of [gin](#) (or vodka)
- 1 33 oz bottle of [blueberry juice](#) (the good stuff, from the market or the health food store)

Divide blueberries, sugar, peel and lemon flesh among 4 bottles. Pour an equal amount of blueberry juice into each bottle. Fill up the rest of the bottle with gin. Close the bottles and hide them in a dark place for several months, turning them from time to time. This aperitif may be used to dress up vanilla ice cream or to compliment lamb or duck.

## Duck Marinade

- 1 [duck](#) breast
- 1 T fresh lemon juice
- 1 t grated lemon zest
- 4 T blueberry gin
- 3 T blueberries from blueberry gin
- 2 T olive oil
- 1 shallot, very finely minced
- 1 sprig fresh thyme, just the leaves

- 1 T parsley, chopped fine
- 1 T brown sugar
- 1 T unsalted butter (or less)
- sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Combine the lemon juice, zest, oil, sugar, salt, pepper and aperitif in a small ceramic casserole, then add the berries, shallots, parsley and thyme. Cover and marinate the duck, skin side up, overnight. You've already waited 3 months for the Blueberry Gin. What's another night?

Remove the duck, pat dry, reserving the marinade, and transfer skin side down into a preheated heavy cast iron pan. Pampered Chef one works well as you can use the grill press.

Score the duck breast slightly in a crosshatch pattern, then cook it on very low heat for about 10 minutes, allowing the duck fat to melt as the skin gets crispy and browned. Pour off the fat into a small dish, retaining 1 tablespoon to sear all sides of the breast. Use tongs to hold it in position. Once browned, which takes about 6 more minutes, remove the breast to a plate.

Pour the marinade into the pan, adding some of the duck fat and a bit of butter. Simmer and stir for several minutes to evaporate the gin and cook the shallots. Return the duck to the freshly washed covered casserole to rest for 10 minutes before slicing. After slicing thinly on the diagonal, coat the duck with the marinade. You can judge by the colour if the duck needs a few more minutes in the oven. I believe that it's supposed to be enjoyed rare, but everyone is entitled to his or her own preferences.