

A still life photograph of a holiday meal. In the center, a roasted bird is served on a silver platter with a side of golden-brown fried items. To the left, a bottle of wine and a glass of red wine are visible. In the foreground, a glass bowl contains a fresh green salad with sliced meats. To the right, another roasted bird is served on a wooden platter with green and red apples. The background is dark, highlighting the food and drink.

GAME ON

These traditional birds capture the holiday spirit and offer a change of pace from turkey.

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PHOTOS BY PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

Nothing is quite as festive as a whole roasted bird for the holidays. While turkey is synonymous with Thanksgiving in the U.S., and a Christmas staple in the U.K., Europe offers a host of other bird-centric feasts.

Roasting wild game is a special way to honor the change of seasons, while fuller-flavored, darker meats like duck and goose have long been the centerpiece of European festivities. Let us tempt you away from turkey this year with these time-honored recipes from Alsace, Germany and Austria.

FOOD & PROP STYLING: MARIANA VELASQUEZ



Martinsgans

Throughout Austria and southern parts of Germany, goose is the traditional fare on St. Martin's Day, November 11. This harkens to medieval times, where a scarce food supply was supported by alternating periods of feast and fast aligned to the Christian calendar. Prolonged fasts like Lent and Advent would be preceded by one last rich, sustaining meal.

A stuffed St. Martin's goose (Martinsgans) would be the last big meal before Christmas. In Vogtsburg-Oberbergen, Germany, the Schwarzer Adler Winery and Restaurant holds special dinners around St. Martin's Day, served alongside its own wine.

Its version of Martinsgans features a deliciously fruity, aromatic stuffing that perfectly counters the rich meat. Goose meat is dark and dense, but it's not plentiful, so there won't be endless leftovers. Goose fat that renders during roasting can be strained and frozen. The fat will make delicious roast potatoes throughout winter.

Courtesy Schwarzer Adler Estate Hotel, Vogtsburg-Oberbergen, Germany

- 1 **7- to 8-pound goose with innards, preferably free-range**
- 3 **teaspoons salt**
- 1 **teaspoon finely ground white pepper**
- 1 **teaspoon finely chopped fresh marjoram**
- 1 **teaspoon finely chopped fresh mugwort (optional)**
- 1½ **pounds tart apples, like Granny Smith, peeled and finely diced**
- 1 **large onion, finely chopped**
- 8 **ounces bacon, finely chopped**
- 4 **ounces diced crustless white bread**
- 2 **eggs**
- 2 **tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley**

Martinsgans Side Dishes

Potato dumplings, made from cooked, riced potatoes mixed with flour, egg and seasonings. Shape into balls, or *knödel*, and simmer. Fry breadcrumbs in melted butter and sprinkle over knödel for a crunchy touch.

Red cabbage is a staple alongside goose. It can be sautéed in goose fat with onion, apples and a bay leaf for aroma. Goose stuffing is fairly aromatic, so no extra spice is needed.

- 1 **teaspoon fresh thyme leaves**

Finely grated zest of 1 lemon

Heart and liver of the goose, cleaned and finely chopped

- 1–2 **cups chicken stock**

- 1 **cup Pinot Noir**

- 1 **teaspoon corn starch**

Heat oven to 350°F. Pour cold water into bottom of roasting pan, and place rack in pan. Wash goose inside and out, and pat dry with paper towel. Mix 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper in small bowl. Season inside of goose generously with salt, pepper, marjoram and mugwort, if using.

In large bowl, combine apples, onion, bacon, white bread, eggs, parsley, thyme, lemon zest, goose heart, goose liver and remaining salt and pepper. Spoon stuffing loosely into goose cavity, then sew cavity shut with trussing needle. (Leftover stuffing mixture can be baked in ovenproof dish.) Season outside of goose generously with salt and white pepper. Lay goose breast-side down on roasting pan rack, and place in oven.

After 1 hour, remove pan from oven. Turn goose on its back, and carefully pierce sides under wings so fat can escape. Remove excess fat from pan. Discard fat, or strain and reserve for future use. Roast until meat in thickest part of thigh and stuffing both register 165°F, approximately 2 hours. The goose will not need basting. Transfer goose onto serving platter, and let rest.

Remove remaining fat from pan, and discard or reserve. Place pan on stove over medium heat, and deglaze with chicken stock. Bring to boil, and add Pinot Noir. Reduce liquid slightly. To thicken, combine 3 tablespoons cold water and corn starch, add mixture to pan and simmer for 5 minutes. Strain into a heated gravy boat, and serve alongside goose. *Serves 4.*

Pair It

Pinot Noirs are ideal partners for the dark flesh of the goose: The meat is full of flavor without being heavy, and the stuffing is aromatic and bright. Both **Franz Keller's 2014 Franz Anton Schwarzer Adler Pinot Noir from Baden, Germany** and **Au Bon Climat's 2013 Isabelle Pinot Noir from California** play to that in terms of their own freshness, expressive fruit and herbal, briary overtones, which echo the marjoram.



Duck Rôtie au Miel d'Alsace

Duck is another popular entrée for feasts, and it works well with sweet elements. It's surprisingly easy to cook at home, and it always turns out moist and crisp. Mathieu Koenig, chef at Koenig A l'Arbre Vert in Alsace, devised this festive recipe that champions seasonal Alsace ingredients available everywhere. While the duck is glazed with honey, the finished flavor is not sweet, but subtly aromatic, which will pair beautifully with Alsace Pinot Noir.

Courtesy Mathieu Koenig, chef, L'Arbre Vert, Berrwiller, France

- 1 5½-pound duck
- 3 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon finely ground white pepper
- 1 tablespoon duck fat or vegetable oil
- 3 large shallots, quartered
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2–3 tablespoons honey

Heat oven to 350°F. Wash duck inside and out, and pat dry with paper towel. Remove wing tips with kitchen scissors or sharp knife, and reserve. Combine salt and pepper in small bowl, and season duck generously inside and out. Truss firmly with kitchen string.

Heat duck fat or vegetable oil in stovetop-safe casserole dish. Over medium heat, brown duck on all sides. Add shallots, garlic

and wing tips when browning last side. Turn duck onto back, breast-side up. Place lid on casserole dish, and transfer to oven.

After 1 hour, put honey into small, oven-proof dish. Heat in oven briefly to melt. Remove honey and duck from oven, and brush honey across duck's breast and legs. Return to oven without lid to brown, approximately 30–40 minutes, depending on how well it crisps. The duck can be basted once or twice with cooking juices. If skin gets too dark, cover again. Once internal temperature registers 165°F, transfer duck to serving dish. Let rest.

Remove excess fat from casserole dish, and return to stove. Deglaze with water over medium heat. Bring to boil, and reduce slightly. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper, if necessary. Strain into gravy boat. *Serves 4.*

Duck Rôtie Side Dishes

The earthiness of **porcini mushrooms** fried in butter will compliment the duck well. Frozen porcini can also be used. Shallow-fried slowly and gently, they'll brown beautifully.

Choucroute (or sauerkraut) adds a real Alsace accent. Drain and heat with a little goose fat and Riesling. Onions and/or juniper berries can be added.

Parsnip purée offers a pleasantly creamy counterpoint. Boil rounds in salted water until soft, drain then purée with cream, and season with salt and pepper. Celeriac purée works as well, or a mix of parsnip and celeriac.

Pair It

This duck has quite robust flavors: succulent dark meat with honeyed richness. The evolved aromas of **Hugel's 2011 Grossi Laüe Limited Edition Pinot Noir from Alsace** and the peppery verve of **Syncline's 2014 Estate Vineyard Syrah from Washington** echo the earthiness. While it may sound unusual to pair white wine with duck, an **Alsace Pinot Gris, like Domaine Ostertag's 2015 Fronholz**, from a very expressive and ripe vintage, has enough body to match the richness of the dish. The textural roundness of the wine answers the duck's honeyed accent.



Mixed Wild Fowl

Hedi Klinger has worked behind the stoves of Gasthof Klinger in Upper Austria for decades, and she's won countless accolades for her down-to-earth cooking. Feathered game is a great choice during autumn and winter, and individual birds served to each diner can be a nice touch. Pheasants feed two people, while partridges and squab feed one. Game birds have a lovely earthy flavor, and pigeons provide toothsome, dense, dark meat. Roasting smaller birds allows you to sample different flavors.

Courtesy Hedi Klinger, chef/owner, Gasthof Klinger, Grieskirchen, Austria

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 1 medium shallot, peeled and finely chopped**
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh parsley**
- 3 ounces diced stale white bread, crusts removed**
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg**
- 1 egg**
- 1 tablespoon milk**
- 1 tablespoon flour**
- 1 pheasant**
- 2 partridges**
- 2 squabs**
- 2 1/2 teaspoons salt**
- 1/2 teaspoon finely ground white pepper**
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh marjoram**
- 16 pieces thin-cut bacon**
- 1–2 cups chicken stock**

Wild Fowl Side Dishes

Basic roasted potatoes are a staple at Gasthof Klinger and add a pleasantly starchy, toasty element to this richly flavored spread.

Red cabbage spiced with cinnamon and nutmeg and cooked with apples and orange juice offers warm, fruity notes to counter the boldly flavored birds.

Heat oven to 350°F.

To make stuffing, melt 1 tablespoon of butter in skillet over low heat. Add shallot, and cook until soft, but not browned. Add parsley at end of cooking, and let sit. Combine bread and spices in large bowl, and add shallot-parsley mixture. In small bowl, mix egg with milk, and combine with bread. Sprinkle flour on top. Let sit several minutes, then mix fully.

Wash birds inside and out, and pat dry with paper towels. Season cavities with salt, pepper and marjoram. Add stuffing mixture to birds. (Don't overfill, as stuffing expands during cooking.) Season outside of birds with salt and pepper, and rub butter on breasts and legs. Drape bacon over birds. Truss legs and secure bacon loosely with string.

Put pheasant into oven first, breast-side up. It will need approximately 1 hour to cook. The smaller birds can be added after 20–30 minutes. Cook, basting occasionally, until all birds and stuffing register an internal temperature of 165°F. Remove bacon from birds, and keep warm. Let birds rest on warmed serving platter.

Move roasting pan to stove. Deglaze with a bit of chicken stock. Bring to boil, and reduce slightly. Add remaining 1 tablespoon butter, and strain into gravy boat. Serve on one large plate, or on individual plates with bacon crumbled atop. *Serves 8.*

Pair It

These little bird roasts, with their gamey flavors, billowy stuffing and salty bacon, need a medium-bodied red that can stand up to, but not overpower, them. A traditional Austrian selection, like **Muhr-Van der Niepoort's 2014 Samt & Seide Blaufränkisch**, and a New World counterpart, like **Brick House's 2014 Gamay Noir from Oregon**, both show lovely cherry fruit, a spicy touch of pepper and lip-smacking freshness that will illuminate all of the flavors without weighing them down.

Wild fowl are available at dartagnan.com