Lavender-Rubbed Duck Breast with Apricots and Sweet Onions

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|  | **Jennifer – 4 Guys and a Tomato**  **Event:** Bainbridge Island Spouses and Guests, August 19, 2022  **Inspired by:** *the HERBAL KITCHEN*, Jerry Traunfeld |

I love using fresh herbs from my garden! The first person I look to for inspiration is always Seattle area chef and cookbook author Jerry Traunfeld. When I saw this recipe, I knew this would meet, or even exceed, the standards that the Four Guys and a Tomato set for their summer food festival. After all, I don’t just offer up my Bainbridge Island house for their party — I cook too! After showing them up, it’s their turn, and I can then eat and drink with abandon.

Ingredients: (makes 4 servings)

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| 4 | Large | Skin On Duck Breasts (approximately 2 pounds), preferably Muscovy |
| 2 | T | Lavender Buds, fresh or dried |
| 1 | T | Dried Coriander Seeds |
| 1 | t | Dried Fennel Seeds |
| ½ | t | Black Peppercorns |
|  |  | Grated Lemon Zest From ½ Lemon |
| 1 ½ | t | Kosher Salt |
| 1 | T | Olive Oil |
| ½ | Large | Sweet Onion, thickly sliced |
| 8 |  | Fresh Apricots (12 oz), pitted and quartered, or 1 C (4 oz) sliced dried apricots |
| ½ | C | Dry White Wine or Vermouth |
| ½ | C | Chicken Broth |
| 1-2 | t | Sherry Vinegar (if needed) |
|  |  | Freshly Ground Black Pepper |

Directions:

Trim excess skin from the sides of the duck breasts. Score the skin in a 1-inch-wide diagonal grid pattern, but do not pierce the flesh.

Finely grind the next six ingredients. Evenly rub the spices onto the duck breasts, working some into the score marks on the skin. Optionally wrap them and refrigerate for up to day to improve the flavor.

Swirl olive oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat and add the duck breasts skin side down. Slowly cook the breasts, shaking the pan occasionally and adjusting the heat as necessary. Render as much of the fat as possible before the duck and spices get too dark. This takes about 15 minutes. Some red juices should collect on the surface and the skin should be a deep bronze color. Flip and cook until the breasts register 135ᵒ - 140ᵒ (approximately 3 to 5 minutes). Rest the breasts on a warm plate while you make the sauce.

Reserve 2 tablespoons of fat in the pan. Don’t discard the rest of the fat; save it for future cooking! Sauté the onions over medium heat until they soften and have deglazed the pan (3 to 4 minutes). Add apricots, wine, and broth. Simmer until reduced by half, and slightly thickened (about 5 minutes). Taste, and add vinegar (depending on the tartness of the apricots), pepper, and salt as needed.

Fan ½-inch slices of the breasts onto a warmed plate and spoon sauce over them. Serve immediately.

Note on Lavender:

Chef Traunfeld has a wonderful tutorial on the use of lavender in his book. Basically, “use a LIGHT hand.” He says the flavor is most successful when it lags in the background. Use the buds at any stage when they show color, but they are best just before they open.