



### THE DARING COOKS' JANUARY, 2011 CHALLENGE: CONFIT & CASSOULET

Holy cow! Who would have thought that learning how to poach an egg (and other delicious foods) could be such an excellent challenge? We can't thank you enough, [Jenn](#) & [Jill](#)! You picked a basic technique that sooooo many of us had never tried before – a technique that's so important to know! Not only is poaching a wonderful way of preparing foods, but there's so much you can build off a poaching recipe. The Eggs Benedict and Oeufs en Meurette made so many lovely people happy! And the vegan sausage looked and tasted divine! I even saw some poached fruit that made me positively drool! Thank you, again, for braving this challenge and for being excellent hostesses! Hugs! xoxo

And wow, can you believe that once this current challenge is over we'll all be smack dab in the middle of January TWENTY-ELEVEN. Another fantastic year has passed, we've all learned so much in 2010. We've learned different cultural foods, we've learned some awesome new techniques and recipes.. and we've all made many new friends. Our 2010 hosts were ALL fantastic and we owe them a lot of gratitude for helping us learn new and exciting things in our own kitchens, things many of us would never had tried if not for The Daring Cooks! And finally – the biggest thank you to our members! If it weren't for you, we wouldn't be this AWESOME community that we've grown into!

Hugs! Happy Holidays! Happy New Year everyone!!  
xoxo

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Hello! We are [Jenni](#) ([The Gingered Whisk](#)) and [Lisa](#) ([Parsley, Sage, Desserts and Line Drives](#)) and we are so very excited to be hosting your challenge this month!! We have found the perfect challenge for you this month! It's warm, it's comforting, it's hearty, it's cassoulet!

Cassoulet is a rich, slow cooked stew or casserole that originated in the south of France during the 14th century. It traditionally contains pork, sausages, and white beans as well as a duck or goose confit and then topped with fried bread crumbs or cracklings. The dish is named after its traditional cooking vessel, the cassole, which is a deep, round earthenware pot with slanted sides. This is a dish that traditionally takes about three days to prepare, but is oh so worth all the effort!!

A confit, in case you don't know, is one of the oldest ways to preserve food. It is essentially any kind of food that has been immersed in any kind of fat for both flavor and preservation. When stored in a cool place, confit can last for several months! Typically meats (most often waterfowl) are preserved in fats, while fruits are preserved in sugar.

Don't worry our hungry Vegetarian or Vegan friends, we haven't forgotten about you! There are many recipes for vegan confit and vegan sausages out there, and we challenge you to experiment with your ingredients and flavors and make something wonderful that you will enjoy!

Our first recipe is considered a "traditional" recipe originating from Anthony Bourdain's Les Halles cookbook,, and 'tweaked' with Michael Ruhlman on No Reservations on the Travel Channel. It's been called the best cassoulet recipe outside of France. It contains a duck fat confit, sausages, pork, and white beans. **Spreading it out over three days and serving it on the fourth, makes for a far less complicated and time consuming cassoulet.** We have also included recipes for chicken confit using olive oil, for those of you who are either nervous about using duck and/or duck fat or can't find it in your area. You can also substitute chicken for duck in any duck confit recipe, including Bourdain's (this is what both of us did since we couldn't find duck anywhere near us).

We have also included several recipes for a quick version, a vegetarian/vegan version, and vegan confits! The quick version and the vegan version do not contain confits, so we've provided a few vegetable confit recipes for you. Feel free to be creative with vegetables in confit! We can't wait to see all the wonderful cassoulets that you come up with!



#### Recipe Sources:

[Cassoulet by Anthony Bourdain and Michael Ruhlman](#) as featured on the Travel Channel's "No Reservations"

[Vegetarian Cassoulet](#) by Gourmet Magazine, March 2008

[Thirty Minute Cassoulet](#) by Jacques Pepin's Fast Food My Way, KQED

[Chicken Confit](#) by Emeril Lagasse, via Food Network

[Garlic Confit](#) from Saveur, Issue #129

[Leek Confit](#) by Molly Wizenberg, as seen in Bon Appetit

**Blog Checking Lines:** Our January 2011 Challenge comes from Jenni of [The Gingered Whisk](#) and Lisa from [Parsley, Sage, Desserts and Line Drives](#). They have challenged the Daring Cooks to learn how to make a confit and use it within the traditional French dish of Cassoulet. They have chosen a traditional recipe from Anthony Bourdain and Michael Ruhlman.

**Mandatory:** You must make a confit and incorporate it in to a cassoulet.

**Variations:** You may choose to use any combination of meat or other protein source that you wish. We also encourage you to soak your own beans, but we understand if you decide to use canned. As extra credit, we challenge you to make your own sausages!!

**Posting Date:** January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**Notes:**

- If you can't find duck, you may substitute with any other waterfowl/poultry. Same goes for any of the pork, you can substitute with lamb, beef, and venison, or whatever you wish.
- If you can't find duck fat, you may substitute any other fat that you want, i.e. bacon grease, lard, butter, olive oil, etc.
- Pork belly may be substituted with a Boston butt pork roast, pork shoulder, pancetta or whatever you think will work and/or simply prefer due to dietary, religious, or any other personal reasons.
- Pork rind may be substituted with slab bacon or you can purchase salt pork and cut off the rind.

**Lisa's Notes:**

- I didn't find the pork rind lining absolutely necessary (Sorry, Anthony). In fact, it was basically flavorless, and unless you can find a whole piece that fits your pot perfectly, or even two complete pieces to fit, you'll end up with smaller pieces you may have cut to fit, like I did, floating throughout your cassoulet upon serving..
- Both Jenni and I used chicken in lieu of duck, Jenni used clarified butter for her fat in the confit, and I used duck fat.

**Jenni's Notes:**

- I agree with Lisa and think the pork rind lining was a waste. Instead, I lined my casserole with extra thick cut bacon. I laid the pieces out like a quilt to line the pot.
- I decided that instead of placing the sausages, duck confit, and the pork roast into the casserole whole (as per the recipe and how Lisa prepared her cassoulet). Instead I cut up all my meat into bite sized pieces and layered them like that. Then when it came time to serve, the bacon I lined my dish with mixed in perfectly with the rest of the meats.
- Also, if you don't have an earthenware pot large enough, you can piece this out into several smaller containers. I used 3 containers – an enamel covered cast iron, a glass Pyrex, and a ceramic casserole dish. All three were fine, but I think the ceramic and cast iron did the best jobs.
- I used canned beans instead of soaking dried beans overnight, and I ended up using twice as much as the recipe called for. This is because the recipe calls for a certain weight of dried beans, and upon soaking they double in size. Canned beans have already been soaked, so please keep this in mind, or you'll end up sending someone to the grocery store halfway through assembly! ☺
- This recipe freezes well, so if you need to make several small batches, go for it!

### Preparation Time:

- For Duck (or Chicken) Confit: 2 Days.
  - First day, 15 minutes.
  - Second Day, 2 hours.
- For Cassoulet: 3 Days
  - First Day: 10 minutes, if that
  - Second Day: Approximately 3 ½ hours, most of which is oven time
  - Third Day: 1 ½ hours, all oven time
- For Garlic Confit: 1 ½ hours

### Equipment Needed:

- Shallow Dish
- Plastic Wrap
- Saucepan
- Ovenproof Casserole Dish
- Foil
- large bowl
- large pot
- strainer or colander
- sauté pan
- paper towels
- blender
- large (about 8 quarts) ovenproof earthenware dish, or another non-reactive ovenproof container. Or you can use several smaller containers, if need be.
- measuring cup
- kitchen spoon



## Cassoulet

Cassoulet by Anthony Bourdain and Michael Ruhlman (as featured on the Travel Channel's "No Reservations")

Serves 4 - 8

### Ingredients for Duck Confit

4 whole duck legs (leg and thigh), size does not matter  
 sea salt, for the overnight (at least 6-8 hours) dry rub (the amount varies depending on the size of your legs, so just know that you need to have enough on hand for a good coating.)  
 2 cups/480 ml/450 gm/16 oz duck fat  
 a healthy pinch or grind of black pepper  
 4 sprigs of fresh thyme  
 1 sprig of fresh rosemary  
 1 garlic clove

### **Day One**

1. Rub the duck legs fairly generously with sea salt, place in the shallow dish, cover with plastic and refrigerate overnight. At all times, keep your work area clean and your ingredients free of contamination - meaning don't allow any other food, like bread crumbs or scraps, to get into your duck, duck fat or confit, as they will make an otherwise nearly non-perishable preparation suddenly perishable.





## Day Two

1. Preheat the oven to moderately hot 375°F/190°C/ gas mark 5.
2. Render (melt) the duck fat in the saucepan until clear.
3. After seasoning with the black pepper, place the duck legs in the clean, ovenproof casserole.
4. Nestle the thyme, rosemary and garlic in with the duck legs, and pour the melted duck fat over the legs to just cover.



*Legs covered in herbs & melted duck fat*



*Legs after cooking & refrigeration.*

5. Cover the dish with foil and put in the oven. Cook for about an hour, or until the skin at the "ankle" of each leg pulls away from the "knuckle." The meat should be tender.
6. Allow to cool and then store as is in the refrigerator, sealed under the fat. When you need the confit, you can either warm the whole dish, in which case removing the legs will be easy, or dig them out of the cold fat and scrape off the excess. I highly recommend the former. A nice touch at this point is to twist out the thighbone from the cold confit. Just place one hand on the drumstick, pinioning the leg to the table, and with the other hand, twist out the thighbone, plucking it from the flesh without mangling the thigh meat. Think of someone you hate when you do it.

### Ingredients for Cassoulet

5 cups/1200 ml/1100 g/39 oz dried Tarbais beans or white beans such as Great Northern or Cannelini (*if you use canned beans be aware that you will need double this amount!*)  
2 pounds/900 gm fresh pork belly  
1 onion, cut into 4 pieces  
1 pound/450 gm pork rind  
1 bouquet garni (*tie together two sprigs parsley, 2 sprigs thyme and one bay leaf*)  
salt and pepper  
1/4 cup/60 ml/55 gm duck fat  
6 pork sausages  
3 onions, thinly sliced  
1 garlic clove, thinly sliced  
4 confit duck legs

## Day One

1. Place the beans in the large bowl and cover with cold water so that there are at least 2 or 3 inches (50mm or 75mm) of water above the top of the beans. Soak overnight. That was hard, right? *(Beans will double in size upon soaking, so use a big bowl!)*



## Day Two

1. Drain and rinse the beans and place in the large pot.



2. Add the pork belly, the quartered onion, 1/4 pound/115 gm of the pork rind, and the bouquet garni.
3. Cover with water, and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for about 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste and continue to simmer until the beans are tender, about 30 minutes more.
4. Let cool for 20 minutes, then discard

the onion and the bouquet garni.

5. Remove the pork belly, cut it into 2-inch/5-cm squares, and set aside. (If you plan to wait another day before finishing the dish, wait to cut the pork belly until then.)
6. Strain the beans and the rind and set aside, reserving the cooking liquid separately.
7. In the sauté pan, heat all but 1 tablespoon/15 ml/15 gm of the duck fat over medium-high heat until it shimmers and becomes transparent.
8. Carefully add the sausages and brown on all sides.





9. Remove sausages and set aside, draining on paper towels.



10. In the same pan, over medium-high heat, brown the sliced onions, the garlic and the reserved squares of pork rind from the beans (*not the unused pork rind; you'll need that later*).
11. Once browned, remove from the heat and transfer to the blender. Add 1 tablespoon/ 15 ml/ 15 gm of the remaining duck fat and purée until smooth. Set aside.



12. Preheat the oven to moderate 350°F/180°C/gas mark 4.



13. Place the uncooked pork rind in the bottom of a deep ovenproof non-reactive dish. You're looking to line the inside, almost like a pie crust. Arrange all your ingredients in alternating layers, beginning with a layer of beans, then sausages, then more beans, then pork belly, beans, duck confit and finally more beans, adding a dab of the onion and pork rind purée between each layer.





14. Add enough of the bean cooking liquid to just cover the beans, reserving 1 cup/240 ml in the refrigerator for later use.
15. Cook the cassoulet in the oven for 1 hour, then reduce the heat to very slow 250°F/130°C/gas mark ½ and cook for another hour.
16. Remove from the oven and allow to cool. Refrigerate overnight.

### Day Three

1. Preheat the oven to moderate 350°F/180°C/gas mark 4 again.
2. Cook the cassoulet for an hour.
3. Break the crust on the top with the spoon and add 1/4 cup/60 ml of the reserved cooking liquid. (Don't get fancy. Just pile, dab, stack and pile. It doesn't have to be pretty.)
4. Reduce the heat to very slow 250°F/130°C/gas mark ½ and continue cooking another 15 minutes, or until screamingly hot through and through. Then serve.



# Chicken Confit Using Olive Oil

*Chicken Confit* by Emeril Lagasse, via Food Network

## Ingredients:

4 chicken leg portions with thighs attached, excess fat trimmed and reserved (about 2 pounds/  
about 1 kg total)  
1 tablespoon plus 1/8 teaspoon (15.6 ml) kosher salt (\*\*note: if using table salt, use 1/2 the amount)  
1/2 teaspoon (2½ ml) (3 gm) freshly ground black pepper  
10 garlic cloves  
4 dried bay leaves  
4 sprigs fresh thyme  
1 1/2 teaspoons (7½ ml) (6 gm) black peppercorns  
1/2 teaspoon (2½ ml) (3 gm) table salt  
4 cups (1 liter) olive oil

## Directions:

1. Lay the leg portions on a platter, skin side down. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon (15 ml) of the kosher salt and black pepper. Place the garlic cloves, bay leaves, and sprigs of thyme on each of 2 leg portions. Lay the remaining 2 leg portions, flesh to flesh, on top. Put the reserved fat from the chicken in the bottom of a glass or plastic container. Top with the sandwiched leg portions. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/8 teaspoon kosher salt. Cover and refrigerate for 12 hours.
2. Preheat the oven to cool 200°F/90°C/gas mark ¼.
3. Remove the chicken from the refrigerator. Remove the garlic, bay leaves, thyme, and chicken fat and reserve. Rinse the chicken with cool water, rubbing off some of the salt and pepper. Pat dry with paper towels.
4. Put the reserved garlic, bay leaves, thyme, and chicken fat in the bottom of an enameled cast iron pot. Sprinkle evenly with the peppercorns and salt. Lay the chicken on top, skin side down. Add the olive oil. Cover and bake for 12 to 14 hours, or until the meat pulls away from the bone.

## **Garlic Confit**

*[Garlic Confit](#) from *Saveur*, Issue #129*

### **Ingredients:**

1½ cup (360 ml) Olive Oil  
1½ tsp (7½ ml) (4 gm) kosher salt (\*\*Note: if using table salt, use ½ the amount)  
10 whole black peppercorns  
5 sprigs fresh thyme  
65 garlic cloves, peeled (about 1 ½ cups/360 ml)  
1 dried bay leaf

### **Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to slow 300°F/150°C/gas mark 2. Put ingredients in a 1 quart (950 ml) pot, making sure all the garlic is submerged in the oil. Cover pot. Bake until garlic is golden brown and tender, about 1 hour. Let cool.
2. Transfer mixture to a glass jar; cover surface of oil with plastic wrap. Cover jar and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks. Makes 2 cups/480 ml.

## **Leek Confit**

*[Leek Confit](#) by Molly Wizenberg, as seen in *Bon Appetit**

Makes 2 cups/480 ml.

### **Ingredients:**

¼ cup (60 ml) (1/2 stick) (60 gm) unsalted butter  
4 large leeks, white and pale green parts only, halved lengthwise, cut crosswise into ¼ inch (6½ mm) thick slices (about 5 cups/1200 ml)  
2 tbsp (30 ml) water  
½ tsp (2½ ml) (3½ gm) salt

### **Directions:**

1. Melt butter in a large pot over medium-low heat.
2. Add leeks, stir to coat.
3. Stir in water and salt.
4. Cover pot and reduce heat to low.
5. Cook leeks until tender, stirring often, about 25 minutes.
6. Uncover and cook to evaporate excess water, 2-3 minutes.



# Vegetarian/Vegan Cassoulet

Vegetarian Cassoulet by Gourmet Magazine, March 2008

*(Note: we didn't actually make this recipe, but we're sure it's a good one!)*

## Ingredients:

3 medium leeks (white and pale green parts only)  
4 medium carrots, halved lengthwise and cut into 1-inch-wide (25 mm) pieces  
3 celery ribs, cut into 1-inch-wide (25 mm) pieces  
4 garlic cloves, chopped  
1/4 cup (60 ml) olive oil  
4 thyme sprigs  
2 parsley sprigs  
1 Turkish or 1/2 California bay leaf  
1/8 teaspoon (2/3 ml) (1 gm) ground cloves  
3 (19-oz/540 gm) cans cannellini or Great Northern beans, rinsed and drained  
1 qt (4 cups/960 ml) water  
4 cups (960 ml) (300 gm) coarse fresh bread crumbs from a baguette  
1/3 cup (80 ml) olive oil  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) (12 gm) chopped garlic  
1/4 cup (60 ml) (80 gm) chopped parsley

## Directions:

1. Halve leeks lengthwise and cut crosswise into 1/2-inch (13 mm) pieces, then wash well (see cooks' note, below) and pat dry.
2. Cook leeks, carrots, celery, and garlic in oil with herb sprigs, bay leaf, cloves, and 1/2 teaspoon (2½ mm) each of salt and pepper in a large heavy pot over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until softened and golden, about 15 minutes. Stir in beans, then water, and simmer, partially covered, stirring occasionally, until carrots are tender but not falling apart, about 30 minutes.
3. Preheat oven to moderate 350°F/180°C/gas mark 4 with rack in middle.
4. Toss bread crumbs with oil, garlic, and 1/4 teaspoon (1¼ ml) each of salt and pepper in a bowl until well coated.
5. Spread in a baking pan and toast in oven, stirring once halfway through, until crisp and golden, 12 to 15 minutes.
6. Cool crumbs in pan, then return to bowl and stir in parsley.
7. Discard herb sprigs and bay leaf. Mash some of beans in pot with a potato masher or back of a spoon to thicken broth.
8. Season with salt and pepper. Just before serving, sprinkle with garlic crumbs.

# Thirty Minute Cassoulet

[\*Thirty Minute Cassoulet\*](#) by Jacques Pepin's *Fast Food My Way*, KQED

Serves: 4-6

## Ingredients:

1 tablespoon (15 ml) good olive oil  
About 1 pound (500 gm) rolled shoulder ham (also called a daisy ham or Boston Butt), tough outer skin removed  
About 3/4 pound (350 gm) hot Italian sausages, cut into 3-inch (75 mm) pieces (about 6 pieces)  
4 bratwurst sausages (about 1 pound/500 gm)  
1 cup (240 ml) diced (1/2 inch/15 mm) whole button mushrooms (about 3 ounces/85 gm)  
3/4 cup (180 ml) diced (1/2-inch/15 mm) onion  
2 tablespoons (30 ml) crushed garlic (about 4 large cloves)  
1/2 teaspoon (2½ ml) (4 gm) dried thyme leaves  
1 bay leaf  
2 (15½ ounces/440 gm each) cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed under warm running water  
3/4 cup (180 ml) (about 7 oz/200 gm) diced (1-inch/25 mm) tomato (1 large plump tomato)  
1/2 cup (120 ml) water  
1/4 teaspoon (1¼ ml) (1½ gm) freshly ground black pepper  
3 tablespoons (45 ml) (30 grams) coarsely chopped fresh parsley

## *For Serving*

Tabasco sauce

Dijon-style mustard

## Directions:

1. Heat the oil in a large skillet and add the ham and Italian sausage.
2. Cover and cook over high heat for 7 to 8 minutes, turning occasionally.
3. Add the bratwurst, mushrooms, onion, garlic, thyme, and bay leaf. Mix well and cook for another 5 to 6 minutes.
4. Add the beans, tomato, water, and pepper, bring back to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover, and boil gently for 5 minutes.
5. At serving time, discard the bay leaf, cut the ham into slices and the sausage pieces in half, and arrange the meat on a platter with the beans.
6. Sprinkle the parsley on top. Serve with the Tabasco and mustard.

### *Additional Resources:*

[Quick video montage of Bourdain's Cassoulet](#)

[Watch a video on making Duck Confit](#)

[Video of Jacques Pepin making his “quick version” of Cassoulet](#)

### **Ideas on where to find Duck Fat and Tarbais Beans online:**

[Williams Sonoma](#) – Rougie’ Duck Fat, \$10.95 for 11.2 ounces/315 gm (US Dollars)



[Dartagnan](#) – Duck Fat: \$5.99 for 7 ounces/200 gm (US Dollars) / [Tarbais Beans](#) - \$11.99 per lb.

[French Feast](#) - Rougié · Duck fat, glass jar · 320g (11.3 oz) · \$8.40, Tarbais Beans - 500g (17.6 oz) · \$19.00 · Available end of December

Also check your local butchers, meat markets, and gourmet food stores