JOHN PLESHETTE'S MEAL OF THE WEEK

DUCK LEGS IN RED WINE WITH GRILLED FIGS

2 DUCK LEGS
2 SHALLOTS
1 CLOVE OF GARLIC
1 STICK OF CELERY
FRESH THYME
LIGHT-BODIED RED WINE SUCH AS BEAUJOLAIS
4 RIPE FIGS
BALSAMIC VINEGAR

PRE-HEAT THE OVEN TO 325°

HEAT A SMALL CASSEROLE OR FRYING PAN WITH A LID ON TOP
OF THE STOVE.

DRY THE DUCK LEGS. SALT AND PEPPER.

POUR 2 TBSPS OF VEGETABLE OIL IN THE PAN. BROWN THE LEGS ON MEDIUM HEAT, SKIN SIDE DOWN FIRST. ABOUT SIX MINUTES A SIDE.

MEANWHILE, PEEL AND ROUGHLY CHOP SHALLOTS AND GARLIC. PEEL ONE CELERY STALK AND SLICE IN ½ INCH PIECES.

REMOVE THE DUCK. POUR OFF MOST OF THE FAT, LEAVING A COUPLE OF TABLESPOONS.

ADD THE VEGETABLES, LOWER THE HEAT AND COVER. COOK A FEW MINUTES, STIRRING OCCASIONALLY UNTIL THEY ARE SOFT.

ARRANGE THE DUCK IN THE PAN, FAT SIDE UP. ADD A COUPLE OF SPRIGS OF THYME AND 2 CUPS OF RED WINE. BRING TO A BOIL FOR A MINUTE TO EVAPORATE THE ALCOHOL. TURN OFF THE HEAT. COVER.

PLACE IN THE OVEN AND BRAISE FOR 2 HOURS OR UNTIL THE LEGS ARE EASILY PIERCED WITH A FORK.

HEAT A FRYING PAN FOR 2 MINUTES OVER HIGH FLAME. SLICE THE FIGS LENGTHWISE IN HALF.

ADD A SPLASH OF OIL. CAREFULLY, PLACE THE FIGS CUT SIDE DOWN IN THE PAN. COOK FOR ABOUT 3 MINUTES, GENTLY SHAKING THE PAN FROM TIME TO TIME SO THEY DON'T STICK. THEY SHOULD GRILL TILL THEY'RE ALMOST BLACK ON THE CUT SIDE. REMOVE FROM THE PAN AND DRIZZLE A FEW DROPS OF BALSAMIC VINEGAR ON THE CUT SIDE. ADD TO THE PAN WITH THE DUCK LEGS.

SERVE WITH RICE OR POLENTA.

SERVES 2

NOTE: YOU CAN DOUBLE THE DISH WITH FOUR LEGS, USING THE SAME QUANTITIES FOR THE OTHER INGREDIENTS AND A FEW MORE FIGS.

WINE OF THE WEEK FROM JILL BERNHEIMER AT DOMAINE L.A.

2009 G. DESCOMBES COTES DE BROUILLY - 100% GAMAY, A BIT STRUCTURED WITH GOOD (BUT MILD) ACIDITY AND TANNIN, AND PURE RED CHERRY FRUIT. $21

2008 FOURIER GEVREY CHAMBERTIN VIEILLES VIGNES - 100% PINOT NOIR, THIS HAS HEFT TO IT, BUT THE CHERRY FRUIT HERE IS A LITTLE BIT MORE TART THAN THE BEAUJOLAIS, AND THERE'S SOME SMOKEY CHARACTER (ALONG WITH A LITTLE BIT OF GAME) TO IT AS WELL. $62