

Summertime Blue
Scott Leysath, The Sporting Chef

I'll never forget the time I made a blue cheese sauce during a cooking demonstration in a poorly ventilated room in South Georgia. Shortly after the cheese hit the pan, I noticed a few people looking around the room with that, "who cut the cheese?" look on their faces. Several of the attendees hightailed it out of the room, one of them exclaiming, "It smells like manure!" Apparently, they don't cotton to stinky cheese in Albany, Georgia.

Not to be discouraged, I'm still a large fan of the big blue. Gorgonzola, Stilton, Maytag, Roquefort and my personal favorite, Clemson Blue Cheese – this isn't kid's stuff, at least not my kid. They're big, bold and "aromatic" cheeses that will liven up any dish. Blue cheeses are treated with molds makes them veiny, stinky and even stronger tasting when aged. How can you tell if blue cheese has gone bad? Beats me.

If moldy cheese isn't something you would like to put on your duck, all is not lost. You can substitute any of your own favorite cheese or leave the cheese part out altogether. It's your sandwich. Just make certain that you don't cook your ducks too long. If your duck ends up tough and dry, don't blame the duck. It's just been overcooked.

The directions for processing the duck breasts before marinating might be a little confusing. The idea is to make them half as thick, so that they cook quickly on the grill. Each breast will yield two slices, roughly the same size, only thinner than before slicing. If your ducks are of the smaller variety – teal, ringneck, shoveler, etc., you'll need a few extra breast fillets to feed four people.

Grilled Duck and Blue Cheese Sandwich
serves four

- 6 skinless duck breast fillets (allow more for smaller species)
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 8 ounces blue cheese, crumbled
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons beer
- dash Tabasco
- 1 large onion, cut into thick rings
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt and pepper
- 1 large tomato, cut into 4 slices
- 4 sturdy burger buns
- 4 lettuce leaves

Place duck breasts on a firm surface and, while pressing down gently on the top of each breast, slice each in half widthwise between your hand and the surface. Keep your fingertips up and away from the knife blade! When done slicing, you'll have 12 slices. Combine kosher salt, pepper, Italian seasoning and onion powder and use mixture to season sliced duck on both sides. Stack seasoned meat together, wrap snugly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 – 4 hours.

In a small saucepan over low heat, combine blue cheese, butter, beer and Tabasco. Stir constantly until mixture is smooth. Keep warm.

Coat onion slices with olive oil, salt and pepper. Place on a medium-hot, well-lubricated grill. Cook for 5 minutes. Place seasoned duck slices on grill and cook 2 – 3 minutes per side for medium-rare.

To assemble sandwich, arrange lettuce and tomato on the bottom of each bun. Top with 3 slices duck breast and grilled onions. Top with warm blue cheese sauce and other half of bun.

Catch Scott's TV show, HuntFishCook on Comcast Sports Southeast, Dish Network and Direct TV. For more great fish and game recipes, visit his website, www.HuntFishCook.com.