

Duck Magret (Sous Vide → Kamado Sear, Grapefruit Gastrique)

Mouillard duck breast, fat cap scored in a 5 mm crosshatch. Two hours in a sous vide bath at fifty-seven degrees Celsius produces perfect medium-rare edge-to-edge. Eight to ten minutes fat-side-down on a kamado at 260 degrees renders the fat cap to a crispy lacquer. Two minutes skin-up to finish. The grapefruit-star anise gastrique bridges rich duck fat to citrus acid in a single sticky spoonful. The dish Pablo cooked first on March 8, 2026, as the opening recipe of his Umami collaboration.

Protein Mouillard duck breast (magret) – pasture-raised, US or French

Serves 2-4 as main (one 450 g magret = 2 generous portions)

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 35 min across 2.5 hours

Total 2.5 hours (2 h SV + 15 min sear + 10 min gastrique + 10 min rest)

THE STORY

Precision + Fire — The Two-Step Showcase

Duck magret is the textbook application for the sous-vide + kamado two-step. The cut has two problems that any single technique fails to solve: the meat is dense, lean, and easy to overcook (even medium-well is tough); the fat cap is thick and needs aggressive rendering to turn from rubbery to crispy. A classical pan sear gives you either properly rendered fat and overcooked meat, or perfect meat and flabby fat. Sous vide alone gives you perfect meat

texture but no crust. The kamado alone cooks too fast to render the fat without destroying the meat. The two-step — sous vide first for the interior, kamado for the exterior — is the only method that gives you both.

Pablo's March 8 first cook followed this exact sequence: 57 °C sous-vide bath for 2 hours, pat dry, kamado at 260 °C fat-side-down for 8-10 minutes until the fat is rendered crispy and deeply bronzed, flip skin-up for 2 more minutes to finish. Rest. Slice against the grain. Drizzle with grapefruit-star anise gastrique. Every bite is a complete story: crispy fat shell, precise medium-rare meat, sweet-acid-spiced sauce. The cook took 35 minutes of active work across 2.5 hours of total elapsed time — which is why this recipe is the perfect introduction to SV+kamado synergy. Maximum showcase for minimum real-time effort.

The gastrique is the other half of this recipe. A gastrique is caramelized sugar dissolved in vinegar — a sweet-acid bridge that neither sugar nor vinegar alone can produce. The grapefruit-star anise version is the Pablo signature: sherry vinegar + grapefruit juice + white sugar (NOT raw cane, Pablo learned this the hard way on March 8 — raw cane stalls before caramelizing and makes color judgment difficult) + 2 star anise pods + a pinch of chile flakes. The caramelization produces the color of whiskey; the vinegar reactivates the caramel into syrup; the grapefruit juice and aromatics finish the flavor. The resulting sauce is 80 ml of concentrated magic that elevates any rich meat — especially duck and pork belly.

Moulard magret sourcing (Hudson Valley Duck Farm, Meat N' Bone, D'Artagnan) is already in Pablo's supplier network. The technique scales without change to Pekin or Barbary duck — just adjust time and temp for the smaller, leaner cuts.

AT A GLANCE

Specs

YIELD 2 generous portions per 450 g magret	DUCK CUT Moulard magret (Hudson Valley, Meat N' Bone)	SV SETTINGS 57 °C / 135 °F • 2 hours	DIFFICULTY Intermediate ●●●○○
ACTIVE TIME 35 min across 2.5 hours	SEAR PROTOCOL Kamado 260 °C · 8-10 min skin down · 2 min flip	REST TIME 5-8 min under foil tent	MAKE-AHEAD SV portion up to 4 hours ahead, ice-bath hold
CARDINAL RULE SCORE fat 5 mm crosshatch BEFORE bagging	PABLO PATTERN March 8, 2026 — first guided cook		

UMAMI ADAPTATION

What Changed & Why

Classical duck magret is seared skin-side-down in a cold pan, with the pan gradually heated to render the fat over 12-15 minutes, then flipped for 2-3 minutes to finish. This produces good magret but has two weaknesses: the interior is inconsistent (edges overcook, center may be rare), and the fat rendering requires babysitting a cold-start pan for 15 minutes. The adaptation uses the sous-vide + kamado two-step: SV at 57 °C for 2 hours solves the interior (edge-to-edge medium-rare), then a fast kamado sear at high heat renders the fat cap crispy without risking meat overcook. The ● Everyday version uses any reliable duck breast source and a kamado OR cast iron pan. The ● No Limits version uses Hudson Valley Duck Farm Moulard (gold standard US source) and the premium grapefruit-star anise gastrique finish that was Pablo's March 8 cook.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	Cold-pan render, 12-15 min + flip	SV 57 °C/2 h FIRST, then kamado sear (8-10 min + 2 min)	Separates interior precision from exterior finish; each technique does what it's best at; near-impossible to overcook
ADD	—	Fat cap scored in 5 mm crosshatch BEFORE bagging	Scoring allows fat rendering to continue during SV bath; post-bag scoring would let moisture out of the bag
TECH	Pan sear	Kamado at 260 °C fat-side-down 8-10 min	Ceramic dome + charcoal direct heat gives fat-crisping performance that pans cannot match; adds subtle smoke
ADD	—	Grapefruit-star anise gastrique (Pablo signature)	Sweet-acid bridge; the sugar caramelizes, grapefruit adds citrus + slight bitter, star anise adds warm spice depth
SUB	Raw cane sugar in gastrique	WHITE granulated sugar (NOT raw cane)	Raw cane stalls before caramelizing + makes color judgment difficult; Pablo learned this on March 8, documenting here so it doesn't repeat

What You Need

● Everyday

The Duck

- 2 Moulard duck magrets (about 450 g / 1 lb each — standard pack size from most reliable sources)
- OR 4 Pekin duck breasts (about 250 g each — leaner, smaller, adjust SV to 55 °C/1.5 h)
- Fine sea salt (for pre-bag seasoning)
- Freshly cracked black pepper (optional — classical)
- Optional: 1 sprig fresh thyme per breast (adds subtle aromatic during SV bath)

Grapefruit-Star Anise Gastrique

- 100 g white granulated sugar (NOT raw cane — see Pablo's March 8 lesson)
- 60 ml sherry vinegar (Vinagre de Jerez — standard quality works)
- 60 ml fresh-squeezed ruby red grapefruit juice (~1 grapefruit)
- 2 star anise pods (whole)
- Pinch of crushed red chile flakes (1/4 tsp — adjust to heat tolerance)
- Optional: 1 strip of grapefruit peel (pith removed, for extra aromatic)

Substitution Notes

- *No Moulard?* Pekin or Barbary duck breasts work — they are smaller and leaner. Reduce SV to 55 °C for 1.5 hours (lower temp because less fat to render). Sear time reduces to 6–8 min fat-side-down.
- *No kamado?* Cast iron pan works — start cold, heat gradually for first 5 min, then high heat for final 3–5 min. Same fat-side-down-first protocol. The kamado is optimal but not mandatory.
- *No sous vide?* Classical technique: score fat, SEASON, pan sear fat-side-down in cold pan 12–15 min until rendered + crispy, flip 3–4 min, pull at internal temp 54 °C, rest 5 min. Different technique, equally valid for classical French preparation.
- *No star anise?* Substitute 1/4 tsp five-spice powder OR 1/4 tsp ground allspice + pinch of clove. Star anise is ideal; substitutes are acceptable.
- *No grapefruit?* Orange juice works — sweeter, less bitter, different flavor profile. Blood orange is the best orange substitute (more complex). Lemon is too acidic for the sugar:acid ratio — don't substitute.

No Limits

Premium Duck + Gastrique

- 2 Moulard duck magrets from Hudson Valley Duck Farm (Pablo ✓ supplier, overnight shipping — ~\$38 for 2-pack, gold standard US duck)
- Maldon flaky salt (Pablo ✓) for pre-bag seasoning
- Fresh thyme sprig per breast (optional — adds subtle herbaceous to SV bath)
- 4 tbsp rendered duck fat — SAVED FROM THE SEAR (not added; the render produces ~60 g per magret). Use in subsequent cooks (rabo de toro browning, potatoes, eggs).

Grapefruit-Star Anise Gastrique (Premium)

- 100 g fine white granulated sugar (NOT raw cane — Pablo March 8 lesson)
- 60 ml Vinagre de Jerez Reserva (aged — Pablo ✓ pantry)
- 60 ml fresh-squeezed organic ruby red grapefruit juice (Florida-grown in season)
- 3 star anise pods (whole, more aromatic from premium source)
- 1/4 tsp Korean gochugaru flakes (substitutes plain chile flakes — adds slight sweet-fruity note)
- 1 strip grapefruit peel (vegetable peeler, pith removed — for extra aromatic during finish)

Service Enhancements

- Warmed plates (important — duck loses heat fast)
- Sharp slicing knife (for against-grain cuts 5–8 mm thick)
- Small ramekin for gastrique service (let guests add their own)
- (●) Pair with: sautéed wild mushrooms (morels in spring, chanterelles in fall) or roasted stone fruit (grilled peaches, roasted plums — complements the gastrique)
- (●) Classical French service: roasted turnips + wilted spinach + pan-jus from the sear leftovers
- Vinagre de Jerez Reserva on the table — few drops across the slices at service brightens the gastrique

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

Immersion circulator (Anova, Joule, Breville) — Pablo ✓

Large container for SV bath (8–12 L) — wire rack or insulated cooler works

- Sharp paring knife (for fat-cap scoring — 5 mm crosshatch)

- Vacuum sealer + bags (Pablo ✓) — or zip-top bags with water displacement method

- Kamado (Pablo ✓) OR heavy cast iron pan

- Chimney starter or electric starter for kamado

- Lump charcoal + optional fruitwood chunk (apple, cherry — subtle smoke)

- Grill tongs + heat-resistant gloves

- Instant-read thermometer (verify 54 °C internal post-sear)

- Heavy saucepan with light-colored interior (for gastrique — so you can judge caramel color)

- Heat-resistant rubber spatula or wooden spoon

- Fine-mesh strainer (for straining gastrique if you prefer smooth)

- Small ramekin or gravy boat for gastrique service

- Warmed plates

- Sharp slicing knife (chef's knife or carving knife)

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

- Duck pulled from fridge 30 min before bagging (not more — Moulard fat softens quickly)

 - SV bath set to 57 °C and held steady for 10 min before duck goes in

 - Fat cap scored in 5 mm crosshatch — cut through skin and fat but NOT into meat. Knife tip should stop when it hits the red tissue layer.

 - Each magret salted generously on both sides (flesh and skin), pepper optional

 - Vacuum-sealed (or zip-top + water displacement) with optional thyme sprig

 - Kamado lit 30 min before SV finishes — target 260 °C direct heat, no deflector
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- Gastrique ingredients measured: sugar in one bowl, vinegar + grapefruit juice pre-mixed in another, star anise + chile flakes ready

- Saucepan ready for gastrique (light-colored interior so you can judge caramel)

- Warm plates in 80 °C oven

- Sharp slicing knife on cutting board

- Small ramekin for gastrique service

MAKE-AHEAD

Timeline

- T-2:30 – Pull duck from fridge**

Rest at room temperature 30 min. This evens the meat temperature before bagging.
- T-2:25 – Score fat cap**

Use sharp paring knife to crosshatch the fat cap at 5 mm intervals. Cut through skin + fat only – STOP at the red meat layer. Scoring allows fat rendering during both SV (starts the process) and kamado sear (completes it).
- T-2:20 – Season + bag**

Salt both sides generously (Maldon for ●). Optional: pepper, thyme sprig. Vacuum-seal or use zip-top with water displacement (submerge bag in water to push out air, seal just above waterline).
- T-2:15 – Into SV bath**

Drop bags into 57 °C water. Clip to side of container. Start 2-hour timer.
- T-0:30 – Light kamado**

Fill firebox 1/4 with lump charcoal. Light with electric or chimney starter. NO heat deflector (direct heat for sear). Open vents fully – target 260 °C.
- T-0:20 – Make gastrique**

Heavy saucepan on medium-high heat. Add 100 g sugar in even layer. Do NOT stir. Swirl pan gently as sugar melts: white → clear → pale gold → amber → DARK AMBER (whiskey color). ~5 min.

T-0:15 – Add vinegar + juice

CAREFUL — the caramel will seize and bubble violently when liquid hits 170+ °C sugar. Stand back. Add the pre-mixed sherry vinegar + grapefruit juice all at once. Stir over medium heat. Caramel will re-dissolve over 2-3 min.

T-0:12 – Add aromatics

Add 2-3 star anise pods + 1/4 tsp chile flakes + (●) 1 strip grapefruit peel. Simmer gently 5-7 min until syrupy — should coat back of spoon. Remove from heat. Remove peel + star anise (or leave if serving rustic).

T-0:10 – Pull duck from SV + DRY

Pull bags. Snip corner, drain liquid. Pat duck COMPLETELY dry with paper towels — any surface moisture ruins the sear. Skin side should be bone-dry.

T-0:08 – Kamado sear skin-down

Burp kamado open (flashback prevention). Place duck skin-side-DOWN directly on the grill at 260 °C. Close dome. 8-10 min. The kamado will FLARE UP as duck fat drips into coals — this is normal; do not panic. Vent air through bottom vent if excessive.

T+0:02 – Check + flip

Open dome (burp). Check skin side: should be deeply bronzed, crispy, with visible rendered fat. If pale: 2 more min. If dark enough: flip skin-UP. Close dome. 2 minutes on meat side to finish.

T+0:04 – Pull + rest

Remove duck to cutting board. Internal temp should read 54-56 °C (it rises slightly from SV's 57 °C during sear). Rest 5-8 min loosely tented with foil. The rest lets juices redistribute.


T+0:12 – Slice + plate

Slice against the grain, 5-8 mm thick. Fan slices across warmed plate, skin side up. Drizzle warm gastrique across slices — don't drown, just streak. Small ramekin of gastrique on the side for add-to-taste.

METHOD

The Cook

1 Score the Fat — The Critical Prep Move

1. Lay the duck magret skin-side-up on a cutting board. The fat cap should be a continuous white-ivory layer about 8–12 mm thick.
2. Take a sharp paring knife. Make shallow diagonal cuts through the skin and fat, 5 mm apart, in one direction. Cut all the way through the fat but STOP when you feel the knife tip hit the red meat tissue layer below. This is the scoring depth.
3. Rotate the magret 90 degrees. Make a second set of diagonal cuts perpendicular to the first — a 5 mm crosshatch pattern.
4. The final result should look like a diamond pattern all across the fat cap, with the meat layer untouched.
5. Season both sides generously with salt (Maldon flaky for ). Pepper is optional and classical. If using thyme, press one sprig gently into the scored fat.
6. Vacuum-seal each magret individually OR use the zip-top water-displacement method: place magret in bag, submerge bag in water up to just below the zip, water pressure pushes out air, seal.

WHY THIS WORKS

Fat cap scoring is the single technique that separates restaurant-quality duck magret from home-cook duck magret. The 5 mm crosshatch does three things: First, it opens channels through which rendered fat can escape during both the SV bath (early fat liquefies and exits through the scored lines) and the kamado sear (remaining fat drains away, producing the crispy shell rather than a flabby cap). Second, it increases the surface area exposed to direct heat during the sear — more Maillard reactions, deeper crust. Third, it reduces the thickness of the remaining fat layer when cooking, which means the fat renders fully in 8–10 min rather than the 12–15 min unscored fat requires. Critically: score BEFORE bagging, not after. Post-bag scoring punctures the bag and ruins the SV cook. Reference: Sous Vide Mastery chapter 7 (Duck); Protein Encyclopedia chapter 4.

2 Sous Vide at 57 °C — The Interior Perfection


1. Preheat the sous vide bath to 57 °C / 135 °F. This is the medium-rare target for Moulard duck. Hold the bath at this temperature for at least 10 minutes before adding the duck (thermal stability).
2. Submerge the sealed bags in the bath. If they float, use a wire rack or clip to keep them submerged.
3. Start a 2-hour timer. The duck will be ready between 2:00 and 4:00 — the safe window is wide because the interior temp cannot exceed 57 °C no matter how long it cooks.
4. During the bath, the duck undergoes two simultaneous processes. (1) The meat fibers relax and partially denature at exactly 57 °C, producing the edge-to-edge medium-rare texture that cannot be achieved by any pan method. (2) Some of the subcutaneous fat begins to liquefy and escape through the scored channels, starting the rendering process that the kamado sear will complete.
5. At the 2-hour mark, the duck is done at the interior level. Do NOT sear immediately — the skin will be wet from condensation inside the bag. Pull the bags, pat everything completely dry.
6. If you're not ready to sear yet (timing with other courses), you can hold the SV'd duck in an ice bath for up to 4 hours before searing — no quality loss. This is the restaurant prep technique: SV in advance, sear à la minute when the order comes up.

WHY THIS WORKS

The 57 °C / 135 °F target is specific to Moulard magret. Lower (55 °C) produces rarer duck that some diners find too raw. Higher (59–60 °C) begins crossing into medium territory and loses some juiciness. 57 °C is the classical restaurant target for this cut, validated across French, American, and Japanese duck-cookery traditions. The two-hour time is NOT minimum required doneness — it's the optimal texture window. At 1.5 hours, the meat is safely cooked but texture is slightly less uniform. At 3–4 hours, texture degrades slightly as proteins over-denature. Two hours is the sweet spot. The SV bath also pasteurizes the duck — at 57 °C for 2 hours, the meat is food-safe even when served medium-rare, which is important for high-risk diners (pregnant, elderly, immunocompromised). Reference: *Sous Vide Mastery* chapter 7; *Protein Encyclopedia* chapter 4.

3

Make the Gastrique — 10 Minutes of Concentrated Magic

1. Heat a heavy-bottomed saucepan (light-colored interior — stainless steel ideal; black enameled cast iron makes color judgment hard) over medium-high heat. No oil, no butter — dry pan.
2. Add 100 g white granulated sugar in an even layer. Do NOT stir.
3. Watch the sugar. After 2-3 minutes, the edges will begin to melt and turn clear. Swirl the pan GENTLY to help the liquid pool reach the dry sugar. Still do NOT stir.
4. The sugar will progress through color stages: white → clear liquid → pale gold → amber → dark amber. The target is DARK AMBER — the color of aged whiskey or dark honey. This takes 5-7 minutes total.
5. Do NOT let it go past dark amber to black — burned caramel is bitter and ruins the sauce. If you are nervous about judging, err on the side of pulling slightly earlier (amber rather than dark amber).
6. When the caramel hits dark amber, immediately add the pre-mixed sherry vinegar + grapefruit juice (120 ml total). CAREFUL — STAND BACK. The 170+ °C caramel flash-boils the water in the liquid, producing violent bubbling and possibly caramel seizing. This is normal and expected.
7. Stir with a wooden spoon or heat-resistant spatula over medium heat. The seized caramel will re-dissolve into the hot liquid over 2-3 minutes. Keep stirring.
8. Add the star anise pods + chile flakes (+ grapefruit peel strip for ). Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer 5-7 minutes until syrupy — the sauce should coat the back of a spoon and hold a line when you drag your finger through it.
9. Remove from heat. Remove the star anise pods and peel (or leave them in for a rustic presentation). The gastrique can be held warm on the stovetop for up to 30 minutes until serving.

WHY THIS WORKS

The gastrique is a sugar-acid bridge that neither ingredient can produce alone. The caramelization of sugar at 170+ °C produces hundreds of flavor compounds — bitter (from partial decomposition), sweet (from remaining sucrose), and aromatic (furanones, diacetyl, maltol). The violent seizing when cold vinegar hits hot caramel is a phase-change phenomenon: the water in the vinegar flash-boils, the temperature shock causes dissolved sugar to briefly re-crystallize, then continued heating re-melts and integrates. The resulting syrup has the complex depth of caramel (sweet, bitter, aromatic) with the brightness of acid (sherry vinegar + grapefruit juice). The star anise adds anethole (also found in fennel, licorice, tarragon) which has a warming-spice character that complements duck fat specifically. White granulated sugar is preferred over raw cane for this technique because pure sucrose caramelizes cleanly and predictably; raw cane has residual molasses that interferes with the caramelization process. Pablo's March 8 lesson: trying to use raw cane sugar stalled the gastrique — document here so we remember. Reference: Sauces and Condiments chapter 9 (Gastriques); Food Science Core chapter 2 (Caramelization).

4

The Kamado Sear — Fat Render and Finish

1. While the gastrique rests, prepare the kamado. Lump charcoal filling 1/4 of the firebox (enough for 15–20 minute direct-heat window). No heat deflector — you want direct heat for this sear. Light with electric starter or chimney starter.
2. Target temperature: 260 °C / 500 °F. This is searing territory — hotter than the pizza setup. Bottom vent fully open, top vent fully open. Takes about 25–30 minutes from lighting to this temp.
3. Pull the sous-vide duck from the bath. Snip a corner of the bag and drain the liquid. Pat the duck completely dry with paper towels — every surface, especially the skin side. Any surface moisture will prevent proper searing (water boils before Maillard can start).
4. BURP the kamado dome (crack 5 cm open, wait 5 seconds, then fully open) to prevent flashback.
5. Place the duck SKIN-SIDE-DOWN directly on the grill. Close the dome.
6. The kamado will FLARE UP dramatically as duck fat drips into the coals — this is normal. The flare-up is actually contributing to the skin's crispy texture via radiant heat. Do not panic. Do not open the dome to extinguish. Let it work.
7. 8–10 minutes fat-side-down. This is the critical phase — the fat renders out through the scored channels, and the skin develops the dark-bronze crispy shell that defines proper magret.
8. At 8 minutes: burp the dome, open, check. The skin should be deeply bronzed with visible rendered fat pockets. If still pale: 2 more minutes. If dark enough: flip.
9. Flip the duck skin-up. Close the dome. 2 more minutes. This finishes the interior at the meat side and produces a light sear.
10. Pull the duck to a cutting board. Rest 5–8 minutes loosely tented with foil. Internal temperature should read 54–56 °C — it has risen slightly from the SV's 57 °C during the sear but not past medium-rare.
11. Rest is non-negotiable. Slicing immediately loses juices onto the cutting board. The 5–8 minute rest lets the juices redistribute through the meat.

WHY THIS WORKS

The kamado sear is the perfect finishing technique for SV duck because it solves three problems simultaneously. First, the direct 260 °C heat is enough to produce aggressive Maillard browning on the skin (Maillard requires 140+ °C surface temps). Second, the ceramic dome radiates heat from above, completing the sear on the meat-side flip without needing to cook the interior further (the SV already did that work). Third, the fat-drip-into-coals flare-up adds subtle smoke flavor that pan searing cannot produce. The 8-10 minute fat-side-down time is calibrated to render the remaining fat cap (after SV) to crispy without destroying the interior. Any shorter (5-6 min) leaves flabby spots; any longer (12+ min) overcooks the meat near the skin. The 2 minute skin-up finish is just enough to warm the meat side and add a light sear — don't extend past 2 minutes or you'll approach medium-well. Reference: Kamado Mastery chapter 5 (Direct Sear); Sous Vide Mastery chapter 7 (Post-SV Finishing).

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Pull duck, rest 30 min at room temp	30 min before bag	Even temperature throughout, no cold spots
Score fat 5 mm crosshatch + season + bag	10 min	Diamond pattern through fat, meat layer intact
SV 57 °C / 135 °F	2 hours	Bath stable, duck fully submerged
Light kamado, target 260 °C, direct heat no deflector	25-30 min (start 30 min before SV ends)	Dome reads 260 °C, lid burped before opening
Make gastrique (caramelize → deglaze → aromatics)	10-12 min	Dark amber caramel, syrupy coats spoon
Pull SV duck, pat COMPLETELY dry	2 min	No surface moisture, especially skin side
Kamado sear skin-DOWN	8-10 min	Flare-up expected, skin deeply bronzed when flipping
Flip skin-UP, finish 2 min	2 min	Internal temp 54-56 °C verified

STEP	TIME	CUE
Rest 5–8 min loosely foil-tented	5-8 min	Juices redistribute, temperature stabilizes
Slice against grain 5–8 mm, drizzle gastrique	3-5 min	Even slices, crispy skin visible on each, gastrique streak not flood

TROUBLESHOOTING

Emergency Protocols

GASTRIQUE SEIZED TOO HARD – SOLID SUGAR MASS AFTER VINEGAR ADDED

Keep heating over medium. The seized caramel WILL re-dissolve in 2–3 minutes of continuous stirring. If after 5 minutes it's still solid, add 2–3 tbsp more vinegar or water and continue heating. Lost cause only if the sugar burned before vinegar went in (then start over).

GASTRIQUE TOO THIN / WATERY

Continue simmering gently 3–5 more minutes. The sauce thickens as water evaporates. Target: coats the back of a spoon, holds a line when you drag a finger through it on the spoon. If still thin after 15 min total simmering, the ratio was off — start over with 100 g sugar to 100 ml liquid.

GASTRIQUE TOO THICK / CANDY-LIKE

Add 2–3 tbsp warm water, stir in gently over low heat. Consistency should be syrupy, not candy-glass. If truly solidified, the sauce has crystallized from excessive cooling — reheat gently with a splash of water.

CARAMEL WENT FROM AMBER TO BLACK BEFORE VINEGAR WENT IN

Start over. Burned caramel is bitter and unrecoverable. Next time: pull pan from heat 30 seconds before you think it's done — residual heat continues the cook, and dark amber is easier to pull slightly early than slightly late.

 **KAMADO FLARE-UP BECAME EXCESSIVE (FLAMES ENGULFING THE DUCK)**

Close the top vent 50% to reduce oxygen. Do NOT open the dome (lets in more oxygen). If flames are still excessive after 30 sec, move duck to cooler side of grill if possible. Normal flare-up is expected and actually contributes to flavor; dangerous flare-up is rare but possible with very fatty magret. Prevention: smaller charcoal fill, slightly lower target temp (230 °C instead of 260).

 **SKIN IS PALE AFTER 10 MINUTES FAT-SIDE-DOWN**

Kamado temp was too low OR duck wasn't dry enough. Continue 3–5 more minutes. If still pale after 15 min total, the temperature never reached searing range. Next time: verify dome thermometer reads 260 °C BEFORE putting duck on.

 **SKIN IS BURNED BLACK WHILE FAT UNDERNEATH IS STILL RUBBERY**

Fat wasn't scored deep enough, OR kamado was too hot. Lesson: score through full fat layer to meat; verify kamado temp. Can't save current duck — remove burned skin at slice time, serve sliced meat with gastrique to mask the missing skin.

 **INTERNAL TEMP PULLS AT 58-60 °C (PAST MEDIUM-RARE)**

Sear went too long OR SV was too hot. Serve immediately — medium duck is still good, just less juicy. Next time: pull at 2 min skin-up max, verify SV temp calibration.

 **DUCK TASTES FINE BUT GUESTS DON'T LIKE THE GASTRIQUE**

Serve gastrique ON THE SIDE (small ramekin) rather than pre-drizzled on the plate. Let guests add as much or as little as they want. Some palates prefer plain duck; others love the gastrique. Both camps are served by side-service.

 **MAKING FOR A DINNER PARTY – TIMING THE SV WINDOW**

SV the duck any time within 4 hours before service. Hold in ice bath if finished early (0 °C, pre-iced water + ice, 60+ min shelf life with no quality loss). Pull bags 20 min before sear to reach room temp. This is the restaurant prep pattern — SV is your friend for dinner-party timing.

Technique Notes

● **Universal: Score Before Bagging — Never After**

DUCK TECHNIQUE · PREP PROTOCOL · UNIVERSAL

The fat cap must be scored BEFORE the duck goes into the vacuum bag, never after. Post-bag scoring punctures the bag, causing moisture leak during the SV cook and ruining the pasteurization. The 5 mm crosshatch is the classical depth — deep enough to open channels for fat rendering, shallow enough to not puncture the red meat layer. Use a sharp paring knife, cut through skin and fat, stop at the red tissue layer. Rotate 90°, make the perpendicular cuts. The diamond pattern maximizes the surface-area-to-volume ratio for both SV fat rendering and kamado searing. This technique applies to any scored-skin application — pork belly, duck legs, chicken skins. Always score before the cook, never after. Reference: *Sous Vide Mastery* chapter 7; *Protein Encyclopedia* chapter 4 (Duck).

● **Universal: 57 °C is the Duck Magret Target**

SOUS VIDE · TEMPERATURE PRECISION · UNIVERSAL

57 °C / 135 °F is the classical medium-rare target for Moulard duck magret. Validated across French restaurant tradition, American specialty-meat suppliers, and modernist cookbooks. Lower (55 °C) produces rarer duck that some diners find too raw; higher (59–60 °C) begins crossing into medium territory and loses juiciness. 57 °C is the sweet spot. The 2-hour bath time is not minimum-safe-doneness — it's the optimal texture window. At 90 minutes, texture is slightly less uniform; at 3–4 hours, over-denaturation begins. Two hours is calibrated. For smaller, leaner Pekin breasts: 55 °C for 90 minutes. For Barbary (intermediate): 56 °C for 100 minutes. Reference: *Sous Vide Mastery* chapter 7.

● Universal: Pat Dry Before Sear — No Exceptions

MAILLARD · MOISTURE MANAGEMENT · UNIVERSAL

After pulling from the SV bath, the duck's skin side is covered in condensation from inside the bag. If you sear this wet duck, the water boils before Maillard can start (water boils at 100 °C; Maillard requires 140+ °C). The skin steams instead of browning. Result: pale, soggy, disappointing. The fix is simple: paper towels, obsessively dry every surface, especially the scored skin. Spend 2 full minutes patting — press into the score lines to absorb moisture. Only when the skin is bone-dry does it go onto the kamado. This rule applies to any sear-after-SV operation: steak, duck, pork chops, fish. Dry surface is non-negotiable. Reference: Sous Vide Mastery chapter 3 (Post-SV Finishing); Food Science Core chapter 2.

● Universal: White Sugar for Gastrique — Never Raw Cane

GASTRIQUE TECHNIQUE · PABLO'S MARCH 8 LESSON · UNIVERSAL

Pablo's March 8 duck magret cook revealed a gastrique failure mode: raw cane sugar (turbinado, demerara, muscovado) STALLS before caramelizing cleanly. The residual molasses in raw cane interferes with the caramelization process — the sugar partially dissolves, the color is difficult to judge (because the sugar already starts darker), and the final gastrique is muddy rather than clean. Use pure white granulated sugar for all gastriques. The caramelization proceeds predictably: white → clear → pale gold → amber → dark amber. Color judgment is easy. Flavor is cleaner. This lesson applies to all caramel-based techniques — gastriques, caramel sauce, pralines, brittle. Documented here so the March 8 error doesn't repeat. Reference: Sauces and Condiments chapter 9; Pantry and Staples chapter 7.

● No Limits: The SV + Kamado Two-Step Showcase

CROSS-TECHNIQUE • PABLO SIGNATURE • UNIVERSAL

Duck magret is the perfect showcase for the sous-vide + kamado two-step because the cut demands both precision interior cooking AND aggressive exterior rendering — neither single technique handles both well. The two-step: (1) SV at 57 °C for 2 hours handles interior. Impossible to overcook, edge-to-edge medium-rare, pasteurized for safety. (2) Kamado at 260 °C direct heat handles exterior. Crispy fat cap, Maillard crust, subtle smoke. Each technique does what it's best at; neither is asked to compromise. The same two-step pattern applies to: short ribs (SV 57/48 h → kamado sear finish — UMAMI-3 #2), pork belly (SV 63/12 h → kamado sear), lamb loin (SV 54/90 min → kamado sear), tuna steak (SV 42/30 min → kamado sear). This is the single highest-value technique bridge in Pablo's repertoire. Master once, apply everywhere. Reference: Sous Vide Mastery chapter 3; Kamado Mastery chapter 5; Cross-Technique Workflows chapter 4.

● No Limits: The Grapefruit-Star Anise Gastrique (Pablo Signature)

SAUCE • PABLO MARCH 8 PATTERN • SIGNATURE

The grapefruit-star anise gastrique is the Pablo signature for duck and pork belly. Formula: 100 g white sugar + 60 ml sherry vinegar + 60 ml grapefruit juice + 2 star anise + pinch chile flakes. The sherry vinegar adds Spanish oxidative character; the grapefruit adds citrus acid + slight bitter; the star anise adds warm spice depth (anethole specifically pairs with duck fat). The chile flakes add a subtle heat undertone. The finished gastrique is sweet-acid-spiced-citrus in every teaspoon — the universal rich-meat sauce. Variations work for other proteins: replace grapefruit with passion fruit for tropical pork belly; replace with fresh orange juice for classical-French-style citrus duck; replace with blood orange for winter dramatic. The base technique remains identical. Reference: Sauces and Condiments chapter 9.

What to Drink

Wine — Classical French

Pinot Noir (Burgundy or Oregon Willamette Valley)

Classical pairing. Pinot Noir's fruit-forward body and bright acidity match duck's richness while not competing with the gastrique. Burgundy is the regional French classic; Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot is the accessible American upgrade — softer tannins, similar brightness.

Wine — Spanish Alternative

Mencía (Bierzo) or Ribera del Duero Crianza

For Spanish-leaning dinner parties, Mencía from Bierzo (Galicia) is the duck equivalent of Pinot Noir — bright, complex, medium-bodied. Ribera del Duero Crianza adds more structure for richer duck preparations (e.g., paired with the braised Rabo de Toro). Both respect the Spanish axis of Pablo's repertoire.

Wine — Premium Burgundy

Premier Cru Burgundy (Gevrey-Chambertin, Chambolle-Musigny)

For formal French service with duck as the main: single-vineyard Burgundy is the pinnacle pairing. The elegance and complexity match the dish. Expensive (\$150+) but defining for a dinner-party flagship event.

Fortified Alternative

Aged Armagnac or Pedro Ximénez sherry (for after-dinner)

Armagnac is the classical French duck digestif — warming, grape-forward, aged brandy. Pedro Ximénez sherry is the Spanish equivalent — dark, raisin-forward, ultra-sweet. Either works as a perfect end to a duck-centered meal. Small pours, served in appropriate glassware.

Menu Ideas

French Classical Service (2-4 guests)

One magret per 2 guests. Accompaniments: roasted turnips, wilted spinach with butter and garlic, small drizzle of gastrique. Burgundy Pinot Noir pairing. Simple green salad after the main. Cheese course with an aged Comté or Epoisses. Dessert: poached pear with almond cream. The classical French bistro-style dinner, 90 minutes start to finish.

Pablo Spanish-Fusion (6-8 guests)

Scale to 3-4 magrets for 6-8 guests. Accompaniments: roasted stone fruit (grilled peaches or roasted plums) that complements the gastrique, crispy roasted baby potatoes, blistered shishito peppers. Mencía or Ribera del Duero wine pairing. Tapa board starter (jamón, Manchego, olives, pan con tomate on focaccia UMAMI-10 #2). Dessert: Spanish leche frita or crema catalana. The Pablo Sunday service — 2-3 hour meal.

Cross-Recipe Integration

Complements UMAMI-3 #2 Short Ribs (the 48 h braise is the sister SV-kamado recipe — totally different protein, identical technique philosophy); UMAMI-6 #1 Ibérico Secreto (the other SV-optional kamado showpiece); UMAMI-7 #2 Rabo de Toro (same dinner-party arc but heavier braise). The grapefruit gastrique works on any rich meat — port belly, duck legs, pork roast. Save rendered duck fat from this cook for later recipes (Rabo de Toro browning, potatoes, eggs). Zero-waste integration.

Pablo's March 8 Pattern — The Starting Cook

This is the recipe Pablo cooked first with Umami on March 8, 2026. Reproduce the original: 2 magrets, gastrique exactly as described, warm plates, sliced against the grain, small ramekin of gastrique on the side. The origin cook. Reference for anyone new to the SV+kamado technique — 35 minutes active work spread across 2.5 hours, maximum showcase for moderate effort. The recipe to serve when you want to demonstrate the technique philosophy Pablo is building across his collection.

YOUR NOTES

Cook Log

Session Notes

Date: _____ · Serves: _____ · Rating: __ / 5

Use this space to record what you changed, what worked, and what you'd do differently next time. Your future self will thank you.



Stop following recipes. Start understanding food.

