

# NATIONAL POST

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## A food fest, and they have a killer spa, too

'Auberge Le Baluchon might be the most remarkable places I've ever been'

**Amy Rosen, National Post**

Earlier this year, while enjoying a perfectly Canadian horse-pulled sleigh ride at Auberge Le Baluchon, in Saint-Paulin, Que., I got to thinking that this may be one of the most remarkable places I've ever been. Not only do they have a killer spa and a waterfall-flanked boardwalk, but, in winter, there's five kilometres of river skating, dog-sledding, winter horseback riding, a grand cabane a sucre -- all of these activities seamlessly switching over to summer's hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking and geocaching.

But I was especially struck by their new Eco-Cafe; a rustic, chic spot that serves and sells products from more than 35 local producers, promoting sustainable local foods and culinary traditions. It's a gustatory showcase for the Mauricie region's flavours and natural production methods, not to mention being a tasty learning experience. For example, a deer and boar sausage combo plate details where the two different sausages come from, as well as the farm from which the accompanying french-fried potatoes were sourced. And obviously, you'll need a local beer to wash it all down.

At the inn's main house, things are a bit more upscale, as you dine on the French and Quebecois cuisine of Chef Patrick Gerome, an early proponent of using organic ingredients from the area's terroir, such as those found in this simply delicious duck dish.

### LOCAL DUCK BREAST IN BUCKWHEAT BEER AND MAPLE SYRUP

(Serves 4)

- 4 duck breasts
- 4 shallots, chopped
- 14 grams oyster mushrooms
- ¼cup maple syrup
- ¼cup buckwheat beer

- salt and pepper

1. Score the fat on duck breasts without going all the way through to the flesh. Cook duck breasts in a frying pan, skin side down, until much of fat renders out. About six minutes. Flip and continue cooking until medium rare. Remove from pan and set aside to rest.

2. Drain off most of the fat and add mushrooms and shallots. Deglaze with beer and maple syrup, reduce to a saucy consistency and season to taste. Slice rested duck and spoon sauce ovetop.

-Amy Rosen is the food editor at Canadian House & Home magazine.

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