Apple Duck & Apple Swan

INGREDIENTS: For each bird: 1 large Red Delicious apple, 1/4 cup lemon juice in a saucer.
TOOLS & SUPPLIES: Paring knife, 6-inch knife, 1 wooden pick and apple duck and swan patterns.
TIPS & TIMING: Duck takes 10 minutes; swan a few minutes more. Birds can be made 2 days ahead. The lemon juice keeps them from browning. Dip: every wedge and head in juice as soon as they are completed. For storing, leave wings unextended. Wrap birds tightly and refrigerate. If you display 2 ducks (or swans) with their beaks touching, carve 1 head with beak facing right and other facing left.
USES: Centerpieces for platters and cheese boards. Free-standing table decorations.
DUCK

1. Remove stem. Set apple on stem end. Take a slice off 1 side, starting with blade going down through 2 of the little bumps and cutting straight down. Place your apple duck pattern on flat side of this slice with beak pointing toward end with bumps. If you're right-handed, have beak pointing to right. Lightly trace outline into apple. Remove and wipe pattern dry.

Block-cut around traced design (see illustration). It is important to hold your knife at a right angle as you cut. Begin saw cutting at front of beak. Saw cut with your paring knife using short, gentle strokes. Cut along top of beak going up over head and down back of neck in 1 continuous move. See second illustration on page 59 for example. Now, cut front of neck and bottom of beak. Shave square edge off top of beak on fleshy side. You can also trim a bit of skin from top of beak; but do not cut any of forehead away. Set aside.

2. There are 3 sets of wings. Imagine the apple's stem end is a clock face. Begin the first set at the top-12 o'clock. The wedge runs lengthwise from end to end. The first wedge is a little over 1 inch long and up to 1/4 inch wide at its middle. The walls of each successive wedge are as thick as a nickel. Make 5 V-shaped wedges, or more. Stop before you reach middle of apple.
3. The L-shaped side wing sets begin at 2:30 and 9:30. If you're right-handed, begin at 2:30 (right side). After cutting the right set, turn apple around so left side is now on your right; make final set. It’s much easier to always cut side wings in from the side you naturally hold your knife.

4 To attach the duck head, trim fleshy side of bottom of neck so it fits snugly in stem end of top V-shaped cavity. Stick a toothpick straight down into apple; slip neck onto toothpick. To set wings in place, first reconstruct apple. Place all wing sections back in their original positions, then push sections of each wing back, separating them. Make smallest wedge in top set stick up by cutting a little cross slit into second smallest wedge, then slip 1 end of smallest wedge into slit.

SWAN
1. Follow general method for duck. Position swan pattern so head is at narrow end of apple slice. Block cut it out, then saw cut pattern with paring knife. Trim fleshy side of beak to a point at skin side.
2. Make 3 primary wing sets as for duck, using the 6-inch knife. If there is room, make 2 or 3 tiny wedges in ribs of uncut apples between primary cavities, making 2 extra small wings for a more delicate look.
3. Mount head at narrow (flower) end of apple. Reconstruct apple and extend wings back from head.