

## THE DOMESTIC DUCK

Nearly all farmyard ducks in Britain are descended from the wild mallard. Though certain breeds are kept for egg production, most, including the Aylesbury, are generally kept for the table. There are around a million domestic ducks in Britain mainly reared in small units or on mixed farms. There are a few large specialist duck breeders left, mainly in Lincolnshire, and there are none now around Aylesbury.

Although hardy and easy to look after, the domestic duck does not take well to intensive breeding methods, and duck meat is usually more expensive than chicken or turkey. A domestic duck likes to forage for itself, eating grass and other vegetation and digging up worms. A duck depends on the farmer for its extra food, such as mash or cereals. It is a messy creature, but cheap to house. Ducks like to have a pond, river or water trough in easy reach, and ideally should be enclosed overnight, both to preserve them from foxes and because ducks lay eggs in the early morning, and are apt to drop them anywhere.

The best known laying breeds are the Indian Runner and the Khaki Campbell, which can lay up to 300 eggs a year — comparable with the domestic hen. Other breeds like the Aylesbury, the Muscovy, Pekin and Rouen are farmed for their meat, and only lay 30–60 eggs a year.

Duck eggs take 28 days to hatch and the ducklings can run and pick up food within a few hours; but they depend on their mother for warmth until they are 3 or 4 weeks old. They then grow quickly, and can reach a weight of 6 lbs at 10 weeks old.

## AYLESBURY

### Duck Dinner



TUESDAY, 11th OCTOBER 1988

at

THE WALTON LOUNGE

of

THE CIVIC CENTRE, AYLESBURY