

And the hunt is on...

You may have noticed the specs of blaze orange peppered through out the woods on your morning commute or the guy pumping gas into his pick'em up truck at the local station dressed head to toe in camo. If you grew up in Clinton County you just "know," but if you've recently settled in the country of southwestern Ohio these are just two reminders that deer season is here.

I've been deer hunting before...not a pretty sight. I'm convinced that friends take me along for exactly the same reason they take me out to play golf...comedy relief! On the other hand, the eating part that follows is all business and can be an extraordinary dining experience.

The first time I enjoyed fresh venison was years ago on a trip to the Burgundy region of France. The meal was incredible and left me wanting more. Don't be hoodwinked into thinking that only hunters really appreciate well-prepared venison. It's served in some of the finest restaurants in the world. So let's start thinking "out-of-the-box!"

A supply of fresh venison in the freezer is a great thing when combined with the ability to cook it without turning it into a dish that looks, chews and tastes like old shoe leather. Remember that venison is extremely lean and how you prepare it will be based on *that fact* above and beyond anything else.

Rule of thumb is that tender cuts from the saddle, loin, tenderloin and hind leg are best cooked over high heat for a short amount of time, this means that steaks, chops and strip loins are best when broiled, sautéed or grilled quickly. Some would argue with me but these cuts should be served while they're *still slightly crimson*; if they're gray, they're overcooked!

Tougher cuts of meat are best prepared by searing them until brown over high heat in a good light olive oil, then slowly roasting them in a 225° to 250° F. oven. You can also get great results with your crock-pot keeping your cook temperature low with copious amounts of broth or wine in the pot and slowly cooking your roast for several hours. Fork tender tells you when you're done.

One last suggestion on venison that has been harvested wild is to use a great marinade to tame down the flavor and season the meat. The amount of "wildness" in your venison does vary from animal to animal and there are a lot of theories as to what makes that difference. Regardless, we use a favorite marinade to insure top results.

Here's our's:

- 1 bottle of hearty red wine (Pinot Noir, Shiraz or Zinfandel)
- 1 chopped large yellow onion
- 2 heaping tablespoons of minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon of dried rosemary

1 tablespoon of dried thyme
1 cup of extra virgin olive oil

Now that you've got all that meat in the freezer it's time to start enjoying it. Here is a favorite recipe that is delicious and really simple!

Roasted Loin of Venison with Pecan Crust

Preheat oven to 425° F.
Combine in a small bowl:

1-cup ground pecans
½ cup Italian breadcrumbs
2 tablespoons of chopped flat leaf parsley
2 tablespoons good extra virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons fresh ground pepper
dash of salt

Take a boneless venison loin roast, trimmed, and give it a great rubdown with enough extra virgin olive oil to well coat it. Coat the venison on all sides with your nut and breading mixture and press it firmly into the meat until it adheres. Place your roast in a roasting pan with a rack and insert your remote meat probe thermometer into the center of the roast. Position the roast as close to center as you can in your oven.

For rare your cooking time will be roughly 7 minutes per pound (110° to 115° F.); for medium rare about 8 minutes per pound (120° to 125° F.); or for medium figure 10 minutes per pound (130° to 135° F.). Remember as with beef roasts to let the meat rest at least 5 minutes before slicing.

Venison is highly flavored meat and demands a wine that can stand up to its assertive nature. Our choice to compliment it would be a great old vine Zinfandel, a robust Australian Shiraz or a great Pinot Noir from Carneros in California. Here are a few specific brands to look for:

- 2000 Rosemont “Hill of Gold” Shiraz
- 2003 Definitive Carneros Pinot Noir
- 1999 Peirano Estate Vineyards “Old Vine” Zinfandel – Lodi

If you're not a big fan of dry red wines there are also some terrific late harvest reds that are fruity in style but not overtly sweet. These would work just as well. Here are a couple suggestions:

- 2003 Nemes Kadarka from Hungary

- 2003 Pelee Island Winery Late Harvest Merlot from Canada

As always, call us if we can be of help at 888-288-0668 and enjoy your feast!