Venison Curry

By Tom Dickson | Preparation time: 30 minutes | Cooking time: 30 minutes to 2 hours | Serves 6

When I first began dating my future wife, we spent a lot of time hanging out at her parents’ home. Her father, a doctor who immigrated to the United States from Burma (Myanmar) in the late 1950s, had recently retired. For recreation, he liked to cook Burmese cuisine, which is influenced by Chinese, Indian, and Thai dishes. On Saturday nights after Lisa and I returned to her parents’ home from a movie or concert, we’d be hit with the welcoming aroma of cinnamon, coriander, ginger, turmeric, cloves, and more from dishes like biryani or beef curry. A big bowl would be left out for the two of us.

After we moved to Montana, I set out to re-create that scrumptious curry, using venison rather than beef. I experimented but could never quite capture the taste of what I remembered. Finally I hit upon the right mix of ingredients that transported me back to that aromatic kitchen.

The ingredients list is long, but don’t be deterred. All items are available in most Montana grocery stores. And the cooking process is easy: Brown the meat and onions, add everything else, then stick the pot into the oven for a few hours. Pay bills or watch TV while it cooks.

This recipe is a great way to use venison neck meat, shanks, and the sinewy portions of the shoulder. These cuts contain collagen and connective tissue that break down and make the meat fork-tender during the slow, moist, low-heat cooking process known as braising. If using beef, the best cut is a chuck roast.

If all you have in the freezer are venison steaks and roasts—which usually come from the hindquarters—you can still make this dish. Simply cook it hotter and faster. It won’t be as good as with a slow braise, but it will still be delicious.

—Tom Dickson is editor of Montana Outdoors.