

Venison Steak au Poivre with Red Wine Sauce

By Tom Dickson | Preparation time: 30 minutes | Cooking time: 10 minutes | Yield: 4 servings



INGREDIENTS

- 1½ lbs. venison loin or other steaks (4–6 small steaks about 1-inch thick)
- Salt
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed to a paste
- ½ t. coriander seeds, lightly toasted and ground, or pre-ground
- ½ t. fennel seeds, lightly toasted and ground, or pre-ground
- 2 t. coarsely crushed black peppercorns, or pre-ground
- 2 T. olive oil
- 1 T. butter
- 2 shallots, minced
- ½ c. red wine
- 2 c. chicken or beef broth (homemade if possible)
- 2 T. butter

DIRECTIONS

Season steaks with salt. Sprinkle with garlic, coriander, fennel, and black pepper. Drizzle with olive oil. Rub to coat evenly with spices on both sides. Let marinate at room temperature for 15 minutes (or refrigerate for up to 4 hours and bring to room temperature before cooking).

Make the red wine sauce: Melt 1 T. butter over medium-high heat and add shallots. Cook, stirring, until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Add wine and simmer until reduced by half. Add broth and reduce until 1 cup sauce remains, about 10 minutes. Turn off heat and swirl in remaining butter to thicken. Season with salt, set aside and keep warm.

Set a wide cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat (or use 2 smaller pans). When hot, lay in steaks and sear for 2 minutes, until nicely browned. Flip and cook 1 minute more for rare, 2 minutes for medium rare. Arrange steaks on a platter or individual plates. Spoon wine sauce over each steak. Serve with mashed potatoes or French or steak fries. ■

Why do the dishes served in fine restaurants taste so good? One reason is that highly trained chefs have years of experience. It's like any profession, where the experts usually do a better job than the amateurs—in this case, us home cooks.

Top chefs also use fresh ingredients, make their sauces and broths from scratch, and add much more butter, cream, and salt than most of us do.

Finally, there's presentation. Top food establishments pay nearly as much attention to how a dish looks on the plate—arrangement, color, texture—as they do to how it tastes. If a dish appears delicious, the odds are much better that the customer will find it so.

Those of us working to improve our game cooking skills can take a page from the professionals: Add a bit more salt, butter, and cream (on special occasions for special dishes), spend the time to make more elements from scratch, and try to emulate the beautiful images featured in cookbooks and on websites.

The two recipes here are fairly easy to make and produce those luscious flavors so regularly found at high-end restaurants. ■

—Tom Dickson is the Montana Outdoors editor.

Braised Leeks and Carrots (*Zeytinyağlı Pırasa*)

This elegant Turkish side dish is a delicious accompaniment to any type of wild game, especially venison. Heat ¼ c. olive oil over medium-high heat in a saucepan until shimmering. Add 3 large, cleaned leeks (keep only the white and light green section) and 2 to 3 carrots, all cut into ¼-inch rounds beforehand. Add 3 minced garlic cloves. Season with kosher salt, black pepper, 1 t. ground cumin, and 1 t. ancho chili powder or paprika. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes, until the vegetables begin to soften, stirring regularly.



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