

For Harris and Family, Venison is What's for Dinner



Scott and Stacy Harris join forces to prepare another wild game meal for the family (photo courtesy of Stacy Lyn Harris)

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For someone who is now one of venison's biggest fans, celebrity chef and sustainable living guru Stacy Lyn Harris admits that when she married in 1993, deer meat was not high on her favorite foods list.

"When we got married, he was hunting about every weekend and almost every morning before work," Harris said of her husband, Dr. Scott Harris, a dentist in Montgomery. "I told him we needed to have a talk about that, and it didn't go over great. As you can tell, I'm the one who bent; he didn't. So, we had a lot of venison in the freezer, and I really didn't like it very much. It was tough. I don't like to work that hard for my food. I want it to melt in my mouth and taste delicious.

"I thought, I've got to do something to make this palatable because I'm not going to eat it if it isn't great. It took a while, but I learned how to cook each piece that came off the deer. It was a challenge, but once I reached that pinnacle of making that first dish great, I said, OK, I can do this. Now, venison is the best meat, in my opinion, of any meat."

Mother of seven, author, speaker, gardener, photographer, lawyer and TV host of The Outdoor Channel's "The Sporting Chef," Harris said the first dish she made great was Venison Parmesan, which is served with pasta and marinara sauce.

Venison Parmesan

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds venison loin

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

3 extra-large eggs

2 cups Panko breadcrumbs, dried and seasoned

1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, plus extra for serving

2 tablespoons oil of choice

2 teaspoons butter

1 cup basic tomato sauce

Parsley, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

Slice venison into 1-inch pieces. Pound to 1/4 inch thick.

In a plate, mix flour, salt and pepper. On a second plate, beat the eggs with 1 tablespoon of water. On a third plate, mix Panko breadcrumbs and Parmesan cheese.

Lightly dredge venison in the flour mixture, then the egg wash and then the Parmesan Panko mixture.

Heat oil and butter in large cast iron skillet or sauté pan. Cook venison for about 2 minutes over medium heat on each side or until browned. Place pieces on cooling rack.

Place each piece of venison on a plate and serve with basic tomato sauce or your favorite marinara sauce. Top with fresh parsley.

Of course, Harris said the key to tasty venison is how the animal is cared for after it's harvested, and she said her husband has it down pat.

"He taught me how, but he pretty much does it," she said. "I do help package it. Here in the South, we go ahead and cut it up. We don't hang the deer because we don't have a walk-in cooler. We butcher the deer and put it on ice. I set up a draining system (<https://stacylynharris.com/ten-tips-to-know-when-preparing-venison/>) where I can age the deer 10 days in the refrigerator to help it become tender before we package it and put it in the freezer. If you don't get to age your venison as long as you wanted, put a fan on and let it dry out. It makes it brown a lot better."

I made it really tough on Harris by asking her to name some of her favorite venison recipes among the multitude that are available on www.stacylynharris.com. After much pondering, she was able to pick out the recipes below.



Harris's Venison Chili Con Carne is an award-winning dish (photo courtesy of Stacy Lyn Harris).

Venison Chili Con Carne

INGREDIENTS

1 16-ounce can of tomatoes diced

3 teaspoons minced canned chipotle chili in adobe sauce

5 slices bacon finely chopped

4 pounds venison stew meat cut into 1/2-inch cubes

Kosher salt and pepper

olive oil

1 large yellow onion chopped

1 jalapeño chili pepper seeded and chopped

1 can kidney beans

3 tablespoons chili powder

1½ teaspoons ground cumin

1½ teaspoons oregano

4 cloves garlic minced

1 dash cinnamon

4 cups beef broth

1 tablespoon packed brown sugar

2 tablespoons yellow corn mix

INSTRUCTIONS

Place tomatoes and chipotle chili in a food processor and puree until smooth (this should only take about 10 seconds). In a Dutch oven, cook the bacon over medium heat until crisp. Transfer bacon to paper towel. Leave the fat in the pan.

Pat venison dry and season with salt and pepper. Heat the fat until smoking hot. Brown half of the venison. Do not crowd the pan or the meat will steam instead of brown. This should take about 6 to 8 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to bowl and repeat.

Add the olive oil, onion and jalapeño to Dutch oven and cook for about 5 minutes or until softened. Stir in kidney beans, chili powder, cumin, oregano, garlic and dash of cinnamon. Cook for about 30 seconds. Stir in broth, tomato mixture and brown sugar and bring to a boil. Add the meat to the Dutch oven, and then reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, for 1 hour. Uncover and simmer for about 30 minutes longer.

Ladle 1 cup of the chili liquid into medium-sized bowl and stir in yellow corn mix. Whisk mixture into chili and simmer until chili thickens. Check seasonings. Serve with a dollop of sour cream or cheese and jalapeño cornbread.

Venison Bourguignon

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil

8 ounces of bacon diced

3 pounds venison hindquarter cut into 1-inch pieces

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 large Vidalia onions chopped

4 carrots sliced diagonally into 1-inch chunks

2 teaspoons chopped garlic (2 cloves)

2 cups quality red wine

2½ cups canned beef broth

1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves

1 pound mushrooms thickly sliced

½ stick unsalted butter at room temperature divided

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

INSTRUCTIONS

Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven or stockpot over medium heat.

Add the bacon and cook over medium heat for 8 to 10 minutes or until the bacon is lightly browned. Remove the bacon with a slotted spoon.

Salt and pepper venison. In very hot skillet, add a single layer of venison and brown it on all sides, working in batches. Do not crowd the pan or the meat will steam instead of brown. Set aside.

Place onions and carrots into the stockpot. Cook over medium heat for approximately 10 minutes or until the onions are lightly browned. Add garlic and cook for one minute longer. Add the wine and broth into pot. Add the venison, bacon, tomato paste and thyme into pot. Bring to a boil. When it reaches a boil, turn it to low and simmer for about 2 hours.

Sauté mushrooms in 2 tablespoons of butter until lightly browned. Add to stew.

Thicken the stew by mixing 1/4 cup of water, 2 tablespoons of flour and 2 tablespoons of butter. Pour mixture into pot. Simmer for about 5 minutes.

Garnish with parsley and serve with crusty bread and butter.

“I prepare that around Christmas each year, and we serve it over mashed potatoes,” Harris said.



Stacy Lyn Harris and daughter Graylin prepare venison dishes for an outdoor writers conference at Lakepoint State Park on Lake Eufaula (photo by David Rainer)

Cocoa-Crusted Venison

INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup ground coffee

¼ cup cocoa

2½ tablespoons salt

1 tablespoon brown sugar

1 teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

½ venison tenderloin

Olive oil for browning

Berry Reduction

1½ cups blackberries

½ cup blueberries

½ cup cabernet sauvignon wine

¼ cup sugar

1 lemon, juiced

Kosher salt to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a medium-sized bowl, mix ground coffee, cocoa, salt, brown sugar, cinnamon and cayenne pepper. Rub mixture into loin.

Heat olive oil in cast iron skillet to almost smoking. Place loin into skillet and brown on all sides. After browning, place loin in oven for 4 to 5 minutes to continue cooking until loin reaches 125-130 degrees internal temperature.

Remove to a cutting board. Let rest for at least 5 minutes.

Slice into 1-inch pieces on a platter and spoon berry reduction on top of venison. Sprinkle Kosher salt over the sliced loin.

Berry Reduction

Place blackberries, blueberries, red wine, sugar and lemon juice in a small saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to simmer and reduce by half. Season with salt.

"I usually use tenderloins, but you can use backstraps," Harris said. "If people are like me, I save the tenderloins. My family probably averages taking 13 deer or so a year, so I'll save tenderloins for this dish. I made that just recently. I served it over goat cheese with blueberry jelly instead of the reduction on top. It was delicious."

Another of Stacy Lyn's favorite wild game recipes is Venison and Turkey Masala.

Visit https://stacylynharris.com/wprm_print/11257 for that recipe.

Despite her busy family life and work schedule, Harris recently finished her latest book, *Love Language of the South*. It will be available the first of March.

"It's a celebration of the food and hospitality in my Southern home," Harris said. "I have a lot of my favorite recipes from when I was growing up. And I have a chapter called *Hunting and Fishing and Loving Every Minute*, and another chapter about my husband. Those two chapters have wild game recipes."

Visit www.hachettebookgroup.com/titles/stacy-lyn-harris/love-language-of-the-south/9781546004264/ to find links to purchase the book.

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