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By

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In This Article



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Although some folks balk at eating wild game, when prepared the right way, venison's flavor and texture can surpass any other red meat. It can also be healthier—venison is lower in fat and cholesterol and higher in Vitamin B6, B12, and Omega 3 fatty acids.¹

I cook it five nights a week, along with [heirloom produce from our garden](#), for my husband and our seven children. As the author of field-to-table cookbooks and the [website](#), my passion is sharing recipes and tips for how to cook venison and for harvesting and preparing other foods from the field, garden, and the chicken coop.

Read on to find out the five things you should know about how to cook venison.

Stacy Pilgreen-Harris is the author of the blog [Stacy Lyn Harris](#) and several books including [Recipes and Tips for Sustainable Living](#).

1. Don't Overcook Venison

The number one mistake people make when preparing venison is that they overcook it, rendering the meat rubbery and gamey. Tender cuts of venison should be served rare or medium rare unless you are braising it or mixing it with pork to add more fat. Keeping venison [tender](#) comes down to how you cook and season it.

2. Pick The Right Cooking Method

Naturally tender cuts like loins and tenderloin take well to high-heat grilling, pan searing, or stuffing and trussing and should be served rare to medium rare.

Tougher muscles from the shoulder, shank or neck should be braised or stewed [low and slow](#).

The hindquarter cut is incredibly versatile and can be cut into steaks, tenderized, and cooked just like the loin; cut into cubes for low and slow method; use it in sauces; cut into strips across the grain and used in salads, [fajitas](#), burritos, or on sandwiches. I also cut the hindquarter into 1-inch thick steaks, pound them, bread and pan-fry them to make Parmesan Venison, Country Fried Steak or Venison Scaloppine.

3. Use Dry Rubs And Marinades

Most of my [dry rubs](#) contain salt and also coffee or ginger, which break down the enzymes in the meat, tenderizing it without making it mushy like some of the other tenderizers do.

[Marinades](#) rely on acids such as wine, vinegar, or lemon or lime juice to denature the proteins. I marinate in a zip top bag for easy clean up.

4. Age Your Venison

If you're using a processor to process your deer meat, he or she has probably already aged the meat for you. Ask them about their methods.

At home, I prefer dry aging venison before freezing it. To dry age, refrigerate the meat on a rack set over a pan at steady temperature of 34 to 37 degrees for at least seven days and up to 14 days.² To wet age, [thaw the meat in the refrigerator](#) in its vacuum-sealed packaging, and refrigerate it for up to 14 days in the refrigerator.

5. Don't Substitute Venison For Beef

Don't substitute it in beef recipes. Deer have less fat and marbling than corn-fed beef. The upside is flavor; deer forage on grass, herbs, acorns, among other plants, while cattle eat a corn and grain-based diet. This depth of flavor is why many of the top restaurants charge such high prices for venison on their menus.