

Venison Dumplings

by Chef Brian Henry

Venison is a term used to describe any meat harvested from moose, elk, and caribou. Antelope and gazelles also fall under the name of venison. Venison is a dark red, fine grained meat. It is exceptionally lean and what fat it does contain is quite high in polyunsaturates.

Personally I'm often leery of venison harvested from the wilds of northern Ontario. The term gamy is often used to describe its flavour. I find that its flavour is more associated with its diet, which in Northern Ontario is often bark, twigs and leaves. Wild venison from the Kawartha's tends to consume a large amount of corn in its diet from the farmers fields which yields a more palatable flavour that does not need to be masked with strongly flavoured spices or sauces.

I find that it's relatively easy too obtain wild Kawartha venison even if you are not a hunter for it seems that in these parts of the world we all know a friend or a relative who takes part in the hunt.

There is another option for obtaining venison in our area and that is at the Saturday Farmer's Market in Peterborough. Antler Acres is a local producer of antibiotic and hormone free elk. It makes for a terrific ingredient in this weeks recipe for Asian style dumplings.

Venison Dumplings

2 cups Napa cabbage shredded
1 tsp salt
1 lb ground elk, or pork
4 green onions minced
2 cloves garlic minced
1 egg beaten
1 tbsp ginger grated
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tsp sesame oil
¼ tsp pepper

For the filling:

In a medium sized bowl toss together the cabbage with the salt. Allow the cabbage to rest for 20 minutes. Squeeze the excess liquid out of the cabbage, allowing it to remain moist but not wet. In a large bowl combine the cabbage with remaining ingredients. Mix the ingredients together by hand until evenly incorporated. This yields enough filling for 5 dozen dumplings.

For the Dumplings:

2 packages of Chinese dumpling wrappers
¼ cup cornstarch
1 cup of water

Lightly dust a baking sheet with the cornstarch. Using your finger, wet the edge of the wrapper with water. Place 2 tsp. of the filling in the centre, fold the wrapper over and pinch the edges together. Pleat the edge by pinching the wrapper a few times around its edge. Stand the finished dumplings on the dusted baking sheet. Cover with a tea towel.

Dumplings can be stored covered in the refrigerator for up to six hours. You may choose to freeze the dumplings uncovered on a tray, once frozen transfer them to an airtight container and store frozen for up to three months.

The dumplings may be cooked fresh or from frozen by steaming, boiling or frying. My preference is to fry them. Pre-heat a cast iron or non-stick pan over medium-high heat. Add 3 tbsp of vegetable oil and fill the pan with dumplings but do not allow them to touch. After 2-3 minutes of frying, pour ½ cup of water into pan and cover with a tight fitting lid. Cook covered until dry and all splattering ceases. Remove lid and fry until bottoms are golden brown. Serve with rice vinegar, soy and chilli sauces for dipping.



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