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REMOVING AND CLEANING THE TOPSIDE, BULLET & THICK FLANK

- 1 Carefully follow the bone from the top to the bottom of the joint and remove it by working your way around it then divide the joint into two where the bone was.
- 2 You will notice that the largest joint has a thin piece of meat that runs around the outside of it, this is the thin flank. Remove this by cutting along the seam and not into the muscle. Below this you will find two joints, the topside and the bullet.
- 3 You can separate these two joints with your fingers.
- 4 The joint on the other side also has an outer piece of meat that once removed will give you a round-shaped joint, this is the thick flank.
- 5 Remove any sinew from the outer parts of the joints carefully, as you will be pan frying, roasting or stir frying these joints. Any sinew on the outside of these joints will make them tough and curl up, as they do not have time to break down when cooking this way.



CUTS & JOINTS FROM THE HAUNCH

The Whole Haunch:

Whole Haunch: A classic roasting joint which is slow roasted and cooked no more than medium. It can be larded to give a little extra fat.

Open-Boned Haunch: A great joint to cook on a BBQ. It will not take long to cook and will be a fantastic centrepiece on the table.

From the Shank:

The Shank: a slow-cooking joint with lots of flavour, but one that will take time to cook. Do not rush it or it will go dry.

Osso Bucco: the shank cut through the bone into 4cm thick pieces: a slow-cooking cut with lots of flavour which takes a long time to cook. Do not rush it or it will go dry.

The Topside and Silverside:

Both these joints produce fantastic steaks. Cut them as small or large as you like, pan fry or flame grill them, but never cook to well done. The most you will want these is medium otherwise, because of the lack of fat, they will be dry and tough.

The Bullet and Salmon Cuts:

Both these joints are small and best used for a stir-fry or kebabs. They are tender as long as not over-cooked. The bullet has an artery halfway along that runs through the middle of the joint. Remove this before using.

The Thick Flank:

The thick flank can be used for steaks and also for paves. It's a cut used extensively and, dare I say, invented by my good friend Mike Robinson. These can be flame grilled or pan fried.

The D-Shaped Rump:

The rump can be left as a single sharing joint. The portions you will get depend on the size and species of deer. The rump can also be cut into portions but this can be wasteful, I think. It can be cooked as a slow-roast joint or as a pot roast.

The Off-Cuts:

The off-cuts and trimmings left from preparing the haunch will give you both dice or mince to use in a wide range of recipes.



Herb-rolled venison cannon with girolle mushrooms

(SADDLE & FILLET)

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

4 x 150g cannons of venison

salt and pepper

oil for frying

20g butter

50g girolle mushrooms, cleaned and cut in half if large

300ml venison jus (*see page 149*)

2 tbsp chopped chervil

2 tbsp chopped flat leaf parsley

2 tbsp chopped chives

The cannon is a cut from the loin and is one of the most popular cuts used by chefs. It is boneless and very tender. If you were using beef instead of venison, the cannon would be the equivalent of the beef sirloin.

The venison cannon requires very little cooking, just sealing and roasting in the oven for 7-8 mins, no more, followed by a resting period of 4 mins before carving.

METHOD

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C.

Season the venison cannons. Heat a small amount of oil in a pan to smoking hot then seal the venison on all sides.

Remove the venison from the pan and place on a baking tray and put in oven for 4 mins. Turn the cannons over and cook for a further 4 mins then remove and allow to rest for 4 mins in a warm place.

While the venison is cooking, melt the butter in the same pan you sealed the venison in, add the mushrooms and cook briefly over a high heat.

Add 150ml of the jus and bring to the boil allowing it to thicken to the consistency of double cream then keep warm.

Take the rest of the jus and reduce by half.

Place the chopped herbs in a shallow dish. Holding the cannons at each end with finger and thumb, roll them in the reduced venison jus and then in the herbs. Don't worry about covering the ends. Place each cannon on a piece of cling-film and roll it in the cling-film twice over and twist the ends. This is to help the herbs to stick to the meat.

Slice then remove cling-film and serve with venison jus, mushrooms and potato purée.



Venison lasagne (MINCE & DICE)

Serves 6

Lasagne is an Italian classic normally made with beef mince but venison mince is a great alternative, as it is low in fat and full of flavour. My wife Charlotte loves this recipe and I often make it at home to freeze and eat at a later date.

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE MEAT SAUCE

1 litre venison stock or dark chicken stock
 light olive oil
 1kg venison, minced
 1 onion, finely chopped
 2 cloves of garlic, very finely chopped
 1 large carrot, finely chopped
 2 sticks of celery, finely chopped
 2 tsp tomato purée
 1 sprig thyme
 1 tsp chopped oregano
 1 bay leaf
 50g plain flour
 2 x 400g tins of chopped tomatoes

CHEESE SAUCE

500ml milk
 ½ onion
 1 bay leaf
 2 cloves
 50g butter
 50g plain flour
 75g cheddar cheese, grated
 25g parmesan, grated

400g fresh or dried pasta sheets

METHOD

In a saucepan bring the venison stock to the boil and keep warm.

Place a little oil in a large saucepan. When hot, fry half the mince until cooked then remove from the pan. Add some more oil to the pan, reheat and fry the rest of the meat and again remove from pan.

In the same pan cook the onion and garlic in a little oil without colouring. After 5 mins add the carrot and celery and fry for 4-5 mins, then add the meat, stir well, add the tomato purée and herbs and cook for 4 mins. Stir in the flour well, add the tinned tomatoes and cook for a further 5 mins. Add the hot stock and bring to the boil.

Cook over a gentle heat for at least an hour and a half. If it becomes too thick, add some more stock. Correct seasoning and allow to cool before using.

Put the milk, ½ onion, bay leaf and cloves in a saucepan. Bring to the boil then turn off and keep warm. In a separate saucepan melt the butter, stir in the flour and mix to form a roux. Cook for about 2 mins then pull off the heat and allow to cool slightly. Remove the onion, bay leaf and cloves from the milk then place the roux back on the stove over a gentle heat. Stir a third of the milk into the roux, mixing well until smooth, then add another third, stirring again until smooth and then the final third. Turn the heat very low and allow to cook for 30 mins then add 25g of the cheddar cheese and all the Parmesan to the sauce, stir well, then allow to cool.

Once the meat and cheese sauces have cooled down, take a deep oven-proof dish and start by spooning a little of the cheese sauce into the dish, then place some of the pasta leaves onto the sauce. Now add a layer of meat sauce to coat the pasta then cover with more pasta and then sauce. Continue this layering until you are 1cm below the lip of the dish then finish with a layer of cheese sauce and sprinkle the last of the cheddar cheese on top.

Pre-heat oven at 180°C then place the lasagne onto a baking tray to catch any drips and cook for 1 hour, checking that the centre is cooked and hot before serving.

