

Peppered Loin of Venison with Savoy Cabbage and Celeriac

Venison, cabbage, celeriac, cream: all wonderful seasonal ingredients.

Don't be afraid of the quantity of the pepper. It really helps to bring out the rich flavour of the meat.

Serves 4

4 150g venison loin steaks

salt and freshly ground pepper

50g black peppercorns, crushed

1 ½ tablespoons olive oil

1 small Savoy cabbage, trimmed of dark outer leaves and shredded into ribbons, 1cm thick

1 large carrot, peeled and cut into 2.5cm x 0.5cm batons

1 small celeriac, peeled and cut into 2.5cm x 0.5cm batons

4 tablespoons duck fat

100ml double cream

Season the venison loins with salt. Roll the venison in the crushed peppercorns, covering nice and evenly.

Heat the oil in a heavy-based frying pan over a medium heat. When it's hot, pan-fry the pieces of venison for about 3-4 minutes on each side until the venison becomes firm to the touch, but still springs back when pressed with your finger. We want it to be pink in the middle. Remove from the pan and set aside to rest in a warm place.

Melt a third of the duck fat in a heavy-based saucepan over a medium heat. Add the carrot and celeriac batons and cook them until tender. Strain them through a colander, remembering to drain the fat into a heat-proof receptacle.

Return the saucepan to the heat, add the rest of duck fat and cook the cabbage for a few minutes until the ribbons begin to wilt slightly. Add the carrot and celeriac to the cabbage and cook for another 3-4 minutes.

Strain off the duck fat into a heat-proof bowl. Return the pan to the heat and pour in the cream. Bubble it slightly until the cream lightly coats the cabbage leaves.

To serve:

Slice the venison and place on a large warm plate, with the creamy cabbage to the side.

Bryn's Tip:

I think the best way to judge the done-ness of a steak – any kind of steak – is the following simple touch test:

With your right index finger, press the soft fleshy bit at the base of your thumb, making sure your thumb is relaxed. The muscle should be soft and squishy. That's what rare meat feels like. As you pull your thumb across your palm, this muscle will get firmer and firmer. So does the steak when you cook it. So: relaxed = rare, semi-firm = medium, and firm = well done.

Once you've practiced this a couple of times, you'll learn to judge how any piece of steak is cooked by feel alone. It is so much more reliable than timings, because every steak is different and will cook at different speeds.