

Venison Jerky



RECIPE BY MIKE ZLOTNICKI
PHOTOGRAPHED BY THOMAS HARVEY

I cook venison several different ways, from chili to marinated backstraps to crockpot barbecue and many more recipes. But I would say the most universally received method among both hunters and non-hunters is venison jerky. I'm always amazed at how much people love it.

Jerky basically tastes like whatever marinade or rub you use. The recipe here is my attempt to mimic the Original Allegro marinade, and they have many different flavors on the grocer's shelf now. One can also explore dry rubs for seasoning.

If you're short of venison, a beef brisket or London Broil (or any other lean meat) can be used. I've made jerky with goose, duck, turkey and venison. With deer, I like to bone out a ham and cut the roasts into fist-sized chunks. I then freeze them, semi-thaw them and use a Cabela's electric slicer to cut to about 5 to 6 millimeters in thickness. Mostly frozen meat is much easier to cut uniformly. Too thick and it's chewy; too thin and it crumbles when done. I always try to cut against the grain of the muscle so the finished product breaks off when bitten and one doesn't have to chew on a piece for separation. I usually refrigerate what I'm going to consume in the short term and freeze the extra for later use.

I use a Cabela's 12-tray dehydrator, but most any dehydrator will do. Or you can hang your venison strips from the grates in an oven. Typically, it takes 5 to 6 hours at 150 to 160 degrees to yield the finished product.

The recipe printed is basically a starting place, with a minimum of spice heat. Personally, I like a little more of the pepper taste (although younger palates may not), so I add another teaspoon of black pepper and red pepper flakes. I have also found white pepper to be an underrated seasoning with a unique aftertaste, so you may want to consider adding another teaspoon of it as well.

INGREDIENTS

1 to 2 pounds sliced venison
1 cup of water
1/4 cup of Worcestershire sauce
1/3 cup of lime juice
1 1/2 tablespoons garlic powder
1 tablespoon dried basil
1 teaspoon white pepper
2 teaspoons black pepper
2 teaspoons red pepper flakes

PREPARATION

To prepare the marinade, combine the ingredients and stir until blended. Marinate venison strips in a large bowl for about 12 hours in refrigerator, stirring occasionally. Remove venison from the refrigerator and bring close to room temperature, roughly a couple of hours. Gently shake off the excess marinade and place venison on the dehydrator trays and try to keep separate from each other. Dehydrating temperature can range from 150 to 160 degrees depending upon your dehydrator and the thickness of your slices. Freeze for future use or refrigerate to be eaten in the next couple of weeks.

