

Pan-seared Medallions of Caribou with Morello Cherry Jus (serves 4)

Paired with E&E Black Pepper Shiraz

Chef Shayne Shepherd

St. James's Well

Newport Village

Port Moody, BC

- 4 pieces Denver Leg Caribou (about 5 oz ea)
- ½ cup dried Morello cherries
- 5 juniper berries
- 5 black peppercorns
- 5 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves (fresh if available)
- ½ cup dry red vermouth
- 1.5 cups veal demi-glace (available at a soup & stock market)
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter (cold)
- Light olive oil
- Salt and Pepper

About Caribou:

The Denver leg cut of meat consists of about 7 or 8 muscles cut from the hind leg of the animal and is a cut known for its tenderness, versatility and excellent flavor. Your butcher should be able to supply this product. The meat should be free of sinew and silver skin. Ask your butcher to remove it for you if you'd like. Denver leg venison or thick cut medallions of veal tenderloin could be substituted in this recipe.

Mix the juniper berries, black peppercorns, bay leaves and thyme together to make a 'rub'. Coat the meat with light olive oil and this spice mixture and let it marinate overnight.

A few hours before preparation soak the cherries in the red vermouth.

Preheat oven to 425 F.

Meat Preparation:

Remove the caribou from the marinade and pick off any of the aromatics that may have stuck to the meat and discard. Season both sides of the meat generously with salt and pepper.

Heat a large heavy skillet over medium heat until hot. *You can test for the correct heat of the pan with a drop of water. If the water sizzles and evaporates, the pan is at the right temperature. If the water beads up and dances all over the surface of the pan, the pan is too hot; and if the water does nothing the pan needs to be hotter!*

Place a small drizzle of oil in the skillet and place the caribou in the pan. Make sure your pan is large enough that the meat isn't overcrowded. Sear the meat for 2 to 3 minutes and then give the pan a tiny shake. When the meat shakes free of the bottom of the pan with the shake, it is ready to flip. *Do not lift the meat to check it. You want to sear the caribou by ensuring it maintains direct and continuous contact with the pan surface. This will create a nice golden crust.*

When ready, turn the meat over and transfer the pan to the preheated oven.

This cut of meat is best eaten medium. 7 to 8 minutes in the oven, depending on size and thickness of medallions would be a good gauge of doneness. The best technique is to use a meat thermometer. Medium will yield a reading of 115 F in the center of the meat.

Remove the meat from the oven, transfer the meat to a small cooling rack with a pan underneath to catch any drippings, cover with foil. While the meat is resting, you can make the sauce.

Sauce Preparation:

Drain the cherries and set the vermouth aside. Drain and discard any oil in the pan used to cook the meat and return the pan to medium heat on your stove. Add the vermouth and, using a wooden spoon, deglaze the pan by scraping all the fond left by the meat. Bring the vermouth to a simmer and reduce by 2/3rd.

Add the veal demi-glace and cherries to the pan and bring to a simmer, allowing the sauce to reduce by half. This should take about 5 minutes. During this time, you can add any drippings from the resting meat into the sauce. When the sauce just coats the back of a spoon, add the unsalted butter and swirl around until fully incorporated.

Taste the sauce and adjust the salt and pepper as required. Transfer the medallions back to the pan with the sauce, heat for 1 minute and then serve.

Notes from the Chef:

I would recommend decanting the Black Pepper Shiraz about 10 minutes before serving. This is a great wine with subtle espresso and cherry flavors, rich tannins (not overpoweringly so though) and a great earthiness with just a hint of oak. Think of the scent of the deep dark forest after a heavy rain. These flavors mirror the rich savory flavor of the caribou which has a silky texture much like veal. The red vermouth in the sauce is subtle enough not to mask the wine, while the butter in the sauce adds a velvety finish to compliment the tannins of the Shiraz.

This dish would go very well with a potato and fennel gratin. *A gratin can be compared to scalloped potatoes.* Use thin slices of a waxy potato, like Kennebec, and layer them with thin slices of fennel in a baking dish. Make a cream mixture by reducing heavy cream with butter and seasonings; perhaps garlic, fresh thyme, a touch of nutmeg. Reduce this mixture by half, and then strain out the aromatics before pouring the mixture over the layers of potato and fennel. Finish with grated Gruyere or Gouda cheese, and bake in the oven until golden brown.