

Recipe

A well chosen beer is the perfect compliment to a great game dish, according to top local chef, Derek Patterson.

"The eastern European beers especially are superb with game, beers from Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and even parts of Russia. For a start, these countries are supremely adapted to game, with dense forestry hosting a full range of game birds and natural herds of wild boar and deer.

"Much of our modern gastronomie has actually originated in these parts and been passed down over the centuries. There is also, of course, a long history of beer making in this area and, unlike the Irish and British, many Europeans don't go for 'big nights on the beer'. They prefer to savour and enjoy the full flavours of fine beers, with beer houses, similar in style to cafés and wine bars, offering customers a wide choice of really excellent beers.

"Beer is also associated closely with food in these countries; historically beer was the food accompaniment. The result is a range of beers with much more body, texture and flavour than the western European and American brands".

It seems then, that we westerners have been missing out all these years. However, it's never too late to learn, so why not try some of Derek's recommendations on both the food and the beer front.

Venison Liver served with Roasted Garlic and Tomato

This recipe is easily adapted to the liver of your choice, however, my recommendation is that venison liver is the most appropriate.

• 6oz venison liver per portion, trimmed and thinly sliced (*when preparing liver, make sure that all sinews and membranes are removed to enhance the taste and texture of the finished dish*)

• 1 bulb fresh garlic, divided into cloves, peeled or unpeeled according to preference

• baby spinach leaves

• sunblushed tomatoes (*these are best, but sundried tomatoes in oil will suffice*)

• basic spring onion mash to accompany venison

Pre-prepare a normal spring onion mash/champ, which, for ease when entertaining can be re-heated in the microwave.

Season the liver with salt and pepper and brush with olive oil.

Sauté the garlic cloves in a pan with a little butter, using gentle heat until the cloves have caramelised and softened. Then add the sunblushed tomatoes and finally, for a few seconds, the baby spinach leaves, until they wilt. Remove from the heat and finish with a small knob of salted butter.

At the same time as you are preparing the vegetables, using a heavy, cast iron, ribbed pan, gently sear the liver and sauté lightly. It is best served medium rare so take care not to overcook.

To serve, arrange the heated mash in the centre of the plate and top with the slices of venison liver. Arrange the garlic cloves, sunblushed tomatoes and baby spinach leaves around the liver and dress with the oil and butter from the pans.



Fine Food and Great Beer

~ A Winning Combination

Derek Patterson is a successful restaurateur with two firmly established bar/restaurant outlets in Co. Down - the Plough Inn, Hillsborough Village and The Pheasant, just across the road from Larchfield Estate in Annahilt. Derek's passion for working with winter season game originates in his early training at Baden Baden in Bavaria, and at Schwartzfeld in the heart of the Black Forest, where the game was plentiful, and the beers rich, smooth and refined over centuries to complement food perfectly. As well as being a top class chef, Derek is also a keen shot. He enjoys salking on Caledon Estate and also shoots at several estates and shoots around the country



And to drink..

Derek recommends Duckstein, a full bodied German beer with lashings of flavour. "The venison liver is surprisingly mild, so that extra flavour in the beer works really well to enhance the overall experience. The beechwood and chocolate malt in the beer cause a natural chemical reaction on the pallet to create undertones of sweetness from the liver - really excellent!"

CHEF'S SOURCES

Game: Moyallon Quality Foods, The Farm, Crowhill Road, Craigavon Tel: (028) 3834 9100

Specialist Ingredients: Fifth Sense an internet direct order firm based in Llisburn. www.fifthsense.com.

