VENISON WITH OATMEAL, BLACK TRUMPET MUSHROOMS, AND HUCKLEBERRIES

SPICED PEAR EXECUTIVE CHEF MATT VOSKUIL
Serves 4

VENISON
4 – 6 oz. portions of boneless venison loin
1 bottle red wine
1 carrot, medium dice
2 ribs celery, medium dice
1 yellow onion, medium dice
1 tsp. juniper berry
1 tsp. black peppercorn
1 sprig thyme
1 sprig rosemary
1 bay leaf

METHOD
Combine red wine, carrot, celery, onion, juniper, peppercorns, thyme, rosemary and bay leaf in a small sauce pan. Bring to a boil and remove from heat immediately. Chill the mixture completely. Once cool, place the venison portions in the marinade and refrigerate for at least six hours. Remove venison and set aside for cooking later. Strain aromatics from the wine and reserve the wine to use in the sauce.

OATMEAL
2 cups rolled oats
1 shallot, minced
2 oz. unsalted butter
3½ cups heavy cream
salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 eggs, beaten
2 Tbsp. parsley, finely chopped

METHOD
Melt butter in a medium sauce pan over medium heat. Add the minced shallot and sweat until translucent. Season with salt and pepper. Add rolled oats and toast lightly. Add cream and cook slowly until most of the cream is absorbed by the oats. Season with salt and pepper again. The mixture should be very thick. Remove from heat and let sit at room temperature for 15 minutes. Stir occasionally to help the mixture cool evenly. Stir in the eggs and parsley until evenly combined. Transfer the mixture to a baking pan and chill in the refrigerator for four hours. Once cold, cut into four even portions using a ring cutter or mold.

Sauce
1 shallot, sliced
1 Tbsp. grapeseed oil
red wine from marinade
2 cups veal demi-glace
3 oz. huckleberries

METHOD
In a small sauce pan over medium heat, sweat the shallot until translucent. Season with salt. Add the reserved wine and increase heat to high. Reduce until almost all of the wine has evaporated. Add the veal demi-glace and reduce by half over medium heat. Skim any impurities from the surface as it slowly reduces. Strain the sauce through a fine mesh strainer and then add the huckleberries. Simmer for 10 minutes and then keep warm until the rest of the dish is prepared.

FINAL COOKING
2 Tbsp. grapeseed oil
3 Tbsp. unsalted butter
1 sprig thyme
1 clove garlic

VEGETABLES
20 each black trumpet mushrooms, cleaned
20 each green beans, trimmed and blanched

METHOD
Season the venison with salt and pepper. Heat a cast iron pan over high heat and sear the venison in the grapeseed oil. Turn the venison over and sear the other side. Place 1 Tbsp. butter, thyme and garlic in the pan. Reduce heat to medium and baste the venison on each side for about 2 minutes. Remove and let rest on a wire rack. Place the mushrooms and green beans in the pan, season with salt and pepper and cook until heated through. Remove from the pan and keep warm.

While the venison is cooking, in a nonstick saute pan, melt 2 Tbsp. of butter. Place the oatmeal cakes in the pan and cook over medium heat until golden brown. Flip the cakes and cook until golden brown and warm in the center.

Place an oatmeal cake, mushrooms and green beans on each plate. Slice the venison and place over the vegetables. Finish with the huckleberry sauce.

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Hallmarks of great cooking: taking simple ingredients and working with them to develop an experience on the palate.

Why did you pursue a culinary career?
I think it was just fun. I went through high school thinking I was going to be a lawyer. I always enjoyed the idea of law; I enjoyed the challenge of solving problems through language. But I started cooking when I was 14 years old. I became a dishwasher; and after about six weeks they promoted me to cook. By the end of the summer, I had the keys to the restaurant and was opening the restaurant every day.

At age 14?
It was probably very illegal (laughs). It was a very small town. I cooked throughout high school. The summer before I went to college I went to work at a really nice country club, and it was there that I worked with European chefs for the first time and was exposed to more fine dining cooking, and I found it to be fun and challenging, and rewarding in a way that law probably wasn’t going to be. You can’t take it home with you, the feedback is pretty much instantaneous. I found the pace of it to be pretty exciting. So before I left for college that year I expressed an interest in culinary school. I had an academic scholarship to go to college, so my parents encouraged me to go for a year and check it out. I did, I came back home the next summer and still said, “I want to get off this path and onto the path of a culinary career.” So they agreed to send me to culinary school. This is back before being a chef was popular. My parents were always very supportive.

How did you find this position as executive chef at The Chanler?
I didn’t know Newport was in Rhode Island. I probably went through the first two or three days of speaking to them thinking we were talking about California. Then I spoke to someone finally who was talking about Newport as, not the Hamptons but the same sort of feel where it’s a small town, and I was like, “I’m sorry, where exactly are we talking about?” But I came out here the 22nd and 23rd of December, saw the property, met with the owner. Her vision for what she wanted really aligned with the things I would like to do. If you don’t have a great relationship with the owner and feel like you can help each other attain goals, it wouldn’t have been worth moving across the country for. But her aspirations here really match mine. I can see the future here. We’re going to put together some really exciting food and beverage offerings that really support the experience of the hotel.

Such as?
One of the unique things about The Chanler is that all the rooms are decorated differently. There’s a Renaissance Room, an Empire Room, Moroccan, Cape Cod, Nantucket. So no two guests are having the same experience. They aren’t seeing the property in the same way. Because of that, I feel it’s our responsibility down here at the food and beverage side to take all those separate experiences and create something that ties the whole thing together. We’re using the decor choices as jumping-off points for the cuisine as we develop menus. My initial take on everything is that the restaurant is going to be more of an American-French type of cuisine, and for the outdoor menu I’m going to be using Mediterranean social.

Have you ever been an executive chef elsewhere?
Yes. I was the executive chef at Bistro Zinc in Chicago, American Fish at Aria in Las Vegas. I owned my own recipe development business for a couple of years. I was contracted to provide 540 unique dishes to a company in Florida that was building a home delivery kit, finished, catered, delivered fresh food, that they could launch in New York City. We started that project in 2007, and because of what happened to the economy the gentleman who hired me was going into a financial headwind and we gave up on that project in 2010. We were working with Asian chefs, Italian chefs, French chefs. I was building my arsenal of food and nutrition knowledge. It was a great learning experience.

How did your wife, Heidi, adjust to the move to Newport?
She loves it. She put up with Las Vegas for me for a long, long, long time. She hates the heat. I think last summer we had something like 50-some-odd days in a row over 110 degrees. She absolutely loves it here. She’s been touring mansions, going around and meeting people.

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Limited admission tours are included on a space available basis.