

# Chef's Corner: Bacon-Wrapped Venison Tenderloin

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*By the time the Christmas holiday rolls around, we turn our focus from the sea to nature's bounty on the farm – organic, ultra-lean, wild venison tenderloin!*

Whether you hunt or are fortunate enough to know a successful hunter willing to share the blessings of the fall harvest, it's hard to beat fresh venison.

It is a renewable resource that is free from chemicals and antibiotics; high in protein, vitamins, and minerals; and low in fat. It truly is one of nature's super foods that fueled our ancestors for generations during good times and bad.

This recipe is simple, healthy, and absolutely delicious!

High quality game or fish is a labor of love born from respect of all gifts which nature bestows upon us.

Care of the harvest begins in the field and ends on the dinner table, and what happens in between is what truly makes for a quality dining experience.

I hope you enjoy this recipe – it is definitely a Germanos family favorite!

## **Ingredients:**

1-1/2 pounds of premium venison tenderloin trimmed of all fat & sinew, cut into 2-inch thick loin steaks

½ pound thin-cut hickory-smoked bacon slices

3 tablespoons soy sauce

Sea Salt to taste

Fresh ground black pepper to taste

Garlic powder to taste

Toothpicks – one per tenderloin steak

Hardwood charcoal (high-heat gas grill works just fine – just not as smoky)

## **Directions:**

This recipe begins after the backstrap tenderloins have been skillfully filleted with a quality boning knife. Once removed from the bone, all fat and sinew are removed and set aside in a scrap pile for grinding into premium pet food – we waste nothing! The lean meat trimmings are set aside for jerky, ground venison, or stew meat.

This process is highlighted below. From left-to-right, fresh loin filets from two deer harvested during the October 2018 Virginia archery season; the ensuing loins trimmed of all fat and sinew; and the final product ready for the grill and/or freezer for that special occasion!



*Southeastern Surf-n-Turf: Fresh grilled Venison Tenderloin served with grilled NC Shrimp and fresh Asparagus.*

I think we lose sight of the process when we buy produce in ready-to-serve packages. I have found that harvesting and processing high-quality game and fish for my family and friends is amazingly gratifying and somehow links my soul to America's pioneering heritage.



*Backstraps from 2 young bucks.*



*Trimmed of all fat and sinew.*



*Lean slices ready for wrapping!*

If you are beginning with a package of venison loin from the freezer as shown below – so much the better! Simply remove the loin from the packaging. Check for any sinew or freezer-burned spots and trim away as necessary.

Slice the tenderloin across the grain into two- or three-inch steaks as shown below, and depending on the circumference of the loin steaks, use either the full slice of bacon, or trim 1/3 of the bacon strip to fit with about a 2-inch overlap when wrapped around the steaks. When in doubt, just use a full strip!

We often trim the fattiest end of the bacon and use it to prepare either of the following potato sides:

- Country-style Stewed Potatoes and Onions (winter favorite!)
- Western Coal-baked Potatoes (great all year – and especially when camping!)

I added these two potato recipes at the end of this article since both are simple, easy, and really delicious!

Additional sides which compliment this dish include grilled asparagus, grilled zucchini, and grilled vegetable skewers of mushrooms, peppers, onions, and cherry tomatoes.

Texas Toast is another great addition – just take a quality French or Artisan loaf; slice to desired thickness; butter each side; and add a dash of garlic powder while it toasts over the hot coals! Simple, but Oh-So-Good!

If cooking Western Coal-baked Potatoes, have them wrapped in aluminum foil and ready to go into the fire as soon as the coals are good and hot!

Oh, and if you *really* want to amp-it up, serve with a few skewers of peeled and de-veined fresh grilled NC shrimp for a truly marvelous version of southeastern-style surf-n-turf!



*Thawed package of loin steaks.*



*Loins, bacon, and spices ready!*



*Sliced loin steaks for the grill!*

While the coals are getting hot, wrap each loin steak with bacon, overlapping and securing each slice with a toothpick. This helps to hold the bacon in place while grilling (below left).

Place the bacon-wrapped steaks in a shallow baking dish as shown below – they are now ready for seasoning!

To season the steaks for grilling, follow these steps as listed for best results:

- Moisten one side of the steak with a dash of soy sauce – just enough to moisten the surface (teriyaki works too)
- Sprinkle a layer of garlic powder onto the moistened surface – it should adhere nicely and absorb the sauce
- Follow with a sprinkling of freshly ground black pepper to taste – it will also adhere to the surface
- Finally, sprinkle a layer of salt over the garlic and pepper...we add the salt last because it will draw some natural moisture out of the meat and further adhere and meld the spices and sauce with the meat. This creates a nice caramelizing effect when grilling over the hot coals!
- Turn the steaks over in the baking dish and repeat this process for the other side
- Let the spices meld until ready to grill...usually as long as it takes for the coals to turn white-hot.



*Wrap each steak with bacon and secure with a toothpick.*



*Moisten with soy sauce and season steaks for the grill.*

Once the coals are white hot, it's time to grill!

If using a gas grill, adjust to high or medium high based on the flame intensity of your grill, but it should be pretty hot to sear the steaks while cooking to a juicy medium-rare doneness!

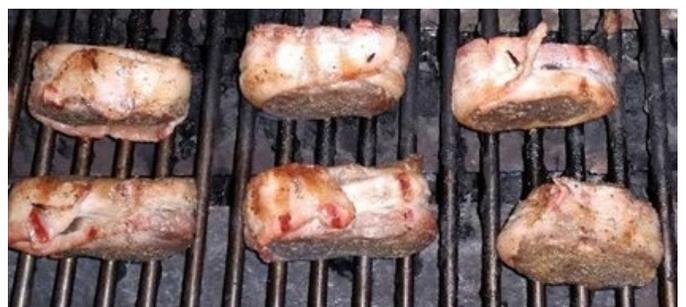
Note that the tenderloins are often started on their sides, bacon-side down (pictured left). This ensures the bacon browns nicely and helps get some drippings into the fire to enhance the searing effect and generate a little smoke.

I typically start the steaks on their sides like this, cooking up to 5 minutes on each side to get a nice glaze on the bacon.

I then crank-up the heat and cook the meat-side surfaces until the spices and sauce begin to caramelize (see below).

Two keys to this process:

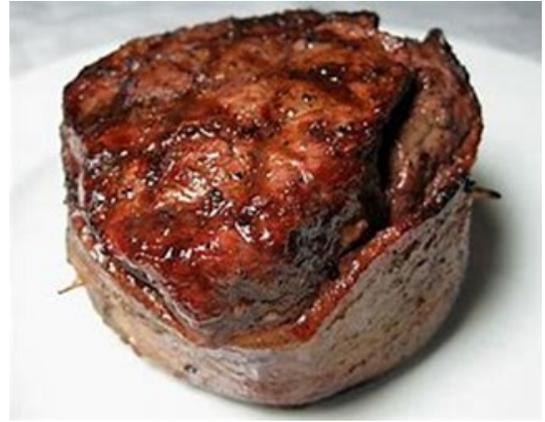
- Caramelized, but not burnt...
- Seared to ensure a medium-rare doneness, else this ultra-lean cut of meat could get dry!



*Cooking bacon-side down gets drippings into the fire!*



*Searing the bacon-wrapped tenderloin on the grill.*



*Caramelized & cooked to medium-rare perfection!*

### ***Stewed Potatoes and Onions***

Render bacon ends in small stewing pot and remove bacon when crispy but not burnt. Add sliced onions and fry in the rendered bacon grease until they just begin to caramelize to a slight brown color. Add water or clear soup stock (I like chicken stock or venison stock) and sliced potatoes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Simmer on low boil for 20-30 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Add crumbled bacon and serve!

**Note:** Butter can be used in place of bacon grease, and for a little more kick, add a chopped jalapeno or serrano pepper when frying the onions!

### ***Western Coal-Baked Potatoes***

This is super easy and super good! Slice medium baking potatoes lengthwise in half (any potato will work, however). Lay each halved potato on a small sheet of aluminum foil – just enough to completely wrap the halved potato when ready to cook.

Place the halved potato flesh-side up and lightly season with salt and pepper to taste. Add a thin slice of onion and followed by a layer of trimmed bacon end. Again, you can add a layer of fresh sliced jalapenos for more kick!

Wrap each halved potato/onion/bacon in aluminum foil and place in the coals, bacon-side down. This will effectively fry the bacon and onion while the potato bakes in the hot coals. It's okay to move the coals around to assure even heat.

These usually take about 30-35 minutes, depending on the heat and how the coals are arranged. When the potatoes “give” when pinched, they are done. Remove from the foil and plate with the Venison, Texas Toast, and grilled veggies du jour!

You will be in for a meal that will make any five-star restaurant pale in comparison!

So, the next time you are blessed with some succulent Venison backstraps, cut them into steaks, fire up that grill, and ENJOY!

***Contributed by: CHAC member John Germanos, aka “The Instinctive Chef”***