

Living the Country Life®

Recipes: Bison aiming big

No longer a novelty, this meat is targeting the center of the food plate.

Betsy Freese

A century ago, conservationist William Hornaday launched the American Bison Society with U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt. Their goal was to reclaim the species from the devastation of the massive kill-offs in the 1800s. Since then, the bison (or American buffalo) has rebounded, with 500,000 now on private ranches, public preserves, and tribal lands.

Taste and nutrition

Growing consumer demand for bison meat is playing a vital role in encouraging growth of bison herds, says Dave Carter, executive director of the National Bison Association. "As more consumers discover the wonderful taste and nutrition of bison, ranchers will continue to build their herds," says Carter. "The growing interest in high-quality food is enticing more consumers to take their first bite of deliciously healthy bison meat."

The amount of bison meat processed under federal inspection has more than doubled since 2001. "Bison is no longer a novelty found on a few restaurant menus in the West," says Carter. "Consumers are sending a message that they've fallen in love with the deliciously healthy taste of bison meat. Bison is the perfect meat for festive occasions and for everyday dining."

If you want to learn more about the attributes of bison meat, as well as tips on how to prepare it, visit www.bisoncentral.com, the official Web site of the National Bison Association.



In the tall grass

One rancher promoting the meat is Bob Jackson of Tall Grass Bison near Promise City, Iowa. Jackson has been raising the animals for 30 years and has the largest bison herd in Iowa, over 300 animals on 1,000 acres. His management philosophy is a bit different than others.

"We are one of the few producers in the country who raise bison with intact social family order (like elephant families)," says Jackson. "We feel this stress-free lifestyle, along with our other management practices, translates into better tasting, more nutritious, and tender buffalo meat."

Jackson and his wife, Susan, have a unique motto for their product: The taste of native prairie -- a diet for the soul. They have created many bison recipes, including the delicious Herb Rubbed Bison Sirloin Tip Roast shared here. For more recipes and information, e-mail the Jacksons at TGBison@iowatelecom.net.

Herb Rubbed Bison Sirloin Tip Roast is deliciously seasoned with paprika, salt, garlic powder, oregano, thyme, black pepper, onion powder, and cayenne pepper. Photographs: Mike Dieter



Herb Rubbed Bison Sirloin Tip Roast

Prep: 20 minutes, Roast: 75 minutes, Stand: 15 minutes

1 tablespoon paprika
2 teaspoons kosher salt or sea salt, or 1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano, crushed
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
One 3- to 3 1/2-pound boneless bison sirloin tip roast
Roasted vegetables (optional)

Step 1: In a small bowl combine paprika, salt, garlic powder, oregano, thyme, black pepper, onion powder, and cayenne pepper. Stir in oil until well combined. Set aside. Trim fat from roast. Spread oil mixture over surface of meat. Place meat on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Insert an oven-going meat thermometer into center of meat.

Step 2: Roast in a 375 degree F. oven for 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 300 degrees F. Roast 60 to 65 minutes more or until meat thermometer registers 140 degrees F. Cover roast tightly with foil and let stand in pan on a wire rack for 15 minutes. The temperature of the meat after standing should be 145 degrees F. (medium rare). Thinly slice meat across the grain to serve. Serve with roasted vegetables, if desired. Makes 8 servings.

Nutrition facts per serving: 229 calories, 8 g fat, 121 mg cholesterol, 570 mg sodium, 1 g carbohydrates, 0 g fiber, 37 g protein.

Here's something for a chilly day in the country. Hearty Bison Chili can be topped with shredded cheddar cheese, jalapeño peppers, and sour cream.



Bison Chili

Prep: 20 minutes, Cook: 70 minutes

1 pound ground bison
1 medium onion, chopped
Two 14 -1/2-ounce cans diced tomatoes
One 15- to 16-ounce can pinto beans, rinsed and drained
1/2 cup water
2 to 3 teaspoons chili powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 cup snipped fresh cilantro

Toppers, such as shredded cheddar cheese, sliced fresh or pickled jalapeño peppers, and/or dairy sour cream (optional)

Step 1: In a large skillet cook and stir bison and onion over medium heat until bison is browned and onion is tender. Stir in undrained tomatoes, beans, water, chili powder, salt, cumin, and pepper. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, covered, for 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

Step 2: Stir in cilantro. Cover and cook 10 minutes more. If desired, add toppers to each serving. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Nutrition facts per serving: 281 calories, 3 g fat, 70 mg cholesterol, 1,047 mg sodium, 31 g carbohydrates, 7 g fiber, 33 g protein.

Tested for you

These recipes were tested by the same food authorities who approve all recipes for Better Homes and Gardens magazine, a sister publication of Living the Country Life magazine. For questions about the recipes, contact:

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