



VADZAIH

cooking caribou from antler to hoof



This book was made possible through the financial support of



Published by
Porcupine Caribou Management Board
2016

ISBN 978-0-9953052-0-5

Mahsi' choo to the people of Old Crow who worked with us to make this cookbook. Your willingness to share your stories, recipes, hunting and cooking techniques made this book possible. It was an honour to learn from you as you shared your love and respect for the caribou. May they continue to provide for you for many generations to come.

Kelly Milner, author and project manager

Miche Genest, author and cooking consultant

Cathie Archbould, photographer

VADZAIH

cooking caribou from antler to hoof



“Those caribou, they are important to us. They give us food and we eat it all. The guts. The kidney. The liver. The heart. There is very little left if you treat it right.” – Stephen Frost Sr.

Old and new ways of preparing caribou

The Porcupine Caribou herd is one of the largest caribou herds in North America. For thousands of years it has been the lifeblood for the high Arctic region that is now northeastern Alaska, northern Yukon and the MacKenzie Delta of the Northwest Territories. The herd’s annual migration is one of the greatest movements of life on land anywhere in the world.

The Gwich’in have also lived in this same region for thousands of years. One of the oldest artifacts of human habitation in North America – a 28,000 year-old tool made of mammoth bone – was discovered just south of the current Gwich’in community of Old Crow. The caribou are an integral part of the Gwich’in way of life and are central to their survival. This close relationship is reflected in their stories and legends, but also in the strong connections and sense of responsibility to the caribou that is reflected in their modern communities.

All parts of the caribou are still used today, from the head to the hooves. But not everyone remembers how to use all the parts and reference materials are scarce. This cookbook is intended to bridge the gap between the past and the present. It explores traditional ways of preparing and using caribou – particularly some of the more challenging parts for modern cooks. Starting with traditional recipes, we have worked with cooks from the Gwich’in community of Old Crow to explore old and new ways of preparing caribou. It’s our way of showing respect and sharing how the caribou continues to provide for people across the north – and our hope that it will continue to provide for many generations into the future.



Old Crow “Cooking Caribou Together” Workshop participants (left to right): Lori Leduc, Renee Charlie, Kelly Milner, Neta Benjamin, Miche Genest, Bertha Frost, Florence Netro, Elizabeth Kyikavichik



Caribou recipes:

Head	Elizabeth Kyikavichik's Roasted Caribou Head	21
Vadzaih Chi'	Roasted Caribou Head Italian Style	23
	Bertha Frost's Head Cheese	25
	Morel Mushroom and Caribou Brain Ravioli	28
	Caribou Wonton Soup	31
	Deep Fried Wontons with Plum Sauce.....	35
	Poached Caribou Tongue	36
Organs	Caribou Heart Tortillas	43
Ch'idrii	Caribou Heart Kebabs with Tzatziki	47
	Caribou Liver Pâté.....	50
	Caribou Liver with Bacon, Onion and Mushrooms	52
	Kidneys on Toast	54
	Caribou Steak and Kidney Pie.....	56
Bones	Caribou Bone Broth	60
Tth'an	French Onion Soup with Caribou Bone Broth	62
	Caribou Shin Marrow on Toast	64
Tender Bits	Dry Meat (Nilii Gaii)	68
Vadzaih nilii	Caribou Filet Mignon with Peppercorn Sauce	69
dàtl'ok	Pan-Fried Caribou Steaks with Cranberry Reduction	72
	Simple Caribou Roast with Rich Gravy and Yorkshire Puddings.....	73
Tougher Bits	Ch'itsúh (Pemmican)	78
Vadzaih nilii	Pulled Caribou Neck with Buttermilk Buns and Classic Coleslaw	81
dach'at	Caribou Breakfast Sausage Patties.....	85
	Curried Caribou Brisket with Dried Apricots and Spinach	86
	Elizabeth Kyikavichik's Traditional Recipe for Stew	87
	Braised, Barbecued Caribou Ribs	88
	Cathie Archbould's Famous Tourtière.....	90
	Gwich'in Caribou Tacos with Refried Beans	92
	Caribou Lasagne	94
Finishing the Meal	Refreshing Drinks	98
	Chocolate Cranberry Brownie	100
	Cloudberry Rugelach Cookies.....	102
	Birch Syrup Pecan Squares	104
Butchering Tips	Step-by-Step Field Dressing	106
	Preparing the Head	110
	Skinning Caribou Legs	112

Caribou

Vadzaih

“The Gwich’in people depended on the caribou since the beginning of time so they respect the caribou. They were raised eating caribou meat and they respect the animal. It is still like that today.” – *Edith Josie*

Respecting the caribou and giving thanks for the food and other uses its body parts provide are an important part of Gwich’in culture. Access to new technology – like snowmobiles and other vehicles – means people hunt differently than they did in the past. As well, more northern people working in a wage economy has led to less time for preparing meals. Increased travel and the expansion of northern grocery stores means communities also have access to new types of food, which is changing people’s taste preferences and the way that they cook.



Porcupine Caribou crossing the river.



Philip Rispin heads out for a hunt on the Porcupine River.

Caribou are one of the Yukon’s most iconic animals. Their evolution is closely tied to the history of the territory. The oldest caribou remains in the world were found near Fort Selkirk in the Yukon and are thought to be almost two million years old. Caribou are members of the deer family and over time have adapted to living in the cold arctic climate.

Caribou are now found throughout the circumpolar north and can be divided into two types: the woodland caribou that live in small ranges within the boreal forest; and the barren-ground caribou that live north of the treeline and migrate large distances over the arctic tundra.

The Porcupine Caribou herd is one of the largest barren-ground herds in North America. Since scientists started conducting annual herd censuses in the 1970s, the herd has fluctuated between 100,000 and 200,000 animals. The Porcupine Caribou continue an annual migration between their calving grounds on the coastal plains of Alaska, and their winter range in northern Yukon.

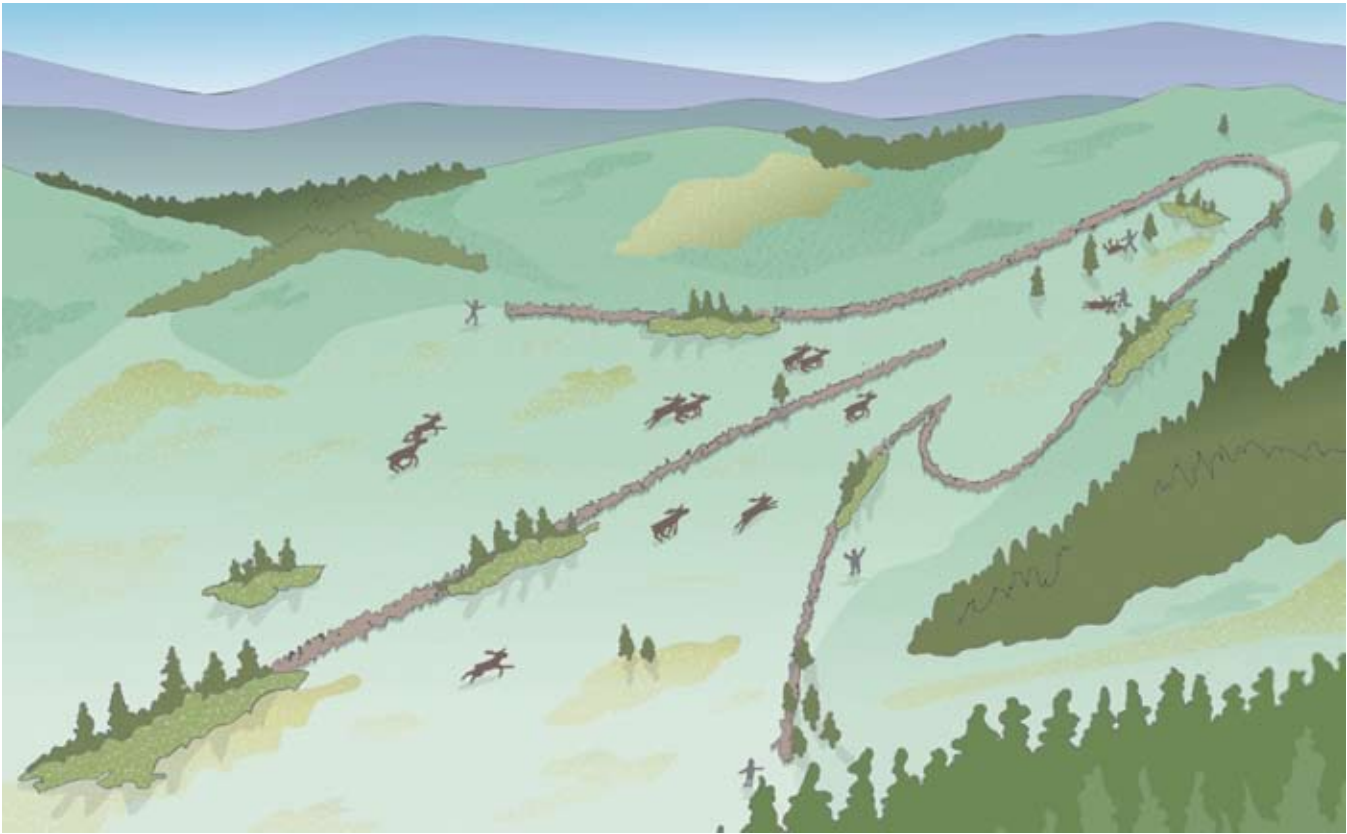
The caribou continue to be an important food source for First Nation and Inuvialuit people who live within the range of the herd. Many of the modern land claim agreements in the North include provisions for the cooperative management of the caribou between federal, territorial and aboriginal governments. By working together, collaborative plans are now in place to manage hunting and some of the key habitats of the herd to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Porcupine Caribou herd.



Range of the Porcupine Caribou.

For thousands of years, First Nation people living within the range of the herd – Gwich’in, Northern Tutchone, and Inuvialuit – have relied on the caribou for their survival. When the caribou moved through their traditional territories, they would harvest the animals, preserving and using all parts for food, tools, and clothing.

In the past, Gwich’in people used caribou fences to harvest caribou. They would build wooden structures – sometimes many kilometres long – and would drive caribou into a small area where they could be easily killed with spears and arrows. New technology like rifles, snow machines and boats has changed how caribou are now harvested, but the significance of the hunt remains a central activity in communities each year.



“In the springtime and fall they make caribou fence, they would round up the caribou and drive them into the fence. Once inside the fence the caribou run wild. This is when they shoot the caribou with bow and arrow. This is how they kill caribou long time ago. I remember my dad telling us this story – that is what I am telling you.” – Edith Josie

“Long ago when I was a kid, people used all the parts of the caribou... They saved caribou skin for tanning and in the winter when it is cold they will make clothing with it. For their kids and themselves... All the kids wear calfskin parka. They made a lot of things with it – fur mitt, rope. Everything they used it for.”
– Charlie Peter Charlie

Along with providing food, caribou parts were used for many other things.

Hide – made into clothing, moccasins, babiche (ropes) and shelters

Brain – used in the tanning process to soften hides

Hoof – made into rattles, buttons and beads

Antler – made into arrow or spear points, knives, cups, spoons, buttons, and carvings

Bones – used as awls, hide scrapers, fish lures, pipes and sled runners

Sinew – made into thread, cord, snares and fishnets.

Stomach – used as a cooking bag and a storage container for food and water

Bladder – storage container for food and water

Hair – used in pillows, mattresses, toys, dog bedding

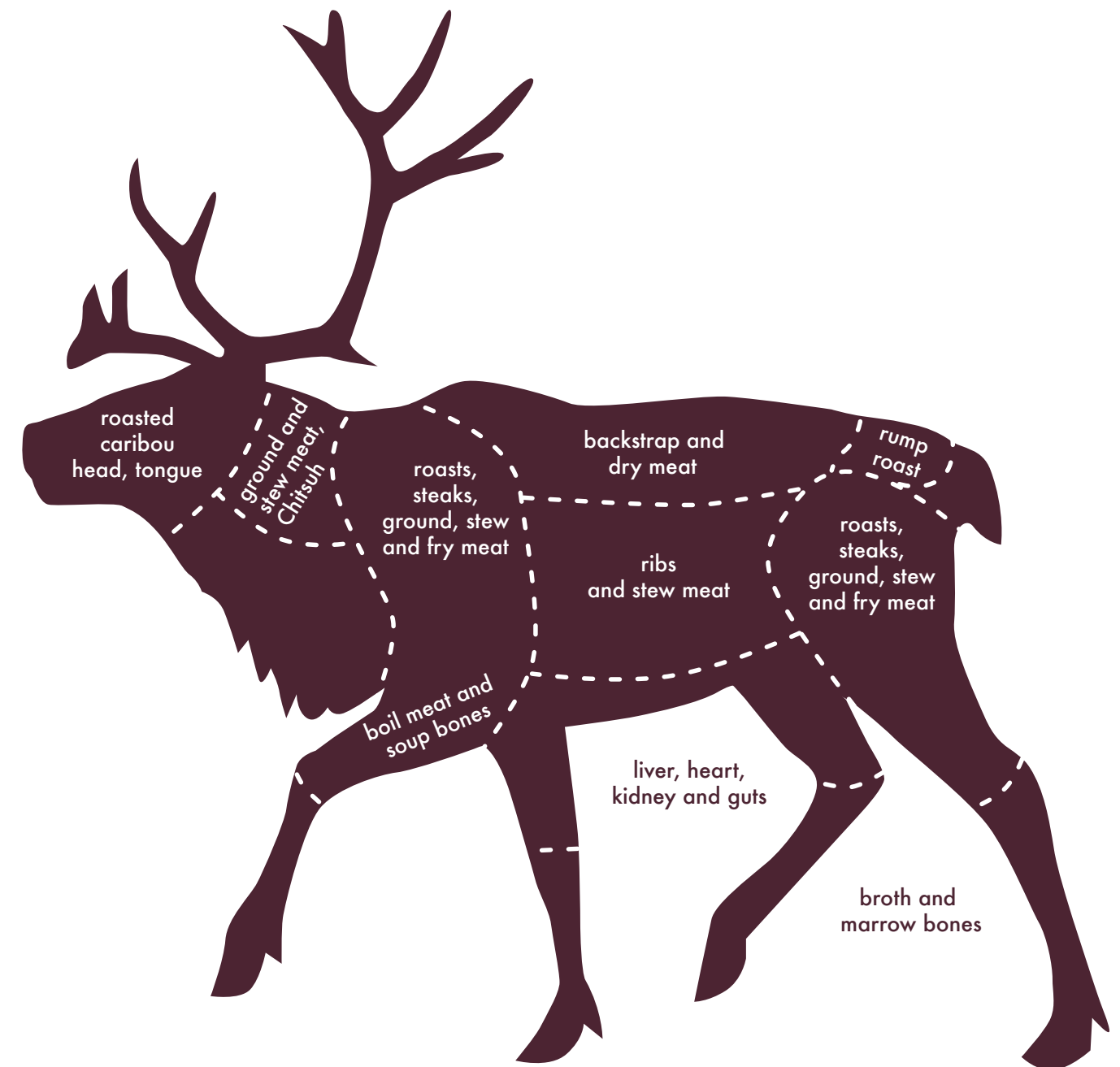
Teeth – made into ornaments

Tail – used in medicine, made into whips



Cheryl Itsi-Charlie participates in a traditional sewing workshop at Old Crow's Yukon College campus.

For the Gwich'in, honouring the caribou means using all the parts. Taking an animal's life is significant and hunters are expected to ensure the caribou is not taken for granted.



The Northern Kitchen

“When you killed a caribou 80 years ago, there wasn’t much to go with it. Just meat. No vegetables. So they had to cut it up and find ways to cook it so it tastes good.” – *Stephen Frost Sr.*

Cooking in the northern kitchen sometimes takes a bit of creativity. In most places, kitchen supplies are only found in a small corner of the community food co-op. And most stores only carry staples and basic ingredients.

The recipes in this book assume that most northern kitchens have basic cooking equipment and are stocked with some essential ingredients. Most of these can be bought locally or ordered on-line.

A corner of Bertha Frost's kitchen



Tammy Josie gets supplies from her pantry.



A well stocked spice shelf.

Essential Kitchen Equipment

Here is a list of the minimum items you need to have in your kitchen to be a well-rounded cook. If you don't already own them, try to find them. You don't have to spend a lot of money – just get what you can afford.

- Large non-stick frying pan

Cast iron frying pan

Large casserole or Dutch oven

Set of saucepans (small, medium and large)

Cookie sheets

Set of mixing bowls

Good quality knives (chef's knife, serrated knife, small paring knife)

Wooden spoons

Metal whisk

Metal tongs

Potato masher

Ladle

Plastic spatula
- Peeler

Cutting boards (one for meat and one for vegetables)

Measuring cups and spoons

Strainer

Grater

Rolling pin

Can-opener

Cheesecloth

Parchment paper

Tin foil

Waxed paper

Plastic wrap

Food storage containers

For the Cupboard

Most northerners try to keep their cupboards well-stocked, as the availability of groceries can be unpredictable. Having a good selection of basic ingredients at home is a great way of making sure you always have what you need to make a delicious meal.

Remember that fresh is not always necessary. Fruits and vegetables that have been frozen are picked when they are at their best and are packed with nutrients. The following list of basic ingredients are all things that you should be able to keep in your cupboard or freezer for months and will be ready for you to use for whatever recipe you want to tackle.

Basic ingredients	Basic spices and herbs	Basic frozen supplies
Cooking <div><div>Oil (Olive and vegetable)</div><div>Vinegar (white, red wine and balsamic)</div><div>Cornstarch</div><div>Canned kidney beans</div><div>Canned tomatoes</div><div>Canned tomato paste</div><div>Rice (basmati and brown)</div><div>Dried pasta</div><div>Canned soups such as mushroom and tomato</div><div>Boullion cubes</div><div>Soya sauce</div><div>Ketchup</div><div>Mayonnaise</div></div>	<div><div>Nutmeg</div><div>Cinnamon</div><div>Cloves</div><div>Allspice</div><div>Mace</div><div>Powdered ginger</div><div>Oregano</div><div>Basil</div><div>Bay leaves</div><div>Fennel seeds</div><div>Cumin seeds</div><div>Chili powder</div><div>Coriander powder</div><div>Curry powder</div><div>Dried labrador tea</div><div>Dried sage</div><div>Dried juniper berries</div><div>Salt</div><div>Pepper</div></div>	<div><div>Wonton wrappers</div><div>Peas</div><div>Green beans</div><div>Corn</div><div>Fruit</div></div> <div>Berries<div><div>One of the best things about living in the north is access to wild berries. Make sure you get out picking!</div><div>Low-bush cranberries</div><div>High-bush cranberries</div><div>Cloudberries</div><div>Blueberries</div><div>Soapberries</div></div></div>
Baking <div><div>Baking soda</div><div>Baking powder</div><div>Corn flour</div><div>Flour (all-purpose and whole wheat)</div><div>Dried yeast</div><div>Sugar (white and brown)</div><div>Cocoa powder</div><div>Oatmeal</div></div>		

Head

Vadzaih Chi'

“I skin the head; I do it good. I open the stove damper in front and hang up the head and I sit by it and I twirl the head around for it to cook. I know when the head is cooked. I eat some then I singe the nose part and cook it... Ah, the caribou head cooks really good.”

– *Alfred Charlie*

In Old Crow, caribou head is a delicacy and a comfort food that reminds people of home. Heads are not something we commonly see displayed in North American grocery stores or restaurants, but recipes that feature heads, brains and tongues are common around the globe. Although cooking a caribou head can seem intimidating, it's not that difficult once you get started.





Elizabeth Kyikavichik is one of Old Crow's cooking experts and is often called upon to prepare community feasts or help out with the school's lunch program.

Elizabeth Kyikavichik's Roasted Caribou Head

Caribou head is one of Elizabeth's son's favorite meals. She sometimes slow-roasts it hanging on a rope by their wood stove, but this method uses an oven.

1 or 2 caribou heads, cleaned (with tongue removed), brined, rinsed and patted dry

1) Prepare the Caribou Head

Preheat oven to 325F (160C).

Place head in a large roasting pan with a cover. (If you don't have a cover, tin foil will do.)

Fill roasting pan with water to about halfway up the head. Cover and place in pre-heated oven.

Roast for 4 hours, turning occasionally.

Remove from oven, and place head on a baking sheet.



When cool, remove meat from the bone, tear into bite-sized pieces and arrange on a platter.

Serve with caribou gravy.



2) Prepare the Gravy

3 to 4 cups (750 mL to 1 L) roasted caribou head cooking water

4 to 6 Tbsp (60 to 90 mL) butter

4 to 6 Tbsp (60 to 90 mL) flour

Salt and pepper to taste

Optional: a dash of soya sauce and a handful of low-bush cranberries

Strain caribou head cooking water into a measuring cup.

For each cup of liquid, use 1½ Tbsp butter and 1½ Tbsp flour.

Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat and when it is bubbling and starting to brown, whisk in flour.

Cook for 2 minutes, then slowly add strained cooking liquid, whisking so no lumps form. Continue adding liquid while gravy thickens, whisking each time.

Whisk in salt and pepper, add soya sauce and cranberries, if you're using them, turn heat to low and allow gravy to cook for a good half-hour to develop its flavour.

Either pour over the roasted caribou meat or serve in a pitcher at the table.

Plain boiled rice or roasted potatoes are a good accompaniment to this dish.



Neta Benjamin and Miche Genest remove meat from the roasted head and tear it into smaller pieces for eating. A caribou head can feed a surprising number of people.

Roasted Caribou Head Italian Style

This is a recipe we made up during our “Cooking Caribou Together” workshop in Old Crow. It turned out pretty well, we think.... Olive oil, garlic and oregano add an Italian flavour.

1) Parboil the Head and Tongue

Place a prepared caribou head and tongue in a large pot, cover with cold water and bring to a boil over high heat, skimming off any scum that rises to the surface. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes.

Remove head, place in a roasting pan and leave tongue to simmer for another 20 minutes before adding it to the roasting pan.

2) Marinate the Head and Tongue

Cover everything with marinade while still warm and marinate for 1 hour, turning every 20 minutes.

Marinade

- ¼ cup (60 mL) melted butter
- 2½ Tbsp (37.5 mL) olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1½ tsp (7.5 mL) dried oregano rubbed in your hands until powdery
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) coarse sea salt
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) ground pepper
- ½ cup (125 mL) apple juice
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) white vinegar

Whisk together the butter and the olive oil. Whisk in garlic, oregano, salt, pepper, apple juice and vinegar. Pour over caribou head and tongue while still warm.

3) Roast the Caribou Head

- ¼ cup (60 mL) melted butter
- 2½ Tbsp (40 mL) olive oil

Preheat the oven to 325F (160C).

Roast head for 90 minutes (1.5 hrs), basting and turning over every 20-30 minutes.

Remove from oven and turn oven broiler on high. Whisk together the melted butter, olive oil and add a splash of apple juice. Brush half of this mixture onto the head, and put head into oven under broiler about 6 inches from the heat. Broil for 6 minutes, watching carefully, then remove, turn head over and baste the other side with the remaining oil and butter mixture. Broil for another 6 minutes.

Remove head from oven and cool just enough so you can pull the meat from the bone without burning your fingers. Peel the skin from the tongue and tear meat into bite-sized pieces. Serve on a bed of spaghetti tossed with olive oil, minced garlic and parsley and a squeeze of lemon.





Bertha Frost's Head Cheese

Bertha Frost is a skilled Old Crow cook who makes head cheese two different ways: without spices – for those who prefer their headcheese “as is” – and with pickling spice for those who like it jazzed up a bit. For plain headcheese, just eliminate the pickling spice.

1) Cook the Heads

Place 2 or 3 prepared heads in a large pot and barely cover with cold water (it's important not to use too much water).

Bring to a boil, skimming any scum off the surface.

Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 3 or 4 hours until the meat falls off the bone.

Remove the heads from the pot and place on a couple of baking sheets to cool. Reserve the cooking liquid to make broth.

2) Prepare the Broth

[The quantities of seasonings here are for two heads. Reduce or increase amounts according to how many heads you have cooked.]

2 Tbsp (30 mL) salt

2 Tbsp (30 mL) black pepper

1 Tbsp (15 mL) brown sugar

2 Tbsp (30 mL) pickling spice (optional)

½ tsp (2.5 mL) hot sauce (optional)

½ cup (125 mL) white vinegar

While the meat is cooling, strain the broth into a medium-sized pot. Add the salt, pepper, vinegar, sugar and seasonings if you're using them. Bring to a boil, remove from heat and pour into a bowl without straining.



Bertha Frost and her trusty slow-cooker.

3) Make the Head Cheese

When the heads have cooled, separate the meat from the bone. The tongue should pull out from the head easily. Skin the tongue and remove any gristle. (See page 107 for more details on this.) Discard the skull.

Grind the meat in a food processor or meat grinder or cut into small pieces and pound with a mallet until broken down.

Transfer meat to a bowl, and add broth $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) at a time, stirring constantly, until the meat is the consistency of soft dough.

Spoon the mixture into two or three small loaf pans, or into muffin cups. (Muffin cups are a great way to make small portions that can go into the freezer, individually wrapped.)

Place a piece of plastic wrap over top and press down, making sure the mixture is completely covered. Place a piece of parchment paper over top and weight with a few cans, or if you're using muffin tins, set a baking sheet over top, weighed with cans.

Refrigerate until set – about 3 or 4 hours. Turn out from pans or muffin cups, wrap in waxed paper and then in plastic and return to fridge until you're ready to serve. Freeze for up to 3 months.



Tea with Bertha Frost.



Grinding the meat.



Spooning the mixture into a pan.



Weighing down the headcheese.

4) Serve the Head Cheese

With a sharp knife, cut head cheese into slices. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve with buttered toast, pickled radishes and low-bush cranberry gastrique. Try some spruce tip salt, if you're in the mood.

Low-bush Cranberry Gastrique

A “gastrique” is essentially a French sweet and sour sauce, very easy to make, that can be drizzled onto cooked meats or cheese or just about anything. The ingredients are something sweet such as sugar or syrup (maple syrup, honey, birch syrup – basically, any kind of syrup), something sour like vinegar or sometimes wine, and optional additions such as berries, bone broth or pan juices.

The recipe here is one that Neta Benjamin, Lori Leduc and Miche Genest invented during the “Cooking Caribou Together” workshop in Old Crow in the fall of 2015.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) white vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) frozen, low-bush cranberries, thawed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) caribou bone broth (see recipe on page 58)

In a small, wide frying pan or saucepan over medium-high heat, whisk together the honey, white vinegar and cranberries. Once the mixture begins to thicken, whisk in the bone broth, turn heat to medium and cook until the consistency of thick syrup. Remove from heat, pour into a jar or small jug and cool to room temperature.

Makes about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL).



Pickled Radishes

- 6 to 8 large radishes
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 mL) apple cider vinegar (use white vinegar if that's all that's available)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 mL) water
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) white sugar
- 2 tsp (10 mL) coarse sea salt

Trim radishes, wash thoroughly and dry with a paper towel. Slice as thinly as possible and transfer to a bowl. In a separate bowl whisk vinegar, water, sugar and salt until sugar and salt are dissolved. Pour over radishes, refrigerate for 30 minutes and serve. Radishes are best eaten right away or on the same day, before they lose their crispness. Tip: the vinegar is great in salad dressings.

Makes about 1 cup (250 mL).

Spruce Tip Salt

Pick spruce tips in the spring when they've just emerged at the end of the spruce branches. Freeze them whole, or to dry them, place on a baking sheet in an airy place out of direct sunlight. They will usually dry within a week or 10 days. Store in a jar in a dark cupboard.

- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) coarse sea salt
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) dried spruce tips

Grind spruce tips with half the salt with a mortar and pestle until spruce tips are fairly fine. Add remaining salt and transfer to a small bowl for serving. Store extra salt in a jar in a dark cupboard. Spruce tip salt keeps its flavour indefinitely.

Makes 3 tablespoons (45 mL).

Morel Mushroom and Caribou Brain Ravioli

[Adapted from *Odd Bits* by Jennifer McLagan]

This recipe has several steps, but it's not difficult, especially if you spread the steps out over a number of days. The most difficult part is removing the brain from the caribou head (for tips, turn to page 106) but the result is worth it. This recipe received a 10 out of 10 from our testers in Old Crow.



1) Prepare the Brains

Rinse the brains under cold running water. Remove fatty tissue from around the brains and brush away any bone chips with your fingers.

To draw out the blood, soak brains in salted water to cover for six hours using 1 tsp (5 mL) coarse salt for every cup (250 mL) of water. Change the water every two hours.

Lift brains out of the salt water with a slotted spoon, leaving any bone chips behind. Throw away the water. Rinse the brains in cold running water before poaching.

2) While Brains are Soaking, Make the Court Bouillon (Poaching Liquid)

A court bouillon is simply a well-flavoured stock, using just water and seasonings. (This one is also great for poaching tongue.) After poaching brains or tongue, you can strain and refrigerate the court bouillon and re-use it within 4 days, but after that, it's best to discard it.

Court Bouillon

- 5 cups (1.25 L) water
- 1 carrot, peeled and sliced
- 1 small onion, peeled and sliced
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 1 large strip lemon zest
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 star anise
- 1 five-inch stick of cinnamon
- 1 large sprig of thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 10 black peppercorns
- 4 cloves

Combine all ingredients in a medium saucepan and bring to the boil, covered, over medium heat. Lower heat and simmer for 20 minutes.

Strain court bouillon and save in fridge for up to four days. If you're not using the brains right away, they can be kept in the strained court bouillon for up to two days.

3) Cook the Brains

Rinse brains under running water before poaching.

Bring court bouillon to the boil, reduce heat to a simmer and add brains.

Poach gently for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from court bouillon and cool to room temperature. Strain court bouillon. Brains can be stored in court bouillon in the fridge for up to two days.

4) Make Ravioli Filling

- 2 oz (60 gr) dried morel mushrooms
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) unsalted butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) apple juice (unsweetened is best) or apple cider
- 1 tsp (5 mL) white wine vinegar
- 1 set of poached caribou brains (explained in step 1), finely diced
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dried rosemary
- Salt and pepper

Soak mushrooms in water to cover for 30 minutes. Remove mushrooms from water, squeeze out liquid and chop finely. Set aside. Keep the soaking liquid to add to the bone stock.

Melt the butter in a frying pan over medium heat. When it sizzles, add chopped onion and cook until soft, about 5 minutes.

Add chopped mushrooms and cook for another 2 minutes.

Add apple juice and vinegar and cook until the liquid has evaporated.

Add diced caribou brains, rosemary, and salt and pepper to taste and cook for another 3 minutes.

Remove pan from heat and set aside to cool.



6) Make the Ravioli

- 2 egg whites
- 2 tsp (10 mL) water
- 48 wonton wrappers

Take the wonton wrappers from the package and set on the counter under a tea towel so they don't dry out.

Whisk egg white and water together.

Set out 4 wonton wrappers on the counter and brush each one with egg white and water. (This is the "glue" that will help the wonton wrapper stay sealed while it cooks.)

Put 2 tsp (5 mL) of the brain mixture in the centre of each wrapper.



Fold one side of the wrapper over, corner to corner, to make a triangle. Press firmly around the filling to expel all the air and seal the wonton wrapper well.

Place raviolis on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, lightly dusted with flour, and cover with a tea towel or plastic wrap. Repeat until all the wonton wrappers are filled.

Store, covered with plastic, in the fridge until ready to cook.



7) Cook the Ravioli

Bring a medium pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. While you are waiting, make the Browned Butter Sauce as explained below.

Reduce to medium-low heat, and when the water is lightly simmering, add raviolis to the pot, about 6 at a time. You don't want to crowd them.

Cook raviolis until they float to the top and the wrapper looks translucent – about 3 minutes.

Drain well and add to the melted butter, below.

8) Make the Browned Butter Sauce

- 8 Tbsp (115 gr) unsalted butter
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) apple juice (unsweetened is best) or apple cider
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) chopped parsley

While the raviolis are cooking, cut butter into small pieces and place in a frying pan over low heat.

When the butter has melted, increase heat to medium and cook until the milk solids just start to brown and there is a nutty aroma.

Remove pan from heat and add apple juice – the butter will sizzle and spit, so be careful.

Remove cooked ravioli from the pot with a slotted spoon and slide into the browned butter sauce, turning carefully to coat each side with butter. It's best to serve immediately, but if not, keep cooked, buttered raviolis warm in a 170F oven. Sprinkle with parsley just before serving.

Makes 12 to 15 appetizer servings (48 raviolis).

Caribou Wonton Soup

This recipe brings together Chinese cuisine and a broth made with browned caribou bones. It was a hit during our cooking workshop and we think the Old Crow co-op will now be stocking wonton wrappers on a regular basis.



“The Vuntut Gwitchin used to travel to Crow Flats and then to Herschel Island and there is even a trail there. There is a trail to the calving grounds and they used to travel that trail long ago. They used to go and stay around the calving grounds watch the caribou and live off the caribou. And this is why they know so much about caribou.” – Charlie Peter Charlie

1) Prepare the Broth

- 12 cups (3 L) caribou bone broth (p. 58)
- 1 four-inch (10 cm) piece of fresh ginger, sliced
- 4 green onions, white and green parts, chopped
- 1 dried chili pepper
- 2 star anise
- 2 tsp (10 mL) fennel seeds
- 1 2-inch (5-cm) piece cinnamon stick
- 6 cloves
- 12 black peppercorns

Combine all ingredients in a large pot, cover, bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Strain into a clean pot and set aside.



2) Make the Wonton Filling

- 2 cups (500 mL) fresh mushrooms, finely diced
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) canola oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp (5 mL) soya sauce
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) finely chopped ginger (substitute 1 tsp (5 mL) dried ginger)
- 2 tsp (10 mL) sesame oil
- 2 tsp (10 mL) Chinese Five Spice mixture
- 1 poached caribou brain, chopped into small pieces (See instructions for poaching brain on page 26)
- 48 wonton wrappers
- 2 egg whites
- 2 tsp (10 mL) water

Heat oil in a frying pan over medium high heat. Add mushrooms and stir to coat them in oil. When mushrooms have absorbed the oil in the pan, add soya sauce and garlic, stir again and cook until dark brown and just beginning to stick to the pan.

Turn heat to medium and add ginger, sesame oil and chopped brains. Cook for another 2 to 3 minutes.

Remove from heat, transfer to a bowl and let cool to room temperature. (Can be prepared to this point and chilled in refrigerator for up to 2 days.)



3) Filling the Wontons

Take the wonton wrappers from the package and set on the counter under a tea towel so they don't dry out.

Whisk egg whites and water together.

Set out 4 wonton wrappers on the counter and brush each one with egg white and water. (This is the "glue" that will help the wonton wrapper stay sealed while it cooks.)

Put 2 tsp (5 mL) of the brain mixture in the centre of each wrapper. Fold one side of the wrapper over, corner to corner, to make a triangle. Press firmly around the filling to expel all the air and seal the wonton wrapper well.

Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper lightly dusted with flour. Lay a tea towel or plastic wrap over top.

Repeat until all the wonton wrappers are filled, covering each layer with parchment. Cover well with plastic and place in fridge until ready to use.



3) Completing the Soup

- 12 cups (3 L) flavoured caribou broth (from step 1 of this recipe)
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) soya sauce
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) white vinegar
- 2 tsp (10 mL) sesame oil
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced (substitute 1 tsp (5 mL) dried ginger)
- 2 tsp Chinese Five Spice powder
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 3 cups (750 mL) green cabbage, sliced thin
- 2 cups (500 mL) peeled carrot, thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 2 cups (500 mL) celery, thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 48 filled wontons (from step 3 of this recipe)
- 4 green onions, white and green parts, sliced thin on the diagonal

Bring broth to the boil over high heat. Whisk together soya sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, ginger, garlic and Chinese Five Spice powder and add to the broth, along with garlic cabbage, carrot and celery. Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Add wontons and simmer for another 3 minutes. Serve immediately, sprinkling green onions over each bowl.

Makes 12 servings.

Chinese Five Spice Powder

Sometimes spices can be hard to find, especially in small northern stores. If your store doesn't sell Chinese Five Spice powder, you can make your own. This is a basic recipe. If you can only find cinnamon, cloves and pepper, that's at least a good start.

- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp (10 mL) ground cloves
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) ground black pepper
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) ground fennel seeds
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) ground star anise

Mix spices together, place in a jar and store in the spice cupboard.

Deep Fried Wontons with Plum Sauce



For a special treat, try homemade deep-fried wontons with store-bought plum sauce or one you make yourself.

- 20 filled wontons (page 31)
- 2 cups canola oil for deep-frying

Preheat oven to 200F (95C). Heat oil in a medium-sized pot over medium heat. Test to see if oil is ready by dropping in a small corner of wonton wrapper. If it puffs up and cooks immediately, the oil is ready. Carefully slide two to three wontons into the hot oil and cook until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Keep warm in the oven. Repeat until all the wontons are cooked. Serve with plum sauce.

Homemade "Plum" Sauce

Apricot jam is a good substitute for plum jam, which can be harder to find. In a pinch, peach jam will work too.

- ½ cup (125 mL) apricot jam
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) vinegar
- 1 tsp (5 mL) chili peppers
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) ground ginger
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) ground cloves
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) water

Combine ingredients in a small saucepan, bring to a boil over medium heat, reduce heat to medium-low and cook for 2 minutes.

Makes just over ½ cup (125 mL).

Poached Caribou Tongue

[Adapted from *Odd Bits* by Jennifer McLagan]

Caribou tongue can be eaten many different ways. This is a simple preparation made delicious by pairing it with homemade condiments.

- One or two caribou tongues, brined, rinsed, patted dry and trimmed. (See instructions on page 107.)
- 4 cups (1L) court bouillon (See recipe on page 29.)



1) Cook the Tongue in the Court Bouillon

Simmer the court bouillon for 20 minutes and then add the tongue. Bring to a boil over medium heat, skimming off any scum that rises to the surface. Lower the heat and simmer, partially covered, for 90 minutes to 2 hours – the tongue should be very tender. Test by piercing the tongue with a skewer at the thickest end; the skewer should slide in easily with no resistance.

Remove the tongue from the court bouillon with a slotted spoon and place on a cutting board or plate. Reserve the court bouillon. Now you will attempt to peel the skin from the tongue while it's still hot. Wear clean rubber gloves or keep a bowl of cold water handy to cool your fingers.

2) Peel the Tongue

Start at the back of the tongue and use a small knife to lift up the first piece of skin. Then, using your fingers, peel the skin off as though peeling off a glove. Be careful when you reach the tip of the tongue that you don't pull it off. Discard skin.



Once the tongue is peeled, cut away any remaining gristle or fat, and remove the bumpy bits from the sides of the tongue by sliding the blade of the knife gently along.

Strain the court bouillon and allow to cool. When both tongue and court bouillon have cooled to room temperature, place tongue in court bouillon and refrigerate. The tongue will keep for up to 4 days.



Renee Charlie preparing tongue.

3) Serve the Tongue

- 4 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and cooled
- ¼ cup (60 mL) salsa verde
- 4 radishes

Remove the tongue from the court bouillon and pat dry. Discard the court bouillon.

Cut tongue into thin slices. Cut hard-boiled eggs in quarters. Trim radishes, scrub thoroughly and slice as thinly as possible.

Arrange tongue on a platter with eggs and radishes, and drizzle salsa verde over top. Serve with more salsa verde on the side, with a basket of toast and crackers and some butter.

Salsa Verde

This is a great sauce to have on hand – it goes well with all kinds of meats, fish and even boiled vegetables.

- 2 cups (500 mL) of fresh parsley leaves, washed, dried and separated from their stems
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) capers
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tsp (5 mL) caper juice
- 1 tsp (5 mL) lemon juice
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) olive oil
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Finely chop parsley and capers and combine in a small bowl. Mince garlic and add to the bowl. Mix in lemon and caper juice and then whisk in olive oil, salt and pepper. Can be used right away, but will keep in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.

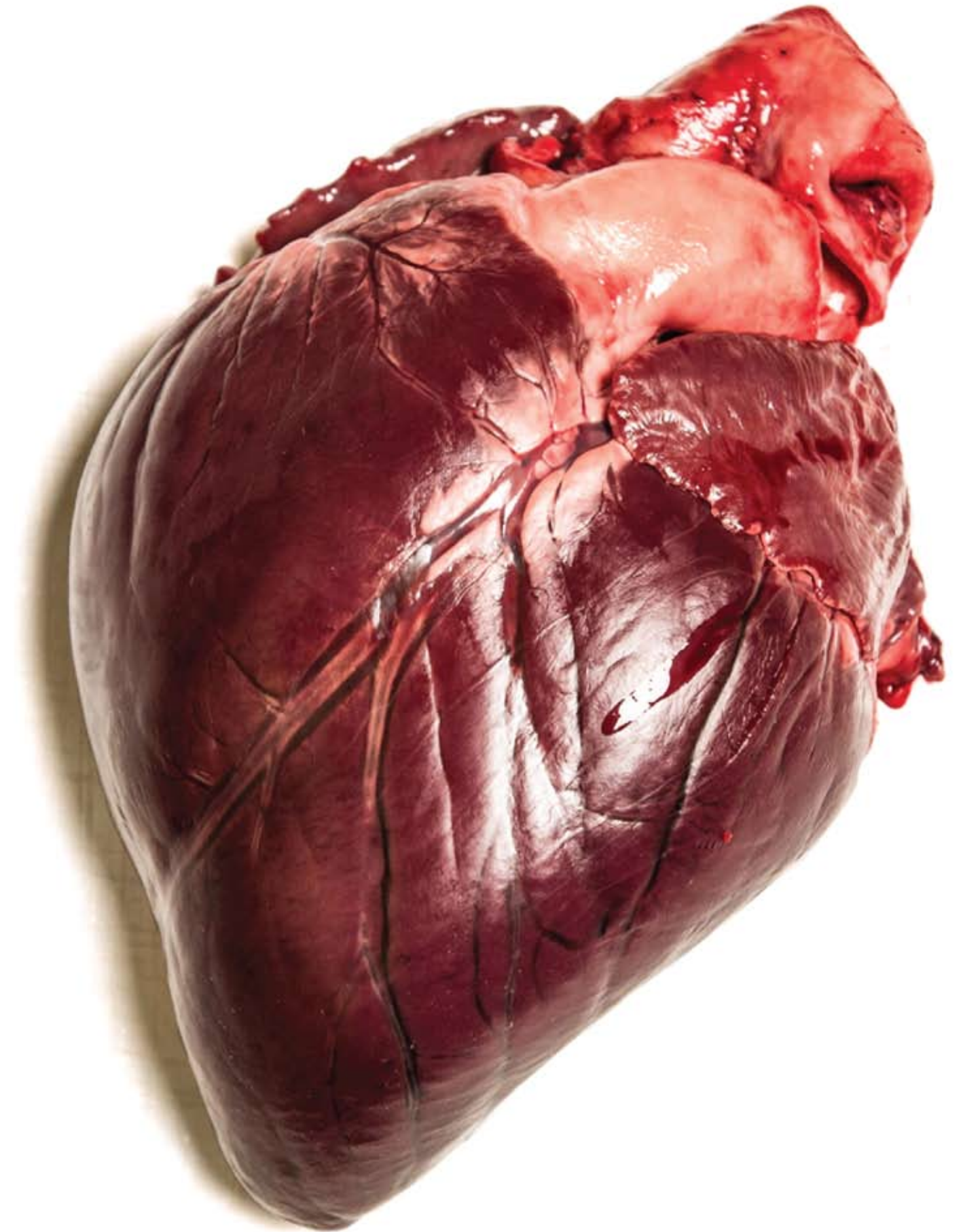
Makes about ¼ cup (60 mL).

Organs

Ch'idrii

“We lived the right way and we followed the rules. When they kill caribou they are happy and they eat good. The guts and the kidneys and the back leg and the ribs they cook that to fire and after this they really enjoy their meal.” – *Charlie Thomas*

Heart, kidney, and liver: these nutrient-rich parts can be an acquired taste. But properly prepared, they are a delicious change to the usual meat fare and can be a nice addition to special meals and celebrations.



Preparing Organs

In the Field

When gutting caribou, try to remove the guts with as little damage as possible to prevent the spread of harmful bacteria. Pull organs toward you with one hand, and with the other hand cut the connective tissue along the back. Remove the heart from between the forequarters by cutting the aorta. Wipe clean and lay on clean moss. Remove the liver and kidneys from the gut pile, give them a wipe and lay them on clean moss as well. Once cool, wrap organs in cloth or place in bags to take home. During transport and at home, keep organs as cold as possible – ideally, less than 40F or 4C.

At Home

When back at home, rinse heart, liver and kidneys under running water, pat dry, wrap in butcher's paper and if you're not going to use them right away, freeze for up to six months.

Clean work surfaces and knives with soap and water after preparing food, especially raw meat, and wash hands with soap and water before and after touching meat.



Heart – Ch'idrii



Caribou heart is one of the best parts of the animal: delicious, lean, and an excellent source of minerals and vitamins. Unlike the kidney and the liver, it's not an organ, but a muscle. Think of it as a very lean steak. It's best cooked either hot and fast (grilled or sautéed) or low and slow (braised in a slow cooker or low oven); anything in between will be tough and chewy.

Gwich'in cooks either flash-fry heart for a quick treat or else stuff the heart with rice and vegetables and bake in the oven.

To prepare the heart for cooking these recipes, rinse it under running water and pat dry. Remove the outer membrane by making a small slit with a sharp knife and then peeling it off with your fingers. If you're going to braise the heart, leave the fat on. Otherwise, remove it and save it for rendering (melting). Cut the heart open lengthwise and remove any arteries, blood vessels, fat, stringy pieces, or silver skin. You're now ready to start your recipe.



Caribou Heart Tortillas

This recipe has lots of steps, so do it when you have time. It's a great family-style dish for a Saturday night!

1) Prepare the Marinade and Meat

1 caribou heart cleaned, cut in half, and trimmed of all fat, silverskin, etc.

Marinade

½ cup (125 mL) orange juice
 ¼ cup (60 mL) soy sauce
 2 Tbsp (30 mL) olive oil
 1 tsp (5 mL) dried chilies *substitute 2 Tbsp (30 mL) canned chipotle in adobo sauce
 ½ tsp (2.5 mL) salt
 ½ tsp (2.5 mL) pepper

Whisk together marinade ingredients. Lay the two pieces of heart in a glass dish and pour the marinade over. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour and as long as 24 hours, turning occasionally. In the meantime, you can prepare the other parts of the meal.

To cook the heart, remove both halves from the marinade and pat dry. Throw away the marinade.

Slice each piece in half crosswise then lengthwise into long strips of about ¼-inch (.6-cm) thick by 2 to 3-inches (5 to 7.5-cm) long.

Heat 2 teaspoons (10 mL) canola or olive oil in a cast iron pan over medium high, and when smoking, add heart pieces. Cook in small batches, tossing frequently, for no more than 1 minute for each batch, until all the pieces are cooked. Add more oil as necessary, and keep each batch warm until they're all done.

To serve, bring all the toppings, including sour cream and salsa, to the table, along with the tortillas and the cooked heart pieces. Everyone can make their own tortilla – just pile up the meat and toppings on each tortilla, then fold it up and eat with your hands.

Makes 8 tortillas, enough for 4 to 6 people.





2) Prepare the Toppings

Toppings can be made in advance and served at room temperature.

Re-fried beans:

- 1 medium onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red or green pepper, thinly sliced
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) butter
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) canola or olive oil or rendered caribou fat
- 1 19 oz can (560 mL) cooked black beans
- ¼ cup (60 mL) orange juice
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) soya sauce
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) dried chillies

Melt half the butter and the oil or fat in a frying pan over medium heat. Add onions and cook until slightly browned, about 10 minutes. Add garlic for the last couple of minutes.

Transfer the onions and garlic to a bowl, add more butter and oil or fat to the pan and sauté the pepper until it too is slightly browned, about 10 minutes. Transfer to another bowl.

Add black beans, salt, pepper, soya sauce, orange juice and dried chillies, turn heat to high and cook until orange juice has almost evaporated. Transfer to a bowl and reserve.

Other toppings:

- 1 avocado
- ½ cup (125 mL) fresh cilantro or parsley, chopped
- 1 cup (250 mL) sour cream
- 1 cup (250 mL) homemade salsa (substitute store-bought salsa)
- Salt and pepper
- 8 8-inch (20-cm) homemade flour tortillas (substitute store-bought flour or corn tortillas)

Peel and dice avocado. Wash, dry, and finely chop parsley or cilantro. Place salsa and sour cream in bowls. Cover everything and reserve until you're ready to serve.

Homemade Tortillas

For homemade tortillas, start about 1 hour before you're going to serve.

- 2 cups (500 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ tsp (7.5 mL) baking powder
- 1 ½ tsp (7.5 mL) kosher salt
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) lard or vegetable shortening
- ¾ cup (180 mL) warm water

Whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium-sized bowl. Rub lard into flour mixture using your fingertips until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add warm water and work dough with hands until thoroughly mixed.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead until smooth, about 5 minutes. Cover with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let rest for 10 minutes. Divide dough into 8 equal pieces and roll each piece of dough into a ball. Cover dough balls with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let rest for another 15 minutes.

Place one ball of dough on a lightly floured surface and pat down into a flat disc. Using a rolling pin, roll dough out to an 8-inch round. Cover each tortilla with a piece of paper towel, and pile the tortillas on top of each other, a paper towel between each one, until all 8 tortillas are finished.

When you're ready to cook, preheat a cast iron frying pan over medium heat. It's ready when a drop of water jumps on the hot pan. Transfer one tortilla to pan and cook until bubbles form on the top side and there are brown spots on the bottom side, about 30 to 60 seconds. Flip tortilla and cook until second side develops brown spots, 30 to 60 seconds longer. Transfer tortilla to a plate and cover with a clean tea towel. Repeat with remaining balls of dough. Keep warm in the tea towel until ready to serve.

Store-bought Tortillas

For store-bought tortillas, preheat the cast-iron pan until a drop of water jumps on the hot pan. Cook for 30-60 seconds each side. Keep warm in a tea towel.



Homemade Salsa

Salsa is one of the easiest things to make at home. The basic recipe is just tomatoes, onions, something acidic like lemon juice or vinegar, a bit of oil and salt and pepper. Once you've got that down pat you can start adding anything you like – chopped peppers, some garlic, chopped olives, whatever fruit you have on hand, chopped herbs – the sky is the limit. Just remember to keep the proportions right: half tomatoes, one-quarter onions, and one-quarter anything else.

- 1 cup (250 mL) diced tomatoes
- ½ cup (125 mL) finely diced onions (yellow, purple or spring onions are fine)
- ¼ cup (60 mL) peeled, chopped fruit (apple, orange, canned pineapple – whatever you've got)
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) lime or lemon juice or 2 tsp (10 mL) vinegar
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) each salt and pepper

Mix everything together in a bowl up to 2 hours before you plan to serve. Cover and refrigerate until serving. Will keep for up to 2 days, but it's best the same day.



*"I like cooking outside. It's nice. Food tastes better out there."
— Renee Charlie*

Caribou Heart Kebabs with Tzatziki

Remember that delicious Greek meal you had last time you were Outside? Well, you can make one at home, with tender caribou heart shish kebabs and garlicky tzatziki. Add some oven-baked Greek potatoes and you're all set. Tip: Cook the potatoes first and broil the kebabs just before you're ready to serve.



1 caribou heart, cleaned and cut into 1½-inch chunks
½ tsp (2.5 mL) salt
1 tsp (5 mL) pepper
1 tsp (5 mL) oregano
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tsp (5 mL) dried chilies
1 Tbsp (15 mL) lemon juice
1 Tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
Bamboo skewers

Sprinkle the chunks of caribou heart with the spices and garlic and mix with your hands. Add the lemon juice and olive oil and mix again. Refrigerate for 1 hour. In the meantime, soak the bamboo skewers in water so they don't burn in the oven.

Thread 4 or 5 pieces of caribou heart onto each skewer. Place on an oiled cookie sheet. Set the oven broiler on high and place a rack six inches underneath. Give the oven 5 minutes to heat up, then grill the kebabs under the broiler, setting the timer for 2 minutes. After 2 minutes, turn the kebabs to brown the other side. Cook for no more than 5 minutes in total, or the kebabs will be chewy and tough.

Remove from the oven and serve at once with tzatziki, pita bread, Greek salad and Greek potatoes in the oven.

Makes about 16 kebabs, about 4 to 6 servings.



Greek Salad

You don't need vinegar with this salad because the tomato provides the acid.

- 4 large ripe tomatoes
- Half an English cucumber (substitute regular cucumber)
- 1 green or red pepper
- Half a medium red onion
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) whole black olives
- 1 cup (250 mL) feta cheese
- 1 tsp (5 mL) oregano
- Salt and pepper
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) olive oil

Cut tomatoes into bite-sized chunks and place in a salad bowl. Prepare the other vegetables as follows and add to the bowl as they are ready. Slice cucumber in half lengthwise and cut into chunks. (If you're using regular cucumber, peel it first.) Slice pepper in half, remove the core and seeds, and cut into chunks. Slice the onion lengthwise into thin strips. Mix together, then add olives and seasonings. Crumble feta cheese with your fingers, add to the salad and mix again. Serve at room temperature.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Tzatziki

- Half a cucumber
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt
- 1 tsp (5 mL) pepper
- 1 750 mL container of plain yogurt

Peel and grate the cucumber. Put the grated cucumber in the center of a clean, rinsed tea towel or a piece of cheesecloth. Gather up the corners, twist, and squeeze out as much of the liquid as possible. Transfer to a medium bowl and mix in garlic, salt, pepper. Stir in the yogurt. Refrigerate for two hours to let the flavours develop.

Makes about 3 cups (750 mL).

Greek Potatoes in the Oven

In this dish, the potatoes half bake, half braise, so they're both crispy and soft. The secret to success is to pour the water in from the side of the pan, not over top.

- 1 ½ lbs (700 gr) potatoes, peeled
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) olive oil
- Juice of ½ lemon; about 2 Tbsp (30 mL)
- 3 cloves garlic, cut in half lengthwise and sliced
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ cup water

Cut the potatoes in half lengthwise, then cut the halves lengthwise into thirds or quarters, depending upon the size, so that pieces are uniform. Place the potatoes in a 9-by-13-inch (23-by-33-cm) roasting pan, coat them with oil and lemon juice and sprinkle them with oregano, salt and pepper. Add garlic slices and toss together again.

Pour the water in slowly at one side of the pan, so that the water level creeps up the potatoes from underneath. This ensures that the oil covers the exposed upper parts of the potato, helping it to stay moist as it roasts, and allows the lower part of the potato to braise. Tuck in the bay leaf, making sure it's covered with water.

Bake at 350F (175C) for about 40 minutes. If the water evaporates and the potatoes are still quite hard, add a bit more water from the side of the pan. Don't stir until near the end of the cooking period. By the end there should be very little liquid and the potatoes should have a thin crust and a soft, moist interior.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.



Caribou Liver Pâté

Caribou liver is both delicious and packed with nutrients: iron, zinc and especially vitamin A. One small serving of caribou liver will give you enough vitamin A for several days. The liver is great simply fried up in butter, or with onions, mushrooms and bacon, or in a French Canadian-style pâté. Everyone at our cooking workshop in Old Crow loved the pâté! This is a rich spread, best enjoyed thinly spread on toast or crackers. One whole caribou liver would make a lot of pâté, so for this recipe we just use one pound.



1) Cook the Liver

- 1 lb (454 gr) caribou liver, cut into six pieces
- 4 cups (1 L) water
- ¼ tsp (1.2 mL) salt
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 3 whole cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- 6 juniper berries
- 4 sprigs parsley
- 12 peppercorns
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) dry chili flakes
- 1 2-inch (4-cm) piece of cinnamon stick

Put water in a medium-sized pot and add all of the ingredients except the caribou liver. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Add liver and bring to a boil again. Cover, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove pot from heat and let stand covered for 20 minutes.

Strain, remove caribou liver pieces and discard the cooking liquid and spices. Allow liver to cool, then remove the thin, shiny membrane by peeling it away with your fingers. The membrane looks like very thin, tight plastic. A small, pointed knife helps to lift up one corner; after that the peeling is fairly easy. Cut the liver into 1-inch (2-cm) pieces, and remove any bits of gristle you come across, for the smoothest pâté possible.

2) Make the Pâté

Put the prepared liver into a food processor or meat grinder and grind until it resembles coarse meal. To the ground liver add:

- ½ lb (225 gr) softened unsalted butter
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) mace or grated nutmeg
- 2 tsp (10 mL) dry mustard
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) ground allspice
- Pinch of ground cloves
- 3 green onions, finely chopped
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) minced garlic
- ¼ cup (60 mL) unsweetened apple juice
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) finely chopped parsley

Process until the pâté is well blended and completely smooth, then add:

- 1/3 cup (80 mL) 35% cream

Pack pâté into small serving bowls. Leave the bowls of pâté overnight in the refrigerator to allow the flavours to develop. Bring up to room temperature before serving as both the flavour and the texture are better at room temperature. Serve with crackers and a bit of cranberry chutney. (See recipe on pag 53.)

Makes about 2 ½ cups (600mL).



Homemade Crackers

[Adapted from *The Boreal Feast*]

- 1 cup (250 mL) corn flour
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) sunflower seeds
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) sesame seeds
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) pumpkin seeds
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) flax seeds
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) canola oil
- Sea salt to taste
- 1 tsp (5 mL) fennel seeds
- 1 tsp (5 mL) anise seeds
- 1 tsp (5 mL) ground juniper berries
- 1 cup (250 mL) boiling water

Preheat oven to 300F. Stir dry ingredients together. Add canola oil and boiling water and mix thoroughly. The dough will be quite runny at first, thickening as the corn flour absorbs the water.

Use a spatula to spread dough onto two sheets of parchment paper cut to fit a baking sheet. (It's easier to spread the dough on the paper and then place it on the baking sheet.) Take a third piece of parchment paper, lay it over one batch of dough and use a rolling pin to flatten the dough out to a uniform thickness. Repeat with second batch.

Transfer to baking sheets. Bake until golden brown, or about 1 hour (check after 45 minutes). Remove from oven and cool on a rack. Break into large pieces. Store in a covered tin. Will keep for several days.

Caribou Liver with Bacon, Onion and Mushrooms

Back in the old days, the liver from a freshly killed caribou would be dipped in flour and salt and fried in a hot pan over the campfire. Today, this is still one of the main ways people in Old Crow prepare caribou. Sometimes simple is best.



1) Prepare the Bacon, Onion and Mushrooms

- 3 strips double-smoked bacon, diced
- 1 cup (250 mL) diced white or crimini mushrooms
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- Splash of unsweetened apple juice or white grape juice
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) 35% cream

Fry bacon in a cast-iron pan over medium heat. Don't let it get too crunchy. Remove from pan and drain on paper towels.

Pour off most of the bacon fat. Add the mushrooms to the pan and sauté for 3-4 minutes. Remove from pan.

Add green onions and garlic to the pan and sauté for 2-3 minutes – add a bit of bacon fat if necessary.

Chop bacon and mushrooms together with a knife, but not so the mixture is mushy, and add to the onions and garlic.

Add apple or white grape juice and turn heat to high. When juice has reduced, add whipping cream and cook until the mixture just holds together.

Remove from heat, add pepper to taste, and reserve, covered, off the heat.

2) Prepare the Caribou Liver

1 lb (454 gr) caribou liver

Slice the liver into pieces ¾-inch thick and coat with olive oil, salt and pepper. You can either grill the liver or sauté it. If grilling, heat grill so it's smoking hot. Grill the liver for two minutes on each side. (Time it for more than two minutes. The liver should be pink inside, not tough and gray.) If sautéing, heat 2 tsp (10 mL) each of butter and olive oil in a cast-iron pan over medium-high heat. When the butter is no longer sizzling add the liver pieces and cook them for two minutes each side. Let cooked liver rest for five minutes before serving.

Serve the grilled liver with the bacon-mushroom mixture on the side or on the top. Caribou-fat roasted potatoes and steamed broccoli would go nicely with this dish, with some cranberry chutney on the side.

Makes four servings.



The Claim Cranberry Chutney

Many thanks to Glenys Baltimore and The Claim in Whitehorse for sharing this great recipe. For extra heat, add two chopped jalapeno peppers.

- 1 cup (250 mL) chopped onion
- 1 ½ tsp (7.5 mL) chopped garlic
- ¼ cup (60 mL) olive oil
- 1 tsp (5 mL) cinnamon
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) cardamom
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) cloves
- 7 cups (1.65 L) whole cranberries
- 1 cup (250 mL) white sugar
- 5 Tbsp (75 mL) balsamic or red wine vinegar
- A pinch of salt

Sauté onion until clear (if you're using jalapenos, cook with the onions), add garlic and spices, stir to combine and sauté for another couple of minutes. Add cranberries and stir until they begin to pop. Add sugar and vinegar. Cover and simmer for an hour, stirring often. Pour into sterilized jars, seal with two-piece metal lids, and immerse in a boiling water bath for 12 minutes. Remove and let cool to room temperature. Store in a cool, dark place.

“If we look after the caribou good, it will be around for a long time. They should take all the meat and not waste it. When we kill caribou, we should take good care of the meat, respect what you get.” – Edith Josie

Kidneys on Toast

For the Gwich'in, kidneys were a great delicacy and were often fried up on an outdoor fire right after the hunt. Elizabeth Kyikavichik described a dish where cleaned and sliced intestines were fried with the kidneys for a special outdoor meal. Kidneys on toast makes an excellent breakfast for two. Try it for Valentine's Day!



2) Make the Sauce

Melt the second tablespoon of butter or fat in the frying pan. When it is sizzling, whisk in the flour and cook for two minutes, whisking occasionally. Pour in the stock in a steady stream, whisking the whole time. Whisk in the vinegar and salt and pepper to taste. Reduce heat to low and cook for 10 minutes, whisking now and then.

3) Add the Kidneys to the Sauce

Slice the kidneys crosswise into 1/8-inch slices. Add kidney slices to the sauce, turn heat to medium and let the kidneys heat through for two or three minutes while you prepare the toast. Butter toast, pour kidneys and sauce over top, sprinkle with parsley and serve at once.

Makes two servings.



Marla Charlie participates in the leg-skipping contest during Vadzaih Choo Drin (Big Caribou Days).

- 2 caribou kidneys, fresh or frozen and thawed, about ½ lb (225 gr)
- 2 Tbsp butter or caribou fat
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 1 cup (250 mL) caribou bone broth
- 1 tsp (5 mL) apple cider vinegar
- 1 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 2 to 4 slices whole wheat or sourdough bread

1) Prepare the kidneys

Separate the kidneys by cutting through the membrane that connects them. Trim the fat by pulling it away with your fingers from the hollow side of the kidneys. (Keep the fat for making pastry, or melt in the frying pan to substitute for some of the butter in this recipe.)

Remove the membrane that covers the kidney by making a small slit in the membrane on the rounded side with a sharp knife or nail scissors, and then peeling it off with your fingers.

Melt one tablespoon of butter or fat in a frying pan over medium heat. When the butter is no longer sizzling, add the kidneys and cook them for about 6 minutes, turning every minute or so. Remove them from the heat and reserve.

Caribou Steak and Kidney Pie

Like liver and all organ meats, caribou kidneys are nutrient-rich, a great source of iron and zinc, and loaded with vitamin B12. They are relatively small organs, so if you only have the kidneys from one animal, it's best to combine them with other meats so they'll go further, like in this recipe.

If you cook and cool the filling first, the pastry is less likely to sink during baking. You can make both the filling and the pastry the day before and finish making the pie on the day you want to serve.

1) Make the Filling

- 1 caribou kidney, about ½ lb (225 gr)
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) butter or caribou fat, divided
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) olive oil, divided
- 1 ½ lb (775 gr) caribou steak
- 2 medium onions, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium carrots, peeled, sliced lengthwise and chopped into ½-inch (1.2-cm) pieces
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed into ½-inch (1.2-cm) pieces
- 1 cup (250 mL) caribou bone broth
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) soya sauce or Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dried mustard
- 1 tsp (5 mL) Labrador tea, chopped fine (substitute dried rosemary)
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) salt
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) pepper
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) apple cider vinegar or white vinegar
- ½ cup (125 mL) fresh parsley, minced
- ¼ cup flour
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1 egg yolk plus 1 tablespoon cold water

Separate kidneys and trim away fat and membrane. Slice into ½-inch (1.2-cm) pieces and reserve. Cut steak into 1-inch (2.5-cm) pieces.

Heat one tablespoon each of butter and oil in a large frying pan. Brown pieces of steak in two or three batches, removing from pan each time, and reserve.

To the same frying pan, add the remaining butter and olive oil. Once butter is sizzling add onion and cook for about 5 minutes until soft. Add garlic and carrots and cook for another 2 minutes. Add mustard, Labrador tea or rosemary, salt and pepper, soya or Worcestershire sauce and vinegar and cook for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add kidneys and cook for 4 to 5 minutes. Add potatoes, stirring gently, then add steak back to the pan and stir to combine.

Sprinkle flour over top of the mixture in two or three batches, stirring each time to coat the meat and vegetables. Once all the flour is added, cook for 1 minute, then pour in all the broth in a steady stream, stirring constantly.

Turn heat to low, cover, and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are still somewhat firm. Add chopped parsley, taste and add more salt and pepper if necessary.

Remove from heat and let the mixture cool to room temperature. While the meat is cooling, prepare the pastry.



Neta Benjamin with a lot of Labrador tea.



2) Make the Pastry

- 1 1/3 cups (330 mL) flour
- ½ cup (125 mL) cold, unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch (1.2-cm) cubes
- ¼ tsp (2.5 mL) salt
- 1 egg
- 2 to 3 Tbsp (30-45 mL) cold water

In a large bowl, whisk together flour and salt. Add butter, toss to coat with flour and mix lightly with your fingertips until butter forms pea-sized pieces. Whisk together egg and one tablespoon of the water. Add to flour mixture all at once, mixing gently with your fingertips. You should be able to see chunks of fat, and the pastry should be moist enough to begin to stick together. If the pastry is too dry, add up to 2 more tablespoons of water.

Turn the pastry out onto a lightly floured work surface, dust with flour, and knead gently until the pastry is smooth, about 3 to 4 times. Transfer to a plastic bag and form pastry into a disk. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before rolling out. The pastry will keep in the refrigerator for 3 days.

3) Make the Pie

- 1 egg beaten with 1 Tbsp (15 mL) milk or water
- Preheat oven to 400F (200C). On a lightly floured surface roll out the pastry to a thickness of ¼-inch (.6-cm). Fill a deep 9-inch (22-cm) pie dish with the steak and kidney mixture. Brush the edges of the dish with water, then fit the pastry on top, pressing it down well all around the edge to seal. Cut away any pastry that hangs over the edge with a sharp knife. Make a steam hole in the center and brush the top with beaten egg. Bake for 25 minutes, or until pastry is golden. Let sit for 10 minutes before serving.
- Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Bones

T'th'an

“Long ago when they killed caribou, they skinned it and they gather all the bones and then boil it for bone grease... The marrow, they cut it up and cook it... They never wasted any food, nothing. They used just about every part of the caribou.”
– *Alfred Charlie*

Bones and bone grease were an important part of Gwich'in cooking in the past. They are often overlooked in modern cooking – most of us think of them as something to feed to our family pet. But with a bit of effort, bones can enhance the taste and texture of many dishes.



Caribou Bone Broth

[Adapted from *The Boreal Gourmet*]

Bone broth is delicious, easy to make and freezes well, so make lots! One of our workshop participants said, “Now I can make my own broth. It costs me nine bucks at the store.”

- 5 lbs (about 2kg) caribou shin, leg and shoulder bones, sawed into 3 to 4-inch pieces
- 2 medium onions, peeled and chopped
- 2 carrots, washed and chopped
- 2 celery stalks, washed and chopped
- ½ head of fennel, including bulb, stem and leaves, chopped
- 1 leek, cleaned and chopped
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) olive or canola oil
- ¼ cup (60 mL) white or red wine vinegar
- 4 bay leaves
- 10 juniper berries
- 6 peppercorns

Thoroughly clean hair and dirt from caribou bones. Soak bones in cold water for at least an hour to draw out blood and remove impurities. Drain, rinse, pat dry and arrange bones on baking sheets.

Preheat oven to 400F. Toss vegetables in oil and arrange on another baking sheet. Roast bones and vegetables until browned and aromatic – about 30 minutes for bones and 50 minutes for vegetables.

Transfer bones to a large pot and fill with cold water to cover by 2 inches. Pour about ½ cup of cold water onto the baking sheet. Swirl it around to gather up the browned bits and add it all to the pot. Bring to the boil, covered, over high heat, constantly skimming off any scum that rises to the surface.

When scum has stopped forming on the surface, add vegetables, vinegar and seasonings. Once the broth has returned to the boil, reduce heat to medium low and simmer the broth very slowly for 4 to 8 hours.

Strain broth and discard bones and vegetables. (Use meat scraps for dog food.) Cool quickly to room temperature in several bowls. Once cool, refrigerate for several hours or overnight.

Skim off congealed bone fat from the surface of the chilled broth. Reserve fat for eating with dry meat. Taste broth – if it’s strong enough for your liking either use immediately or freeze for future use.

Makes about 16 cups.



For a more strongly-flavoured broth, such as for French Onion Soup, transfer broth to a pot and bring to a slow simmer over medium-low heat. Simmer slowly for 2 to 3 hours, until broth is reduced by one-third to one-half. Use right away or cool to room temperature, refrigerate for several hours, and then freeze for future use.



French Onion Soup with Caribou Bone Broth

Use strong, reduced caribou bone broth (previous page) for this recipe. The flavour is spectacular.

- 5 medium cooking onions, cut in half and thinly sliced
- ¼ lb. (115 gr.) butter
- 6 cups (1.5 L) strong, dark, caribou bone broth
- ½ cup (125 mL) balsamic vinegar
- Four to six thick slices of bread – just use whatever’s on hand
- 1½ cups (375 mL) grated sharp cheddar cheese

Sauté onions in butter in a large saucepan over medium-low heat until onions are browned and aromatic, about 30 to 40 minutes.

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, reduce (boil) balsamic vinegar until it’s thick. Remove from heat and set aside.

Warm stock in a separate saucepan, add to browned onions, add reduced vinegar, bring to a slow boil and let simmer for 30 minutes.

- Remove from heat, cool to room temperature and store in fridge.
- When you’re ready to serve, heat soup in a saucepan. Toast bread, estimating about one slice per bowl, and slice or tear into rough croutons (small pieces).
- Pour hot soup into bowls, top with croutons, add grated cheese to cover, put on a baking sheet and broil at high until cheese is browned and bubbling, about 1 minute. Serve at once.
- Makes six servings.



Stan Njootli Jr. at high noon, mid January.

Caribou Shin Marrow on Toast

Sometimes caribou shins are left out on the land after a hunt. But they’re full of tasty bone marrow! Marrow contains important nutrients as well as omega-3 fatty acids – the “good” kind of fat. Here’s a new way to enjoy this traditional treat.

- 4 caribou shins, hooves removed, sawn into 3-inch pieces
- Coarse salt
- Water
- ½ cup (125 mL) flour
- 2 tsp. (10 mL) spruce tip salt, divided
- 2 to 3 Tbsp (30 to 45 mL) butter
- 1 baguette, sliced into ¼ inch pieces
- 2 cups (500 mL) arugula or watercress or other spicy green
- 1 lemon, cut into eighths

Clean shins thoroughly to get rid of hair and bone chips. Place in a large bowl and cover with salted water, using 1 tsp of coarse salt for every cup of water. Leave bones in brine for at least one hour.

Remove bones from brine and rinse well. With a long, slim knife, work around the marrow in the centre of each bone to loosen it. Push the marrow gently with the forefinger or the handle of a wooden spoon until it comes out the other end, hopefully in one piece.

Stir flour and half the spruce tip salt together and transfer to a large plate. Roll each piece of marrow in flour so that it’s completely coated. Repeat until all the marrow is coated.

Melt butter in a frying pan over medium heat. Fry marrow in batches, turning gently, for 5 to 8 minutes. Drain on paper towels.

While marrow is cooking, toast bread under a broiler set at low for 90 seconds each side, checking often to make sure bread isn’t burning. Set aside.

Place a small pile of greens on each toast. Slice each marrow in half lengthwise and place on top of greens. Sprinkle with spruce tip salt (recipe on page 25), squeeze lemon over top and serve.

Makes 12 to 15 appetizer servings, about 30 appetizers.

Bone Grease

Long ago, bone grease was an important food for Gwich’in, providing a source of fats and oils. Making bone grease takes a long time, but it is an important traditional food that some cooks still prepare today.

To make bone grease, gather some caribou bones and, using an axe, break them up into manageable pieces. Put the bone pieces inside a clean cloth or pillowcase and use the axe again to pound them into small pieces (only a few inches long). Put all the all bones into a big pot and add about 2 inches of water. Bring to a boil. Keeping the water at a rapid boil, add ice or snow until the pot is full of water and grease starts to rise to the top. Keep boiling for up to 3 hours. Use a ladle to skim the grease from the top and filter it through a cheesecloth to make sure all the bits of bone are removed. Cool and serve with dried meat.



Tender Bits

Vadzaih nilii dàtl'ok

“Making dry meat is one of my passions. Some people try to make it all fancy, but I just stick to the old ways. And my grandchildren love it.”

– Elizabeth Kyikavichik

The most tender pieces of the caribou are found in the hindquarters, the tenderloin and the backstrap, and make excellent steaks and roasts. The backstrap is the most tender of the tender bits, and is traditionally used to make dry meat. But there are several other ways to cook this beautiful piece of meat, such as the classic French filet mignon with peppercorn sauce. Customers in the finest French restaurant would die for the chance to try caribou filet mignon! It's surprisingly easy to make.



Dry Meat – Nilii Gaii

Caribou dry meat is a treat for most Gwich'in. It was a convenient way to preserve meat before there were freezers. For Gwich'in who move to other parts of the country, a bag of dry meat sent in the mail is a taste of home. Most cooks seem to have their own “secret” ways of making dry meat, but the basic steps are the same.



Stephen Frost demonstrates how to cut dry meat.

Choose a tender cut of caribou and cut against the grain in thin layers in an “accordion” shape. This will create a long thin cut of meat. Hang this meat over clean poles or on a drying rack in a smoker or in a warm place that will not be disturbed. Flip twice a day and wait until completely dry (but not brittle). Once it is dry, place in a clean pillowcase and break up the dry meat into smaller pieces by pounding or stepping on it.

Some people use seasoning on the meat before drying it. The traditional way uses a liberal amount of salt or no seasoning at all.



Sophie Flather places meat on an indoor dryer.

Caribou Filet Mignon with Peppercorn Sauce

The backstrap is one of the best cuts of meat on a caribou. It's easy to remove and is found along the backbone. It comes off in two long thick pieces and is traditionally used for dry meat and other delicacies. It is very easy to cook and always delicious.



1) Prepare the filet mignon pieces

- 1 caribou backstrap
- 8 slices of bacon
- 8 toothpicks
- Salt and pepper
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) butter

Clean the hair and dirt from a fresh or frozen and thawed backstrap. Rinse under running water and pat dry. Lay the backstrap out on a cutting board.

Cut a small corner of the silver skin and pull the skin off with your fingers. If the skin is difficult to remove, work carefully with the knife held at a close angle to the skin, pulling with one hand and cutting with the other.

Cut away any sinew or gristle until you are left with a long, clean, tube-shaped piece of meat. (Clean the scraps and use for stir-fry or stew meat.)

Starting from the thickest end, cut eight slices 1½-2 inches (4-5.5 centimetres) thick. These are your filet mignons. (You can cut the thin end of the back strap into two or three steaks and use them in the caribou steak recipe that follows.)

Wrap a piece of bacon around each filet mignon so that it's snug but not tight. Run a toothpick through the loose end of the bacon into the filet mignon. Sprinkle filet mignons lightly with salt and pepper.



3) Bring it all together

Heat butter and oil in a medium-sized frying pan over medium-high heat. When the butter has stopped sizzling place all of the filet mignons in the pan. Cook for two minutes on each side for rare, and 2 ½ minutes for medium rare. This meat is best served either rare or medium rare.

Remove filet mignons from the frying pan and let rest for 5 minutes before serving.

To serve, pour a tablespoon of sauce on each plate (for a really fancy touch, heat the plates beforehand in a 200 F oven), place filet mignon on top, and pour another tablespoon of sauce over top. Serve with roasted carrots and potatoes and steamed kale or broccoli.

Makes 8 servings.

Roasted Carrots and Potatoes

- 1 lb (454 gr) carrots (about 6 large), peeled
- 1 lb (454 gr) potatoes (about 4 large), peeled
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) olive or canola oil
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt

Chop carrots in half and cut into quarters. Chop potatoes in half and slice lengthwise into fingers. Combine carrot and potato pieces in a bowl and toss with oil and salt. Spread onto two baking sheets, leaving space between them, and roast at 400 F (200 C) for 30 minutes. Check for doneness with a fork.

Makes 8 servings.



2) Make the Peppercorn Sauce

- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) butter
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) balsamic vinegar
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) strong, dark caribou bone broth (see page 58)
- 1½ tsp (7.5 mL) coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 cup (250 mL) 35% cream (whipping cream) or evaporated milk

Melt butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. When it's bubbling, whisk in vinegar and cook for 2 minutes. Whisk in caribou stock and cook for another 2 minutes, then whisk in pepper and cream. Let the sauce come to the boil, reduce heat to medium-low and cook for 5 to 10 minutes, or until sauce has thickened. Remove from heat.



Steamed Kale

- 1 lb (454 gr) curly kale
- Butter
- Salt

Remove kale from stems, wash well and tear into bite-sized pieces. Pour an inch of water into a medium saucepan, bring to the boil, and add a pinch of salt and kale. Steam for 3 minutes, drain, toss in butter and serve.

Makes 8 servings.

Pan-Fried Caribou Steaks with Cranberry Reduction



- 4 caribou steaks (4 oz /115 gr), about 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick) cut from the hindquarter or the back strap
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) butter
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) olive or canola oil
- Salt and pepper

Sprinkle steaks with salt and pepper. Heat butter and oil in a cast iron frying pan over medium-high heat. When the butter has stopped sizzling, add the steaks to the pan. For rare steaks, cook for 90 seconds each side, and for medium-rare, 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit while you make the cranberry reduction.

Make the reduction in the same frying pan as the steaks, right after removing steaks.

To serve, slice the steaks into thin slices and arrange on a platter or on individual plates. Pour sauce over top and serve right away.

Roasted carrots and potatoes are a good accompaniment for this dish.

Makes 4 servings.

Cranberry Reduction

- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) white or balsamic vinegar
- ½ cup (125 mL) rich caribou bone broth (page 60)
- 1 cup (250 mL) low-bush cranberries
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) cold butter
- Salt and pepper

Turn heat under the frying pan to medium and add vinegar. Let it sizzle and spit for about 30 seconds, then add caribou broth and cranberries. Let the sauce bubble rapidly for 2 minutes and add sugar. Cook until the sauce has thickened to a syrupy consistency, about 5 to 7 minutes, and remove from heat. Beat in the cold butter, one tablespoon at a time. Taste and add salt and pepper as needed.

Simple Caribou Roast with Rich Gravy and Yorkshire Pudding



- 1 caribou roast (1-lb/454-gr), cut from the hindquarter
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) butter, oil or caribou fat
- 1 clove of garlic peeled and cut into 8 slices
- Salt and pepper
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) mustard
- 4 or 5 strips of bacon

With the tip of a sharp knife, make 8 evenly spaced incisions in the caribou roast and push the garlic slices in as deeply as you can.

Sprinkle caribou roast with salt and pepper, on the top, bottom and sides.

Melt butter, oil or fat in a cast iron frying pan over medium heat.

Sear the meat on all sides.

Remove roast from pan and spread Dijon mustard over top and sides. Wrap bacon slices around the roast. Return the roast to the same pan and roast in a 375 F (190C) oven for 35 to 40 minutes for medium rare.

Remove roast from the oven and let it rest while you make the gravy and the Yorkshire pudding.

Serve in thin slices, bacon and all, with rich gravy, Yorkshire pudding, garlic mashed potatoes and honey-glazed carrots. (Recipes on the next page.)

Tip: Make the mashed potatoes beforehand and warm up in a saucepan over medium-low heat about 30 minutes before you're ready to serve.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Yorkshire Pudding

Yorkshire pudding is not really pudding but hollow and puffy popovers, sort of the Northern English version of bannock. They are traditionally served with roast beef dinner and are absolutely great filled with gravy.

Yorkshire tips:

You want the puddings to rise as much as possible, and to serve them when they're still puffy and hot – they collapse soon after they come out of the oven. There are some important tricks to ensure success.

- 1. Mix the batter two or three hours before you're going to serve dinner and let it sit, covered, on the counter.
- 2. Make the Yorkshire puddings last, after the roast is out of the oven. (The roast will be room temperature but the gravy, vegetables and puddings will be piping hot.)
- 3. Wait until everybody is sitting down at the table ready to eat before the puddings come out, and have the roast, gravy and vegetables ready to go.

Batter

- 1 cup (250 mL) milk
- 1 cup (250 mL) eggs (from 3 to 5 eggs, depending on their size)
- 1 cup (250 mL) flour
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt

Whisk eggs and milk together vigorously, add flour and salt and whisk until the batter is bubbly and there are no lumps. Cover and set aside while you prepare the rest of the meal.

After the roast has come out of the oven, turn temperature to 425F (220C). Put a pat of butter or caribou fat in each cup in a muffin tin. Place tin in the preheated oven until fat is melted, about 2 minutes. In the meantime, beat the batter vigorously to incorporate lots of air. Remove the muffin tin from the oven and swirl so the fat comes up the sides of the cups. Working quickly, pour the batter into the cups and put into the oven. Immediately turn the temperature down to 375F (190C). Set the timer for 30 minutes.

If it's your first time making Yorkshire pudding, you'll be watching anxiously for them to start puffing up. It doesn't happen right away, but slowly they will rise and rise until they are light and airy. When the timer goes, remove them from the muffin cups right away and make sure everyone gets to see them, big and beautiful, before they fall. (They'll only fall a bit.) Put a whole muffin on each plate and tell people to pull them apart and pour gravy inside. Delicious!

Makes 12 puddings.



Rich Gravy

- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) butter
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) flour
- 2 cups (500 mL) rich caribou bone broth
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) soya sauce
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) white, red or balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper

Over medium heat, melt butter in the same frying pan the roast was cooked in and scrape up all the browned bits from the bottom of the pan. (Remember, the handle of the frying pan is going to be really hot. Leave an oven mitt on top of the handle to remind yourself.) Whisk in flour and cook for 2 minutes. Slowly add the bone broth, whisking constantly. Let the gravy bubble and thicken for 5 minutes or so, then whisk in the soya sauce, brown sugar and vinegar. Cook for another 10 minutes, or until it has thickened nicely, taste and add salt and pepper if necessary.

Makes about 2 cups (500 mL).

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

- 1½ lbs (700 gr) potatoes, about 5 large
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ cup (60 mL) milk
- 2 to 3 Tbsp (30 to 45 mL) butter
- Salt and pepper

Peel potatoes and cut into quarters. Rinse, place in a medium saucepan and cover with water. Bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer until fork-tender. Drain and mash with a fork until all the lumps are gone. Whip the milk in with a fork, and then add butter and garlic. Taste and add salt and pepper to your liking.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Honey-Glazed Carrots

- 1 lb (454 gr) carrots (about 6 to 8 large), peeled
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) butter
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) honey
- Salt and pepper

Slice carrots in half lengthwise and then on the diagonal into ¼-inch (1-cm) slices. Place in a medium saucepan and cover with boiling water. Bring to the boil, reduce heat to medium low and cook for about 5 minutes, until they're tender but still firm. Drain, leaving about one tablespoon of water in the pot, and return to the heat. Add butter and honey and toss until the carrots are coated in a syrupy glaze. Serve at once.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.



Tougher Bits

Vadzaih nilii dach'at

“In the beginning of August, we start to hunt for caribou. When we live around New Rampart we go into the mountain to hunt. We dry the caribou to preserve it. We would take the bones inside the ribs and dry the meat. We did this to the brisket too.

Every part of the caribou was used.”

– *Charlie Thomas*

Tougher bits of caribou have traditionally been used to make things like ch'itsúh (pemmican), a staple for hunters and trappers out on the land. The secret to cooking tougher bits of caribou at home is braising: long, slow cooking in flavourful broth. Braising makes the meat tender and easy to remove from the bones. You can then finish the meat in a sauce, stew or soup, using some of the braising liquid. The other secret is to remove as much of the silver skin, gristle and sinew as possible before cooking. Another option is to grind up the tougher bits and use the ground caribou for family-friendly meals like lasagne or Gwich'in tacos.



Ch'itsúh (Pemmican)

Community cook Renee Charlie showed us how to make ch'itsúh at the Cooking Caribou Together workshop in Old Crow in October 2015.



- 2 lbs (900 gr) caribou roast, cut from the shoulder
- 2 cups water
- ½ lb (225 gr) caribou fat, cut into small pieces
- Salt and pepper

Rinse the roast under running water and pat dry. Remove any silver skin and fascia. Place in a roasting pan and pour the water around it. Cover and roast in a 350F (175C) oven until well done, about 1 hour. Remove from oven and cool to room temperature.

While the meat is in the oven, melt the fat in a medium frying pan over medium-low heat. Cook until most of the fat is liquid and there are only small pieces of crackling left.



Cut the meat into small pieces. Pound the pieces into a paste, breaking up the larger pieces with your fingers, placing the finished meat in a bowl.



Massage with your hands. Pour in enough fat to make a dough-like mixture, mixing with your hands as the fat cools down.

Add the cracklings and mix again.

Form into balls about 2 ½ inches (6.2 cm) in diameter. Place on a baking tray to harden. Wrap individually and freeze.

Makes about 15 balls of ch'itsúh.





Lori Leduc defrosts a caribou quarter arm and shoulder.

Pulled Caribou Neck with Buttermilk Buns and Classic Coleslaw

The caribou neck has a surprising amount of meat for such a bony part of the body. Rather than trying to cut the meat from the bone out in the field, it's easier to bring the whole neck back home and braise it. In this recipe, the neck braises for six hours in a slow oven, so it's best to start early in the day or the day before you plan to serve.



1) Prepare the Caribou Neck

- 1 caribou neck
- Salt and pepper

Trim caribou neck of sinew, silver skin and the thin membrane that covers the meat (the fascia). This can be tricky because there are several layers of meat on the neck with layers of silver skin and fascia in between but just do the best you can.

Preheat oven to 400F (200C). Season caribou neck all over with salt and pepper and place on a baking tray. Roast neck for about 10 minutes, or until browned. Remove from oven and reduce heat to 275F (135C).



2) Braise the Neck

- 2 onions, diced
- 1 carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 apples of any type, cored and diced
- 1 cup (250 mL) low-bush cranberries
- 2 slices bacon
- 2-3 cups (500-750 mL) caribou bone broth
- 1 cup (250 mL) apple juice or pineapple juice
- 1 28-oz (796 mL) can tomatoes
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) soya sauce
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) maple syrup, honey or brown sugar
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dried thyme
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dried rosemary
- 10 juniper berries
- 2 bay leaves
- Salt and pepper to taste

Place neck in a deep roasting pan and arrange vegetables and fruit all around it. Lay the bacon strips down on either side of the neck.

Combine remaining ingredients and pour evenly all around the neck, mixing with a spoon. Cover pan with parchment paper with tin foil over top.

Place pan in the oven and braise neck for six hours, checking every now and then to make sure there's still lots of liquid in the pan. If not, add another cup of bone broth. After six hours, remove from the oven.

At this stage you can cool the neck to room temperature, leaving it in the braising liquid, and then refrigerate overnight, covered. In the morning, heat the whole thing on the stove over medium low heat until it's bubbling slowly.

Remove neck from pan and place on a baking sheet to cool. When cool enough to handle, remove meat from the bone, discarding any sinew or gristle you come across, and place the meat pieces in a bowl. Take two forks and shred the meat by pulling forks in opposite directions.

Strain the braising liquid and pour ½ cup (125 mL) over top of the shredded meat, mixing thoroughly. Cover and set aside.



3) Make the Sauce

- Vegetables and liquid from the braising mixture
 - ½ cup (125 mL) brown sugar
 - 2 Tbsp (30 mL) soya sauce
 - 1 to 2 Tbsp (15 to 30 mL) vinegar
 - Salt and pepper to taste
- After you've strained the braising liquid, remove the bay leaves and then puree the vegetables by pressing them through a strainer into a bowl or blending them in a food processor. Add liquid as needed to help loosen up the mixture. When the vegetables are a smooth puree, whisk any remaining liquid back in.
- Place in a medium-sized saucepan over medium heat and whisk in remaining ingredients. Once the sauce has come to a boil reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until thick, about 20 minutes. Taste. If the sauce is too sweet, add a little more soya sauce and vinegar. If too tart, add a little more sugar.
- Pour about ½ cup (125 mL) of sauce over the pulled meat and mix well. Pour remaining sauce into a pitcher. Serve pulled meat on open-faced buttermilk buns with sauce over top and coleslaw on the side.

Makes 12 servings.



Classic Coleslaw

- 1/2 large green cabbage, shredded
- 2 carrots, peeled and grated
- 2 stalks celery, thinly sliced
- 1/2 medium purple onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup (250 mL) dried cranberries (optional)
- 1 cup (250 mL) raw pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds (optional)

Dressing

- ½ cup (125 mL) mayonnaise
- ½ cup (125 mL) sour cream or yogurt
- ¼ cup (60 mL) olive oil
- ¼ cup (60 mL) white wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) Dijon mustard or 1 tsp (5 mL) dried mustard powder
- 1 tsp (5 mL) soya sauce
- Salt and pepper to taste

Toss cabbage, carrots, celery, onion, cranberries and pumpkin seeds in a large bowl until thoroughly mixed. In a separate bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients. Pour over coleslaw and toss, mixing thoroughly. Season with additional salt and pepper as necessary. Serve at once.

Makes 12 servings.

During our caribou cooking workshop, there were plenty of guests to help out with the tasting.



Buttermilk Buns

[Adapted from *wholefoodsmarket.com*]

Though these are called “buttermilk” buns, buttermilk can be hard to find in northern stores. This recipe substitutes half yogurt and half milk.

- 3¼ cups (810 mL) flour
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt
- 2 tsp (10 mL) active dry yeast
- 5 Tbsp butter (75 mL) melted and divided
- ½ cup (125 mL) milk
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) honey
- ½ cup (125 mL) yogurt
- 1 egg

In a large bowl, whisk together 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) of the flour, salt and yeast until combined; set aside.

In a small saucepan, melt the butter. Pour off 2 tablespoons into a small bowl. To the pan, add milk and honey and heat until honey is melted. Remove from heat and whisk in yogurt and egg. Don't worry if the yogurt curdles.

Mix the milk mixture into the flour mixture and stir until a thick batter is formed. Stir in remaining flour, mixing thoroughly. The dough will be somewhat sticky.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead, dusting with more flour as needed to keep dough from sticking to the counter, until dough is smooth and no longer sticky, 7 to 8 minutes.

Divide dough into 12 equal pieces and roll each into a small ball. Arrange balls of dough snugly in a greased 9-inch (22-cm) round cake pan. Brush rolls with a bit of the remaining 2 tablespoons butter, then cover loosely and set aside in a warm spot until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 375F (190C). Brush rolls with remaining butter and bake until deep golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Allow to cool in pan for 10 minutes, then remove and set on a rack. Pull buns apart and serve warm or at room temperature.

Makes 12 large buns.

Caribou Breakfast Sausage Patties



- 2 lbs (900 gr) ground caribou
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 tsp (5 mL) ground nutmeg
- Pinch of ground cloves
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) each salt and pepper
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dried chilies
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) grated orange zest
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
- 1 tsp (5 mL) soya sauce
- 1 egg, beaten

Add all ingredients except oil, soya sauce and egg to the ground caribou and mix well with your hands. Beat in remaining ingredients with a fork. Make a small test patty and fry for 2 minutes each side, taste and add more seasonings as necessary.

Form into 2-inch patties and fry in butter in a medium-sized frying pan, counting on 2 patties per person. Cook for 4-5 minutes in total – if overcooked, the patties become dry. Serve with scrambled eggs, toast and thick slices of pan-fried tomatoes.

Makes about 20 patties.

Curried Caribou Brisket with Dried Apricots and Spinach



- 1 caribou brisket
- Salt and pepper
- 1 cinnamon stick (broken in half) or substitute
1 tsp (5 mL) ground cinnamon
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 cups (1L) caribou bone broth

1) Prepare the Brisket

Clean the brisket of all hair and dirt, rinse and pat dry. Remove as much silver skin, gristle, sinew and fascia as possible.

Season the brisket with salt and pepper and place in a roasting pan. Roast in a 400F (200C) oven until browned, about 10 minutes.

Remove brisket from oven and turn temperature down to 300 F. Pour bone broth over brisket and put one bay leaf and one-half cinnamon stick in each end of the pan. (If you're using ground cinnamon, whisk it into the broth first.)



Cover with parchment paper and tin foil and braise for 3 hours at 300F. (While brisket is cooking, start on the curry sauce.)

Remove pan from oven; take brisket out of the broth and place on a baking sheet to cool.

When cool enough to handle, remove meat from bones, discarding any gristle or sinew you find. Cut meat into bite-sized pieces and set aside.

Strain the broth and reserve 1 cup. Pour remaining broth into a container, cool, and then freeze for future use.

2) Make the curry sauce

- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) butter
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) olive or canola oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) curry powder
- 1 28-oz (796 mL) can diced tomatoes
- 1 14-oz (414 mL) can coconut milk
- 1 cup (250 mL) caribou brisket braising liquid
- 1 10-oz (285 gr) bag fresh spinach
- 1 packed cup (250 mL) dried apricots
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat butter and oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until soft, about 7 to 10 minutes. Add carrots and garlic and sauté another 2 minutes. Stir in curry powder and mix so the vegetables are evenly coated. Add tomatoes and coconut milk and simmer for 20 minutes.

Cut the apricots into small pieces and add to the simmering sauce with the brisket meat. Simmer for another 10 minutes, and then add spinach. As soon as the spinach has wilted, remove from heat. Serve with lemon rice and bannock.

Makes 8 to 10 servings.

Lemon Rice

- 2 cups white rice of any kind
- 3½ to 4 cups (750 mL to 1 L) water
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) butter
- Grated zest of one lemon or substitute 1 Tbsp lemon juice

Rinse rice under running water. Drain. Bring water and salt to the boil, following package directions for the type of rice you're using – some types need more water than others. Once the water has boiled, add rice and bring to the boil again. Reduce heat to low and cook for 15 to 25 minutes, according to package directions. Fluff rice with a fork. Add butter and lemon zest or juice, fluff once more and serve.

Makes about 4 cups (1L).

Elizabeth Kyikavichik's Traditional Recipe for Stew

Elizabeth says that today she adds vegetables like potatoes or carrots to the stew, but this is the traditional recipe.

- 2 lbs (900 gr) caribou meat from the hindquarter
- 6 cups (1.5 L) water
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 Tbsp (60 mL) flour

Cut up the caribou meat into small pieces for stew. Pour water over top. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 2 hours. Make a flour paste with some of the cooking water. Add to the boiled pieces. Add salt and pepper to taste and serve.

Braised, Barbecued Caribou Ribs



2) Prepare the sauce

- ¼ cup (60 mL) reduced caribou braising liquid (see above)
- ¼ cup (60 mL) tomato ketchup
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) soya sauce
- ½ cup (125 mL) orange marmalade
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) vinegar

Whisk all ingredients together in a medium saucepan. Heat to boiling over medium heat, reduce to medium-low and simmer until thick, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat.

Makes about 1 cup.

3) Finish the ribs

Preheat oven to 450F (230C). Brush barbecue sauce over ribs, front and back. Roast for 5 minutes and brush with sauce again. Repeat twice until sauce is browned and bubbling, remove from oven and serve with extra sauce on the side.

Since ribs are finger food, other finger food such as homemade baked French fries and raw carrots, broccoli and celery sticks with a simple dip are a great accompaniment.

Makes 3-4 servings.

Homemade French Fries

- Six large potatoes
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) olive or canola oil
- 2 tsp (10 mL) coarse salt or 1 tsp (5 mL) table salt

Peel potatoes and cut lengthwise into 5 or 6 slices. Cut each slice into long, thin pieces. Soak for 15 minutes in cold water. Drain and shake in a colander to get rid of excess water. Transfer to a big bowl and pour oil over top. Toss with your hands to distribute the oil, add salt and toss again. Spread over two or three baking sheets lined with parchment paper.

Bake in a 400F (200C) oven for 20 to 30 minutes, or until golden and crispy. Serve at once.

Makes 4 servings.



Tougher Bits

- One side of caribou ribs
- Salt and pepper
- 4 cups (1 L) caribou bone broth
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) white, red or balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) soya sauce
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) brown sugar
- 2 bay leaves
- 10 juniper berries

1) Prepare the ribs

Clean ribs of dirt and hair. Rinse under running water and pat dry. Remove fascia and silver skin. Don't worry about the fascia on the back side of the ribs; it will help to hold the ribs together while they braise.

Season ribs with salt and pepper and place in a roasting pan. If ribs don't fit in the pan, cut between ribs in one or two places to make smaller sections. Roast at 400F (200C) until browned, about 10 minutes. Remove from oven and reduce temperature to 300F (150C).

Whisk together bone broth, vinegar, soy sauce and brown sugar. Pour over ribs. Add bay leaves and juniper berries. Cover with parchment paper and tin foil and braise for 3 hours. Remove ribs from oven and transfer to a baking sheet.

Strain braising liquid into a medium-sized saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat to medium and cook until liquid is reduced to 1 cup (250 mL). Reserve ¼ cup (60 mL) for the barbecue sauce, and freeze the remainder for future use.

Cathie Archbould's Famous Tourtière

Every year hunter and photographer Cathie Archbould makes 10 or 12 of these delicious pies for friends and family. She says her secret ingredient is a can of mushroom soup.



- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) olive oil
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 to 10 medium-sized mushrooms, sliced
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt
- 1 tsp (5 mL) black pepper
- 1 heaping tsp (5 mL) nutmeg
- Generous dash mace, cayenne and allspice (substitute ½ tsp (2.5 mL) ground cloves)
- ¼ tsp (1.2 mL) celery salt
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dry mustard or 1 Tbsp (15 mL) Dijon or French's mustard
- 2 lbs (900 gr) ground caribou
- 1 can mushroom soup

1) Prepare the filling

Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add onions and cook until soft, about 7 to 10 minutes.

Add garlic and cook another 2 minutes, and then add mushrooms. When mushrooms are soft and beginning to brown, add all the spices and stir until vegetables are thoroughly coated.

Add meat and cook, stirring, until browned. Add mushroom soup and simmer for about 10 minutes.

Remove from heat and cool to room temperature before filling pies.

2) Make the pastry

- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt
- 1 cup (½ lb or 225 gr) vegetable shortening or lard
- 1 cup (½ lb or 225 gr) butter
- 4-8 Tbsp (60 to 120 mL) cold water
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tsp (5 mL) white vinegar
- Milk or beaten egg for brushing pastry



Whisk together salt and flour in a large bowl. Cut in butter and shortening until pieces are the size of small peas.

In a separate small bowl, beat egg, vinegar and half the water together with a fork. Add this to the bowl with flour and stir with fork. Add more water as necessary until the dough clumps together when you pinch it. Knead briefly and lightly into a round.

Cut the round into 2 or 3 pieces, depending on how many pies you're going to make. Divide each piece in half.

Roll into two rounds. One round should be slightly larger than your pie plate (the bottom layer), the other (the top layer) about the same size as your pie plate. Fold bottom layer into 4, place in pie plate and unfold. Trim overhanging edges.

Fill with caribou mixture, place top layer of pastry over top and pinch the bottom and top layers together around the edges with your fingers.

Brush with milk or beaten egg. Cut holes in pastry top to let steam out. Bake at 425F (220C) for 40 minutes.

Makes 2 10-inch (25-cm) or 3 9-inch (22-cm) pies.

Ground caribou is the hunter's friend, turning scraps into delicious and versatile meat that can be used in a ton of family-style dishes, from lasagne to Gwich'in tacos to French Canadian meat pie (tourtière).



Gwich'in Caribou Tacos with Refried Beans

Who would guess that bannock makes great tacos? This dish has a truly Gwich'in twist. The chocolate in this recipe might seem odd, but it adds an unexpected, rich flavour that you would never guess was chocolate. Try it!



- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) white vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp (5 mL) fresh or dried wild sage
- 2 tsp (10 mL) ground cumin
- 2 tsp (10 mL) chili powder
- 1 tsp each salt and pepper
- 2 lbs (900 gr) ground caribou
- 2 Tbsp (15 mL) tomato paste
- 1 oz (28 gr) unsweetened chocolate (optional)
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) brown sugar (optional)
- 1 cup (250 mL) caribou bone broth

1) Prepare the caribou taco mixture

Heat oil in a cast iron frying pan over medium heat. Add onion and cook until soft, about 7-10 minutes.

Add vinegar and cook another two minutes and then stir in garlic and spices. Add ground caribou meat and cook until browned, stirring to break up any lumps.

Add tomato paste, chocolate, sugar and bone broth. Simmer for 20 to 25 minutes, or until liquid is mostly evaporated.

Serve warm on top of bannock taco, layering with refried beans, grated cheddar cheese, sour cream and salsa.

2) Make the bannock tacos

For this recipe you'll need a fairly stiff batter.

- 5 cups (1.2L) flour
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) baking powder
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) salt
- 3 to 4 cups (700 mL to 1L) water; enough so that the dough is of a biscuit-like texture
- ½ cup (125 mL) solid vegetable shortening such as Crisco

Combine dry ingredients. Add water, stirring constantly until the batter is thoroughly moistened but still stiff enough to pick up a piece in your hands. It should still be quite sticky.

With floured hands, pinch off a piece about the size of an egg and pat or roll into a round of about 5 to 6 inches.

Over medium heat, melt enough shortening in a cast-iron pan so that it's ¼-inch (.5 cm) deep. Cook bannock taco for about 3 minutes per side, or until golden brown and puffy.

Continue rolling dough and cooking bannock tacos until all the batter is used, keeping cooked bannocks warm in a 200F (93 C) oven until you're ready to serve.

Serve with ground caribou taco mixture and refried beans.

Makes 10 to 12 Gwich'in tacos.

Refried Beans

- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp (5 mL) chili powder
- 1 19 oz can pinto or kidney beans
- ½ cup (125 mL) caribou bone broth
- Salt and pepper
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) chopped fresh cilantro leaves (optional)
- 1 to 2 Tbsp (15 to 30 mL) sour cream

Heat the oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and chili powder and cook for 1 minute more. Stir in the beans and bone broth and cook until the beans are bubbling, about 5-7 minutes. Mash the beans coarsely with the back of a wooden spoon, adding more broth to moisten, if needed. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the cilantro. Serve warm.



Caribou Lasagne

There are three different parts to lasagne – noodles, cheese and sauce. Start by making the sauce. Cook the noodles and grate the cheese while the sauce is simmering.



1) Prepare the meat sauce

- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) butter
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp (10 mL) oregano
- 1 tsp (5 mL) cinnamon
- 1 tsp (5 mL) each salt and pepper
- 2 lb (900 gr) ground caribou
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) tomato paste
- 1 28 oz (796 mL) can of tomatoes
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) vinegar
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) soya sauce

Heat the butter and oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add onion and cook until soft, about 7-10 minutes. Add garlic, cook for another 2 minutes and then add spices, salt and pepper, stirring until onions are evenly coated.

Add ground caribou and cook until browned, stirring to break up any lumps. Stir in the tomato paste, followed by the canned tomatoes. (Break up the tomatoes into smaller pieces with a fork.)

Stir in vinegar, brown sugar and soya sauce, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until thick.

Remove from heat and let cool slightly before putting together the lasagne.

2) Prepare the noodles

- 12 lasagne noodles (about one package)
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt

Bring a large pot of water to the boil over high heat. Add salt and noodles. Give noodles a good stir occasionally so that they don't stick together. Turn heat to medium and cook for 8 to 10 minutes, until they're just barely done. They'll cook more in the oven.

Drain noodles and fill pot with cold water until you're ready to assemble the lasagne. Then drain the cold water off and work quickly to assemble the lasagne so the noodles don't stick together.

3) Assemble the lasagne

- 4 cups (1 L) mozzarella, grated (about ½ lb, or 225 gr)
- 2 cups (500 mL) grated parmesan
- 2 cups (500 mL) cottage cheese (one large tub)

Lightly oil a deep, 9 x 13 (22 x 33 cm) pan.

Spread a thin layer of sauce on the bottom. Place 3 cooked noodles over top. Spread one-third of the remaining sauce over top, followed by one-third of the mozzarella and one-third of the parmesan cheese.

Add a layer of 3 noodles. Spread all the cottage cheese over top, followed by another layer of 3 noodles, a layer of sauce and a layer of mozzarella and parmesan.

End with the last 3 noodles, the rest of the sauce, and finally, the rest of the cheese.

Bake in a 350F (175C) oven until the whole lasagne is bubbling and the cheese is golden, about 1 hour. Let rest for 10 minutes before cutting.

Makes 8 large or 12 medium-sized servings.



Tammy Josie prepares caribou meat for a community feast.

Community feasts are an important part of life in the North. They are a time of celebration and sharing. Caribou are usually a central part of the meal and are often prepared in a soup or stew and served with bannock.

Finishing the Meal

“When we lived in the bush, we eat good. In the evenings, we don’t have much to do so sometimes we picked cranberries. We gathered the cranberries to use during the winter months. We had a good life out in the bush.” – *Edith Josie*

Making meals from food off the land is healthy and satisfying, but it’s also nice to have some delicious treats to go with it. Easy-to-make drinks and simple desserts round out a caribou supper, whether at home with the family or at a community feast.



“In the fall, I go up on the mountain and pick berries with my mom. It is good to have a freezer full of berries for the winter.” – *Neta Benjamin*

Drinks

Buying sweet drinks at from northern grocery stores is expensive and drinking lots of pop or sugary drinks isn't the best thing for people's health. When we were preparing the final dinner from our cooking workshop in Old Crow, we tested out some low-sugar, easy-to-make drinks to accompany our meals. They were definite crowd-pleasers.

Switchel

[Adapted from *eatingwell.com*]

Switchel is a cooling drink from the Caribbean made with cider vinegar, ginger, and molasses. The sour, sweet and tart flavours are a great contrast to the rich flavour of caribou.

- 9 cups (1.75 L) water, divided
- ¼ cup (60 mL) minced fresh ginger or substitute 1 Tbsp (15 mL) ground ginger
- ¼ cup (60 mL) honey, birch syrup or maple syrup
- ¼ cup (60 mL) molasses
- ¾ cup (180 mL) lemon juice
- ¼ cup (60 mL) cider vinegar
- Cranberries or lemon slices for garnish

Combine 3 cups water with ginger in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat, cover and let infuse for 15 minutes.

Strain the ginger-infused water into a pitcher, pressing on the ginger solids to extract all the liquid. Add honey (or syrup) and molasses; stir until dissolved. Stir in lemon juice, vinegar and the remaining 6 cups water. Chill until very cold.

Serve in tall glasses over ice cubes. Garnish with low-bush cranberries or lemon slices.

Makes about 10 cups (2.5 L).



The Old Crow cooking workshop was a time for sharing recipes and ideas.

Fruit-infused Water

Soaking slices of fruit and sometimes herbs or vegetables in a pitcher of water makes a delicious, sugar-free drink. Try different combinations, using about ½ cup (125 mL) fruit for 8 cups (2 L) of water. The trick is to let the fruit soak in the water at least of couple of hours before serving to let the flavours develop.

Lemon and Cucumber Water

- One 2-inch (5-cm) piece of cucumber, peeled and sliced
- ½ lemon, sliced
- 8 cups (2L) cold water

Place lemon and cucumber in the bottom of a large juice pitcher and pour cold water over top. Refrigerate at least 2 hours. Serve over ice in tall glasses with a fresh piece of lemon or cucumber for garnish.

Orange and Cranberry Water

- ½ orange, sliced
- ¼ cup (60 mL) low-bush cranberries
- 8 cups (2L) cold water

Follow instructions above.

Apple and Grape Water

- ½ apple, core removed, sliced
- 10 purple grapes, cut in half

Follow instructions above.

Lemon and Orange Iced Tea

- 10 regular orange pekoe tea bags
- Peel of one orange
- 4 cups boiling water
- ½ cup (125 mL) orange juice
- ¼ cup (60 mL) lemon juice
- ¼ cup (60 mL) sugar
- 4 cups cold water

Remove the peel from the orange with a vegetable peeler, trying not to get too much of the white pith. Pour 4 cups boiling water over the tea bags and the orange peel and steep for 5 minutes. Strain and add orange juice, lemon juice, sugar and cold water. Refrigerate until chilled, about 2 hours. Serve over ice with orange wedges, if desired.



Chocolate Cranberry Brownie

[Adapted from *The Boreal Feast*]

Low-bush cranberries add a nice tang to chocolate brownies.



- 4 oz. (115 gr) unsweetened chocolate
- ½ cup (125 mL, 4 oz, 115 gr) butter
- 4 eggs at room temperature
- 1 ½ cups (375 mL) sugar
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla
- 1 cup (250 mL) flour
- ¼ cup (60 mL) cocoa
- 1 cup (250 mL) low-bush cranberries

Melt chocolate and butter together in a double boiler over boiling water. Beat thoroughly to incorporate and cool to room temperature.

In a bowl, beat eggs until light and foamy. Still beating, add sugar gradually until mixture is thick and creamy. Beat in vanilla.

With a spoon, mix the cooled chocolate into the eggs and sugar, and before the mixture is uniformly coloured, gently stir in the flour until thoroughly mixed.

Pour into a greased 9 x 13 (22 x 31 cm) pan and smooth into place with the back of a spoon or a spatula. Sprinkle berries evenly over top, pressing lightly into the batter.

Bake at 350F (175C) for about 25 minutes. Cool to room temperature before icing with ganache.

Makes about 42 1x1½-inch (2 x 2.5-cm) squares.



Neta Benjamin's fall cranberry crop.

Ganache

- 5 oz. (140 g) dark chocolate
 - 1 cup (250 mL) 35 percent cream or evaporated milk
 - 3 tbsp (45 mL) butter
- Break chocolate in small pieces into a bowl.
- Bring cream and butter to a boil over medium-high heat and pour over chocolate.
- Place a plate over the bowl and wait for 5 minutes for the chocolate to melt.
- Beat thoroughly until smooth and creamy. Cool to room temperature and then refrigerate until a spreadable consistency.
- Makes about 2 cups (500 mL), enough to generously ice one pan of brownies with about ¾ cup (180 mL) leftover.



Cloudberry Rugelach Cookies

[Adapted from *The Boreal Feast*]

These little Eastern European cookies make a nice light dessert.



Sour Cream Pastry Dough

- 2 cups (475 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1 cup (250 mL) cold unsalted butter, cut in small pieces
- 1 egg yolk
- ¾ cup (180 mL) sour cream

Cloudberry Filling

- 1 cup (250 mL) cloudberry jam
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) ground cinnamon
- ⅓ cup (80 mL) walnuts, finely chopped

Topping

- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) unsalted butter, melted
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) granulated sugar

Place flour, butter, egg yolk and sour cream in large bowl. Beat with electric mixer at low speed until dough just comes together. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill until firm, overnight or longer.

To make the filling, stir together jam, cinnamon and walnuts in a separate bowl.



Preheat oven to 350F (180C).

Divide dough into 4 pieces. Place 3 pieces in refrigerator and roll 1 piece on a lightly floured surface to an even 9-inch (22.5-cm) circle. Spread a quarter of the filling over the circle of dough.

With sharp knife or pizza cutter, cut circle into 12 neat wedges. Beginning with outside edge, roll wedges up tightly toward the centre.

Place rolls on an ungreased baking sheet, tucking center points underneath, spacing about ½-inch (1.25-cm) apart.

Repeat with remaining dough and filling. Keep assembled rugelach refrigerated while you work on the remainder.

Brush rugelach very lightly with butter and sprinkle with sugar. Bake until golden brown, about 30 minutes. Remove from oven and transfer cookies to racks to cool.

Makes 4 dozen.



Birch Syrup Pecan Squares

[Adapted from *The Boreal Feast*]

These are some of the best squares ever invented.



Base

- ¾ cup (180 mL) butter, softened
- ½ cup (125 mL) sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 cups (475 mL) flour
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) salt
- 1 tsp (5 mL) baking powder

Beat butter and sugar together until light, add egg and beat until fluffy. Sift together dry ingredients and beat into the butter mixture. Press into baking dish and bake for 10 minutes, or until base just begins to colour. Remove from heat, leaving the oven on, and let cool for 10 minutes before covering with topping.

Topping

- ¾ cup (180 mL) butter
- 1 cup (250 mL) brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) birch syrup *substitute corn syrup
- 2 cups (500 mL) chopped pecans *substitute walnuts or almonds

Preheat the oven to 350F (180C) and grease a baking dish (9 x 13-inch or 22.5 x 32-cm). Melt butter and sugar together over medium heat, stirring to combine. Stir in birch syrup, then stir in pecans. Spoon onto the cooled base and spread evenly. Bake for 15 minutes, or until entire top is bubbling. Remove and cool on a rack. Cut into squares when thoroughly cool.

Makes about 42 1 x 1½-inch (2.5 x 3.8-cm) squares.



Sunrise along the Porcupine River.

Step-By-Step Field Dressing

Once you have harvested a caribou, it is time to take care of the meat. Every hunter has their own way of cutting up their caribou, so the following images show just one way that it can be done.

Some important things to remember are:

- Have a clean space to clean the animal. Put down a tarp or tree boughs to make a clean surface to do your butchering.
 - Have clean, sharp knives for cutting.
 - Bring clean tarps or other materials for wrapping meat for transport
 - Keep everything cool and dry
- 1.** The first step is to remove the head and bleed out the animal. To do this, cut between the skull and the first vertebra of the spine. This will leave all the neck meat on the animal, which can be taken off at a later step.
 - 2.** It is important to keep everything clean at all times. Most hunters will remove the hooves as a second step, especially if they are muddy. If they are clean, some hunters will leave this until a later step. For instructions on how to do this, see Step 8 of this guide.

- 3.** Starting at the genitals, carefully open the body cavity and remove the stomach and guts. Be careful not to puncture anything and try to keep the rest of the meat clean. Cut away the penis and save it if you need to provide proof of sex.



- 5.** Using a sharp knife, pull back the skin and carefully start cutting the skin away from the body.



- 7.** When the hide has been removed, cut between the vertebra close to the shoulder and remove the neck.



- 6.** Once the skin has been pulled back past the stomach muscles, use your hands and knuckles to punch down and peel off the skin. This will help keep the hide intact.



- 8.** Using a sharp knife, cut into the joint at the knee to remove the hoof and lower leg with the hide still attached. Not all hunters cut the legs off at this point, but if there is mud in the hooves, this is an important way to keep the meat clean. The legs can be cleaned and skinned at a later time. The bones can be used to make broth and the hide can be tanned and used for sewing projects.



9. Lift the leg to find the joint at the front shoulder and begin cut there to remove the front quarter.



11. As you remove each quarter, slash the tendons on the lower leg to create a place to hang the meat from. Hanging meat helps improve the flavor and helps keep it clean until it can be cut up into smaller pieces.



10. Do the same with the rear quarter, lifting the leg and looking for the hip joint to start your cut.



12. Remove the backstrap by cutting along the top of the ribs.



13. Remove the rump from the rib cage, cutting between the vertebra where the last ribs join.



15. Remove the ribs from the spinal column. Look for the white joints close to the vertebra and score along that line.



Then, using your knife or a saw, cut the ribs away.



Put a small slash between a couple of the ribs as a place to hang the meat.

14. Cut away the brisket or breastbone by carefully slicing along the lower ribs.



16. Clean the hide and carefully fold it together, skin side in, and bring it home. It can stretched for a caribou mattress or tanned for making clothing.

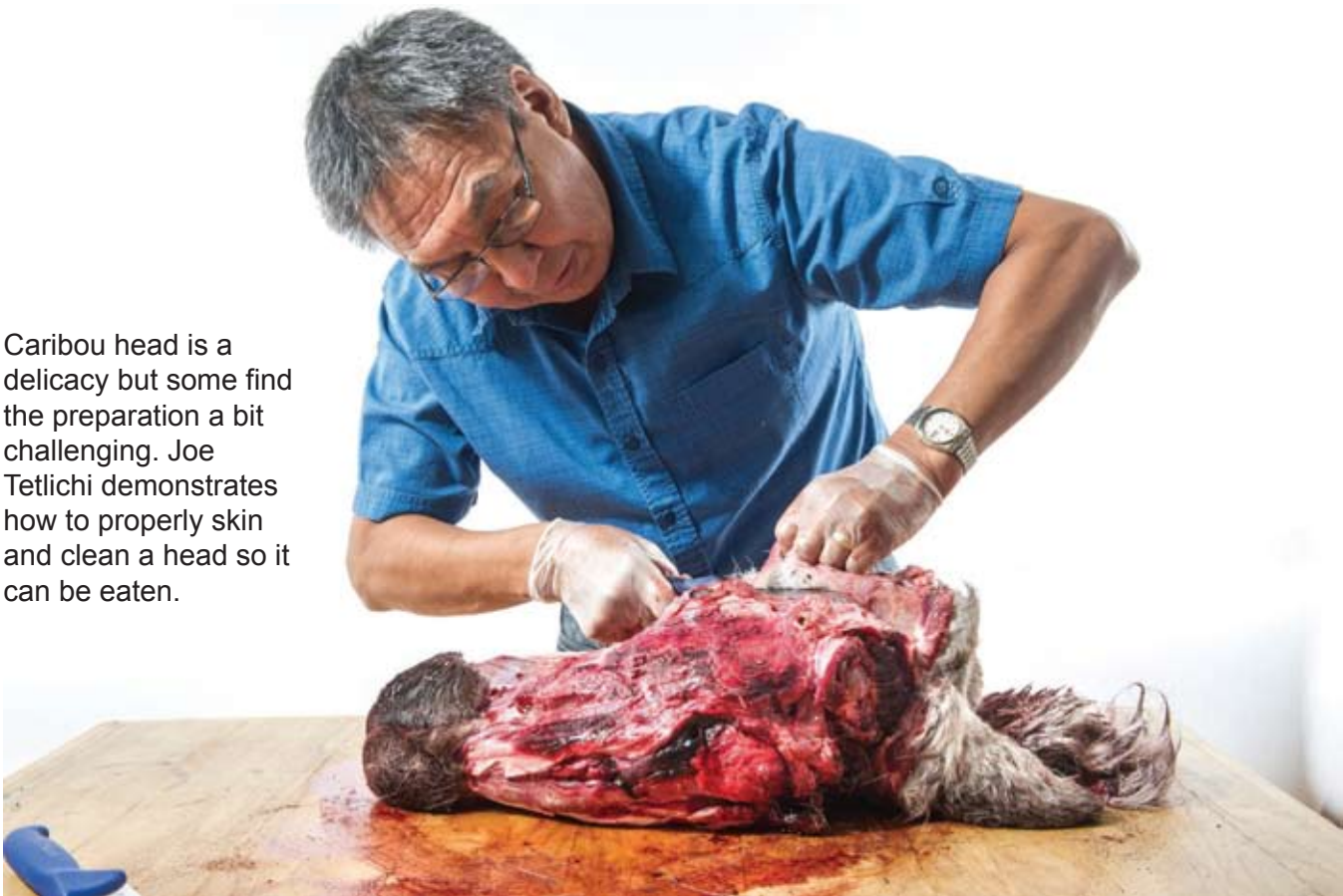


If hunters are not interested in doing the tanning themselves, hides can be donated to be used in the annual tanning workshops or sent to a commercial tanner.



Preparing the Head

Caribou head is a delicacy but some find the preparation a bit challenging. Joe Tetlichy demonstrates how to properly skin and clean a head so it can be eaten.



Skin the head

Removing nose, eyes, ears and any gristle or fat.



Removing the nose.



Remove the brain

With a sharp knife or axe, cut a hole about 4 inches in diameter in the top of the head. Start your cut just behind the antler stubs and work towards the back of the head. Once the cut is made, lift the piece of skull away. Gently lift the brain out and place in a bowl or baggie.

Remove the glands

Remove the soft tissue at the base of the tongue that contains lymph nodes (commonly known as glands) and the salivary glands below the ears, extending towards the cheek muscle. These look a bit like fish eggs.



Removing the soft tissue containing the glands.



salivary glands

Removing the Tongue

Once the head has been prepared, cut through either side of the head following along the jawline with your knife. Pry the jaw open (this can be a job for two people), then work your knife underneath and around the tongue to separate it from the jaw. Remove the tongue in one piece and trim sinew, fat or gristle. Rinse thoroughly and pat dry.

Brining the Tongue

To brine the tongue, rinse well under cold running water, then place in a bowl and cover with cold, salted water (4 tsp. salt 1 qt. water). Brine for a half-day or a whole day. Rinse and pat dry before using.

Brining the Head

Once the head is clean, rinse it under cold, running water then place it in a large bowl or pot and cover with cold, salted water (4 tsp salt to 1 qt. of water). Soak for at least 6 hours. Remove from brine and pat dry with paper towels.

Skinning Caribou Legs

Vadzaih Choo Drin (Big Caribou Days) is an annual event held in Old Crow each spring to celebrate the Porcupine Caribou and their importance in the Vuntut Gwitchin culture and tradition. One of the premiere events is the caribou leg-skinning competition that tests people’s speed and technique. While legs don’t have a lot of meat on them, they do contain marrow and the bones can be used for bone grease or roasted for broth.



1. Using a sharp knife, cut along the back of the leg from the knee joint to just above the hoof. (Demonstrated by Joe Tetlichy.)



Alan Benjamin in the leg-skinning competition during Big Caribou Days.



2. Carefully loosen the hide by cutting around the edges.



3. Pull on the hide to peel it completely away from the bones.



4. Trim the hide away from the hoof to remove it completely.



5. Sever the tendon that connects along the top of the shin bone.



6. Cut along the top of the hoof to loosen it from the joint.



7. Dislocate the joint at the “wrist” and remove the hoof entirely.



8. Clean the bone.



9. The remaining hoof and attached tendons used to be hung from trees and dried. Some say that people would use them to feed their dogs in the winter if times got tough.



VADZAIH

Old and new ways of preparing caribou

“The Gwich’in people depended on the caribou since the beginning of time so they respect the caribou. They were raised eating caribou meat and they respect the animal. It is still like that today.” – Edith Josie

The Porcupine Caribou herd is one of the largest caribou herds in North America and the herd’s annual migration is one of the greatest movements of life on land anywhere in the world. For the Gwich’in who live within the range of the herd, the caribou are integral to their way of life and are central to their survival. Respecting the caribou and giving thanks for the food and other uses caribou provide is an important part of Gwich’in culture.

This cookbook is intended to bridge the gap between the past and the present. It explores traditional ways of preparing and using caribou. It’s our way of showing respect and sharing how the caribou continue to provide for people across the north – and it is our hope that it will continue to provide for many generations into the future.