

Marinade

6 juniper berries
1 sprig fresh rosemary
15 fresh sage leaves

¼ cup tellicherry (black)
peppercorns
6 allspice berries
2 tablespoons kosher salt

2 small leeks, sliced in rings
6 cloves garlic, sliced
¼ cup olive oil

4 Axis venison chops (about 6 to 7 ounces each)

Wild Chokecherry-Ancho Chile Sauce

2 tablespoons olive oil
½ cup venison trimmings
1 cup fresh chokecherries, or ½ cup
dried cherries rehydrated in
warm water (page 192)

2 cups Venison Stock (page 193)
2 dried ancho chiles, stemmed,
seeded, and toasted (page 192)
1 sprig fresh thyme
6 juniper berries, crushed
2 bay leaves

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
½ cup thinly sliced wild
mushrooms or domestic
mushrooms
1 teaspoon chopped fresh sage

Place all the marinade ingredients in a food processor or blender. (Use a little more olive oil if necessary to allow puréeing.) Purée until smooth. Place the venison chops in a dish, and cover on all sides with the marinade. Cover the dish with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

Bring the venison chops and marinade to room temperature, about 4 hours.

To prepare the sauce, heat the olive oil in a saucepan and caramelize the venison trimmings over medium heat, about 5 to 7 minutes. Add the chokecherries and cook over medium heat for 3 to 5 minutes. Add the stock, toasted ancho chiles, thyme, juniper, and bay leaves. Reduce the liquid by one-third while simmering over low heat, about 12 to 15 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and strain the sauce through a sieve into a bowl, pressing down with a spoon or ladle on the solids to force the juices through. Set aside.

In a separate saucepan, heat the butter and sauté the mushrooms over medium-high heat until cooked through, about 2 to 3 minutes. Add the sage and strain off any excess liquid. Add the reserved strained sauce to the mushrooms and keep warm.

Remove the room-temperature venison chops from the marinade. Heat a heavy sauté pan or skillet and sauté the chops for 3 to 4 minutes per side over medium heat for medium-rare.

Allow the chops to rest for a few minutes before serving. Transfer to serving plates and pour the sauce around the chops.