

Wild Gourmet

Wild Game, Fish, and Fowl Recipes for Everyday Chefs – Prepare Savory Dishes with the Game You Bring Back from the Hunt!

Pronghorn on an Iron Cross with Chile-Fennel Tzatziki

From Chef Michael Chiarello

Serves 20 to 30

When I consider all the people, throughout centuries, who have used this method to cook a pronghorn, I feel like one small dot in a very long time line. This is a 30-log kind of a fire. To be safe have 3 dozen logs, each about 6 inches in diameter and each completely dry, stacked, and ready before you begin.

BASTING LIQUID

- 1 cup loosely packed sage leaves
- ½ cup fresh rosemary sprigs
- ½ cup fresh thyme sprigs
- 4 cups fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 cups fresh mint
- 1-1/2 cups fresh oregano
- 8 garlic cloves
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon butcher's salt
- 2 cups olive oil
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 6 bay leaves, fresh or dried

Chile-Fennel Tzatziki (opposite page)

The basting liquid makes enough for one pronghorn up to 45 pounds. I love the flavor butcher's salt adds to the basting liquid. Butcher's salt is a blend of salt and spices from France made especially for meat. In a perfect world, you'd baste the pronghorn while it cooks using a branch of rosemary as your brush. Silicone basting brushes—as big as you can get—do the job just fine too.

FOR THE BASTING LIQUID

In a food processor, or in a blender in batches, combine the sage, rosemary, thyme, parsley, mint, oregano, garlic, kosher salt, and butcher's salt or pepper. Process to a coarse purée. With the machine running, add the oil and wine, and purée until smooth. Transfer the liquid to a container with a lid, add the bay leaves, and refrigerate until the pronghorn goes on the fire.

SETTING UP FOR THE PRONGHORN

When you're ready to start cooking, clean the pronghorn, but don't tie it to the cross until you've started the fire. When the fire is ready for the big logs, add them and then fasten the pronghorn onto the cross while the fire burns down a little. The fire you need to build won't be the size of a bonfire but just big enough to provide steady, even heat for the 4 hours that the pronghorn will cook.

Have one or two friends hold the pronghorn up against the vertical bar, with the pronghorn shoulders toward the ground. While you tie each of the four legs to a crossbar. The back of the pronghorn should be against the cross; the ribs should be facing out toward the fire. Use a heavy-gauge wire (at least 16-gauge, found in my hardware store) to securely tie each leg to a crossbar and then use the wire to fasten the neck to the center, vertical bar.

When the fire has died down slightly so it's not raging flames. Maneuver the iron

cross into place so it's close to the fire but not right on top of it. Use your hands to test that the pronghorn is close enough to the heat to cook. You'll want to allow at least 3 to 4 hours for a pronghorn that weighs roughly 45 pounds.

Check the fire periodically. If it begins to cool, add logs but always add new wood to the edge of the fire farthest from the iron cross; you don't want flaming logs under the pronghorn. When the new wood glows red and is no longer emitting lots of smoke and flame, then rake it forward closer to the pronghorn.

Don't rely on time alone to determine when the meat is done. For medium-rare pronghorn, it's done when the meat registers 135°F on a meat or probe thermometer. Take the pronghorn off the fire and let rest for 15 minutes before you begin to carve.

If you have an iron cross with rings, slide each of the animal's legs through the rings. Secure each leg by twining 16-gauge stainless steel picture wire around the leg and the crossbar. Don't use a wire that's too lightweight hold the animal and don't use wire with any kind of coating on it.

Have a large heat-proof surface ready for the pronghorn. A butcher block table is ideal. Ask a friend or two to help plate the pronghorn as you carve.

HOW TO CARVE

First untie the wire from the pronghorn and discard it. Cut away the hind legs at the

joints; the meat should be tender enough so this is easy. Next, carve at the shoulder, working down toward the front legs. Cut away the front legs, and then carve the pronghorn one section at a time, working from the ribs toward the backbone.

CHILE-FENNEL TZATZIKI

Makes 3 cups

The rich hot pronghorn and the cool, creamy tzatziki sauce are made for each other. I gave this an Italian twist by adding fennel, roasted lemon juice, and Calabrian chiles. Use a traditional thick Greek-style yogurt, and use the green fronds at the top of your fennel to give this extra flavor and color. For more flavor grate the cucumber, catching all the juices for the tzatziki. I like to make this at least an hour ahead of time so it can chill before serving.

- 1 juicy lemon, halved
- 1 small bulb fennel with green fronds
- 2 cups Greek-style yogurt
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 large whole peeled cucumber or
2 small whole peeled cucumbers
- 1 teaspoon Calabrian chile paste, or
¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/4 teaspoon coarse sea salt, preferably
gray salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Grill the lemons at least 1 hour before serving or the day before if you like. On a hot grill or in a cast-iron pan over a fire or on the stove, place the lemon halves cut-side down. Cook until the lemon shows some char, 4 to 5 minutes. When the lemons have cooled, juice them and then strain the juice to get rid of some of the char. Measure about 1 tablespoon of the roasted lemon juice and reserve the remaining juice.

Trim the fennel. Cut the white part into 1/4-inch dice (about 1 cup); coarsely chop the green fronds (about 1 tablespoon).

In a medium bowl, mix the 1 tablespoon strained lemon juice with the diced fennel, yogurt, and garlic. Grate the peeled cucumber into a measuring cup, catching all the juice that you can. Add the grated cuke and its juice to the bowl when you have about 1 cup. (A little less or extra is fine.) Stir in the chopped fennel fronds, chile paste, salt and pepper. Taste and then add another few teaspoons of roasted lemon juice or more salt and pepper, if you like. Cover with plastic wrap, refrigerate, and chill for at least an hour or overnight. Stir just before serving.

B&C Field Notes

Additional sauce recipes and information about using an iron cross will be available in the Club's upcoming book, *Wild Gourmet*, due out in the fall of 2014.



Meet the Chef

Michael Chiarello

*Chef and Owner
Bottega*

Michael Chiarello is an award-winning chef and owner of critically acclaimed Bottega restaurant in the Napa Valley. He made his mark by combining his Southern Italian roots with the distinctive hallmarks of Napa Valley living. From his earliest childhood experiences—created around his mother's California kitchen with his extended Italian family of butchers, cheesemakers, and ranchers—Michael Chiarello dreamed of becoming a chef one day. Decades later, he has realized his dream, and much more.

Upon graduating from the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), Michael began to shape his career into what he would become: an acclaimed chef, culinary and lifestyle trends pioneer, noted author, and Emmy-winning television host on Food Network and Cooking Channel. Throughout his achievements, he incorporates his passion for seasonal, sustainable living – and the artisan purveyors who make it possible – into his endeavors. His unique perspective on good food and healthy living, spiced with a dose of old-world charm, inspires friends and family to create meaningful memories around their table.

Michael was named Chef of the Year by Food & Wine Magazine in 1985, received the CIA's Chef of the Year Award in 1995, and was named CIA's 2011 Alumni of the Year. He was also a finalist on Top Chef Masters, and has appeared as a judge on Top Chef and Top Chef Masters. A popular celebrity guest chef, Michael is a regular contributor to NBC's The Today Show, CBS's The Early Show, Martha Stewart Living Radio, Regis & Kelly, and the *San Francisco Chronicle's* "Inside Scoop Voices" Column.

B&C Field Notes

B&C staffer, Justin Spring, field-tested this recipe earlier this fall with delicious results (photo below). Check out the time-lapse video of the process here: <http://bit.ly/1aul4EJ>

Photos courtesy Joel Issacs

