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The Seal Meat Experience

Posted by Tyler Wilman on Tuesday, January 3rd, 2012

Tags for this Article: Anthony-Bourdain, hunter, Inuit, raw, Ron Shewchuk, Seal, sushi, Truffel oil, vancouver



Although many of you might be a little disheartened in the upcoming tasting choice, I for one feel that introducing myself to as many different foods, flavors, and textures allows me to appreciate the art of cooking, the passions for food and the appreciation of where our sustenance comes from.

An opportunity recently came up for me and a some fellow Foodists to try some seal meat, and after watching Anthony Bourdain experience his first seal we were all very interested in the textures and tastes that made these people so excited about their meal. I should state that this meat was not controversial baby seal, but sourced through a local importer via government-sanctioned herd culling in Northern Quebec where seal populations have spiked and are depleting fish stocks.

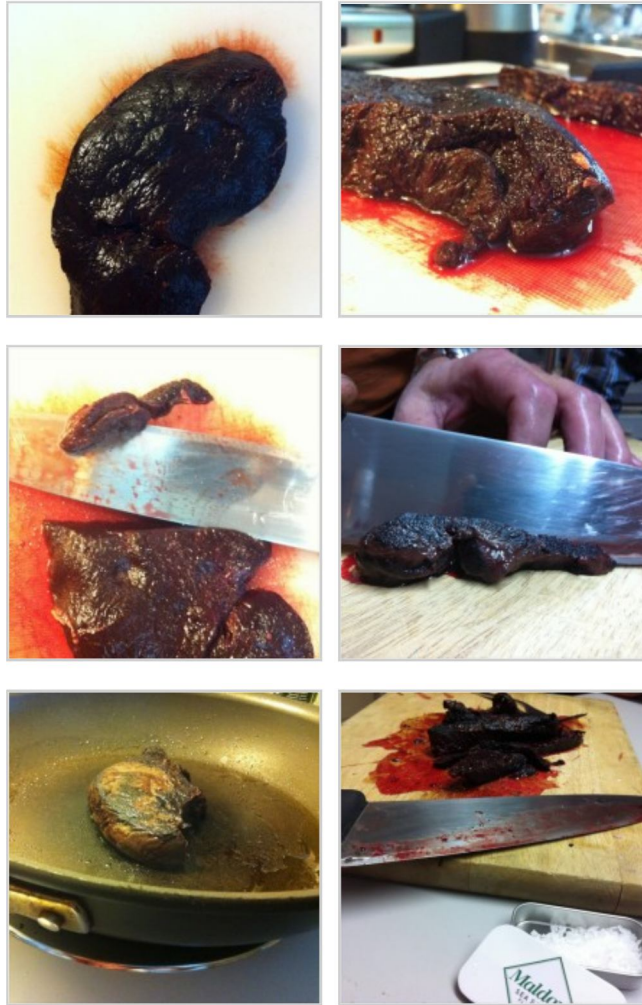
BBQ Champion Ron Shewchuk was our chef for the experience and served us some raw seal steaks, slicing against the grain to allow us to dive into the raw flesh. It was surprising how red the richness of the colour was, and how soft and smooth the meat was to the touch. It smelled as if rich with iron with a hint of the ocean. Apparently seal meat is very rich in protein, calcium, iron, magnesium and vitamin B-12. The meat is leaner since seals carry all of their fat directly beneath their skin, and it is free of hormones typically used in farming to increase mass or growth.

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Tasting the meat, the texture on the tongue was just the same. Silky smooth and seemed quite gamey (almost like an organ meat) yet had a subtle flavoring familiar of the ocean. We pondered the taste and were surprised at how little the fishy flavor was present in the meat. The irony aftertaste proved to be a bit overpowering with Mark Busse commenting that it was "like a bloody nose" but commented that he "felt manly somehow about eating it, like an Inuit hunter."

For the second round Ron added a pinch of sea salt to the meat. This punched out the fishy flavor and made it all the more evident that this was seal meat. Next, he added some truffle oil along with the salt which cut through the fish flavor and added to the soft texture on the palate and allowed the richness of the seal flavoring to come forth.

Ron then slightly seared the seal meat, giving it just a bit of heat on each side while leaving the inside raw. This began to give the meat a very familiar flavor, reminiscent of caribou or venison. A gamey irony flavor that completely disengaged the senses from associating this animal meat with the sea that it came from.

This was an incredible experience and one that I will not soon forget. Eating the meat in its purest raw form almost made me feel closer to that of a hunter, or the people that rely on seal meat for daily sustenance, fuel and warmth for their bodies in very cold climates.

In the future I don't know if I would rush out and purchase seal like I would beef, but it would be interesting to try some of the authentic recipes and [various ways of preparing seal](#).

What are your thoughts around this controversial meat? Would you try seal if you had the opportunity?

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13 Responses To "The Seal Meat Experience"



Mark Busse says:

Posted on January 3rd, 2012

I wonder what smoked or properly BBQ'd seal would taste like?



Ben Garfinkel says:

Posted on January 4th, 2012

How about seal jerky!



Stephen Abbott says:

Posted on January 5th, 2012

I tried seal back in the '70s, as a young boy visiting family in NFLD. I remember it being something fairly common, but a significant meal (such as a formal Sunday dinner). Ours was roasted, and the texture was a little like corned beef. What stands out in my memory is that it was served with flippers still attached; like how a roast chicken still has its legs. I thought the taste was okay, but a little too gamey, and haven't had the opportunity to try it since.



Mr3arnest says:

Posted on January 5th, 2012

I'd eat the shit out of a seal! No... Wait a minute. That didn't sound right. Why would it be ok to eat a cow or a pig or a lobster but not a seal? Because they are ugly? We shouldn't eat cute things? Or because they are stupid? We shouldn't eat smart things? Are Seals smarter than pigs? How about Octopus? They are smarter than we are, Fortunately they aren't smart enough to figure out how to farm us but that is their own problem. Let them eat cake. I should really try to figure out just exactly what it is that I am trying to say here but I am hungry now and I have some leftover lamb chops calling my name from the fridge.



Liesa Billings says:

Posted on January 8th, 2012

Cold smoked seal meat would most likely be pretty good. Or made into black pudding style sausage using other parts of the seal and fried up on a nice hot cast iron pan. Smoked sausage with wild blueberries and juniper would be super!

Also soaking the in milk or buttermilk would extract some of the strong taste much like with liver because of the iron looses that "bloody nose" metallic taste you are speaking of.

At least you know if this was to become trendy that chefs would only purchase from sustainable resources and the infinite number of ways to prepare it would be interesting. Respect the meat! Regardless of where it comes from. Mind you I've served everything from rattlesnake croquettes to muscox and am unsure if I would ever had served seal meat.

Thanks for this story I enjoyed it.



Ronnie Shewchuk says:

Posted on January 9th, 2012

Nice post, Tyler and great comments. It was truly an unforgettable experience, and I look forward to eating seal meat again. It is indeed a sustainable, humanely produced food source, although the sealing industry is condemned by what the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador calls "radical and unethical anti-harvesting organizations." Just recently, after hearing that Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan are considering banning seal products, Newfoundland and Labrador issued this news release, which will be of interest to everyone reading Tyler's post: <http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2011/fishaq/1223n04.htm>



Kam says:

Posted on January 24th, 2012

Roughly four years ago an acquaintance brought back some seal meat jerky and I tried some. It was delicious; dense, lean, meaty and fishy all at the same time. The taste reminded me of cod liver oil. Ever since then I get a craving for it now and then. I would seriously pay money to get more seal jerky. I've tried googling, but nothing turns

up. :(



JD says:

Posted on June 2nd, 2012

Seal meat is high in mercury. Look it up. Bon appetite.



Katherine says:

Posted on November 23rd, 2012

YOU ARE FUCKING MONSTERS.

How the hell can you call slowly crushing an animal's skull humane? You are disgusting. You don't need to eat seal meat. No one does. You just want to do inflammatory shit and think you're edgy epicures for doing so, which is pathetic. I'd like to take a hakepik to your skulls so you know what you're choosing to put those animals through!



Stan says:

Posted on December 23rd, 2012

<http://www.piaberrrend.org/seal-hunt-in-canada/>

If you click that link you inhumane people can see how you get your shitty seal meat.



Mimi says:

Posted on December 26th, 2012

Stan you are sadly

misinformed. It has been illegal to kill white coats since the 80s. The site you posted the link to is designed by animal rights groups to make you react but very little of the information here is fact. That photo has been very clearly faked. Keep in mind that when the fish stocks collapsed the seal population was around 5 million. Current numbers are estimated at near 10 million at the moment. From an ecological standpoint, the seal population must be controlled. The truth of the hunt is that these animals are killed in a far MORE humane way than the majority of the farm animals sold to be eaten. Anything NOT used by the hunter is left for the scavengers who depend on the hunt as much as those participating in it. Polar bears especially need the extras right before their summer starvation period starts if they are to survive. The animals are killed quite quickly there is no 'slow crushing' they are dead in seconds. that study they refference – have you actually read it? You are leading with your heart in this matter and not taking the time to learn all the facts.



Gil says:

Posted on December 31st, 2012

If you want to explore seal

meat, phone that guy: Rejean Vigneau. He owns Boucherie Côte-a-Côte in Magdalen Islands and offers seal sausages, pâtés, terrines, burgers, jerky... (418.986.3322).



stephane vigneau says:

Posted on January 8th, 2013

If you are in Montreal we sell Seal

meat seal sausages, pâtés, terrines, burgers, and more

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