

The boneless rib meat on a deer is, at best, usually relegated to the sausage pile and, at worst, just discarded. This cut consists of layers of collagen-rich silverskin and sinew, lean meat, and relatively large amounts of fat. This trifecta of toughness means that the belly must be cooked for a long time, but, when this is achieved, it is a meltingly tender and flavorful. This is all made even better with the addition of smoky (and fatty) bacon, sharp mustard, sour pickles/pickled jalapeños, and lots of savory onion.

Remove the belly in one large sheet from just behind the shoulder to the hams running below the backstrap/loin—don't worry if you poke some holes in the sometimes-thin belly piece—the rolling process will patch any gaps. It will be a rough parallelogram shape. Remember also to go back and trim the meat from between the ribs after, as this is a very good stew meat cut and shouldn't be wasted.

## Ingredients

- 1 boneless venison belly, about 14" x 20"
- Salt and pepper
- 8 oz. sliced bacon
- ¼ cup mustard, Dijon or coarse-grain mustard
- 2 onions, sliced
- ½ cup pickled jalapeños
- 3 tbsp. olive oil or lard
- 3 carrots, diced
- 3 tbsp. flour, optional
- 3 qts. venison or beef stock

## Instructions

Lay the belly on a cutting board with the grain running horizontally. Season well with salt and pepper then rub the entire belly with the mustard. Lay the bacon across the belly horizontally, then scatter half of the onion and pickled peppers over the belly, leaving a 2" border.

Roll the belly up tightly from the bottom to top. Tie the belly securely with butcher's twine.

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

In a large pot or Dutch oven, heat the olive oil or lard over high heat and brown the belly well on all sides.

Add the remaining onion and carrots to the pot and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the optional flour and cook, stirring constantly, for about two minutes.

Add the stock and bring to a simmer. Put the lid on the pot and place in the oven until tender, about 5-7 hours, turning the belly at least once and adding water or stock if the

level falls below a point halfway up the belly. Once tender, move the belly to a board to rest for about 20 minutes and reduce the sauce until slightly thickened. Cut the strings from the belly and slice thickly against the grain, then spoon the sauce over.