



LEFT: A tri-tip steak, onion confit and bok choy.

RIGHT: Steak and Quaintree pinot noir.

Photos by David Campiche

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and olive oil. Here is a quick recipe for the dry application:

- 1 teaspoon of Szechuan peppers
- 1 teaspoon of black pepper, preferably Tellicherry
- 1 teaspoon of fennel seed
- 1 tablespoon of sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon of smoked sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon of Hatch chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon of smoked paprika

Throw the spices in a coffee grinder. Spin for five seconds. Sprinkle the rub over the marinated steaks on both sides. Let them rest for at least a couple hours. Sauté the steaks in a hot cast-iron skillet for 90 to 120 seconds on each side for medium-rare, at 135 degrees. Transfer and hold in a warm oven.

A half-reduced brown stock (chicken stock with soy) thickened with a roux or corn starch (and a little water with the corn starch) makes a lovely sauce for the meat.

Add a couple tablespoons of an Asian sauce like Yoshita's or a teriyaki blend. I love to enrich the flavor by adding a 1/2 tablespoon of mushroom dust to the mixture. Call it terroir. The sauce is finished when it shines like silk and the fragrance erupts across the kitchen.

One warning: Slice the tri-tip thinly and across the grain.

Bok choy

Baby bok choy is a fine companion to red meat. Preparation is simple. Cut the vegetables through the root-end in halves or quarters and steam in a wok until tender. Or boil in a pan until tender, remove the water, and sauté briefly in butter or olive oil. Salt.

Pour a tablespoon or two of sweet chili sauce on the bok choy. Toss and serve.

Sauteed spuds

Cut small yellow potatoes into wedges, eight to a spud. Par-boil until the potatoes are just soft. Do not overcook. Pour a quarter cup of olive oil into a sauté pan, bring to medium heat, and then add a tablespoon of fennel seed and as much garlic as you like. Brown the mixture until translucent. Sprinkle in a 1/2 teaspoon of turmeric, and sauté until the potatoes are golden and crispy.

Turmeric gives you a lovely yellow color and enhances the dish without overwhelming the cook with too strong a flavor. A few dried chilis add a nice heat. Chopped parsley is colorful against the turmeric.

Mushrooms

I love to collect wild mushrooms, but with such a short season, I recommend slicing a porcini mushroom about a 1/4 inch wide, vacuum sealing, then freezing the package for later consumption. Added to a sauce, the delicate morsels simply enhance flavors to another level.

With frozen mushrooms, chop cross-wise and dry sauté. Without oil, mushrooms brown. Best yet, they leave no liquid, which can turn them squishy. The mushrooms will be firm and dress up any sauce. Off-season, a store-bought cremini mushrooms are a good alternative. I also like to reconstitute the wood ear mushroom, which can be found in Asian markets.

The point is, mushrooms enhance nearly every meat. Their health benefits are far-reaching.

Eat heartily and drink to your health.

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