

Getting up close with big cats in South Africa

By **RENEE GRAHAM**
Associated Press

DINOKENG GAME RESERVE, South Africa — The male lion brushes through the tall grass and strides into a clearing in a South African wildlife sanctuary. A man beckons the big cat with purring sounds. The lion, Bayetsi, responds with a gentle growl and caresses Kevin Richardson, popularly known as the “lion whisperer,” with its mane.

Richardson hopes his hands-on stunts with lions will highlight the plight of the African predator, whose numbers have dwindled. It also thrusts him into a sensitive debate about human interaction with lions; some conservationists say Richardson’s message is sound and sincere, but note the limits of what he can do to address big-picture problems facing the vulnerable species.

The number of lions in the wild in Africa has dropped by more than 40 percent to about 20,000 in the past two decades, according to some estimates.

Made for viral viewing on social media, the spectacle of Richardson lounging and cavorting with lions as though they were house pets might resemble a circus act in the African bush. But he uses the attention to condemn the South African industry in which customers kill captive-bred lions in relatively confined areas.

He and other critics describe that practice as “canned hunting” and also condemn the tourist draw of lion cub petting in special enclosures, saying those same



In this photo taken March 15, Kevin Richardson, popularly known as the “lion whisperer” interacts with one of his lions while out for a walk in the Dinokeng Game Reserve, near Pretoria, South Africa. Richardson seeks to raise awareness about the plight of Africa’s lions, whose numbers in the wild have dwindled in past decades.

animals would not be able to survive in the wild and often get cycled into the “trophy” industry to be shot for a price.

“Today’s lion cub becomes tomorrow’s trophy and the unsuspecting tourists have blood on their hands,” said Richardson, who once worked at a tourist park that offered lion cub-petting. The tourists, he said, “have been hoodwinked into believing that their contribution of funds is going into lion conservation.”

One South African oper-

ation, the Lion and Safari Park, said it stopped lion cub petting but had to resume it because of a “dramatic and unexpected” drop in visitors and tour operators who sought out cub petting elsewhere. It said it keeps its lions until they die of natural causes or donates them to “reputable” zoos and parks, and does not sell its lions to hunters.

Today, 42-year-old Richardson, who is married and has two children, manages a wildlife area with 31 lions within the Dinokeng reserve

north of South Africa’s capital, Pretoria. Many of the lions, which were captive-bred and cannot be released into the wild, were rescued from being transferred to operations that would let customers shoot them, he said.

Richardson said he does not breed lions and that those on his 3,200-acre property feed on donated carcasses of cattle and antelope.

“I have been accepted as part of the pride,” said Richardson, scratching the lion

Bayetsi’s chin. “But I have to be very careful. They are large animals and are very good at telling you how they feel.”

The lions have scratched and bitten Richardson over the years, but perhaps more hurtful to him has been the criticism he has faced after being filmed wrestling with his lions or roaring with them.

Richardson’s website, which offers merchandise including T-shirts, key chains and calendars, says he seeks to promote wildlife preservation through “education,

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— Kevin Richardson

awareness and funding.”

Luke Hunter, president of Panthera, a conservation group, commended Richardson for his passion and “authentic” concern for lions, saying: “His messaging, for what he has and what he can do, is good.”

But Hunter emphasized the broader conservation needs of the lion, including efforts to protect habitats and address poaching, in which antelopes and other potential prey for lions end up in the bushmeat trade, and lions get trapped in snares laid down indiscriminately.

A relatively recent concern is demand in some Asian countries for lion bones used in traditional medicine, and the possibility that poachers are increasingly targeting lions to meet that demand. Currently, South Africa allows the legal, annual export of bones from hundreds of captive-bred lions to China and Southeast Asia.

Richardson spoke of his intimacy with the animals.

“The relationships I have with them are purely to give them a better quality of life in a captive situation,” he said. “I will look after them as long as I can.”



In this photo taken March 15, Kevin Richardson, popularly known as the “lion whisperer” interacts with one of his lionesses in the Dinokeng Game Reserve, near Pretoria, South Africa.



In this photo taken March 15, Kevin Richardson, popularly known as the “lion whisperer” ends a two-hour walk with three of his lions in the Dinokeng Game Reserve, near Pretoria, South Africa.



In this photo taken March 15, Kevin Richardson, popularly known as the “lion whisperer” interacts with one of his lions while out for a walk in the Dinokeng Game Reserve, near Pretoria, South Africa.

Wine, sake and orange juice makes a memorable cocktail

By **THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA**
Associated Press

As any food lover knows, our culinary creations have a natural best friend, one that is so ingrained in the food world that the Culinary Institute of America has entire programs dedicated to its study — wine.

Food’s favorite companion has been a part of our dining tradition as far back as 4100 B.C., but despite its long, rich history, it remains a mystery to many of us. With seemingly endless origins and varieties, it can be daunting to choose the right wine, and even avid wine-drinkers may feel as though they are simply guessing.

And while being a wine expert is not essential to the enjoyment of a glass of wine, there is a satisfaction that comes from knowing your way around a wine list. Luckily, the CIA has you covered.

The uku rouge is one of our favorite cocktails. Named for its red (rouge, in French) and floating (uku, in Japanese) elements, the cocktail is best prepared with a bright, Junmai-style sake and Cotes du Rhone red wine, though any medium-bodied red wine will work. The cocktail is visually beautiful, with deep red wine literally floating on top of the orange-hued blend of sake, sweet vermouth and orange juice.

With its combination of flavors and ingredients, the uku rouge is a chameleon. It is refreshing enough to enjoy during a cocktail party on your back patio, but also transitions beautifully as an aperitif before a summer dinner party. And with three different types of wine, it will give you the opportunity to show off all of your new wine trivia.



John Barkley/The Culinary Institute of America via AP
Uku rouge cocktail.

UKU ROUGE

Servings: 1

- 2 ounces Junmai-style sake
- 1 ounce sweet vermouth
- 1 ounce freshly squeezed orange juice
- 1 ounce Cotes du Rhone, or other medium-bodied red wine

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice and add the sake, vermouth, and orange juice. Shake vigorously, then strain into a rocks glass over fresh ice.

Holding a spoon cup-side-down over the glass, slowly pour the wine over the back of the spoon, so that it falls gently into the glass and floats above the other ingredients.

Nutrition information per serving: 156 calories; 1 calories from fat; 0 g fat (0 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 4 mg sodium; 10 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 2 g sugar; 1 g protein.

Chicken salad served in a hot dog bun

By **SARA MOULTON**
Associated Press

Chicken salad, that summertime classic, often suffers from Chewy Chicken Syndrome, a pitfall that requires a tightrope walk to avoid.

You want to build the recipe around white meat chicken — the perfect foil for its mayonnaise-based sauce — but you don’t want to overcook it, an easy thing to do given white meat’s leanness. (And if you do happen to overcook it, you might as well kiss it goodbye. It’ll end up about as tender as a pencil eraser.)

Accordingly, this recipe for Deluxe BLT Chicken Salad Sandwiches With Basil Dressing mimics the cooking process called sous vide to guarantee the chicken turns out tender. Without going into a lengthy explanation, let’s just say the premise of sous vide is to cook the item at a temperature no higher than the one at which you want it to end up. That way it can never be overcooked. In this case the outer limit for the internal temperature is 165 degrees, the heat at which you can be sure that any bacteria have been killed.

Here the chicken is cooked in chicken broth, which deepens the flavor of both the chicken and the broth. You’ll start by heating the broth to 170 F, not 165 F, because the temperature drops quickly with all the chicken in there. Then cover the pan and pull it off the burner, allowing the chicken to cook gently in the lingering heat of the broth. (Cut into the thickest part of the thickest chicken breast and if you see any pink reheat the chicken briefly.)

What puts this chicken salad over the top? Salting the tomatoes to remove excess water and make them more tomato-y and pureeing the basil leaves in a food processor to make them more basil-y. Lastly, we borrow one of the features that makes a New England lobster roll so magnificent — serving the chicken salad in a buttered, toasted hot dog bun.



Sara Moulton via AP

BLT CHICKEN SALAD SANDWICHES

Start to finish: 1 hour 20 minutes (20 active)

Servings: 6

- 1 to 1 ¼ pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts (not thin sliced), about 3/4-inch thick
- 6 cups chicken broth
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered if large
- Kosher salt
- 6 ounces bacon
- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- 1 ½ cups packed fresh basil leaves
- 2 teaspoons lemon zest and 1 ½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 6 hot dog buns
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- Baby romaine lettuce leaves for garnish

In a medium saucepan combine the chicken with the broth and heat the pan over medium heat until it registers 170 F. Remove the pan from the heat, cover the pan and let it stand 20 minutes. (Cut into the thickest part of the thickest chicken breast and if you see any pink reheat the chicken briefly.) Transfer the chicken to a bowl and let it cool. When cool, cut into ½-inch cubes.

Strain the broth, cover and either chill or freeze it for future use.

Meanwhile, sprinkle the tomatoes lightly with salt and let them stand for 15 minutes.

In a large skillet cook the bacon over medium heat until crisp, about 5 minutes and transfer to paper towels to drain. When cool, crumble.

In a food processor combine the mayonnaise, basil, lemon zest and juice and puree until smooth. Add a little water if the dressing is too thick to pour.

Using a serrated knife, slice off and discard the side crusts of the hot dog buns. Brush the cut sides with the butter. In a large nonstick skillet toast the buttered sides of the hot dog buns over medium heat until they are golden brown.

Using paper towels gently pat dry the tomatoes. In a large bowl combine the chicken, dressing, tomatoes and bacon; stir gently just until combined.

To serve: Put a piece of lettuce inside each toasted bun and mound the chicken salad on top.

Nutrition information per serving: 599 calories; 370 calories from fat; 41 g fat (11 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 111 mg cholesterol; 690 mg sodium; 25 g carbohydrates; 2 g fiber; 4 g sugar; 31 g protein.