

The History of Steak Tartare

Steak Tartare Recipes From Around the World

Many people are not attuned to the art of eating raw meat. Others find the practice to be abhorrent. But in my view consuming raw meat tugs at hard wired yearnings deep within our *Homo sapiens*' collective soul...

Contents

- [The key seasonings is allspice \(which the Lebanese call sweet pepper\), along with salt, pepper and, sometimes, cinnamon, cumin or even a little hot...](#)
- [Abstract of Meeting Paper: Society for Risk Analysis 2001 Annual Meeting](#)



I have been eating steak tartare for at least 50 years, and have clearly lived to tell of it. As a youngster in the American Midwest, occasionally on a Saturday my father would bring home fresh rye bread and a pound of ground round steak from our local butcher. Out would come an old wooden bowl and in it dad would mix the steak, a raw egg yolk, capers, chopped anchovies, a dab of hot mustard and chopped onions. Dad would spread it thickly on a slab of rye bread, add salt and pepper, open a cold beer, and then a look of satisfaction would appear upon his face like no other.

Upon turning seventeen I arrived in Bremen, West Germany, in the summer 1963 as an American Field Service ("AFS") high school exchange student, and one of the first things I remember seeing were sandwich kiosks displaying steak tartare. The raw meat was out there right in the sun, in the open. I saw, I ate, and I survived.

However, upon returning to America I have over the years encountered innumerable stares, comments and quips over my perchance for dining *a la tartare*. Especially today, in an America with an obsessive concern over safety in an unsafe world (driven by millionaire class action lawyers) and a myopic mantra of political correctness (inverted McCarthyism); the rather natural act of consuming meat raw is viewed with suspicion. How did we get here?

Savanna Erectus

Homo neandertalensis lived between 400 and 28 thousand years ago. Archaic *Homo sapiens* appeared 400 - 150 thousand years ago, and modern *Homo sapiens* appeared less than 100 thousand years ago. When the first *Homo sapiens* ventured from the safety of their jungle cover to the vast open savannas of Africa, their *erectus* "biped-id-ness" allowed them to see better to defend themselves. It is at this point that humans probably became hunters as well and thus consistent meat eaters. As this epoch was before man had fire, logically this meant that they ate their meat raw. This opinion is perhaps my own conceit, however our beginnings beg the conclusion that eating raw meat is hard wired into the very reptilian depths of our brains.

When these ancestors of ours began hunting game they soon discovered that raw meat spoils rather quickly. Thus began the human culinary history centered upon finding methods to preserve meat. The vast array of what today we call meat delicacies are simply the end result of an endless search to preserve food; including boiling, braising, brining, curing, drying, encasing, fermenting, pickling, preserving, roasting, salting, smoking, spicing, steaming, and on and on. A human had just three choices before refrigeration; eat the meat raw on the spot, find some snow or ice, or resort to preserving it with any method readily available.

The Dance of the Tartars

According to legend, the now world-famous cold raw steak dish called steak tartare emerged in the eastern borderlands of medieval

Poland in the 13th century, which were repeatedly invaded by Tatar (also spelled Tartar) hordes, also known as Scythians or the Mongolian tribes. The Tartars! Their appearance was not at all what we call Mongoloid, Asiatic. Drawings of the Tartars look more like the Russian Cossacks or the Turks.



The name Tatar first appeared among nomadic tribes living in northeastern Mongolia and the area around Lake Baikal from the 5th century AD. Unlike the Mongols, these peoples spoke a Turkic language, and they may have been related to the Cuman, Kalmuck, or Kipchak peoples. After various groups of these Turkic nomads became part of the armies of the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan in the early 13th century, a fusion of Mongol and Turkic elements took place, and the Mongol invaders of Russia and Hungary became known to Europeans as Tatars (or Tartars).

These ferocious horsemen were constantly on the move in military units known as 'czambuls.' Each fighter had a string of ponies, allowing czambuls to cover great distances in a short period of time. Their style was to probe, feint attacks, withdraw and then hit another area with lightning speed until a weakness was uncovered; tactics the Polish called the "dance of the Tartars."

Historical accounts by chroniclers observed that the Tartars would place long strips of raw meat (probably horse meat) beneath their saddles. One might presume that the constant pounding, heat and salty horse sweat served to marinate and tenderize the meat, which was then eaten uncooked. When they stopped to eat they chopped up the meat and added caper berries (indigenous to Western and Central Asia) and other spices to flavor the meat.

The earliest reference to Tartars consuming raw meat that I have found is in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, by Robert Burton, first published in 1621. "The Tartars eat raw meat, and most commonly horse flesh, drink milk and blood, as the Nomads of old –" From the Latin, "Tartari mulis, equis vescuntur, et crudis carnibus, et fruges contemnunt, dicentes, hoc junmentorum pabulum et boum, non hominum."

Another reference to Tartars eating raw meat is found in *Appletons' Journal: a magazine of general literature*, published in the 19th century as a weekly in New York, with its first issue dated April 3, 1869. In the third of a series of articles entitled *Life in Russia*, published in April 3, 1875, it reported that "The Tartars of the plains cut the horse-meat into long strips, and put them under the saddle in order to render it more tender."

A countervailing opinion was expressed in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, By John Bagnell Bury, published in 1911 by Macmillan. "That the Huns and Tartars ate raw meat softened by being carried under a saddle, is a mistake of the chroniclers. At the present time the mounted nomads are accustomed to put thin strips of salted raw meat on their horses' sores, before saddling them, to bring about speedy healing. But this meat, impregnated with the sweat of the horse and reeking intolerably, is absolutely uneatable."

What Bury acknowledges here is that the Tartars did put meat under their saddles. However I think he is stating his own unfounded common sense opinion that he would find it unpalatable as food. Further, salt crystals rubbing on a wound under a saddle would make no sense either.

The Tartars and related tribes are violent peoples. They have a game called *Buzkashi (goat pulling)* in which mounted horsemen fight in teams to control a headless goat. Riders beat and savage one another for control of the goat. Men whip their horses, the other horses and each other. There are no boundaries, no rules and spectators are trampled as well. The object of Buzkashi is to grab the goat out of a caulk circle on the ground, gallop around a pole some few yards away with the headless carcass in hand, and then race back and drop the goat back in the circle for a 'goal'. This goes on for hours, and here is the punch line, after the victor is declared (the rider with the most 'goals') the winners roast the goat and eat it! So much for being particular about their food.

Early accounts suggest the name “ta-tar” originated from the cries of terrified people. They would both hear and feel the surging sound and the distinct “trrrtrrr” of Tartars horses’ hoofs on the ground. Over the decades people would whisper in fear “trrrtrrr” when threatened by these hordes, as that dreaded sound meant certain horror and loss of life. “Trrrtrrr” soon became a regular word in their vocabulary and over time it was pronounced as “Tar-tar.” Everybody who lived between Tibet and Mongolia to the east and the Holy Roman Empire to the west knew the meaning of “Tartar,” in much the same way that today we know “terror.”

An alternate explanation of the origin of Tartar is that it came from the Latin word “Tartarus” meaning the lowest region of the underworld. The Romans considered the Ta-ta people of central Asia to be barbarians and because of their blood thirsty reputation they may have inserted an “r” in their name, thereby linking them with Tartarus. My only problem with this view is that Tartarus and Hades were both concepts developed in Greek mythology, not necessarily by the Romans. More importantly, the Romans were arrogant conquerors who thought all non-Romans were barbarians, so why would they single out the Tartars for special treatment?

Before becoming overwrought with the romance of the Tartars, we might ponder an entry in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, published by A. and C. Black in 1810: “Mr. Foster, describing the Kalmuck (Kalmyk) Tartars, says, ‘there is not perhaps on the face of the earth, a human creature who lives on coarser fare, or to a civilized people, more disgusting, than a Kalmuck Tartar. ...Raw putrid fish, or the flesh of carrion, horses, oxen, and camels is the ordinary food of the Kalmucks; and they are more active and less susceptible of the inclemency of the weather than any race of men I have ever seen.’” Clearly John Bury had not read Foster.

What cannot be doubted in the end is that the Tartars were outstanding warriors who moved fast across the country, aided by strings of horses for each fighter. They most certainly ate their mounts as they advanced, so they carried their food supply with them, or scavenged off those they conquered. People feared the Tartars, but may have attributed their strength to their energy source of raw meat and spices. Soon people in Europe (perhaps secretly at first, but soon openly) prepared food the way they had seen the Tartars do it.

The Advance of Genghis Khan and the Tartars (1200-1300 AD)



You Bet Your Life!

Dishes centered on raw meat appear in nearly every culture worldwide. Given the history of the dish in Eastern Europe and the fact that that my own family originated in Prussia near Königsberg, by the North Sea, I naturally have centered my interests on European versions of steak tartare. In Germany and other parts of Europe, there is a little metal knife made especially for this purpose, which is utilized by the **Tartar Feinschmecker** in its preparation. The meat is scraped so that none of the sinew or other non-meat tissue finds its way into the final result. Therefore, the look of the dish is that the meat be coarse. Sea salt, coarse ground pepper, chopped onion and capers

help create this look and feel.

It is a moot point whether or not the historical origin of tartare calls for horse meat. There were no herds of beef cattle in the epoch of the Tartars and if there were they most certainly would have eaten them on the spot. So today there is but one firm requirement of the dish, that the beef steak be fresh and free of harmful bacteria. To accomplish this you must **find a butcher you trust**, who understands what steak tartare is and who is used to preparing beef for that purpose. Any good butcher has one grinder for beef and another for pork for obvious reasons for example.

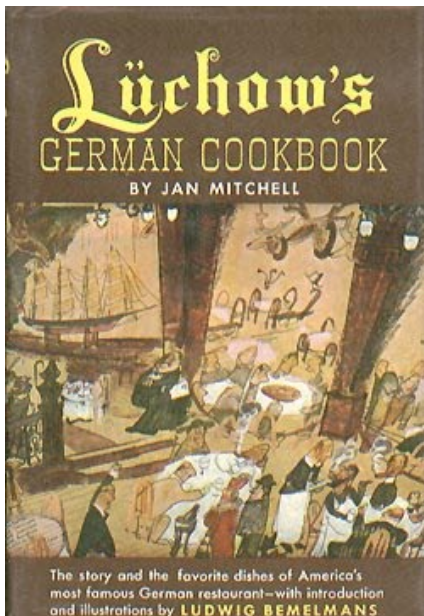
In my experience either sirloin or top round steak have the right marbling to achieve a flavorful result. You should ask the butcher to remove all obvious fat and sinew from the steak before grinding. Alternatively you can pick out the steak yourself and trim and grind it at home. For a rougher texture you can finely chop the steak by hand. Steak tartare should be eaten immediately after preparation. Do not leave steak tartare out for more than two hours. Do not leave it out in high temperatures. Do not display it in direct sunlight. If you follow these simple guidelines you should never have problems with the dish. I have been eating steak tartare for nearly half a century and have never become ill as a result.

I would strongly discourage buying any “processed” meat for steak tartare. By this I refer to products from meat processing factories, which “floor plan” nearly the entire selection of meats available in supermarkets today. I have been inside several meat processing plants and they are truly amazing models of efficiency. However they are also perfect points for the spread of bacteria, as many ground beef E. coli recalls have demonstrated. Because of their processing methods, a single pound of ground beef may contain meat from several hundred cattle, increasing the odds of contamination.

The Recipes

The further back I have chased steak tartare recipes the simpler they seem to be. Perhaps the earliest American restaurant versions I know of come from Lüchow’s, the famous German restaurant in Manhattan near Broadway at 110 East 14th Street. Founded by Guido August Lüchow in the 1882, the Lüchow’s cookbook version I own was published in 1952. Lüchow’s closed in 1982; a 100-year run that very few restaurants have achieved (Union Oyster House in Boston, founded 1826, being the oldest in America).

Lüchow’s hosted the greatest personalities during its best years, from President Theodore Roosevelt to the celebrity actors from nearby Broadway. In later years Gary Grant, Bette Davis, Jane Fonda and Ted Kennedy dined there. The great New York Symphony Orchestra conductor and composer Walter Damrosch (1862-1950) often dined at Lüchow’s with his grandchildren. He invariably ordered one of these two steak tartare versions, presented here in their exact text. Damrosch would drink a German red wine, Assmanshauser, with his tartare.



Lüchow’s Beef Steak Tartare

2 pounds fillet of beef

4 slices freshly buttered toast

4 fresh raw eggs

8 sardellen (anchovies)

2 tablespoons capers

Remove the fat from beef. Grind meat fine. Arrange on toast; serve a raw egg on top of each slice. Garnish with sardellen and capers.
Serves 4

Note: If you are dieting to lose weight, this is a satisfying and effective dish.

Raw Meat Lucullus

Schlemmerschnitte (Gourmet chopped steak)

2 pounds fillet of beef

4 slices freshly buttered toast

4 tablespoons fresh black caviar

1 ½ tablespoons chopped onion

Remove the fat from beef. Grind meat fine. Arrange on toast; garnish with caviar; serve with chopped onions on a side dish. Serves 4

Note: See diet note above.

This dish was a favorite of the great Pavlova and of John Barrymore, and still is of many show people.

My own personal rendition of steak tartare, learned initially from my dad and refined over the past thirty years, incorporates the best of the German (in Germany they sometimes add nutmeg to the mix) and French (mustard) preparations I've tasted in countless restaurants. Steak Tartare usually is prepared at the dining table so as to display the absolute freshness of the ingredients:



Wottrich Steak Tartare

Appetizer - Serves 12

2 pounds top round or sirloin

3 eggs, yolks only

1 large onion, chopped

½ cup capers

½ cup anchovies, chopped (optional)
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon olive oil
sea salt & ground pepper to taste
Tabasco Sauce to taste
Worcestershire Sauce (white sauce) to taste
1 teaspoon vinegar
2 teaspoons brown or Dijon mustard, or to taste
1 teaspoon horseradish sauce, or to taste
1 loaf black bread or pumpernickel, toasted, display
1 stick butter, display
parsley, garnish
1 bunch radishes, display
1 small jar French Cornichons (or baby gherkins), display

Preparation: 1. In a large mixing bowl (usually wooden) combine the ground steak, anchovies (optional), half the chopped onion, half the capers, olive oil, 2 egg yolks, sea salt, ground pepper, Tabasco sauce, Worcestershire sauce, horseradish, lemon juice, vinegar and mustard to your taste. 2. Thoroughly mix and then arrange meat in a loaf shape on a large wooden platter. 3. Crosshatch the top of the loaf. 4. Garnish with parsley. 5. Put an egg yolk (optional) in a depression made with a tablespoon on the center top of the loaf. 6. Display sliced Cornichons around the yolk. *Serve slightly chilled, NOT ice cold.*

Presentation: 1. In small matching bowls display the remaining chopped onion, capers, anchovies, radishes and Cornichons. 2. Toast the bread and remove the crust, cut into uniform small squares and display with a stick of butter.

It is worth mentioning in passing that steak tartare left overs are absolutely delicious if spread on toasted bread and put under the broiler for a minute or so the next day.

Every year Saveur magazine publishes an issue of the 100 top food-related ideas, restaurants, recipes, people, places and things. In their Jan/Feb 2002 issue they published this fabulous recipe listed as #72, perfected by Michael Leviton, of Luminiare, a very good restaurant near Boston, MA USA. I tried it in a taste-off against my Wottrich Steak Tartare. The Asian version received rave reviews! It tastes fresher and lighter than traditional Steak Tartare:

Asian Red Curry Steak Tartare

Serves 4

For the Kaffir Lime-Leaf Oil:

½ cup fresh Kaffir lime leaves (about 16) (Or substitute ½ teaspoon each of lime and orange zest)

6 tablespoons Canola oil

For the Red Curry Vinaigrette:

2 tablespoons red curry paste

2 tablespoon fresh lemongrass

2 tablespoons seasoned rice vinegar

½ tablespoon patis

¼ cup Canola oil

For the Steak Tartare:

1 pound aged sirloin (fat cut off) ground twice

1 ½ piece of ginger, peeled and minced

1 shallot, peeled and minced

1 tablespoon finely chopped Thai basil or spearmint leaves

1 tablespoon finely chopped peppermint leaves

Preparation: 1. Put the Kaffir leaves (or zest) and oil into a blender and puree until the oil is flecked with the leaves, one to two minutes. Transfer to a bowl and cover. Set oil aside at room temperature overnight. The following day strain through a cheesecloth-lined sieve into a small bowl, discard solids, set aside. 2. Put the curry paste, lemongrass, vinegar, and fish sauce into a blender and puree until smooth, about one minute. With the motor still running, gradually add oil in a steady, slow stream through the hole in the blender lid. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside. The vinaigrette may appear separated or “broken.” 3. Put the meat, ginger, shallots, basil or spearmint, peppermint, and 6 tablespoons of the vinaigrette into a large bowl and gently mix together until just combined. Add a pinch of sea salt to awake the flavors. *Serve slightly chilled.*

Presentation: 1. Gently pack one-fourth of the Steak Tartar into a deep, 2 ½-inch ring mold set in the middle of a serving plate, then un mold by removing the ring. Repeat on three more plates. Drizzle some of the lime oil and remaining vinaigrette around each serving. Scatter a few Oriental sugar peas, which have been soaked overnight in rice vinegar, around the plate as a condiment.

French Steak Tartare

Appetizer – Serves 8

The French version is classic to French Bistros and usually prepared very simply. This more refined version was served to me at Guy Savoy in Paris.

2 teaspoons Dijon Mustard

2 teaspoons French mustard

2 tablespoons lemon juice

2 tablespoons heavy cream

2 tablespoons extra virgin Olive oil

2 teaspoons Cognac

1/3 teaspoon ground Cumin

1/3 teaspoon ground cayenne Pepper

3/4 teaspoon fine sea Salt

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

6 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf Italian Parsley

1 tablespoon chopped Basil

2 tablespoons chopped Chives

1 1/2 pounds chilled ground (minced) beef

Polish Steak Tartare (Befsztyl Tartarski)

Serves 4-5

Trim fat and sinew from 3/4-1 lb. beef tenderloin and grind. Add 1-2 teaspoon prepared brown mustard, 1 Tablespoon olive oil, 1 teaspoon Maggi seasoning, 1 tablespoon chopped dill pickle, 1 tablespoon chopped chives, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper.

Mix well and divide into 4-5 portions. Roll into balls and place on serving platter (or individual plates), pressing down slightly to form a mound. Cover with plastic wrap and chill at least 30 minutes. To serve, make a well at the top of each mound and deposit a fresh raw egg yolk in each. Next to each portion place a small mound (1 heaping teaspoon) finely chopped onions and another of finely chopped dill

pickles or zesty gherkins.

Garnish egg yolks with a sprinkle of chopped chives and serve immediately. Polish rye or black bread and ice-cold Polish vodka are perfect accompaniments.

Swedish Steak Tartare (Rabiff)

Serves 4

In Sweden steak tartare is mixed at the table by the guests themselves. It is best served with ice-cold vodka or Champagne (but then cut back on the accoutrements). One popular variation is to let the guests mix their steaks and then broil them on very high heat over a charcoal fire for only a few seconds, so that they remain raw inside. In that case it may be served with French fries and butter Maitre d'hôtel (i.e. butter mixed with finely chopped parsley and a little lemon).

1 ½ pounds filet of beef, trimmed and very finely chopped

1 white onion, very finely chopped

3 tablespoons capers

3 tablespoons pickled beets, finely chopped

3 tablespoons horseradish, grated

4 eggs

salt and black pepper to taste

Dijon mustard to taste

Serve ice cold. Make four nicely shaped hamburgers and arrange on the plates with onion, capers, beetroots and horseradish on the side, in the form of a cross. Separate the egg yolks and serve in the half shell on top of each hamburger. Serve salt, pepper and mustard on the side.

Japanese Steak Tartare (Gyuniku Sashimi)

Serves 6-8

1 1/2 pounds filet mignon

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon mirin

1 tablespoon lemon juice

2 teaspoons ginger grated

1 clove garlic minced

1 green onion thinly sliced

fresh cracked black pepper

lettuce leaves for garnish

1 6 -inch daikon grated



Sear meat in a heavy skillet. Plunge into very cold water until chilled. Pat dry and set aside. In a medium bowl, combine soy sauce, mirin, lemon juice, ginger, garlic, onion (reserve a few pieces for later), and pepper. Marinate meat in mixture for several hours (up to overnight), turning frequently.

Cut meat into very thin slices, arrange on a chilled, lettuce-garnished serving plate, and drizzle with marinade. Peel daikon and grate to a fine pulp. Put daikon in a separate serving bowl near the beef, and add reserved onion pieces to garnish. Serve beef chilled, with daikon as a topping.

Note: Adapted from S. F. Slack, "Japanese Cooking for the American Table."

Armenian Steak Tartare (Khema or Kheyma - *chee kufta*)

- 2½ pounds lean ground meat (London Broil or top round)
- 2¼ cups fine ground bulghour (bulgur)
- 2 cups cold water
- 2 tablespoons tomato sauce
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped basil
- 3 cups onion, chopped fine
- 1 large bunch parsley, chopped
- 1 large green pepper, chopped

Combine vegetables and basil together and mix well. In a large bowl combine 2 cups of chopped vegetables and mix the bulghour, water, tomato sauce and salt. Mix well and let stand 10 minutes. Add meat and blend well. Knead about 5 minutes, moistening your hands with cold water at intervals. Taste for salt. Add more if necessary. Shape as desired and place on platter. Garnish and serve with remaining chopped vegetables.

Lebanese Steak Tartare (Kibbe)

This seasoned bulgur and lamb paste that is Lebanon's national dish exists in dozens of forms. Most typically, it is served as part of the meze spread as kibbe nayyeh, a sort of Lebanese steak tartare of raw lamb, drizzled with olive oil. (Armenians call this dish Kheyma) The same paste, layered with a meat-and-pine-nut filling and oven-baked becomes kibbe bi saniyeh (kibbe in a tray).



The most spectacular presentation that tests the skills of traditional cooks involves shaping the kibbe mixture into thin-walled torpedoes, stuffing them with the aforementioned filling and deep-frying them. Every cook in Lebanon has a different way of making kibbe. Proportions of grain to meat vary from a fifty-fifty blend to one with a far greater amount of bulgur.

The key seasonings is allspice (which the Lebanese call sweet pepper), along with salt, pepper and, sometimes, cinnamon, cumin or even a little hot red chili. Some cooks soak the bulgur before combining it with the meat; others adamantly refuse to. Traditionalists agree, however, that you must use No. 1 grade (finely ground) bulgur. Traditionally, the fat used for making kibbe, and the fat used throughout Lebanon, was samna, a sort of clarified butter, or rendered fat from the tail of the Lebanese fat-tailed sheep.

Filling:

1 ½ tablespoons unsalted butter
 1 ½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 1/3 cup pine nuts (2 ounces)
 1 ½ cups chopped onions
 ½ pound lean ground lamb
 1 teaspoon allspice
 ½ teaspoon cinnamon
 Pinch of cumin
 Salt and freshly ground pepper
 2 teaspoons pomegranate molasses
 ½ to 1 teaspoon ground sumac

Kibbe:

1 pound yellow onions (about 4 medium), coarsely chopped
 1 teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
 ½ teaspoon allspice
 ½ teaspoon cinnamon
 ½ teaspoon cumin
 Pinch of cayenne pepper
 1 pound very lean ground lamb
 1 cup fine bulgur (No. 1 grade)
 Vegetable oil, for frying
 Eggplant-Yogurt Sauce

1. **Filling:** In a medium skillet, melt the butter in the olive oil over moderate heat. Add the pine nuts and cook, stirring constantly, until golden. Transfer the nuts to a plate.

2. Add the onions to the skillet and cook, stirring, until softened but not browned. Add the lamb and cook, stirring to break it up, until no trace of pink remains. Remove from the heat and stir in the toasted pine nuts and the allspice, cinnamon, cumin, salt and pepper. Stir in 1 teaspoon of the pomegranate molasses and 1/2 teaspoon of the sumac. Taste and add the remaining pomegranate molasses and

sumac if desired.

3. Kibbe: In a food processor, pulse the onions until finely chopped; add the salt, pepper, allspice, cinnamon, cumin and cayenne and process until minced. Distribute the meat over the onions and pulse to mix. Transfer to a large bowl.

4. Put the bulgur in a large bowl and stir in enough water to cover. When the wheat dust and chaff rise to the surface, pour off the water. Rinse the bulgur 3 or 4 more times, until the water is clear. Cover the bulgur with fresh water and let it soak for 20 minutes. Drain the bulgur, squeeze it dry and add it to the lamb. Using wet hands, knead the kibbe as you would bread dough, wetting your hands frequently to prevent sticking. The texture of the kibbe should resemble light biscuit dough. Refrigerate until well chilled.

5. Moisten your hands and roll about 3/4 cup of the kibbe into a football shape. Using your index finger, poke a hole in 1 end of the football and gently work your finger into the kibbe until you have a 3-inch-long torpedo-shaped shell with 1/3-inch-thick walls. Cradling the kibbe in one hand so that the walls don't collapse, spoon about 1 tablespoon of the filling into the cavity. Pinch the end to seal, patting the kibbe into a 3-by-1 1/2-inch torpedo. Set the kibbe on a baking sheet lined with plastic. Repeat with the remaining kibbe and filling.

6. In a medium saucepan, heat 2 inches of oil to 350°. Fry the kibbe, 5 at a time, until browned, about 3 minutes. Drain on a rack lined with paper towels. Serve with the Eggplant-Yogurt Sauce.

Ahi Tartare with Taro Chips

Serves 2

Fresh Ahi tuna prepared in this manner is a wonderful substitute for steak tartare. If taro root is not available for the chips, sweet potatoes will work just as well. If you are not absolutely sure about the safety of the egg yolks at your market, substitute the heavy cream.

2 egg yolks, or 2 tablespoons heavy cream
 Hawaiian or kosher salt to taste
 Freshly ground black pepper to taste
 1 teaspoon wasabi powder
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 1 teaspoon soy sauce
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 2 tablespoons finely chopped Maui or other sweet white onion
 2 tablespoons finely chopped Cornichons
 2 tablespoons chopped capers
 2 tablespoons minced fresh herbs (parsley, chervil, tarragon, chives)
 8 ounces Ahi tuna, cut into 1/4-inch dice

Taro Chips

1 taro root, peeled, thinly sliced & soaked in cold water (or sweet potato)
 Peanut oil for frying
 Hawaiian or kosher salt to taste

2 cups lettuce leaves

To make the tartare: Combine the egg yolks or cream, salt, pepper, wasabi powder, lemon juice and soy sauce in a bowl. Gradually whisk in the olive oil. Add the onion, Cornichons, capers and herbs. Just before serving, toss the diced Ahi with this dressing.

To make the chips: Drain the taro root or sweet potato chips and pat dry with paper towels. In a wok or deep fryer, heat 1 inch of oil to 375 F., or until almost smoking. Add the chips and fry for 2 to 3 minutes, turning, until they brown and are cooked through. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with salt.

To serve: Divide the lettuce leaves among 4 salad plates and top each with one-fourth of the tartare. Serve with taro chips on the side.

Thai Steak Tartare (Lapp Muu)

Thai tradition has it that this dish is served raw, thus I include it here as a Thai version of Steak Tartare. However, one will rarely find it served uncooked. Usually you'll find that they lightly poach the meat before mixing it with the other ingredients. It can be made with pork, beef, chicken, or even with Catfish in many Bangkok restaurants.

- 1 ½ tablespoons long or short grain rice
- 4 small dried red chilies, seeded
- 1 pound lean pork or beef, finely ground
- 2 limes, juiced
- 3 stalks of lemon grass, finely minced
- 1 large red onion, finely chopped
- 1 large green Bell pepper, cored, seeded and chopped
- 2 teaspoons garlic, minced
- 30 mint leaves
- 2 tablespoons patis

In a small dry frying pan, over medium heat, roast the rice and chilies, shaking the pan, until the grains are brown and the chilies are darkened. Remove the rice and chilies to a mortar and pestle or electric grinder and pound or grind until you have the consistency of coarse sand.

Place the ground steak in a bowl and mix, with your hands, adding the ground rice and chilies, lime juice, lemon grass, red onion and green pepper. Chop one half the mint leaves and stir them into the mixture, reserving the remaining mint for garnish. Season this mixture with the fish sauce and transfer to a platter. Mound the steak tartare attractively with your hands or in a mold. Garnish with the remainder of the mint leaves.

Italian Carpaccio

Carpaccio, named after an Italian painter in 15th century, is the celebrated dish created at Harry's Bar in Venice (founded 1931), the famous supposed haunt of Ernest Hemmingway. The dish was created by its chef Arrigo Cipraini for a customer whose doctor had advised him to eat only raw meat. This favorite Italian restaurant appetizer is easy to make at home. For a change of pace, you can make this with sushi-grade fresh raw tuna.



- 12 ounce filet mignon (tenderloin steak)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons warm water
- 1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons drained nonpareil capers
- 3 cups gently packed arugula leaves, washed and thinly sliced
- Parmesan cheese curls (make with a vegetable peeler)

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Wrap beef and freeze until firm, about 1 hour. Cut beef across the grain into 1/8" slices. Place slices between two sheets of plastic wrap and pound with a kitchen mallet until paper-thin but thick enough to be lifted from the plastic without tearing. Roll up beef in plastic and refrigerate 1 hour.
2. For vinaigrette: In a blender, process lemon juice, water, vinegar, oil and salt until smooth. (You may also whisk dressing ingredients in a bowl.) Pour into a small bowl and stir in capers.
3. Arrange beef slices in a single layer over six plates. Toss arugula with half the dressing. Mound the arugula on top of beef. Top with Parmesan curls and black pepper. Serve remaining dressing separately.

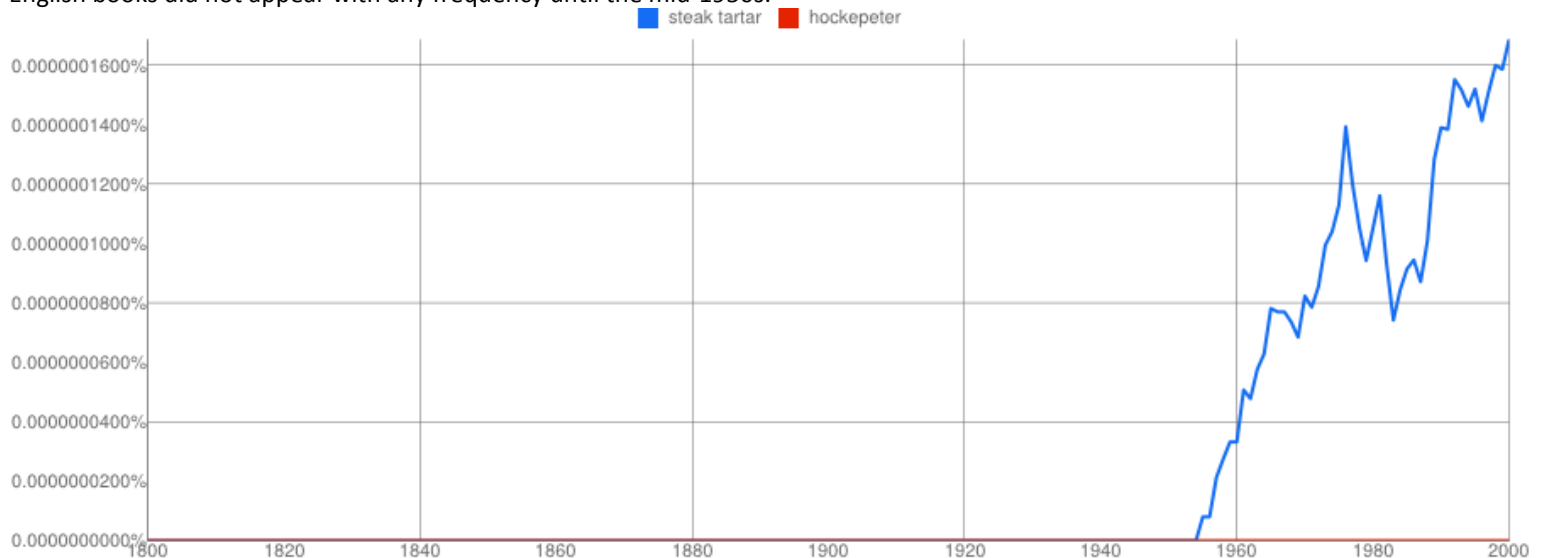
Ethiopian Steak Tartare (Kitfo)

Serves 8

In a hot 9-inch skillet melt 2 ounces of butter, adding ¼ teaspoon of cayenne pepper, ¼ teaspoon of chili pepper and 1 teaspoon of salt. Mix thoroughly. Add 1 ½ pounds of lean ground steak and mix. Serve immediately; do not cook.

Google's Ngram - Tracking the Appearance of "Steak Tartar" in Books (01-01-2011)

Google has a new book search service, Ngram, that searches its entire data base of books for key words. This provides evidence of the frequency and dating of word usage. The results for "steak tartar" appear in the following chart. Clearly the appearance of the phrase in English books did not appear with any frequency until the mid-1950s.



How Now Mad Cow?

The infamous UK epidemic of mad cow disease was and is of great concern to any beef loving gourmand. BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) was first observed in Great Britain in April, 1984, and was specifically diagnosed in 1986. BSE contaminated beef can lead to a disease in humans, called variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). BSE contamination has been linked to the now discontinued UK practice of using ground sheep in cattle feed; the sheep having been shown to be contaminated with spongiform encephalopathy. Both disorders are invariably fatal brain diseases with unusually long incubation periods measured in years, and are caused by the unconventional transmissible agent of ground animal brain and spinal cord remains utilized as cattle feed.

Since 1986, nearly 200,000 cases of BSE in cattle have been identified in the United Kingdom. Limited outbreaks were observed in other European countries. As a result literally millions of beef cattle were killed and cremated. The epidemic peaked in 1992-93 at almost 1,000 cases per week. Control measures have reduced incidence and currently BSE is considered under control.

Important to the consumption of steak tartare is the fact that muscle fiber and blood have not been shown to carry the infective agent. The disease is caused by a prionPrPsc protein carried in the brain of cattle. Therefore the primary method of transposition to humans seems to have been through factory processed meats that contained bits of beef brain and spinal cord matter. (See Section, "You Bet Your Life!" last paragraph.)

It is interesting to note that in the original BSE outbreak in the UK, at the time, there were some estimates that upwards of 500,000

people could ultimately die from vCJD. To date, through 2003, just 139 people in the UK have died of vCJD, and the death rate has actually declined to just a score or fewer deaths each year. The specter of vCJD is certainly to be taken seriously, but in fact the odds of dying from vCJD are along the lines of perishing in a commercial airliner.

In May of 2003 a single cow with BSE was found in Canada. In late 2003 another single cow was discovered in Washington State USA with BSE and it was traced back to the same herd in Canada. Again it is important to point out that BSE has never been linked to bovine muscle fiber. Hence if you buy your beef correctly you are at no great risk.

Considerable research has been done on the safety of steak tartare from E. coli contamination as the following abstract illustrates:

Abstract of Meeting Paper: [Society for Risk Analysis 2001 Annual Meeting](#)

A Risk Assessment of E. coli O157 in Steak Tartare in the Netherlands. *M. J. Nauta, E. G. Evers, K. Takumi, and A. H. Havelaar, RIVM Netherlands*

Steak tartare patties are a typical Dutch lean hamburger-like beef product, typically eaten partly raw. As a pilot study in quantitative microbiological risk assessment (QMRA) modeling using the Modular Process Risk Model (MPRM) methodology, a risk assessment of E. coli O157 in steak tartare in the Netherlands is performed. MPRM offers a general framework for QMRA, by identifying each processing step along the food pathway as one of six basic processes: growth, inactivation, mixing, partitioning, cross contamination and removal. The (Monte Carlo) model structure is defined before the data are collected, thus focusing on the process to be analyzed, not on the coincidental availability of data. After defining the model variables and parameters, data gaps are identified. An expert elicitation workshop is organized to estimate the values of parameters for which no data were found. Uncertainty could not be quantified, due to the nature and level of uncertainty in the food pathway, the models and the data. Therefore only variability is considered. The farm to fork exposure model is linked with a dose response model of E. coli O157, based on Japanese outbreak data, which resulted in a prediction of the incidence of E. coli O157 infections by steak tartare consumption. The result is compared with an independent estimate of the total incidence in the Netherlands based on epidemiological data. The incidence of cases due to steak tartare consumption as assessed in the baseline risk model is rather high, close to epidemiological estimate of the total incidence (attack rate of 82 cases per 10 6 person years due to steak tartare consumption vs. 126 (90 % CI (5 , 416)) per 10 6 person years for all cases in the Netherlands). Using scenario analysis important data gaps are identified, and intervention strategies at the level of farm, slaughter and the consumer are compared.

Nutrition Facts

There are certain advantages to eating beef raw, as all-important vitamin E and most enzymes are lost in the cooking process. A typical 1/4-pound serving of steak tartare breaks down nutritionally as follows:

Calories: 357

Cholesterol: 97mg

Fiber: 0%

Fat: 26mg

Sodium: 500mg

Carbohydrates: 2g

Protein: 27g

Percent of calories from fat: 66%

Percent of calories from carbohydrates: 2%

My father, Robert E. Wottrich (1922-2005), was taught how to make steak tartare by his father, Wilfred E. Wottrich (1896-1963), a banker in Manhattan. His father before him, Frederick Wilhelm Wottrich (1875-1925), was a Brooklyn policeman who lived at 279 East 161st Street. Dad remembers dining with his father at Lüchow's at least three times. It is nice to imagine that perhaps Wilfred and his dad Frederick also dined at Lüchow's and thus refined their version of steak tartare. You see, Wilfred is my grandfather who put me on the ship the Seven Seas in Manhattan in 1963 to cruise to Germany as an AFS exchange student, where I dined on steak tartare in my ancestral home.

Richard L. Wottrich

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Thank you for sharing this.

regards:

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[Ronald Ma](#)

Genghis Khan

I was fascinated by your knowledge about Genghis Khan whom I came to know was only about six months ago from the movie called Mongol shown in NZ Movie Festival. I heard about him as Man of the millennium. Could you write a knol about G. Khan please, because in Wiki it is very biased?

Last edited Jan 5, 2009 3:20 AM

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