Biltong

Having just put my latest load of biltong-to-be in the fridge (where it sits for the next 24 hours in a marinade) I thought I'd share a simple recipe for this delicacy. Given that various South African deli's in the US are charging $16 and up per pound for the stuff - I'm busy converting about $15 in total's worth of butcher-bought eye round, into approximately $45 - $60 dollars worth of reasonable biltong.

I'm terminally lazy, so here's the lazy method of making a totally superior-to-jerky snack (as well as an awesome way to preserve meat for long periods of time). Excuse my totally unscientific measurement methods. Given that biltong was/is being made by farmers without much in the way of hi-tech anything - you can't really go wrong with biltong, provided you do the 24 hour marinade. And each batch you come up with, you'll decide how to tweak ingredients and add your own bits and pieces - from chili to garlic..

here's my lazy method...

INGREDIENTS:

small pinch of baking soda
splash of white vinegar and/or malt vinegar if you have it.
splash of Worcester sauce
generous pinch of ground black pepper
tiny pinch of salt
healthy big pinch of crunched up whole coriander
chunk of eye round meat

Cut it with the grain, into inch-and-a-bit thick slices.

Put meat slices into a plastic container, along with the above ingredients, and layer the meat along with ingredients until every thing's covered.

(If you want it spicy, add chili at this point)

Swirl it around in a few hours, mix it up so that the meat gets the ingredients.

Let it sit for 24 hours. Make some 'S' shaped wires, and select a place to hang the stuff (you don't want any flies to have access to it)

After 24 hours:

Poke holes in one end of the meat, hang the meat up (put some newspaper down to catch the initial dripping). And make sure the bits are not touching each other as they hang.

Then leave it alone.

Again, you don't want any flies or insects (or animals) to have access to the area.

The meat will start to blacken (and thus start to become biltong) within about 2 -3 days. You'll notice it shrinking in size, this is why you made such large wedges to begin with. After about 5 days or so, you'll have fairly tasty (and totally safe) biltong to snack on.
The inside will be dark or slightly pinkish. (Some purists use salt peter to keep the pinkness, but I couldn't be bothered.
Once you've reached the 4-5 day mark, experiment and slice off some into thin strips and nibble. The longer it's left, the harder it'll become.
Get a sharp knife and start cutting it into thin slices.
For storage, plastic isn't good - apparently the stuff needs to 'breathe' somehow, so I usually slice it up and store it in brown paper bags in the fridge. It seems to keep for a long time - like weeks and months. It changes color over time, in the fridge, but I still eat it without any problems.

Afterthoughts:
Usually it takes me about 10-15 minutes to slice up meat, grab ingredients and mix it all up and stash it to marinade - so its not a major endevour to do.
I've heard about folks getting mold on their biltong, but have never had this problem myself. Apparently a wipe down with vinegar can kill the mold if it's caught early.
Depending on whether I've gone crazy and used too much coarse black pepper, I sometimes wipe the biltong down ahead of cutting, using vinegar - and then letting it dry again, before slicing it up.
Given the US palate - be advised that biltong isn't a 'sweet' taste at all - unlike jerky, which I've noticed sometimes, to be almost sugary (in my view). I'm sure one can tweak biltong to have a sweeter component - but it's a salty non-sweet taste to begin with..
Hope this is of use to folks who've either heard of biltong, or who enjoy jerky, and want to taste its superior cousin. Or alternatively, those of you who go hunt things, and want to store meat in a tasty edible way that folks have done in South Africa for hundreds of years…