

WILD GAME RECIPES

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Wild Game Recipes: From the Field to Your Plate!

Wild game. We all know it, and we all love it. What better way to bring everything full circle than taking your game meat home with you and cooking up a delicious meal? When it's properly prepared and cooked, wild game is some of the healthiest and most flavorful meat out there. Quite honestly, it's the most free-range meat you can get your hands on.

Of course, it ain't easy. From landing the kill, to processing the meat, to preparing everything and cooking it all, it's no walk in the park. Thankfully, it's a task with a huge reward. That's why we've compiled some of our favorite wild game recipes, plus a few great articles on proper preparation and tips to help turn your game meat into something that's both appealing and good to eat.

First up is Tracy Breen discussing the best methods for backcountry meat care. Then we have the man himself, Jim Shockey, sharing his appetizing Moose Tenderloin Italiano. Next, Tracy L. Schmidt delivers her mouthwatering High Octane Wild Hog recipe, perfect for some pulled pork sandwiches. After that we've got two duck recipes from Steve Weisman, a tasty Fried, Browned and Baked Duck and some simple Grilled Duck Hors d'Oeuvres with Jalapeño Poppers. Tracy L. Schmidt returns with a series of her three best turkey recipes, including a Quick and Easy Wild Turkey Parmesan, a Wild Turkey with Pineapple Lime Sauce and her Two-Day Turkey Leg Soup. Then we have two articles from Cara Hunt, where she supplies tips on how to turn squirrel meat into a truly delectable dish and shares her Cajun Squirrel Stew.

Tracy L. Schmidt makes another appearance, first where she discusses how to properly skin and cut up rabbit, and she follows with her enticing Spanish Rabbit and Garbanzo Bean Bake. We'll wrap things up with five articles on everyone's favorite, venison. First, there's Tracy L. Schmidt explaining her personal relationship with wild game, and then Steve Sorensen helps with the five most common mistakes one can make cooking venison. Jim Shockey returns with his Steak Brew and Saskatchewan Stew. We'll end things with a venison recipe from Tracy L. Schmidt, some Venison Chill 'n' Grill Kabobs.

Alright, enough talk. Let's get to the food!

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Backcountry Meat Care: Cool, Dry & Clean is the Key

By Tracy Breen



Steve Rinella eats only wild game. He knows a thing or two about how to get backcountry meat, and how to care for it.

It's not as easy as picking up a shrink-wrapped steak at the grocery store. The secret to quality wild meat is proper field care – an art that many hunters don't completely understand. People who truly understand backcountry meat care know that getting meat home can be an enormous amount of work. Coolers and freezers are miles away from the kill site, adding urgency to the job of getting meat out of the field. Accomplishing that feat and having the meat still edible when cooked is a bigger challenge than shooting a whitetail on the back 40, dragging it home and hanging it in the garage or dropping it off at the local meat processor. But have no fear – accomplish these three essential tasks and your meat will be a culinary delight.

1. Keep your meat cool – You've heard people complain that venison tastes gamey. That's not because venison has an off taste. It's usually the result of poor meat care. According to Eric Wahlberg from Walhogg Wilderness, makers of the [Meat Savr spray](#), the most important thing that people ignore is air temperature. "If the air is above 45 degrees or so when an animal is shot, bacteria will begin to grow," Wahlberg said. "Even if it is cold at night, if it gets warm during the day meat will begin to spoil. Most hunters know this but they ignore it and think their meat will be okay for a few days. That's not true. When temperatures are warm, meat starts spoiling. Even if it doesn't spoil completely, it will surely have an off taste at the dinner table."

This spray was designed to keep meat from spoiling. Spraying your meat with this helps keep bacteria from forming as quickly on the meat.



2. Keep your meat dry – Few people spend as much time in the backcountry as Steve Rinella, the host of the “Meat Eater” television show on the Sportsman Channel. “When caring for backcountry meat, keep three words in mind: cool, clean and dry. Maintaining these conditions in adverse circumstances can be challenging, but it’s usually possible if you’re adaptive and use your imagination,” said Rinella. “Keep the quarters in breathable game bags and hang them in a shaded area where they can get some breeze. You want to allow airflow between the quarters, so don’t stack them together. If you need to use tarps or plastic sheeting to protect them from rain or snow, put down a buffer of brush to keep the plastic from making contact from the meat. On float trips, the water is often much cooler than the air during the daytime. Think about resting the meat in the hull of a raft or canoe at night, where it’s cooled by the water beneath and shaded overhead by a tarp. Conditions will always vary, of course, but the right frame of mind will help keep you and your game meat in healthy shape.”

3. Keep your meat clean – It’s *your* meat, so *you* are responsible for its cleanliness. That means you protect it with game bags, which allow an outer skin to form that seals bacteria out and keeps flies from laying their eggs on it.

Chris Denham from Wilderness Athlete knows plenty about meat care. Denham is also part owner of “The Western Hunter” television series. As a result, Denham spends a lot of time in the backcountry. He believes one mistake many hunters make is not deboning their meat.



Breathable meat bags are a must when hunting off the beaten path.

“Packing out an elk quarter with the bone in can be very physically demanding and can make cooling the meat down more difficult. I always debone the meat and stuff it in a game bag. When I get back to camp, I will separate the large pieces of meat and put them individually into meat bags so they will cool extremely quickly.” What Denham is saying is that cool and clean go together – you can’t keep warm meat clean because bacteria thrives in warm meat.

Denham believes everyone needs to make a plan. Many hunters don’t think about meat care until they have a dead elk on the ground in front of them. “A question all backcountry hunters must ask themselves is, can they handle an 80-pound pack? If the answer is no, they better know the name of a good horse packer,” Denham advised.

A few years ago while hunting in the backcountry, my buddy and I knew the name of a good horse packer. After packing out one elk on our backs, we hired the packer to come pack out our second bull. With temperatures in the eighties during the day, the meat from the second bull would likely have spoiled if we didn’t have a satellite phone and the number of a local packer.

Meat care, whether you are a hundred yards behind your house or ten miles into the mountains, all boils down to being practical, patient and responsible. Keep the meat cool no matter what it takes, keep it dry and keep it clean. To do these three things, you must plan accordingly and bring the right gear with you. By planning, having good game bags, a tarp and good knives (nothing’s better than a [Havalon](#) for field work), you’ll end up with a freezer full of the best meat that money can’t buy.

Jim Shockey's Moose Tenderloin Italiano



*Upgrade your
next Italian
dinner with
this tasty dish!*

Ingredients:

- 2 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 pound pearl onions
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 pounds moose tenderloin, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 2 cups beef broth
- 16 ounce can whole tomatoes, cut up and drained
- 1/2 cup Burgundy wine
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 pound mushrooms, cut in half
- Spaghetti

In a saucepan, heat water and salt to boiling. Add onions. Return to boil, reduce heat and cover. Simmer until onions are tender. Drain and rinse under cold water, then set aside. Combine flour, salt and pepper in a large bag and shake to mix. Add moose slices and shake to coat. In a large skillet, melt butter in oil over medium heat. Add moose. Cook over medium-high heat to brown, but still rare. Remove slices with slotted spoon and set aside. Add remaining ingredients into skillet, except mushrooms, and mix well. Add mushrooms and onions. Heat to boiling, then reduce heat and cover. Simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in moose slices. Cook uncovered over medium-low heat until sauce thickens slightly. Discard bay leaves, and serve over spaghetti.

Wild Hog Recipe: High-Octane Wild Hog

By Tracy L. Schmidt



Whether you are at the family table or away hunting, there's nothing better to eat than a freshly prepared barbeque sandwich.

The morning after my husband, Dan, returned from a recent wild hog hunting trip, I woke up thinking about how to prepare our hog. Since I cook a lot of venison, I decided to adapt one my hits from that playbook.

After breakfast I asked Dan if he wanted any more of the coffee in the pot because I was going to dump it all over his treasured hog in my slow cooker. "Seriously?" he responded. I told him I was absolutely serious. I make venison roast with coffee, so why not wild hog? The most abundant acid in coffee – chlorogenic acid – is an antioxidant and helps tenderize the venison. It will do the same for pork.

Dan looked at me a bit funny but stood to the side and watched while I measured and poured the coffee over the meat in the slow cooker. This might be a little different, but I like to use what I have handy for a lot of my food, and coffee is pretty much a staple at every hunting camp. I decided not to overdo it with too many flavors in my pot, so I stuck to the basics and added some brown sugar to sweeten it a bit.

High-Octane Wild Hog

Brown sugar will complement the barbeque sauce I will be adding to the hog later to make sandwiches, as will the chili powder.

The end result is the recipe below. We love it and hope you will, too.

Ingredients:

- Wild hog portion
- 2 cups coffee
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 2 tablespoon brown sugar
- Dusting of chili powder to taste
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- Salt
- Pepper
- Barbeque sauce
- Buns



The wild hog is so tender it is easy to flake apart using two forks.

Salt and pepper, then place wild hog or boneless shoulder roast in slow cooker. Add 2 cups of coffee to the cooker, making sure to pour it over the hog. Dust the meat with chili powder, then coat with brown sugar, garlic and onion. Cook for 6-8 hours on low heat. Allow to sit for 10 minutes to let the meat absorb some of the juices once it is removed from the cooker. Shred with a pair of forks and mix in your favorite barbeque sauce. Serve over high-quality sandwich rolls.

Duck Recipes: Great Tasting Duck – Easy as 3 Simple Steps

By Steve Weisman



Decoys are set as the sun rises over a slough in northwest Iowa. In a few minutes, some good eating will arrive!

The waterfowling challenge few people solve is how to turn ducks into quality table fair. Bottom line? It's no different than any other type of food – it's all in the preparation. Fix it correctly, and it's a delight. Fix it incorrectly, and it's a disaster.

No question about my two favorite recipes – they fit into the “delight” category. And both are easily prepared in three simple steps.

Recipe #1 – Fried, Browned and Baked Duck

Step 1 – Slice ‘em

- Skin the duck, slicing the breast off the breast bone and keeping the legs. The legs are tender and the bone provides additional flavor.
- Next, slice the breasts into 1/4-inch thick strips so you can see to remove any steel shot and to make the meat tender when cooked.
- Place in water and chill in refrigerator overnight.

Step 2 – Fry ‘em

- Use olive oil and a spoonful of refrigerated bacon grease.
- Dredge the cut-up portions in flour, salt and pepper and fry at 350°F until brown on both sides.



Step 3 – Bake ‘em

- Place the meat in one pan and put a can or two (depending on the amount of duck) of cream of mushroom soup over the breasts and cook them again either in the skillet or the oven at 300°F for another hour (do not cover with a lid).
- The length of time is determined by how long it takes for the meat to get tender.
- Serve with whatever side dishes you want. My favorites are fresh squash, a cucumber salad and tomatoes.



The author's grandson and son hold a limit of ducks taken in Iowa last fall. Those retrievers know these are going to taste great!

Recipe #2 – Grilled Duck Hors d'Oeuvres with Jalapeño Poppers

Step 1 – Cube ‘em

- Marinate in Italian dressing overnight.
- When ready for the grill, drain off the dressing.
- Wrap a strip of bacon around the breast using a toothpick to hold the bacon.

Step 2 – Add some zing

- Clean seeds out of jalapeños.
- Fill peppers with cream cheese, mozzarella, browned sausage and crumbled blue cheese.

Step 3 – Grill ‘em

- Place duck cubes on the grill and cook until bacon is cooked, but be careful not to burn.
- Place jalapeño poppers on grill and cook until cheese melts and peppers lose their firmness.
- For good measure, throw in some freshly made salsa (fresh garden produce) and chips. Marinated duck breast, poppers and salsa – wow, what a mixture of tastes!



Wild Turkey Recipe: Quick & Easy Wild Turkey Parmesan

By Tracy L. Schmidt



Here's a look at the finished dish.

Some folks think that cooking wild game is complicated, but it doesn't need to be difficult at all. This recipe is great for a family-style dinner after a long day of work. It comes together so fast you might be able to catch all the members of your family at the same place at the same time. And, after they've eaten it once, they'll want to be there to eat it again. Even kids can help with the preparation of this dish. We like to serve ours with a tossed garden salad and garlic bread.

Sometimes I get the turkey and the breading mixture prepared the evening before so I can just come home and get started cooking. This meal works well with wild turkey because the meat does not become tough – a complaint I sometimes hear from people who eat wild turkey that's not properly prepared.

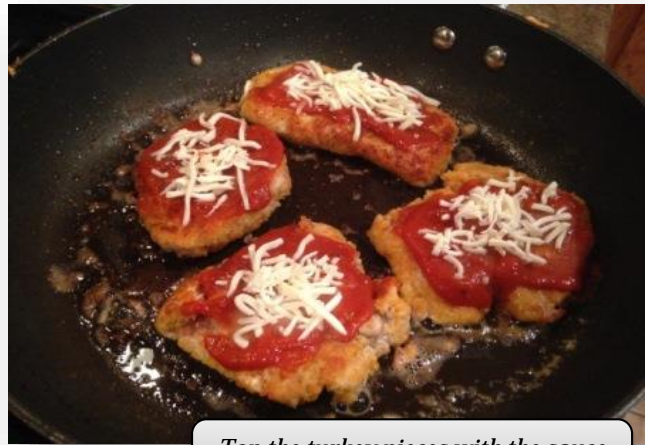
The other thing that turns people off is finding feather bits attached to their meat. The easiest way to deal with any remnants of undercoat feathers during preparation is to use a paper towel to remove them.

Quick & Easy Wild Turkey Parmesan

The key to executing this dish successfully is to make sure the bottom of your turkey pieces do not burn while they are cooking. Once you put the sauce on them you won't be able to flip them over, so make sure your pan heat does not run away from you. I lift my pieces during the cooking process to check for burning. To be safe, the meat needs to reach an internal temperature of 165°F.

Ingredients:

- 1 egg white
- 2 teaspoons milk
- Table salt
- Pepper
- 1/2 cup corn flake cereal crumbs
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese
- 4 portions of wild turkey, tenderized flat
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 (8-ounce) can pizza sauce
- 1/4 cup grated Italian cheese blend
- Quart-sized plastic zip bag



Top the turkey pieces with the sauce and a light sprinkling of cheese.

Combine egg and milk in bowl. Pat the turkey dry, then salt and pepper the portions. Place the Parmesan cheese and cereal crumbs in the plastic bag and shake to mix. Then dredge the turkey pieces in the egg mixture and put in the bag, zip it shut and shake to coat. Dredge and shake each piece twice.

In a large skillet, melt the butter and brown the turkey on both sides. Keep one side just lightly browned and put the pizza sauce on the darker browned side that will be the top. Add a few sprinkles of the cheese blend and cook for 3 to 5 minutes. You can cover the pan briefly during the last minute or so to help melt the cheese. Go lightly on the cheese so it melts quickly before the bottoms of the turkey pieces burn (if uncovered) or get soggy (if covered). An alternative method is to cook the turkey separately from the sauce, heat the sauce in the microwave and then add it to the top of the cutlets when they are cooked through. Then sprinkle the cheese on top of the heated sauce.

Wild Turkey Recipe: Wild Turkey with Pineapple Lime Sauce

By Tracy L. Schmidt



A finished plate of wild turkey with pineapple lime sauce.

My husband Dan taught me how to hunt wild turkeys. We've had many great adventures battling early season ticks, being caught out in swampy areas during driving rainstorms and dealing with henned-up toms that won't cross creeks or old barbwire fences. We've put in a lot of muddy miles and seen some really cool things in the spring woods.

Nothing is more riveting than listening to the thundering gobble of a wild turkey. Time passes so quickly, and it's amazing that you are actually interacting with an animal that way. You almost hold your breath when they go silent and you wait for them to come out of some corner and cross in front of you.

Turkeys are beautiful to watch strutting around out in the fields during spring. We like to drive around in the countryside just to watch them. It's amazing to see the toms spinning around all fanned out, trying to impress the ladies. And they taste amazing, too! Every turkey hunt can become a great story and end with the opportunity to share a delicious meal.

Wild Turkey with Pineapple Lime Sauce

The secret here is that the acid in the pineapple helps tenderize and moisten the wild turkey meat. The lime rind gives it a little zing that goes well with the thyme. To get more juice out of a lime, I pop it into the microwave for 15-20 seconds and roll it on the cutting board before I juice it. That way I can get enough juice for this recipe out of a single lime.

Ingredients:

- A half or whole wild turkey breast, depending on size
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 dash black pepper
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3/4 cup onions, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime zest
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 (20-ounce) can crushed pineapple in juice

Cut the turkey breast into portions. Rub the pieces with lime juice, then salt and pepper. Heat oil in skillet, brown the turkey and transfer it to a plate. Add the onion and garlic to the skillet until soft but not browned. Return the turkey to the skillet along with any juices and simmer, covered, over low heat for 20 minutes. Stir occasionally. Add the lime zest, pineapple with juice and thyme to the skillet. Turn the turkey portions to coat them and cook uncovered for another 10 minutes, making sure the final temperature reaches 165°F. Serve on a platter and top it with some extra pineapple lime sauce.



The acidity in the pineapple helps tenderize and moisten the turkey meat.

Wild Turkey Recipe: Tracy's Two-Day Turkey Leg Soup

By Tracy L. Schmidt

I can still remember the first time my husband handed me a pair of turkey legs. Those drumsticks were huge – big enough for a meal in themselves. I don't think I said it out loud, but I certainly thought, "What in the world am I supposed to do with these?" It was a stressful moment, trying to figure out whether to debone them and marinate the meat for sandwiches or prep them for the soup pot. I decided I needed more time to figure things out, so I roasted them in my slow cooker.



*The turkey leg soup goes
great with a grilled
cheese sandwich.*

When you successfully hunt an animal you don't want anything to go to waste. Out of respect for the animal's sacrifice, I want to utilize every part possible. But not everything is instantly palatable.

Think about this – wild turkeys make their living with their legs. They almost always opt to run rather than fly, and when they fly those muscular legs launch them with power. That's one reason why, when compared to domestic fowl, wild turkey leg meat is much more firm. So, whether serving it in a soup or in a sandwich, make sure you cut it up into smaller bite-sized pieces that people can easily chew.

Prepared properly, turkey legs make excellent table fare. It cannot be rushed in the kitchen, however. That's why I like to turn our turkey legs into soup. The slow cooking process of making soup helps break down the muscle groups and bring out the turkey's unique flavor and texture. I like to use a two-step process that allows the meat to cook slowly so it becomes its most tender before it becomes part of a great pot of soup. Spread the process out over a couple of days and it's easy to make.

Tracy's Two-Day Turkey Leg Soup

Ingredients:

- 2 legs wild turkey, cleaned
- Salt
- Pepper
- Paprika
- 1 1/2 teaspoons thyme
- 32 ounce box of chicken broth
- 2 carrots, sliced thinly or 3/4 cup snapped green beans
- 1/2 cup frozen corn kernels
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup onion, chopped
- Extra-wide egg noodles

Day One:

Season turkey legs with salt, pepper, paprika and one teaspoon of thyme, then place in the slow cooker. Add 12 ounces of chicken broth to cooker and cook for 4 hours on low heat or until they are cooked through and the meat is tender and loose on the bones. Because we are dealing with wild game, the size of the legs will vary, so the cooking time will vary as well. I allow the meat to cool, cut it into bite-sized pieces, then store it in the fridge for the next day when I make the soup. If you want, you can go right to Day Two.



Make sure to cut the cooked turkey meat down to bite-sized pieces so it's easy to chew.

Day Two:

Place the remaining broth plus 2 cups of water in a large stockpot. Add the carrots or beans, onion and garlic and bring to a boil. Add the cooked turkey, 1/2 teaspoon thyme and corn to the pot, cover loosely and simmer for 10 minutes. Then add 1/3 bag of egg noodles and cook uncovered to manufacturer's recommendations for "al dente" (firmness of the noodles to the bite). Check to make sure the carrots are done. Before serving, taste to see if you need any additional seasoning.

Is Squirrel Meat Good to Eat?

By Cara Hunt



Don't waste a good catch! Next time, try these tips for a delectable squirrel dinner.

Heading out into the woods to do a little squirrel hunting can be a fun and exciting experience, especially when you bag a bunch of bushy tails. But once you've got your catch, cleaned it up, stowed it in a cooler and taken it on the long ride home, what do you do with it? If you don't know how to cook squirrel meat or what to expect when you bite into it for the first time, chances are your catch is going to remain in the bottom of the deep freezer for a decade or two until you throw the freezer burned bodies into the trash, at long last.

Never fear squirrel hunting newbies! There are plenty of ways to make squirrel meat taste excellent and give you additional reasons to head out into the woods for a round of squirrel hunting many times throughout the season.

Creating a great tasting squirrel meat dinner begins with the cleaning and storage process. A complete cleaning with full removal of the entrails should be completed in the field.

Be careful not to squeeze too hard on any of them, especially the bile duct. Letting bile loose into the squirrel meat will not only ruin the taste, but will also make it inedible and possibly unsafe, even after cooking. Once you have cleaned your bushy tails, the next step is to completely rinse them with cool water.

A white vinegar rinse or soaking the squirrel meat in cool white vinegar will help reduce the gaminess of the meat, which can be especially important depending on what the squirrels in your area eat. This is also incredibly important if you're unable to cook your kill right away. If soaking your bushy tails in vinegar isn't your idea of creating a flavorful meal, you can also soak your meat in buttermilk overnight. Whether you choose vinegar or buttermilk, you can still cook your squirrel meat however you want, whether that's in a frying pan, baked in the oven or turned on a spit over the grill. For those hunters who like the gamey taste of a fresh kill, soaking in a light marinade overnight or for a few hours will still give your meat a nice flavor but won't take away that gamey, chewy quality that is natural to squirrel meat.

The general rule of thumb for squirrel meat is that it always tastes best if you cook it right away. While two or three days won't make a tremendous difference in the taste or quality in the meat, the fresher it is, the better it will taste.

When you're out hunting, you should also consider the age and size of the squirrel. The younger and smaller the squirrels are that you hunt, the tenderer and tastier the meat will be. Depending on whether you shoot young squirrels or old ones will change how you spice your meat and how you cook it, though seasoning salt and black pepper paired with an hour on the grill will make both young and old squirrels taste just right. If you elect to grill, your meat will be chewier than if you choose a different cooking method.

If you're hoping to shoot a mess of tender, juicy bushy tails, you're in for a tasty treat. Chef Georgia Pelligrini once shared why she loves the flavor of squirrel meat, saying, "After having feasted on a grove of pecans or acorns, their meat is nutty and sweet, buttery and tender."

Cajun Squirrel Stew

By Cara Hunt

Here's a spicy recipe to warm you up on a cold evening. Add as much Cajun spice as you prefer. You'll soon want to be back out in the woods harvesting more squirrels!

Ingredients:

- 4 squirrels, cut into serving pieces or chopped
- 4 quarts of vegetable stock or homemade squirrel stock
- Commercial Cajun spice mix with cayenne pepper
- 1 small bag of baby carrots
- 6 medium red potatoes, cut into small cubes
- 4 stalks of celery, chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 cups of water
- Salt
- Pepper



*Cajun squirrel stew
is a great finish to a
day of hunting.*

Mix water and stock together. Add salt, pepper and Cajun seasoning to taste. Pour stock liquid into a medium stock pot on the stove and turn on medium-high. Bring to a soft boil. Cube your potatoes. If you like potato skins, scrub the potatoes clean and leave the skins on when you cube them, or peel the potatoes and add the skins to the recipe separately. Alternatively, peel the potatoes and discard the skins before cubing. Scrub your celery stalks, making sure to remove all dirt, debris and leaves. Chop or slice the four stalks of celery into small or large slices, depending on your preference.

Add the celery, potatoes and baby carrots to the stock and let boil for 20 minutes. Cut up the cooked meat of four squirrels into quarters or smaller pieces as desired. Be sure to carefully remove all bones and tendons from the meat. After 20 minutes, place the cut up squirrel meat into the stock pot. Reduce heat to medium, cover the stock pot and allow to slow boil for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, depending on the age and freshness of your meat. The younger and fresher the squirrel, the quicker it will cook. Continue cooking for 30 minutes. Add bay leaf. Once finished, remove bay leaf. Serve warm with rolls.

Alternative:

Replace the potatoes in this recipe with your favorite chopped apples. Enjoy!

How to Skin and Cut Up a Rabbit

By Tracy L. Schmidt

My family and I are certified venison fanatics, but truth be told we are equal-opportunity wild game meat eaters. We live ready, meaning we'll gladly freeze, can, pickle and dry just about any critter we can get our hands on. It's fun, clean living, and we wouldn't have it any other way. Deer might be our preoccupation, but small game like rabbits and squirrels are celebrated as winter treats. I will admit it took me a while to acquire the taste and learn how to cook these critters.

When prepared properly, rabbit meat is not only tasty – it's a nutritional gold mine. In fact, rabbit meat is one of the healthiest wild game proteins you can find. It is extremely low in fat, and high in protein, vitamin B-12 and selenium. One 3-ounce serving of rabbit meat contains 25 grams of protein, more than 100 percent of the daily recommended allowance of vitamin B-12 and nearly 50 percent of our daily selenium requirement. (Selenium is a natural antioxidant that helps prevent hardening of the arteries.)



*For best
taste, trim
away all fat.*

Rabbits are among the easiest animals to process. Field dressing is best done while the animal is still warm; this makes taking the hide off as simple as removing a sweater.

The best knife for field dressing small game is one that's [sharp](#). When cutting up your rabbit, you should also have either a [bone blade](#) or shears.

Hang the rabbit up by its back legs and trim the hide away from the leg bone. Make a Y-shaped incision toward the pelvis, and repeat the same cut on the opposite side of the legs. Pull the hide as you go. Once you start, you'll get the idea. It comes off very easily.

Eviscerate the rabbit while it's still hanging. Remove all innards, vital organs, blood, body fat and stomach skin. The more time you take here, the less time you'll have to spend trimming the meat on your butcher block. Next, use a bone blade to remove the head and feet. You can then split the pelvis and remove the offal remnants.



Wash rabbit meat under cold water to remove all traces of blood and hair.

After field dressing, it's important to thoroughly wash the rabbit meat with clean, cold water. Make sure to clean your sink and prep area too. Sanitize these areas, as well as your cutting boards and other equipment, with a diluted bleach solution containing 1 teaspoon of bleach to 1 quart of water. This will prevent harmful bacteria from entering your cooking area and avoid cross-contamination.



Should I Soak Rabbit Meat in Brine?

After washing the meat, pat it dry with paper towels or soak the rabbit for 30 minutes in salt brine. We prefer to soak all of our rabbits, squirrels and ruffed grouse in salt brine overnight. It is believed the gamey taste in some wild animals has to do with the fact that they build up urea in their bloodstream when they don't drink much water. This is especially true for rabbits and squirrels – they acquire most of their bodily fluids from the foods they eat. Soaking the meat in saltwater helps with the appearance of bloodshot meat.

We use 3 tablespoons of salt per gallon of water. In the winter, we place the brine bucket on our covered front porch. During warm weather we place the bucket in the refrigerator and cover it with plastic wrap. Since moisture causes bacterial growth, we pat our meat dry before putting it in the refrigerator.

Spanish Rabbit and Garbanzo Bean Bake

By Tracy L. Schmidt

Ingredients:

- 16 ounce can of Garbanzo Beans
- 6 cups water
- 1 rabbit, cut into serving pieces
- Salt
- Pepper
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup chopped yellow onions
- 1 teaspoon chopped garlic
- 1 small bay leaf
- 3 chorizos sausages, cooked and sliced into 1/4" rounds
- 1 cup uncooked long-grain rice
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten



Rabbit served like this will be the centerpiece of the meal, and you won't have leftovers.

Place the Garbanzo beans and water into a small Dutch oven. Bring to a boil and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, salt and pepper the rabbit and place the pieces in a 10-to 12-inch skillet and brown them. I like to use a cast iron to get a great color. When the beans have simmered for 30 minutes, add the rabbit, onions, garlic and bay leaf. Cover and simmer for 60 minutes. Add the sausages and rice to the rabbit. If you want to remove the rabbit meat from the bones, now is the time to do so. Place back into the pan and simmer with the cover on for an additional 30 minutes or until most of the liquid has cooked off and the rabbit is tender.



A cast iron skillet does a great job of browning your rabbit meat.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Take the beaten eggs and pour them over the top of the casserole without stirring. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes until the eggs are firm and lightly browned.

Venison: Getting Personal with Your Wild Game

By Tracy L. Schmidt



Tracy Schmidt doesn't just cook wild game. She participates in everything, from the field to the table.

It doesn't get any more personal than sitting down to a dinner you put on the table and eating an animal you hunted. It's far more satisfying to feed your friends and family meat you didn't find at the grocery store on a pretty pink plastic tray. How good does that feel?

Nothing honors an animal more than acknowledging its sacrifice by getting real about how it ended up on your plate. It didn't drop from the sky perfectly trimmed, weighed and covered in plastic. It's beyond me why people find meat more palatable when it comes in such a nondescript form from the grocery store.

Unlike grocery store meat, the animals I'm going to eat have real meaning. The venison we put on our table means so much more and is never wasted. It comes with a story, not just a sticker. A conversation that shares a value not in cents, but in the common sense we're responsible for instilling in our kids. What's the true cost of food? That's some great dinner table conversation! So why don't we talk about it more often?

No brightly lit arches or plastic toy gimmicks are involved – nothing that gets tossed to the side – only appreciation and respect for the reasons we are able to eat. Yes, that's old school, but it is a lesson that's worth remembering. We've shared our philosophy with our girls since they were little. It's normal for them to understand the food chain – very few kids do.

It takes hard work and effort to successfully hunt a deer, and a lot of hard work to process it for the table. Serving the folks who hold the forks and knives, and knowing they understand and appreciate their meal, is what fills up your heart as a hunter. Being able to tell the tale of the great gift we have received not only fills our stomachs, but also our souls.

Somehow certain people seem to feel chicken from the store is more humane to eat than the meat from a hunter. How exactly is that, I wonder? No cage, no antibiotics no nameless person did a deed that we pretend never happened because we live in a world lined with rose-colored foam. I prefer to see the world straight up without the glare. I'm a hunter, and I appreciate the sacrifice of the animals I consume. I eat wild venison, and I eat it with pride.



Even the Schmidt children know where their meat comes from.

Cooking Venison: Don't Make These 5 Mistakes

By Steve Sorensen



A super sharp Havalon skinning knife is perfect for slicing your grilled backstraps as thin as you want.

People have different opinions about venison. They toss around words like “gamey” and “dry” without ever defining what gamey is or considering what to do to prevent dry meat. Some people even have rigid attitudes without ever tasting venison. Or they tasted it once, poorly prepared, and think you have to “make it edible.” They forget venison was plenty edible for generations of Native Americans who ate well for thousands of years with venison as the foundation of their diet.

I don't call venison “gamey.” In fact, I don't even know what “gamey” is. Yes, it is game, but I don't hear anyone describe squirrel, rabbit, turkey or pheasant as gamey. The fact is, they're all different, just as venison is different from beef. And right there is the big clue as to why people make plenty of mistakes cooking deer meat. Just because venison is red meat doesn't mean it should be cooked the way you cook beef.

Mistake #1 – Allowing Venison to Dry Out

The best beef is well-marbled with succulent, juicy fat. Fat in meat does two critical jobs. First, it keeps the meat from drying out. Second, it keeps the meat flavorful. Health experts argue that juicy beef isn't good for your cholesterol, but juicy beef doesn't argue with your taste buds!



The backstrap is one of the best cuts of venison. Here it's being prepared on the grill after being marinated.

Remember that the nature of the moisture in beef and venison is totally different. When you grill beef outdoors, you get flare-ups. That's because the melting fat fuels the fire. Beef can afford to lose some of its moisture into the fire; venison can't. In fact, the moisture in venison goes the other way – it rises with the heat and nothing can restore it.

What can you do to keep venison from drying out? A lot of things. One is marinade. Ask five fans of venison what they use for marinade, and you'll get at least four answers. Just in case the fifth person has his own idea, here are five simple and common marinades:

- Milk and egg batter or evaporated milk
- Italian salad dressing
- Mushroom soup
- Teriyaki sauce
- Red wine

Check the Internet for prepared marinades and marinade recipes. Five to six hours is usually enough time. Other ways to retain moisture in venison is to wrap it in bacon, cook it in gravy or lay some strips of beef fat on it.

Mistake #2 – Failing to Trim Fat Away

Let's chew the fat about fat on another point. Beef fat tastes great; venison fat tastes terrible. It's tallowy. It coats the inside of your mouth. It's better used in the candles on your dinner table than on your dinner plate. Truth be told, fat might be the reason people think venison is "gamey." Here's a simple solution – trim away all the fat.

Mistake #3 – Slicing Too Thin Before Cooking



A delicious plate of grilled venison backstrap with fried squash, ripe tomatoes and mini potatoes with sour cream.

Another mistake people make is to slice venison too thin. If you're going to slice it thin, it's better to slice it after it's cooked, or cook it submerged in a sauce. Venison cooks very quickly, so if it's sliced thin prior to cooking, it won't take much heat to dry it out. An inch isn't too thick. After you cook it, your [Havalon skinning knife](#) will slice it as thin as you want.

Mistake #4 – Forgetting the Meat Thermometer

Meat thermometers are in vogue these days, and you should use one for venison just as you would for pork. New guidelines say 145°F is adequate for pork, and the same works for venison. When you use a meat thermometer, insert it so the tip is in the thickest part of the meat, and don't let it touch a bone. A meat thermometer gives you confidence that your meat is cooked through even if it's still pink inside. Don't cook until the pink is gone, because then the moisture is gone too.

Mistake #5 – Adding Salt

Salt has its place. If you're preserving meat, salt is absolutely necessary (think jerky!). But if you're cooking meat, salt will further dry it. Let your dinner guests decide whether to add salt or not. Keep in mind if you've used a marinade, it may have salt in it already.

Most of these mistakes have something to do with drying the meat out. Avoid drying venison, and find a way to supplement its moisture. Do that, and you'll put a culinary delight on your dinner plates.

Jim Shockey's Steak Brew



Try this delicious twist using your favorite wild game meat.

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 pounds venison steak, cut 1-inch thick
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 onions, sliced thin
- 2 cups of beer
- 1/4 teaspoon dried marjoram leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- 1 bay leaf

Heat oven to 325°F. Mix flour, salt and pepper on a sheet of waxed paper. Coat steaks in mixture. Melt butter in oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add steak to brown. Transfer meat and drippings to a casserole dish, and set aside. In a large skillet, melt remaining 1/4 cup butter over medium-low heat, adding onions and stirring to coat with butter. Cover and cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Pour onions over steak in casserole. Add remaining ingredients and cover. Bake for about 2 hours until meat is tender. Discard bay leaf before serving.

**Shockey's love this recipe with bear meat, but remember to cook bear meat thoroughly till it reaches an internal temperature of at least 160°.*

Jim Shockey's Saskatchewan Stew



Cook up a hearty stew next time you get your hands on some venison.

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 cup beer
- 2 envelopes onion gravy mix
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon ground thyme
- 3 pounds venison stew meat
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 bay leaf
- 7 carrots, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 7 medium parsnips, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup frozen peas

Blend water, beer, gravy mix, brown sugar and thyme in a bowl. Set aside. Cut stew meat into 1-inch pieces, making sure to remove as much fat and silverskin as possible. In a Dutch oven, brown meat in oil over medium-high heat. Add beer mixture and bay leaf. Reduce heat, cover and simmer until meat is almost tender, about 1 hour. Add carrots and parsnips and cover. Cook for 20 minutes. Add peas, and cover. Cook for 10 minutes. Discard bay leaf and serve.

Chill 'n' Grill Kabobs

By Tracy L. Schmidt

Ingredients:

- 1 pound cubed venison steak
- 24 cherry tomatoes
- 2 large sweet bell peppers, chunked
- 2 small zucchini, sliced
- 1 large onion, chunked

Marinade:

- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup teriyaki sauce
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic

Place marinade ingredients in a medium bowl. Reserve 1/4 cup of marinade for basting. Add marinade to cubed meat in a bowl and refrigerate overnight or for at least 30 minutes. Alternate meat and vegetables on the skewers and grill until done.



*Does this look delicious?
You bet, and it's
supremely healthy too.*

About the Authors:



Jim Shockey:

Jim Shockey is one of the world's best known and most highly respected names in hunting. He is the host of "Jim Shockey's Hunting Adventures" and "Uncharted." Both award-winning TV shows are sponsored by Havalon Knives. He is also one of the world's top guides and has a passion for conservation and is an avid collector of tribal art and cultural artifacts from around the world.



Tracy L. Schmidt:

Tracy L. Schmidt is a certified master food preservation specialist and the author of the book "Venison Wisdom." She is married to Daniel Schmidt, editor-in-chief of *Deer & Deer Hunting Magazine* and host of "Deer & Deer Hunting TV" on NBC Sports. Tracy enjoys the versatility afforded by Havalon Knives in both the kitchen and the field.



Steve Wiseman:

A retired teacher, Steve Weisman is a member of OWAA and AGLOW, and has been a freelance outdoor writer for 19 years. He writes for several publications throughout the Midwest. He enjoys sharing news about the outdoors through his own experiences and the information gained from DNR wildlife and fisheries biologists and outdoor experts. Contact Steve at stweis@mchsi.com.



Cara Hunt:

Cara Hunt is an avid hunter who enjoys the art of cooking wild game whenever she gets the chance. She appreciates the challenge of small game hunting, and prefers the likes of rabbit, pheasant, squirrel and duck. She is a regular contributor to the *Havalon Post*.

About the Authors, Continued:

Steve Sorensen:



Outdoor writer and speaker Steve Sorensen is the author of “[Growing Up With Guns](#)” and “[The Everyday Hunter Handbook Series](#).” He also writes an award-winning newspaper column called “The Everyday Hunter”[®] and edits content in the *Havalon Post*. He has also published articles in *Deer & Deer Hunting*, *Outdoor Life* and many other top magazines across the USA. Invite Steve to speak at your next sportsman’s event and follow him at www.EverydayHunter.com.



Tracy Breen:

Tracy Breen is a full-time outdoor writer and consultant in the outdoor industry. He works with a variety of outdoor brands and television shows including [Havalon Knives](#). Learn more at www.tracybreen.com.

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