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Using and Storing Wild Game

Michigan State University Extension Service

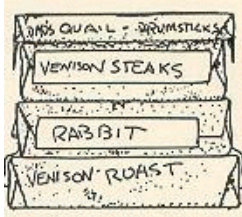
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WILD GAME

Wild game and fowl are good sources of protein and B vitamins. Fat content varies with the species and the animal's diet. Proper handling, correctly chosen cooking techniques and appropriate seasonings result in safe, tender and tasty game.

Types of Wild Game

A variety of wild game and fowl species are hunted in Michigan. Big game animals are deer, bear and elk. Small game includes rabbit, opossum, muskrat, squirrel, raccoon and woodchuck. Game birds include pheasant, partridge, grouse, quail, woodcock, turkey, duck and goose.

Handling Wild Game

Big and small game: Gut as soon as possible after the kill, removing intestines, lungs, liver and heart. Avoid breaking or cutting the intestines and stomach-fluids from these organs contain bacteria that could contaminate the meat. Also avoid breaking the gallbladder on the liver-fluids from the gallbladder can break down the meat and produce undesirable odors and flavors. Wipe the body cavity with a dry cloth, water or snow. If available, use a cloth that has been dipped in a solution of 1 cup water and 1 tablespoon vinegar. Remove shot and splintered bone. Raise the carcass off the ground-hang by the hind legs or place on logs or rocks. Hold in a cool, shaded area. Prop the cavity open with small sticks to speed cooling. Cool meat to 32 to 40 F as quickly as possible to prevent spoilage and bacterial growth.

Fowl: Handle in the same manner as big/small game. Feathers and skin may be removed together or feathers may be plucked without removing skin. When removing only feathers, pluck the bulk of feathers from the bird. Then remove small feathers with a paraffin treatment: combine two cakes of paraffin and 1 gallon of water in a large kettle. Place over medium heat and heat until paraffin melts. Dip the bird into the paraffin/water mixture, remove the bird from the mixture and allow the paraffin to harden. Then scrape off the wax and remaining feathers with a small knife. Avoid damaging skin or muscle.

Cut the carcass into portions for transporting.

Cleaned game can be cooked right away, refrigerated for one to two days, smoked, frozen or canned. Game may be stored for 60 days after the close of the season or 60 days after being imported from another state. To store game beyond the 60-day period, you must obtain a permit from a conservation officer (Department of Natural Resources). There is no fee for the permit.

Storing Wild Game

Divide meat and fowl into meal-sized quantities. Wrap meat and fowl in freezer paper or plastic freezer bags. Remove all air from packages before sealing. Label each package with the type of meat, the cut, the number of servings, the weight and the date. Maintain freezer temperatures at 0 F or colder. Store cuts of big and small game meat in a freezer for 6 to 12 months. Store ground meat in a freezer no more than three months. Keep fowl frozen no longer than six to nine months. Thaw wild game in the refrigerator.

WILD GAME RECIPES

Cooking Wild Game

Cooking tips: Game meat and fowl may be completely thawed before cooking or cooked from the frozen state. Increase cooking time to thoroughly cook frozen meat. Partially thawed fowl will retain more moisture during cooking than completely thawed fowl. Thaw wild game in the refrigerator. Trim away visible fat and remove skin before cooking. "Gamey" flavors are found in the fat.

To prevent lean cuts of meat from drying out during cooking, add other fats. Before cooking, rub meat with salt pork, butter, margarine, beef suet, bacon fat or vegetable fat. Use only enough fat to keep meat moist. Lean cuts may also be basted with broth. Skinned fowl may be wrapped with bacon.

Use marinades to tenderize meat and enhance or disguise wild game flavors. Marinades always contain an acid, various seasonings and sometimes an oil. Allow about one-half cup of marinade per pound of meat. A cooked marinade spreads flavors into wild game. Refrigerate any wild game in marinade if the soak period is longer than one hour. Marinating meat may be refrigerated for up to 12 hours.

Cooking Methods: Big game cuts are similar to beef cuts. For tender cuts, use dry heat cookery—roasting, grilling, broiling and panbroiling or frying. Use moist heat cookery—braising and stewing—for less tender cuts and for meat from older animals. Small game may replace chicken in most recipes. Wildfowl may be cooked like chicken. Because of the high fat content of wildfowl, prepare stuffing in a separate dish.

For additional information about using and storing wild game, contact the home economist in your county Cooperative Extension Service office.

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Cooked Marinade for Game

1/2 cups vegetable oil
1 cup chopped celery
1 cup chopped carrots
1 cup chopped onions
3 cups vinegar
2 cups water
1/2 cup coarsely chopped parsley
3 bay leaves
1 tablespoon thyme
1 tablespoon basil
1 tablespoon cloves
1 tablespoon allspice berries
a pinch of mace
1 tablespoon crushed peppercorns
6 cloves garlic, crushed

Saute celery, carrots and onions in oil until onions are golden brown. **Add** remaining ingredients. **Simmer** for one hour. **Strain and cool.**

Pheasant and Broccoli Casserole

2 cups cooked pheasant, sliced or cubed
1/2 cup water
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 10-ounce package frozen broccoli spears
1/4 cup pimento, chopped
1 can undiluted cream of mushroom soup
1 tablespoon onion, finely chopped
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon curry powder
2 drops Tabasco sauce
paprika

Add salt to water and bring to a boil. **Add** broccoli and cook 5 minutes. **Drain** and **arrange** in the bottom of a shallow, greased casserole. **Arrange** pheasant over broccoli. **Sprinkle** pimento over pheasant and broccoli. **Combine** soup and remaining ingredients except paprika and two tablespoons cheese. **Pour** sauce over pheasant mixture. **Sprinkle** with remaining cheese and paprika. **Bake** at 350 F for 20 minutes. Serves four.

