



WILD GAME: FROM FIELD TO TABLE

Since prehistoric days, we have been hunting wild game, both for food and for profit. Handling of game meat from field to table (killing, storing, and eating), can make a difference in flavor and taste. Undesirable flavors in the meat may be due to inadequate bleeding, carelessness in dressing, or failure to promptly cool the carcass.

Types of Game Meat

Kentucky forests and waters offer a wide variety of small and large game, fowl, reptiles, and amphibians.

Birds		Mammals		Amphibians and Reptiles
Dark	Light	Fatty	Lean	
Dove	Grouse	Opossum	Squirrel	Frog Legs
Duck	Quail	Raccoon	Beaver	Turtle
Goose	Turkey	Groundhog	Muskrat	Rattlesnake
Woodcock		Bear	Rabbit	
Wilson's Snipe		Hog	Deer	

Field Safety and Handling

Whether you enjoy hunting small rabbits or large deer, the procedures for dressing animals are basically the same.

1. Bleed the animal.
2. Remove the entrails and skin soon after the kill to ensure rapid heat loss and the best meat quality.
3. Clean the animal and keep it clean.
4. Cool quickly and thoroughly by hanging the carcass. Spoilage hastens if the carcass is left on the ground to cool. Refrigerate as soon possible.

Aging the meat will depend on factors such as the temperature at the time of harvest, the chilling rate, the animal's age, storage facilities for aging, and the intended use of the meat.

Aging is defined as holding cuts of meat at temperatures between 34 F and 37 F for 10 to 14 days. If you prefer to age your meat, do not remove the skin, as this may result in dehydration, excessive weight loss, and surface discoloration of the lean tissue.

Always observe Kentucky game laws, kill only what you can use, and kill quickly and humanely.

Cooking Wild Game

Wild game may have a different flavor and texture than domestic meat. But wild game can be delicious if properly prepared. Because game meat tends to be drier and less tender than domestic meat, it is better to use slow and moist-heat cooking methods. Since the meat has only a small amount of fat covering, it may require the addition of cream, butter, or cooking oil to maintain the juiciness of the meat. Trim any excess fat from the carcass to decrease the strong flavors present. Serve the meat either piping hot or well chilled, since the fat from large game animals such as deer, moose or elk is highly saturated and will produce unpleasant flavors.

Methods of Cooking Game

Meat	Braise	Fry	Roast	BBQ	Broil	Smoke	Stew	Bake
Deer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Dove	👍	✓					✓	✓
Duck			👍	✓			✓	
Frog Legs		👍				✓		
Goose			👍				✓	
Groundhog	✓		✓	👍			✓	✓
Opossum			👍		✓	✓		
Quail	👍	✓	✓		✓			
Rabbit	✓	✓	✓	👍		✓	✓	✓
Raccoon		✓	✓	👍		✓	✓	✓
Rattlesnake	✓							
Squirrel	👍			✓	✓		✓	
Turkey			👍	✓		✓		
Turtle	✓						✓	

👍 Denotes preferred method of cooking

Storing Game

Refrigerate game meat as soon as possible after the kill. Blood may be removed from meat by allowing the meat to soak in salted water overnight. Then rinse, dry well, and prepare or freeze for later use. To freeze meat, use an airtight, moisture-proof container or wrap in freezer-safe plastic wrap with an overlay of aluminum foil. Be sure to label the contents. Game meat can be safely stored in the same way as domestic meat.

Recipes for Wild Game

Impossible Meat Pie

1 pound rabbit meat, cooked, in pieces	2/3 cup biscuit mix
1/2 cup part-skim mozzarella cheese, shredded	2 eggs
1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste	1 cup skim milk
1 teaspoon oregano, dried	1/2 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon basil, dried	1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup cottage cheese, 1 %	

Combine meat, cheese, tomato paste, oregano, and basil in a small bowl. Combine biscuit mix, eggs, milk, pepper, and salt in a small bowl. Spread cottage cheese into a 9-inch deep-dish pie pan. Spread meat mixture over cottage cheese. Spread biscuit mix mixture over meat. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 350 F for 30 minutes or until brown and knife comes out clean. Let stand 5 minutes before slicing.

Nutritional Analysis (1/4 slice): 290 calories, 39g protein, 15g carbohydrate, 8g fat

Baked Barbecued Rabbit

2 3/4 pound rabbit, cooked, in pieces	2 tablespoons vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste	1 teaspoon prepared mustard
2 (8-ounce) cans tomato sauce	1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce	1/2 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon chili powder	1 onion, small, finely-chopped
1/2 teaspoon red pepper	

Combine all ingredients in 8" x 12" baking dish. Bake at 350 F for 1 1/2 hours or until tender.

Nutritional Analysis (4 ounces): 350 calories, 46g protein, 27g carbohydrate, 5g fat

Venison Chili

1 pound ground venison	2 large cans chili beans
1 onion, large, chopped	1 (8 ounce) can tomato sauce
1/2 green pepper, chopped	1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoon vegetable oil	1 bay leaf
1 (1 pound) can tomatoes	Chili powder to taste

Brown meat, onion, and pepper in vegetable oil. In dutch oven or very large saucepan, combine remaining ingredients. Simmer 1 hour on low heat, stirring frequently. Remove bay leaf before serving.

Nutritional Analysis (4 ounces): 520 calories, 49g protein, 47g carbohydrate, 13g fat

Venison Sloppy Joes

5 pound ground venison	10 tablespoons lemon juice
5 onions, medium, chopped finely	2 cans (8 ounce) tomato soup
5 green peppers, chopped	5 tablespoons worcestershire sauce
2 cups chopped celery	1 cup water
1 cup brown sugar	5 teaspoons mustard
10 tablespoons vinegar	

Mix together all ingredients. Cook in a skillet until onions and venison are done.

Nutritional Analysis(5 ounces): 480 calories, 64g protein, 37g carbohydrate, 8g fat

Deer Camp Breakfast Sausage

2 pounds ground venison	1 teaspoon dry mustard
1 teaspoon marjoram	1 egg
1 tablespoon sage	1/3 cup bread crumbs
1 pound ground pork	1/4 cup cooking oil
1 tablespoon basil	1 tablespoon of oil

Combine meats and seasonings, mixing together, then add egg and bread crumbs to mixture. Stir well, shape into patties, and fry in a skillet with oil until golden brown on each side.

Nutritional Analysis (3 ounces): 230 calories, 24g protein, 2g carbohydrate, 13g fat

Nutritional Information for 3 ounces of raw wild game				
Meat	Calories	Total Fat	Saturated Fat	Protein
Deer	103	2	1	20
Dove	123	2.0	-	20
Duck (breast w/o skin)	105	4.0	1	17
Frog Legs	62	.25	-	14
Goose (w/o skin)	137	6	2	19
Groundhog	188	9	1	26
Opossum	188	9	1	26
Quail (breast w/o skin)	104	3	1	19
Rabbit	97	2	1	19
Raccoon	180	10	3	21
Squirrel	102	3	-	18
Turkey (white meat)	135	6	2	18
Turtle	76	.5	-	17

References:

Conservation Officers Cooking T.I.P.'s (1993). Compiled by Conservation Officer Brenda Louthain.
Venison Recipe Collection (2003). Compiled by Becky Nash.

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Nutritional Analysis ESHA (2004), Food Processor.

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