

TIPS FOR PROCESSING BIG GAME

Bringing home an entire big game animal to process yourself might seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be. Here are some tips for cutting your own meat for the winter.

There are just as many reasons to process an animal yourself as there are excuses to take it to the butcher. To each their own. If you're a do-it-yourself kind of hunter, processing animals in your own garage or kitchen is part of the fun of hunting. If you're new to home processing, we suggest you watch some processing videos or bribe a veteran DIYer with some beverages to come over and show you the ropes. In the meantime, here are a few ground rules to get started.

The first step to home processing is to have an area dedicated to processing your game. A well-lit work area with a large, hard surface is ideal. You'll need access to a large sink, running water, and some bleach for cleanup.

If you have access to an exterior hose, it's a good idea to rinse your game of any debris or contaminants it may have picked up in transport or while skinning. You should take particular care in cleaning the wound channel from your kill shot. Large-caliber and even small shot will drive hair, bone fragments, and bacteria into the flesh of your game. Thoroughly inspect the wound for any contaminants and rinse

well. Always rinse your game from top to bottom under running water. That way, bacteria will wash down and off the meat. Never use a tub of water to rinse game. Standing water will only serve to increase the risk of cross-contamination. Once the flesh of your game is rinsed clean, you will want to pat it dry with clean disposable towels and place it under refrigeration until you are ready to process it

TEMPERATURE

Keeping your freshly harvested meat as cold as possible is crucial. If your game meat constantly stays around 40°F, you will significantly reduce the growth of harmful bacteria and slow the transfer of poor tasting fat into the flesh. Whenever possible, try to minimize the time any particular cut of meat is processed, and keep cuts of meat that are not being worked on stored in the refrigerator or in an ice chest.

Keeping any meat you plan to grind extremely cold, even partially frozen, is very important. If you run warm meat through a grinder, the mixing and cutting of the soft tissue will make for a very pasty, bright pink, and not-so-appetizing final

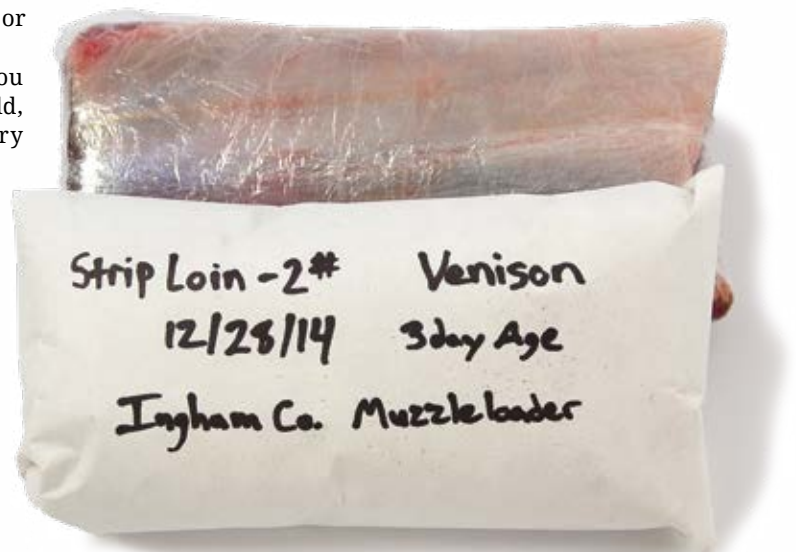
Always keep the flesh covered tightly with plastic film when processing.

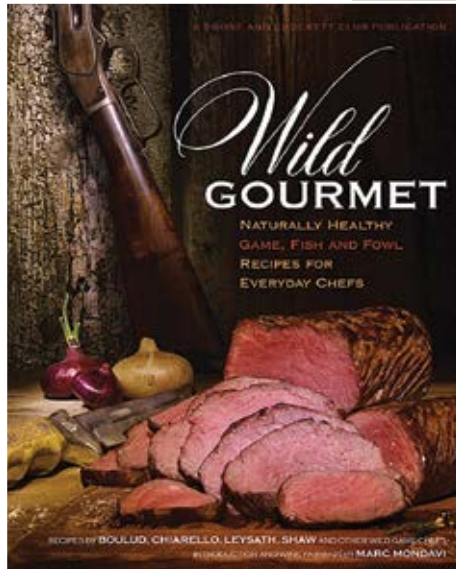
product. Meat is best ground when it is partially frozen. Commercial grinders often add dry ice to their meat to keep the temperature from rising from the heat of the machine and the friction of the grinding process.

EXPOSURE

Always keep the flesh covered tightly with plastic film when processing. Exposure to air is a surefire way to degrade the quality of your game meat. Air will draw moisture out of your game meat and can often dry out the exposed surfaces so much that they must be trimmed and discarded. Contact with air will also start the oxidation process, which heightens the unwanted metallic taste of wild meats, discolors the meat to an unappetizing reddish-brown shade, and can increase the development of rancidity in fat.

It is also essential to minimize exposure in the freezer. Using a high-quality vacuum-sealing machine is the most effective way to seal out air and freezer burn. However, plastic wrap and butcher's paper do better than a cheap vacuum sealer. Always wrap your finished cuts tightly in plastic wrap, then wrap them again in butcher's paper. The plastic wrap protects the meat from exposure to air and freezer burn, and the butcher's wrap protects the integrity of the plastic wrap. To further reduce the possibility of freezer burn ruining more delicate meats like fish and fowl, I will often add 2 to 3 cups of lightly salted water to a heavy freezer bag along with the meat. When you remove the air from the bag and seal it, the brine will form an even better barrier between the flesh and the freezer.





WILD GOURMET

Naturally Healthy Game, Fish and Fowl Recipes for Everyday Chefs

Looking for new ways to prepare the wild game you harvested this season? Do you want recipes that produce unique and delicious results? Do you need tips for processing your venison that will all but guarantee top-notch flavor?

In *Wild Gourmet*, America's most respected chefs share their favorite recipes covering a menagerie of wild meats and a world of flavors. This scrumptiously illustrated cookbook features over 60 easy, step-by-step recipes that will please the most discriminating eaters. Recipes are presented with accompanying photographs, as well as wine pairings suggested by third generation Napa wine maker Marc Mondavi.

Wild Gourmet is much more than just a cookbook—improve the flavor of your game with real-world processing tips. Chef Daniel Nelson provides a comprehensive processing guide—perfect for

both seasoned hunters and those new to hunting—along with detailed information on the best cooking techniques for various cuts of wild game. You'll learn to butcher your own harvest with step-by-step, illustrated instructions covering: rabbit, duck, squirrel, turkey, elk, and salmon.

- Over 300 color photographs
- 8 x 10 inches
- 272 pages

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CONNECTIVE TISSUE AND SINEW

Connective tissue and sinew can easily be removed from each muscle before freezing or thawing. There simply isn't enough fat or moisture in wild game to overcome the dry, rubbery texture of any sinew or connective tissue. Try to remove as much of this silvery skin as possible before cooking your game.

Using a sharp boning or filet knife, slide the knife just under the white strings of sinew. Angle the blade of the knife slightly upward and push the blade forward. The sinew will cleanly separate from the muscle.

MUSCLE GRAIN

Muscles are comprised of long fibrous grains that run in the direction the muscle pulls or pushes. These fibers are very similar to those

found in a tree. Imagine a 2x4. Its strength comes from the long fibers of wood grain that run the length of the board. If we cut a quarter-inch strip lengthwise (with the grain), it will not break in half easily, but if we cut a quarter inch off the end of the board (against the grain), it will break with ease. The same is true for muscle fibers and grain of meat. When carving roasts, you want to find the grain of the muscle and slice across it. The smaller the length of grain in your slice of meat, the more tender it will feel in the mouth. The same perfectly cooked piece of meat can be rendered unimaginably tough by cutting it with the grain



BONUS MEAT POSTER!
Learn the unique characteristics and best uses of each cut of venison with this 24x36-inch color poster, included with every copy of *Wild Gourmet*!

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because your teeth and jaw muscles will have to do the work the carving knife should have done.

I use this same concept when cutting raw meat for quick-cooking methods. Using slightly frozen, uniform-grained, whole-muscle sections, you can thinly slice raw game meat across the grain to produce very tender petite filets perfect for hot-searing recipes like stir fry. I even cut the meat for grilling and kabobs similarly thin; two or three of these delicate slices are much easier to chew than one three-quarter-inch cube.

FAT

Fat is extremely useful in the

kitchen and should never be discarded. I am always amazed by the number of duck hunters who remove the breasts and discard the rest of their hard-won harvest. Not only is there a tremendous abundance of delicious meat being wasted, it is also a great deal of the best cooking fat you can find. Fat can be rendered very easily and can be stored in the freezer for up to six months. Small amounts can be broken off the frozen block of rendered fat for use in recipes.

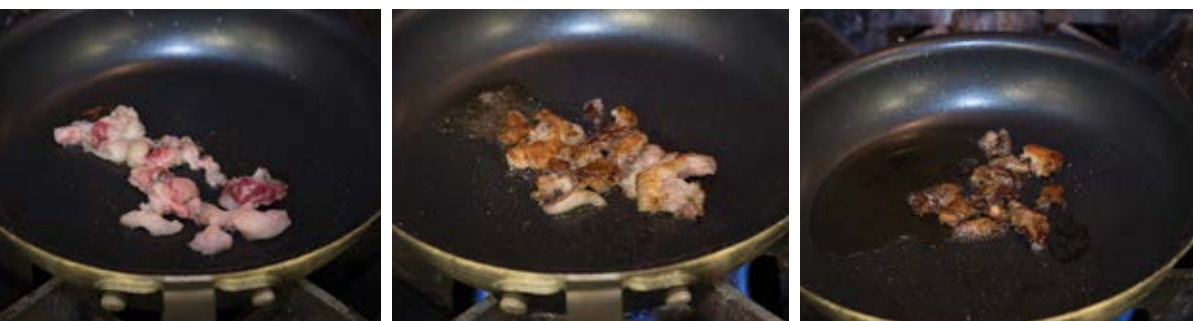
To render fat, collect all fat from the carcass, especially that near the backbone and ribs of the animal. It is okay if the fat has small amounts of meat still

attached. Place the fat in a large sauté pan and add just enough water to cover the bottom of the fat. This will protect the fat from sticking and burning to the bottom. Over medium-low heat, warm the fat and liquefy its delicious contents. Be careful not to use too much heat, which will scald and potentially burn the fat. The large pieces of fat will shrink as they liquefy. Stop once the pieces have turned crisp and golden brown. To finish, filter the hot fat through a cheesecloth.



Filter the hot fat through a cheesecloth and store in an airtight container and freeze until needed.

Steps for rendering fat.



NUTRITION CONTENT OF WILD GAME AND FISH SPECIES THAT HAVE KNOWN NUTRITIONAL DATA IN THE USDA DATABASE.

Nutrition Information Per 3 oz. portion	Energy (kcal)	Protein (g)	Fat (g)	Total saturated fat (g)	Total Mono-unsaturated fat (g)	Total Poly-unsaturated fat (g)	Cholesterol (mg)	Calcium (mg)	Iron (mg)	Magnesium (mg)
Antelope	97	19	1.7	0.63	0.48	0.37	81	3	2.71	23
Black bear	132	17.8	7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6.1	NA
Boar, wild	104	18.3	2.8	0.84	1.11	0.41	NA	10	NA	NA
Caribou	108	19.2	2.8	1.1	0.86	0.4	71	14	4	22
Deer*	120	23	2.4	0.95	0.67	0.47	85	5	3.4	23
Elk	94	19.5	1.2	0.45	0.31	0.25	47	3	2.35	20
Moose	87	18.9	0.6	0.19	0.13	0.2	50	4	2.73	20
Nutrition Information Per 3 oz. portion	Potassium (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Zinc (mg)	Selenium (mcg)	Vitamin C (mg)	Thiamin (mg)	Riboflavin (mg)	Niacin (mg)	Vitamin A (IU)	Total Folate (mcg)
Antelope	300	43	1.09	NA	0	0.27	0.49	NA	0	NA
Black bear	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.13	0.58	2.7	221	NA
Boar, wild	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	0.33	0.09	3.4	0	NA
Caribou	251	48	3.4	NA	0	0.27	0.61	4.7	0	3
Deer*	318	51	2.1	9.7	0	0.22	0.48	6.37	0	3
Elk	265	49	2.04	NA	0	NA	NA	NA	0	NA
Moose	270	55	2.38	NA	3.4	0.05	0.23	4.25	0	NA

Nutrients based on raw meat except where indicated with * Source: USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, updated March 2014, compiled by Moira Tidball, Cornell Cooperative Extension

VENISON PASTY

DANIEL NELSON

MAKES
10

DOUGH

- 3 Cups flour
- 1½ Teaspoon salt
- ¾ Teaspoon baking powder
- 1 Cup shortening
- 2 Tablespoons venison fat
- 1 Cup water
- 1 Teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 Cup ice

FILLING

- 1½ pounds venison roast
- 1 Rutabaga
- 1 Parsnip
- 1 Turnip
- ¼ Cup celery root
- 2 Cups sweet potato or winter squash
- 1 Medium yellow onion
- 4 Cloves garlic
- 2 Teaspoons each of fresh chopped rosemary, sage, oregano, and thyme
- Salt and pepper blend
- 1 Cup rendered goose or duck fat
- 2 Tablespoons butter
- 3 Tablespoons flour
- 2 Cups venison stock or beef stock
- ½ Cup Madeira wine, a dry port or sherry can also be substituted

Note: Do not substitute potatoes for rutabaga.

DOUGH

1. Sift flour, salt, and baking powder together.
2. Crumble in the shortening and venison fat, mix by hand until loosely combined. Do not over mix.
3. Mix ice and water together and stir to thoroughly chill water, measure out ¾ cup water and combine, by hand, with the dough mix. Do not over mix. Set dough in cooler for a minimum of 2 hours or up to 24 hours.
4. Place cold dough ball on well floured counter and roll out to ¼-inch thickness, cut out 5-inch diameter circles. Keep dough circles in cooler until ready to fill.

VENISON PASTY STOCK

1. Trim the venison roast of all fat and sinew (reserve) and dice into ¼-inch cubes, sprinkle with salt and blended pepper.
2. Peel and dice rutabaga, parsnip, celery root, and winter squash into ¼-inch cubes, reserve all peelings. Do not save the rutabaga peelings if your rutabaga has been commercially waxed.
3. Dice half of the yellow onion and add to the venison trimmings and vegetable peelings, as well as 2 cloves garlic.
4. Warm ½ cup of goose fat in a medium stock pan and add the trimming and peeling mixture and sauté for 5 minutes or until onions become translucent.
5. Turn off flame and deglaze the pan with ¼ cup Madeira wine.
6. Turn flame back on to medium and continue to sauté for 2 minutes, add the venison stock and reduce the total liquids by half. Strain off the solids and reserve liquid.

VENISON PASTY MIX

1. Heat ¼ cup of goose fat in a large sauté pan until sizzling hot.
2. Add the diced venison roast and sauté quickly, browning but only partially cooking all meat. Remove the venison and cool.
3. Warm another ¼ cup goose fat over medium heat and sauté all the diced vegetables plus the other diced half of yellow onion and garlic. Season with salt and pepper accordingly.
4. Continue to cook for 6 to 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, do not cook vegetables completely, leave them al dente.
5. Remove and cool vegetables.
6. Turn off flame and deglaze the pan with the remaining ¼ cup Madeira wine, reduce.
7. Add 2 tablespoons butter to the pan and melt.
8. Stir in flour and saute for 1 minute being sure to scrape all browned bits from bottom of pan then add the venison pasty stock, simmer and reduce until the liquids are nearly as viscous as gravy. Cool the liquids.

FILLING PASTY

1. Mix all the cooled (room temperature minimum) venison, vegetables and demi liquids together.
2. Take pasty dough circles from cooler and fill half the circle with pasty mixture.
3. Fold over the dough and pie roll the edges together. Crimp together with a fork.
4. Filled pasties can be baked immediately or frozen until needed.

BAKING

1. Preheat oven to 400°F for fresh/thawed pasties or 375°F for frozen pasties
2. Pasties can be brushed with an egg white wash for a crisper crust
3. Bake until golden brown. Fresh/thawed pasties for 15 to 20 minutes. Frozen pasties 20 to 25 minutes.

