

MY FAVORITE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

PART FOUR

Once you have successfully brought your game out of the woods, you should begin work on butchering and storing this unique gift of nature as quickly as possible. If you again follow the recipe for success by controlling microorganisms, exposure, fat, and temperature, you will be able to produce delicious wild game capable of being substituted for domestic meat in many of your favorite recipes with great success.

The first step to home processing is to have an area dedicated to processing your game. This area should have:

- A large, hard-surfaced table at a height that is comfortable to use while standing. I prefer stainless steel because, with good care, it will provide a safe and durable work surface for as long as you want to keep it.
- Another area with a table that is comfortable for working while sitting down as some processing jobs require a lot of repetitive motion.
- Access to clean, running water and a large sink.
- Access to a chemical sanitizer such as bleach.
- Access to all the necessary equipment for processing that particular game.
- A well-lit work area.
- All smooth surfaces that are easy to clean.

MORE FROM WILD GOURMET



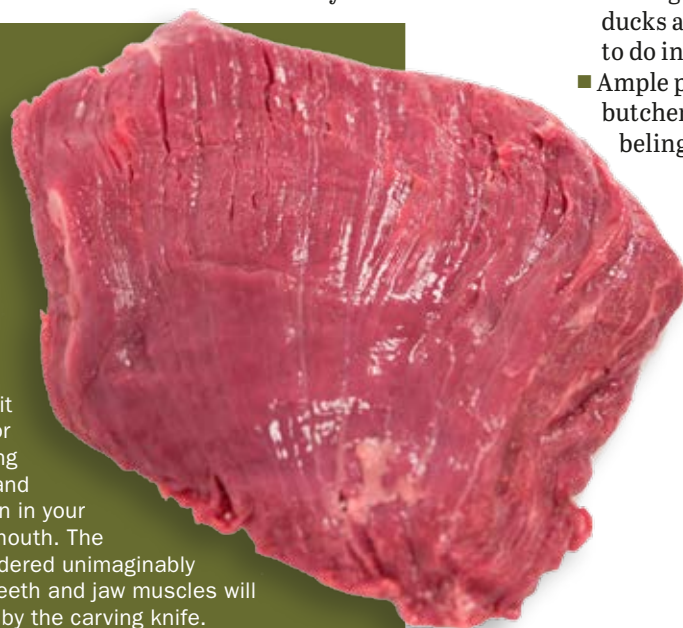
Daniel Nelson
CO-AUTHOR
Wild Gourmet

- Access to a large refrigerator and deep freezer.
- Both an outdoor and an indoor processing area so you can capitalize or avoid the advantages and disadvantages of the weather. Some jobs like skinning game, scaling fish or plucking ducks are just too messy to do inside.
- Ample plastic wrap, butcher paper and labeling tape.

MORE TIPS FOR PROCESSING GAME MUSCLE GRAIN

Muscles are comprised of long fibrous grains that run in the direction that 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 cannot easily be broken in half, but if we cut a quarter inch off the end of the board (against the grain), it can be broken with ease. The same holds true for the muscle fibers and grain of meat. When carving roasts, you want to find the grain of the muscle and slice across them. 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, because your teeth and jaw muscles will have to do the work that should have been done by the carving knife.

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 in a similarly thin manner; two or three of these delicate slices are much easier to chew than one three-quarter-inch cube.



Sliced kebab meat versus cubed meat.

Wild Turkey Processing Tool Kit—bone saw, game shears, and boning knife. Wild turkey is generally harvested when temperatures are warm, ice packs will help cool your meat without the liquid mess from melting ice.



MICROORGANISMS

The last vestige for dirt, debris, pests, and contaminants is the hide, skin, or feathers of your game. Take care to remove it/them in an area far away from your final processing table, as hair, scales, and feathers are incredibly difficult to remove from the flesh of an animal. The necessary care for skin removal is covered in the individual game processing sections in *Wild Gourmet*.

Now that you have access to running water and a large sink, it is acceptable 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 any bacteria will wash down and off the meat. Never use a tub of water to rinse game in, as the standing water will only serve to increase the risk of cross-contamination. Once the flesh of your game is completely 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.

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 so that they need to 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 shade of reddish-brown, and can increase the development of rancidity in fat.

It is also extremely important 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 a better job than a cheap vacuum sealer. Always wrap your finished cuts tightly in plastic wrap, then wrap again in butcher's paper. The plastic wrap protects the meat from exposure to air and freezer burn, and the butcher's wrap will protect 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. ■

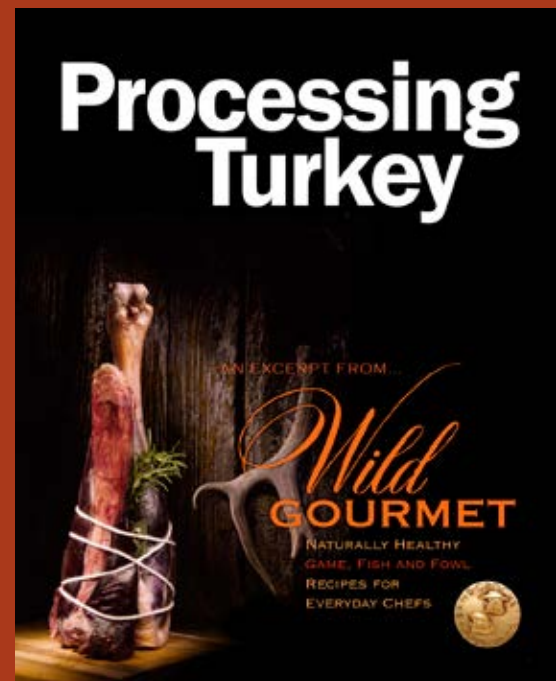
Processing Turkey

When processing birds, even those that I pluck and plan on serving whole, I always separate the chest from the back and legs of the bird. These are two very different types of meat and they require different cooking temperatures and durations to be done well. The light

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protein of the breasts should only be cooked to an internal temperature of 155°F for 15 seconds and no more. The rest of the dark protein should

be roasted long enough to reach the crucial 170°F for one to two hours, which breaks down the tougher connective tissues found in the meat. When roasting whole birds, I will fill the cavity with stuffing as normal and set the breast plate on top. That way I can take the breasts out to rest and avoid overcooking, while the rest of the bird finishes. To avoid drying out birds that have no skin, I recommend that you soak cheesecloth in rendered fat and lay this over the bird while roasting.



FREE DOWNLOAD — 14-Page step-by-step guide to processing your turkey! Go to <http://tinyurl.com/hp575u4> to download the PDF today.



Hickory Cider Glazed Wild Turkey

SERVES
8-12

DANIEL NELSON

The bark of a shagbark hickory tree (*Carya ovata*) is very distinctive and once shown it is easily recognizable, they like to live in the flood plains of the Midwest. The nut of a shagbark hickory is sweet and delicious, but very hard to harvest from the tough shells. It is however, very easy to collect the bark from these trees and it can often be found on the ground under the canopy, simply wiggle loose-looking pieces until you find ones that are ready to fall off.

Hickory cider syrup is best made using a clean percolator, a percolator is important because it runs the cider through the bark at hot but not boiling temperatures. If you boil shagbark hickory bark the tannins will release from the wood fibers and turn the juice bitter. I use a 90-cup percolator for a double batch of this recipe. If shagbark hickory trees are not available in your region, you can crush whole hickory nuts or even acorns and use this nut/shell meal in the drip tray of the percolator.

PREP TIME: The several percolation cycles will take several days. Marinate 12–48 hours. **COOK TIME:** 20 minutes

HICKORY CIDER SYRUP

- 1 Gallon apple cider
- 2 Quarts Shagbark Hickory bark broken into small pieces
- 2 Quarts sugar

GLAZED TURKEY

- 1 Wild turkey breast
Salt and blended pepper
- 6 Cups hickory cider syrup, divided

HICKORY CIDER GLAZE: YIELD 4 QUARTS

1. Add the **cold cider** to the percolator and the **bark** pieces to the filter.
2. Turn on percolator and run a complete cycle. Remove the liquids and remove the filter chamber of bark, keep separate and cool in refrigerator.
3. Once cooled, set the percolator back up and run the liquids through again. Repeat this process 5 to 10 times.
4. After the last run you will need to strain the liquids; the finer the strain the clearer the resulting syrup. I will often put a layer of coffee filters between two china cups and filter the liquid through.
5. Once strained, mix the 2 quarts of **sugar** into the hickory cider and bring to a near boil. Cool hickory cider syrup and store in refrigerator. If air tight the syrup can be stored for several months. The syrup can re-crystallize but a quick heat through in the microwave will dissolve any crystals.

FOR THE HICKORY CIDER GLAZE WILD TURKEY

1. Turkey breast has very long grains of muscle fiber, running in three distinct manners. Trim and divide the breast following these long running grains, removing the inner silverskin as well. I typically cut my turkey breasts into 3 to 5 smaller portions for grilling.
2. Season the raw, trimmed **turkey breast** with **salt** and **pepper** and add to a heavy plastic bag, cover with 4 cups **hickory cider syrup**, remove all air and set in refrigerator to marinate for 12 to 48 hours, turning every 12 hours.
3. Remove turkey breast sections from marinade and drain.
4. Preheat grill to 500°F being sure to create a cool zone for slower grilling. Have a basting brush with 2 cups of the **hickory cider syrup** available for basting. Grill for 3 to 4 minutes on all sides, basting between sides, if turkey breast hasn't reached 145°F, move it to a cooler section of the grill to finish slowly. Once the breast has reached 145°F in the center of the mass, remove it from direct heat to rest.
5. Rest for 20 minutes. To serve tender pieces of turkey it is important to thinly cut these sections, across the long grain of the muscle fiber. The shorter the fiber pieces of each slice cut from the loin, the more tender the meat will be to the palate.

SUGGESTED WINE VARIETALS

WHITE

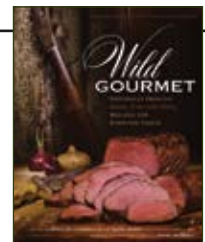
Chardonnay \ Riesling (dry) \ Rosé

RED

Pinot Noir \ Rhone Blend \ Syrah \ Zinfandel

TO SERVE

Serve in a variety of ways such as on a toasted hickory nut and apple spinach salad; with roasted sweet potatoes and sautéed fiddleheads; or on toasted baguette with sliced apple and Brie cheese.



WANT MORE?

Check out Boone and Crockett Club's award-winning cook book, **Wild Gourmet!**

Includes dozens of recipes for wild game, fish, and fowl, plus wine pairings and a detailed chapter on meat preparation. A must-have for every sportsman.

Order directly from B&C to receive your Associates discount at 888-840-4868 or boone-crockett.org.

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