

A SELF-RELIANT HUNTER

In recent years, it seems as if the voice of self-reliance has pretty much been relegated to a seat way in the back of the room. After all, who needs to know how to build a nice cooking fire anymore when you can now light up your gas grill or pellet cooker with an app from your smart phone? Geez, it seems like we've finally figured out how to pretty much take the "outdoors" out of outdoor cooking.

The Covid-19 pandemic has, however, suddenly brought the topic of self-reliance back toward center stage. How have many millions of Americans coped, for example, with doing things more on their own while sheltering in place? Spending time in the kitchen, it

happens, has been a new experience for lots of our younger citizens. I recently read an article that highlighted various culinary miscues among these new "cooks"—one oops after another.

For the most part though, there has been little call in our modern era for younger generations to develop the kinds of hands-on skills once commonplace. Today, Uber picks up, and Grub Hub drops off. Easy peasy.

A bucketful of life skills may not be as important as they used to be, but I believe the ability to do a range of things on one's own today is as much about creating a mind-set as it is about honing one's outdoorsmanship. Self-reliance may well be the most important building

block in developing a strong sense of personal confidence. Not bravado, mind you, but a clear-headed assessment of what you may or may not be able to do, especially in challenging situations.

Nowadays, I can think of no better way to become more self-reliant than to become a hunter. It's the perfect way to learn a host of new skills that will help you become more self-sufficient and self-assured. Shooting your own game and cooking it, for instance, is a valuable accomplishment in which you can take pride.

In the field, the ethical hunter typically faces any number of decisions that only he or she can make. Should I go on or head back to camp? Is that the right animal? Is the



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animal in range for me? A self-reliant hunter, through learning and practice, has a good feel for his or her capabilities and the confidence that the decision ultimately made is a good one.

That's a valuable personal asset to have not only in the field but also through the ups and downs of life. These days, who knows what lies around the bend?

Hope to see you down the trail. ■

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