

MICHIGAN VENISON 2002

Butcher * Prepare*Cook* Preserve Safely

Venison that is handled and cooked safely is a healthful addition to our Michigan food supply. To be safe, venison should be cooked to 165 degrees F. (Michigan Unified Food Law, Public Act 92 of 2000)

Michigan Venison describes proper methods to harvest, dress and cut venison. It recommends proper cooking techniques for the cuts and provides recipes for cooking and sausage making. The process of putting tender, good-tasting venison on the supper table begins with making a quick, clean kill.

Field Dressing

It is important to clean and cool the venison as quickly as possible. To do this, you will need four items: at least one length of rope 10 to 15 feet long, a knife with a blade no wider than 1 inch and at least 4 inches long, a wad of paper towels and, if you wish to save the heart and liver, two plastic bags. (Paper towels should not be white because of the potential danger of showing anything white in the woods during deer hunting season.)

Use additional paper toweling to wipe all the blood from the body cavity of the deer. Be as thorough as possible, keeping in mind that bacteria will grow very well in blood and bacteria cause meat to spoil and possibly become unsafe.

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Do not use leaves or soiled cloth to clean the blood from the body cavity – such items are loaded with spoilage bacteria.

Now that you have completed field dressing the deer, bury the paper towels or place them in the plastic bags in which you brought them to be carried out and disposed of later.

Hanging Your Deer

As soon as you get your deer to campsite or home, hang the deer to allow the venison to cool quickly and completely. If you did not thoroughly clean the inside of the body cavity when you field dressed the deer, do so as soon as you get the deer hung up. Soak a clean cloth in a saltwater solution (1/2 cup salt in 1 gal. Water), wring it dry and wipe the inside of the cavity of the deer with this damp cloth. IF the inside of the body cavity has been contaminated by the contents of a bladder, bowel, intestine or stomach or with unclean water, mud or dirt, thoroughly rinse out the body cavity with water. When the cavity is clean, thoroughly dry the inside with cloth or paper toweling.

The major reason for hanging a deer carcass is to allow the meat to cool further and to make the subsequent butchering process easier. If done properly, hanging may also help tenderize the meat, if that is necessary.

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Aging meat means holding it at 32 to 38 degrees F for as long as 10 days to allow natural enzymes to tenderize the meat.

Aging is a time and temperature relationship – as the temperature is raised, the aging process occurs faster. Any temperature above 40 degrees F not only ages the meat faster but, because of the potential presence of pathogens, may lead to spoilage.

Therefore **AGING ABOVE 40 DEGREES F IS NOT RECOMMENDED.**

Quick Review

Venison is a good-tasting, tender meat, but it is often made less tasty or even gamey by the following practices:

- Contaminating the meat with the contents of bowels, bladder or stomach, dirt or dirty water.
- Hanging the carcass when the meat will reach temperatures above 40 degrees F.
- Not cleaning or trimming and disposing of contaminated meat.
- Leaving fat and connective tissue (the white material) on the meat (the red material)

As with all food preparation, it is important to handle and cook venison safely. Venison food safety practices are the same as those for other foods.*

- Clean hands, cooking utensils and surfaces often.
- Separate: don't cross-contaminate.
- Cook to proper temperature.
- Chill by refrigerating promptly.

* Fight BAC campaign from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

How to Cook Venison

Venison is one of the most highly prized game meats. As mentioned earlier, most of the objectionable or gamey flavor comes

from careless handling of the deer after it has been shot.

Some of the gamey flavor is in the fat, so trim away as much of the fat as possible. Another reason for careful trimming is that venison fat, as it cools, tends to be sticky or tallowy, and it clings to the teeth and the roof of the mouth.

Because venison is a dry meat, only certain cuts (tenderloin, round, and loin steaks or chops) can be cooked using dry heat methods (broiling, frying, roasting, grilling).

All other cuts must be cooked using moist heat (pot roasting, stewing, soup). Adding beef suet, butter, pork fat or bacon prevents venison from becoming dry and chewy. This will, however, also increase the total fat, calorie and cholesterol content of the food.

Venison without added fat is relatively low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol. A 3-ounce serving of roasted venison has 131 calories, 2.7 grams total fat, 1.1 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol. This means that 19 percent of its calories are from fat and 7 percent from saturated fat. That makes venison slightly lower in total calories than roasted beef, roasted chicken breast (meat only) and roasted pork tenderloin, and much lower in percentage of calories from fat than either beef or pork. Only chicken is lower in percentage of calories from saturated fat. All the other meats mentioned, however, are lower in cholesterol than venison.

Sources: Composition of Foods: raw, processed, prepared. USDA Handbook 8, vol. 5, 10, 13, 17; 1979, 1991, 1990, 1989. USDA.

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