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The Irish Venison Cook Book

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The Irish Venison Cook Book
THE

IRISH VENISON

COOKBOOK

Compiled by -

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INTRODUCTION

“Go, little book, and wish to all

Flowers in the garden, meat in the hall.”

Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850-1894.
Wild deer have been hunted as a source of food throughout Europe and the Middle East from the earliest times to the present. Great country houses from the Middle Ages onward frequently kept deer in parks, and quite a few still do. Today, however, the bulk of venison is farmed, in order to meet the greatly increased demand for this healthy meat.

Now that Ireland has become one of the leaders in the production of venison, with a climate and unspoiled environment which is ideally suited, a specialist cookery book which can offer a guide to chefs and cooks from all walks of life should be a welcome addition in every kitchen.

Deer are naturally gregarious animals which live in herds in the wild, so farmed animals are kept in open fields surrounded by high fences, where they can graze in peace. Open sheds are often provided to afford protection in very inclement weather, and deer farmers provide natural food supplements such as hay and root vegetables for the animals. Deer cannot be 'Factory farmed' as some animals are, and so the meat is a completely natural food. Farm bred venison has all the advantages and none of the disadvantages of the wild variety, being high in flavour and low in fat, but at the same time being very tender, as well as being raised in accordance with the latest hygienic standards.

The principal farmed breeds are Fallow deer, Red deer, and their smaller cousins, Sika deer. Apart from the size of the animal, there is little difference between them, so unless you buy venison direct from the farm, you are
unlikely to know which kind is being offered. The best meat is considered to be that of the buck or stag, and the best age eighteen months to two years. The meat is close grained, dark in colour and very lean. It does not have a marbling of fat throughout as beef has, any fat being restricted to the outside of the animal just under the skin. The total fat content of venison amounts to about 6% at eighteen months, although older animals may have a little more; what there is of it is mainly unsaturated fat, and so is very suitable for those who require a low cholesterol diet. This compares with lean beef for example which contains about 12%, while lamb and pork have 18% or more. Where any additional fat, oil or butter is desirable, the recipes in this book take account of it.

The flavour of the meat is largely determined by the length of time it is hung. Traditionally, venison from the wild was hung for a long time in order to tenderise it, and this imparted a strong gamey flavour. This is no longer necessary, and where farmed venison is purchased from the farm shop, a reputable butcher or a supermarket where it is labelled as farmed venison, you can rely upon the meat being properly hung. If you prefer a stronger flavour, consult your supplier. Any additional hanging of joints should be in a cool airy place.

The best parts of the animal are the loin or saddle, the haunch and the shoulder, the rest is best used for stews, pies and mince. The principal joints can be roasted or otherwise cooked either whole or in pieces. The loin or saddle can be cut into individual chops and cutlets which can be fried or grilled, as can slices of the fillet which comes from the loin end of the haunch. The
flavour of Ireland is especially notable in the recipes using Guinness and those with Irish whiskey, but you will find that Irish farmed venison creates many delicious dishes on its own account.

You will also notice that many of the recipes suggest the use of redcurrant jelly as an accompaniment or as an ingredient in sauces. It makes a particularly delicious combination with venison, but other fruit jellies are just as delicious, so try ringing the changes with rowan (mountain ash) jelly, quince jelly, bramble jelly or crab apple jelly. Other traditional accompaniments and suggestions for vegetables to serve with venison dishes are given on p. 59

If you have a freezer, it is worth noting that venison freezes very well and may be kept deep frozen for at least 12 months. Wrap large joints in plastic film and overwrap in stockinette. Cutlets, chops and steaks should be packed individually and stewing pieces and mince in polythene bags in suitable quantities for individual meals. Label all packages with the cut and weight.

Throughout the book oven temperatures are given in degrees fahrenheit, but a table showing conversion to centigrade and gas regulo numbers appears at the back of the book. There are also tables for pounds (lbs) and ounces (ozs) to kilograms and grams, and pints (pts) and fluid ounces (fl. ozs) to litres and millilitres. For their ease of use, many measurements are given in tablespoons (tbspns.), dessert spoons (dspns.) and teaspoons (tspns.). The conversion tables are not mathematically perfect but they are sufficiently accurate for culinary purposes.
You may wish to modify the recipes to suit your own taste and we have left space with each recipe for your own particular ideas. Many of the sauces can be tried in various combinations with different recipes. Do not be afraid to experiment, there are no hard and fast rules.

If you have any difficulty in obtaining venison write to The Secretary, Irish Deer Farmers Association, Springfield, Drumcollogher, Co. Limerick, who will let you know the name and address of your nearest stockist.

Enjoy your cooking!
Dear Mr. Moore

It was recommended by Helen Lucy Burke that I send you a copy of our new venison cookery book. We are involved in deer farming and felt there was a need to show people the variety and versatility of farmed venison. It is a rather simple production, being our first attempt in this line, but it does fill a need to show cooks some simple and some more adventurous ways of cooking venison.

We hope that the book will help in developing the farmed venison industry here and would appreciate some venison recipes in the RTE Guide if you see any you think might appeal!

The book was launched this week at the Irish Deer Farmers Conference in Killarney and we haven't really got an on-going strategy sorted out yet - we will be selling it at the IDFA stand at the Spring Show and also by post from the above address price 4.95 incl. p&p.

I realise it's not quite Danna Allen's but it's so specialised.

I would appreciate your comments even if the RTE Guide cannot contain.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Sykes