



# Furthering Families

## Michigan Venison 2002

### Butcher \* Prepare \* Cook \* Preserve Safely

Venison is a healthful addition to our Michigan food supply when it is has been handled and cooked properly. The Michigan State University Extension bulletin *Michigan Venison* (E-657) provides the necessary information to comply with the Michigan Unified Food Law, Public Act 92 of 2002—and to ensure that the venison you eat is safe—by describing proper handling and cooking methods.

The following is a brief summary of the information contained in the *Michigan Venison* publication that is available on-line at:  
[www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/modac/visuals/E657.pdf](http://www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/modac/visuals/E657.pdf)

#### First Step

The first step in the process of providing tender, good-tasting venison to your family is to make a quick, clean kill. There are numerous hazards associated with trying to recover a wounded deer that should be avoided.

#### Next Steps . . .

- **Field Dressing.** It is important to clean and cool the venison as quickly as possible. A Hunter Safety Kit is recommended for safe handling after the kill. The kit should include disposal latex examination gloves, a face mask, flashlight, Clorox disinfecting wipes to take care of your hands (as soon as hot water and soap are available, thoroughly wash your hands), a large trash bag for disposal of the waste from field dressing, and illustrations of a normal body cavity and Bovine TB pea-shaped tubercles found within the body cavity. Fanny packs make ideal carriers and are available in hunter orange or camouflage fabric.

To begin field dressing, you will need a length of rope 10 to 15 feet long, a knife with a blade at least four inches long but no wider than one inch, and a wad of non-white paper towels. (White paper towels and other white objects present a potential danger in the woods during deer hunting season.) If you wish to save the heart and liver, you will need two plastic bags that you can seal. Use only paper towels to wipe the blood from the body cavity being careful to remove all the blood to keep bacteria from growing that may cause the meat to spoil and be unsafe to eat. Do not use leaves or soiled cloth to clean the body cavity because of potential bacteria. Detailed directions for field dressing are listed in the *Michigan Venison* bulletin. If at all possible, avoid dragging the deer through water, mud or dust in such a way that the inside of the body cavity is contaminated with this debris.

- **Hanging Your Deer.** Hang the deer to allow the venison to cool quickly and completely as soon as your return to your campsite or home. If the body cavity was not thoroughly cleaned when you did the field dressing, clean the cavity while hanging the deer using a clean cloth and a saltwater solution (1/2 cup salt in 1 gallon of water). If the inside of the body cavity has been contaminated by the contents of the bladder, bowel, intestine or stomach, or with unclean water, mud or dirt, thoroughly rinse out the body cavity with water. After the cavity is clean, dry the inside with clean cloth or paper towels.

The primary reason for hanging the deer carcass is to allow the venison to cool further and to make butchering easier. However, proper hanging may also help tenderize the meat. Aging the meat means holding it at a temperature of 32 to 38°F for up to 10 days to

allow natural enzymes to tenderize the meat. Do not age the venison at a temperature above 40 degrees because of potentially dangerous pathogens.

### Quick Check

Venison is a good-tasting, tender meat. It may taste “gamey” or unpleasant if:

- The meat has been contaminated by the contents of the bowels, bladder or stomach, or by dust, dirt or dirty water.
- Hanging the carcass at temperatures above 40°F.
- Not cleaning, trimming or disposing of contaminated meat.
- Not removing fat and connective tissue (the white material) on the meat (the red material).

It is important to handle and cook venison—and all foods—safely. The same food safety practices are used for venison and all foods as published as part of the “Fight BAC” campaign from USDA and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration:

- Clean your hands, cooking utensils and surfaces often.
- Don’t cross-contaminate by using the same utensils and surfaces without proper cleaning for cooked and uncooked foods.
- Cook to proper temperatures — 165°F for venison.
- Chill by refrigerating promptly.

### How to Cook Venison

Venison is one of the most highly-prized game meats. Most of the gamey or unpleasant flavors come from improper handling of the deer after it has been shot, or is in the fat. It is important to carefully trim away as much of the fat as possible.

Venison is a dry meat. Certain cuts such as tenderloin, round, and loin steaks or chops can be cooked using dry heat methods (broiling, frying, roasting, grilling). All other cuts require moist heat (pot roasting, stewing, soup). You may add beef suet, butter, pork fat or bacon to prevent the venison from becoming too dry and chewy but this will increase the total fat, calories, and cholesterol content of the food.

### Nutrition

Without added fat, venison 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. To compare, 19 percent of venison’s calories are from fat and seven percent from saturated fat, making venison slightly lower in total calories than roasted beef, roasted chicken breast (skinless), and roasted pork tenderloin, and much lower in percentage of calories from fat than beef or pork. Only chicken is lower in percentage of calories from saturated fat; venison is higher in cholesterol than beef, pork or chicken (see below table).

3-ounce portion	Calories	Total Fat	Saturated Fat	% Calories from Fat	Cholesterol
Beef tenderloin	181	8.7	3.3	43	72
Pork tenderloin	141	4.1	1.5	26	68
Chicken breast	131	3.5	0.9	24	64
Venison	131	2.7	1.1	19	95

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### References

Dudderar, G., Booren, A., and Andrews, S. 2001. Michigan Venison. Michigan State University Extension Bulletin E-657. Michigan Department of Agriculture, 2000. Michigan Unified Food Law, Public Act 92 of 2000. [www.michiganlegislature.org](http://www.michiganlegislature.org). U.S. Department of Agriculture. 1979-1991. Composition of Foods: raw, processed, prepared, USDA Handbook 8, vol. 5, 10, 13, 17.