



Furthering Families

Venison Preservation

There has been increased concern about venison food safety and handling practices, especially during hunting season, since the discovery of bovine TB in Michigan. A brochure answering questions about human health factors, meat safety, milk safety, and bovine tuberculosis in Michigan has been prepared by The Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan State University and the United States Department of Agriculture. “Bovine Tuberculosis in Michigan—Human Health and Food Safety” also provides information about hunter-harvested deer and is available from your local Michigan State University Extension office along with other information about venison preparation.

Freezing

Freezing is the easiest way to preserve venison. To prepare venison for freezing, trim away connective tissue and fat, the source of strong, “gamey” flavor. Protect the meat by wrapping it in moisture vapor-resistant packaging materials, and package in quantities your family will eat in one meal. Label each package with the date and cut of meat.

Freeze quickly to 0°F. or below. In a home freezer, freeze no more than 2 pounds per cubic foot storage space at one time, i.e., if your freezer capacity is 30 cu. ft., freeze only 60 pounds of venison at one time. Overloading slows down the rate of freezing, and foods that freeze too slowly may lose quality.

Once the packages of venison are frozen, they may be stacked. Keep the freezer temperature at 0°F or below. Use a freezer thermometer to monitor freezer accuracy.

For best eating quality, use frozen ground venison within 3 months. Frozen venison steaks or roasts should be used within 8 to 12 months. Venison should be thoroughly cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F for 15 seconds to kill bacteria.

Canning

Venison may be canned according to directions for canning beef, veal, pork, lamb, and mutton found in the USDA’s *Complete Guide to Home Canning*. For a copy of the specific directions and other directions, please contact your MSU County Extension office or visit the following web site: extension.usu.edu/publica/foodpubs.htm.

Compiled by **Carol Wruble**, Extension Food Safety Program Leader, Family and Consumer Sciences, Michigan State University.