Processing Your Deer At Home
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Venison can be delicious meat. A great deal of your family's acceptance and enjoyment of venison will depend on how it is cut up and cooked. This publication illustrates and describes a good method of cutting up a deer. It serves as a guide, and there are tips on using, cooking, and storing venison in the back.

The deer processing method described here is basically one of boning. If you do not especially like your venison now, try this boning method and you might be pleasantly surprised to find how boning enhances the eating qualities of venison, especially the round in the hind quarters.

Boning a deer is neither impossible nor particularly difficult. It just looks that way. Once learned, it is easy and convenient to take care of venison. It may, however, take some extra courage and a sense of adventure to try it the first time.

Boning has several advantages over the conventional methods of dressing venison. By cutting the hide and quartering the deer, you have removed the hind legs. The hind quarters are shown on a table, and a sense of adventure is involved. But if you quarter the deer, you cannot separate the hind quarters now, even if you later decide you do not want to eat the hind quarters. It is true that it takes some extra effort to bone a deer, but it is not particularly difficult. The hind quarters are easier to bone than the front, and the front quarters are easier to bone than the main body of the deer.

Steaks from the loin are usually cut 3/4 inch thick. However, they can be as thin as 1/4 inch and as thick as 1 1/2 inches. Fry or broil to suit taste.

If roasting venison is a challenge for you, try this recipe. Lay out a piece of aluminum foil large enough to double wrap the roast. Sprinkle one-half package of dehydrated vegetable soup mix on top of the roast. Wrap the aluminum foil tightly around the roast and place it in an oven preheated to 325°-350°F. Cook the average 2 or 3 pound venison roast for 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours, depending on how well done you prefer the venison. The meat will be juicy and moist with this method of roasting. Good stew meat can be made from trimmings and by cutting the ribs into short pieces. Ground venison can be mixed with other meats to make excellent ground meat mixtures and cut into small pieces for making jerky. Elk, antelope, bear or other large game can be cut up in the same way. If you are still in doubt about cutting the hide and quartering the deer, first try this recipe for roasting the venison.
For the uninitiated, the first step in boning out a deer is to study figure 1. Locate the major parts to be boned out. After you have them fairly well in mind, pick up the knife and begin. It is not necessary to follow the exact order of the steps as shown, but it is a good way to proceed.

Venison steaks from a boned deer are cut differently than domestic meat. Cut all venison steaks thin except those coming from the loin and tenderloin. Venison steaks are smaller, without bone or much fat. A venison steak is not like a beefsteak. A venison steak is usually from 1/4 to 3/8 inch thick and a thick one is about 1 inch thick.

When you encounter bloodshot meat, most of it can be saved by soaking it in cold salt water. Put about a gallon of water in a 3 or 4 gallon bucket or dishpan, add 3 or 4 handfuls of salt, and put the venison in. Leave the venison in the salt water for about 90 seconds, or set a time for a steak fryer. The frying temperature is 390 degrees Fahrenheit. Fry for 1 minute and 15 seconds. If the meat is hung before frying, set a time of 1 minute and 45 seconds. The cans of venison are hung for 12 to 18 hours. When hung, they shrink partially, leaving room for canning. When cut, the chunks of venison from the hind leg make excellent steaks.

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Fig. 2. The first cut is to remove a front shoulder. Lift the front leg up from the chest and cut the meat attaching it to the side of the ribs.

Fig. 3. Chunks of trimmed round that have been separated from the hind leg are shown above. These chunks can be made into steaks or roasts. For the smaller family, the larger pieces of round may be halved lengthwise. Leave the pieces whole until just before cooking. The round makes excellent steak meat when it is cut thin.
Fig. 3. Then work the knife back and forth to cut the connective tissue between the leg and the rib cage. The last cut to be made will be at the top of the shoulder blade where it is attached to the withers.

Fig. 36. Divide or separate the large leg muscles in the round by cutting the connective tissue holding them together. Avoid cutting into the meat as much as you can. The meat close to the long tendon does not make good steak meat, it is too tough. Remove it and trim out the meat for grinding or other uses.
Fig. 4. Cut the front leg into three parts—shoulder or blade roast, arm roast, and Shank (Fig. 5 through 7).}

Fig. 35. In this photograph, the leg bone has been separated from the round. The meat from the leg bone can be trimmed off and used for grinding. The next step is to separate the round into its individual muscles, each of which is enclosed in its individual envelope of connective tissue.
Fig. 5. Remove the shoulder roast from the leg by severing at the joint. Locate the joint by moving the shoulder blade up and down and cut through it. The shoulder blade roast is now removed. On each side of the bony ridge on the shoulder blade can be removed. Steaks should be cut 1/4 to 3/8 inch thick for frying.

Fig. 34. Lifting the bone as you cut will make the cutting easier.
Fig. 6. To separate the arm roast from the shank, prepare to saw the leg bone by cutting the meat down to the bone.

Fig. 33. Turn the leg over and shave and cut the meat loose from the joints. But keep cutting what comes naturally.
Fig. 7. Saw the bone through. This is one of the few places where sawing is done close to meat. Trim the arm roast and it is ready for cooking or storing. Trim out the meat from the heavy tendons and tissue of the shank. This meat is good for grinding.

Fig. 32. Continue separating until the meat is free all the way to the joint.
Fig. 8. This is a back view of the whole deer with the outline of the preliminary cuts that are made to remove the loin or backstrap along one side of the backbone. These cuts are made to extend from the base of the neck to the point where the ribs curve down to join the backbone. The loin lies just in front of the hind leg and extends the entire length of the backbone. The ribs and the vertebrae of the backbone lie in the groove between the backbone and the loin. The round lies in the groove between the backbone and the loin. To remove the bone from the round, start by cutting the tendon and connective tissue that separates the Shank from the round and then cut along the outline of the preliminary cuts that are made to remove the loin or backstrap along one side of the backbone.

Fig. 31. To remove the bone from the round, start by cutting the tendon and connective tissue that separates the Shank from the round and then cut along the outline of the preliminary cuts that are made to remove the loin or backstrap along one side of the backbone.
Fig. 9. This photograph illustrates cut 2, the use of the vertical spines of the backbone as guide in cutting forward to the base of the neck. Cut down to the backbone until the junction with the ribs is reached.

Fig. 30. The sirloin tip is excellent as a roast or it can be cut into thin steaks. The steaks should be thin if they are to be fried. Make them not over 1/4 to 3/8 inch thick. The meat is good for hamburger, stew, or other uses.
Fig. 10. Remove the loin by cutting it loose from the ribs.
Lift the loin and start cutting and peeling it from the groove, continuing forward until loin meat ends or the base of the neck is reached.

Fig. 29. Once the sirloin tip has been cut from the leg, remove the connective tissue and extra meat surrounding it. The remaining chunk of sirloin tip meat will be enclosed in a thin membrane and will resemble an undersized football.
Fig. 11. One of the two loins from a deer. It is ready to be trimmed.

Lay the loin on the table and prepare to pull off fat, odd-grained meat and tough tissue by starting at one end. This meat is good for stews, ground meat or other uses, but it detracts from the tenderness of good steaks.

Fig. 28. Lay the hind leg flat on the table and remove the sirloin tip by using the leg bone to guide the knife while cutting off the large chunk of meat. Notice the large white bone (arrow). Start at the knee cap and keep the knife in a vertical plane against this bone. Cut the meat away from the bone with short strokes.

Fig. 11. One of the two loins from a deer. It is ready to be trimmed.
Fig. 12. Cut the trimmed loin into family-sized chunks or pieces and freeze whole. By freezing the chunks, whole, moisture and flavors are preserved and packaging is easier. Wait until you are ready to cook them before cutting the steaks. Cut them 3/4 to 1 inch thick. The boneless loins are not large but they have no connective tissue, fat or off-grained meat.

Fig. 27. Next cut the sirloin tip from the remainder of the hind leg. Which is shown in Figure 28. First, set the leg in a vertical position. Make a cut above the knee cap. Cut directly down to the large leg bone. Then, set the leg in a vertical position. Make a cut above the knuckle shown in Figure 28.
Fig. 13. Remove the flank by cutting it free from the back-bone and the adjoining ribs.

Fig. 26. The sirloin roast is shown from the top side. Remove the fat and sharp projections of pelvic bone before cooking or freezing. If you prefer other cuts to roasts, the meat can be removed and cut into small steaks or used for grinding or stew meat.
Fig. 14. Remove the neck by sawing the backbone off just in front of the point of the shoulder. The neck meat makes excellent mincemeat, stew, or grinding meat. It can also be roasted whole.

Fig. 25. Cut down to the ball-and-socket joint and work the knife through it as shown above. Make the cut as vertical as possible but leave enough meat on the sirloin roast for a meal. Separating with a knife instead of sawing avoids spreading bone marrow and dust.

Fig. 25. Cut down to the ball-and-socket joint and work the knife through it as shown above. Make the cut as vertical as possible but leave enough meat on the sirloin roast for a meal. Separating with a knife instead of sawing avoids spreading bone marrow and dust.
Fig. 15. Remove the side of rib from the backbone. Use the saw and cut the ribs loose at the point where they curve en route to connecting with the backbone. Cut all the way to the base of the neck.

Fig. 24. To cut up the hind leg, remove the sirloin roast first. To do this, locate the ball and socket joint which connects the pelvic bone of the sirloin roast with the large leg bone. Feel for the joint as you raise and lower the sirloin roast. Once located, cut as shown in figure 25.
Fig. 16. A side of rib that has been removed from the deer is shown here. You can either cut it up at this point or turn the deer over and start pounding out the remaining side.

Fig. 23. Use the spinal cord in the backbone as a guide in making the cut with the meat saw. Each hind leg is cut into a sirloin roast, a sirloin tip, the round and the shank.
Fig. 17. A layer of meat covers the ribs. It is usually left as shown, but the layer of meat can be removed and used for jerky, grinding meat, stew meat, or tiny steaks. Enough meat will be left between the ribs for barbecuing.

Fig. 22. The two hind legs are ready to be separated by sawing through the middle of the backbone.
Fig. 18. Here a side of rib is being cut into plates. Plates of ribs can be barbecued whole or separated into two or three ribs per piece. Ribs can be cut into short pieces and used in stew if you prefer.

Fig. 21. Saw the backbone off just in front of the hind legs. It can be cut into sections and used to make soup stocks. The meat scraps can be picked off and used in mincemeat, head cheese, or for other uses. The meat can be used for the venison pies.
Fig. 19. Remove the tenderloin by lifting and cutting it free from the backbone. The two tenderloins are located on each side of the backbone and just forward of the pelvic area.

Fig. 20. Each tenderloin is only about 1 1/2 inches in diameter and a foot long. These are the most tender pieces of meat in the deer, and they are excellent for steak. To make the steaks, cut them into steak-sized pieces and butterfly them. A butterflying steak larger in diameter, but flatter than a butterfly, is cut on each side of the backbone and just for-ward of the pelvic area. The two tenderloins are free from the backbone. The two tenderloins are located on each side of the backbone and just forward of the pelvic area.