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Canned venison a better alternative to grinding your bounty

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Venison should be cut into cubes before put into canning jars

(PhysOrg.com) -- Deer hunting is an old tradition worth preserving, and when it comes to preserving venison, according to a food scientist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, an old traditional method for preserving meat might be best.

Too often, successful hunters will take their deer carcasses to the butcher and have all but the steaks ground, said Martin Bucknavage, senior extension associate in food science. "For all the effort put into hunting the deer, it's a shame that all we can show for it is hamburger patties that probably were blended with beef or pork," he said.

"One way to better utilize parts of the deer you would normally grind is by canning them. With little effort, you can take the shoulder or the hind quarter and convert it into a product that can be used in many meat

dishes."

Canning has a number of advantages, Bucknavage pointed out. For one, the canning process will make the tougher cuts of meat more tender. This process also serves to neutralize some of the strong, gamey flavor that can be associated with deer. Once canned, this venison is ready to be added to most any meat dish.

"You can add it to stew, chili or a meat casserole with little or no preparation of the meat," he said. "Having it in a canning jar also means that less of your freezer will be filled with packaged venison."

When canning venison, it is best to cut the meat into chunks or cubes, Bucknavage explained. Meat first should be trimmed to remove fat and connective tissue and then cut into 1- inch cubes. "There are two basic ways to can -- hot pack or cold pack," he said. "In hot pack, the chunks of meat are seared in a frying pan and then ladled into a jar along with boiling meat juices or broth. In the cold pack method, the chunks are packed loosely into a jar and the jar is sealed without adding any extra broth."

A pressure canner is a must if you are canning venison or any other meat, Bucknavage stressed. Once the jars are prepared, they are placed into the pressure canner, and following established processing procedures, the jars are heated under pressure for a given amount of time.

"Once complete, and the pressure canner is cooled, the jars are removed and stored for future use," he said. "Then, whenever you have a hankering for venison, it is on the shelf and ready to go. There are no worries about thawing out the meat, freezer burn or the venison being too tough to enjoy."

The National Center for Home Food Preservation website lists all of the processing times and temperatures for cubed meat or any other product you wish to preserve. It is important to follow these established processing times to prevent foodborne illness, Bucknavage said.

More information: Bucknavage suggested contacting your county Penn State Cooperative Extension office if you have questions about home canning. A series of online publications, titled "Let's Preserve," also is available for download. To access the publications, go to pubs.cas.psu.edu/Publications.asp and type "canning" into the title/description search field.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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