



Home from **THE HUNT.**

And Ready to Cook!

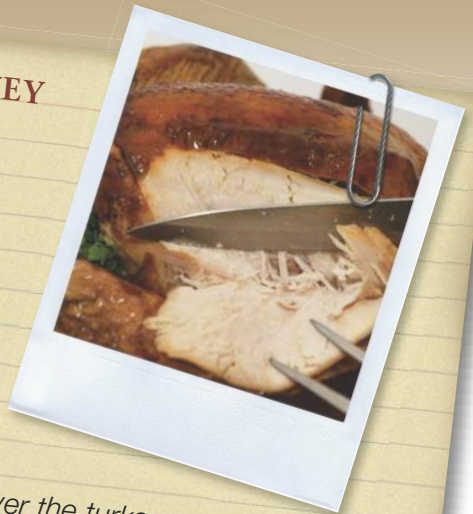


Buzzy Bunch's DRUNKEN WILD TURKEY

- 2 sticks butter, melted
- 1 cup Frank's Hot Sauce
- Cavender's Seasoning, to taste
- 24-ounce beer in a can, any brand will do

Mix butter and hot sauce together, then inject turkey liberally with the mixture. Use any left over to rub over the outside of the turkey, then coat the outside with Cavender's.

Open the beer, place on grill rack, then carefully lower the turkey onto the full can, so it's balanced and standing upright. Cook at about 250° until internal temperature reaches 160°-170°. Using heatproof gloves, grasp both the can and the turkey and remove to a platter. Holding the can steady (you might need an extra pair of hands for this) carefully pull the turkey up and off the can and place on a carving tray.



Dot McElveen, my mother-in-law, was good at a lot of things. Cooking was not one of her strongest skills, but she was okay with that and told many hilarious stories over the years about her exploits in the kitchen. Most ended with takeout. As Dot got older, she realized that she'd done her time in front of the stove and really didn't want to deal with getting dinner on the table, particularly when there were dozens of restaurants in Columbia that were happy to do it for her.

Perhaps Dot's best tactic for avoiding kitchen duty involved a large piece of venison that had made its way into the freezer. One morning, my father-in-law, Moody McElveen, suggested that they stay in for dinner. Agreeing, she headed to the basement, got out the venison and told him that it was about time she tackle it. Knowing her cooking skills, that was all he needed to hear and he quickly made reservations. She put the venison back in the freezer, knowing it might be useful for many years, which it was.

Just like any food, wild game can be horrible—gamey, dry, tough—if it's not cooked properly. The trick is to know how to handle it.

Chuck Salley, a commercial real estate broker in Columbia, has been hunting his whole life, and eating what he's killed. "Both of my parents were avid hunters, and my mother was an excellent wild game cook," he recalls. "She taught me that since game is a lot leaner than meat you get at the store, it can dry out quickly, so you don't want to cook it any more than to medium-rare or medium." Chuck also says that he's had the best luck either quickly searing the meat and letting it finish cooking as it rests or using gentle heat for a long time.

"If you know how to cook the meat, you can let the flavor speak for itself instead of covering it up with a heavy marinade."

— Chuck Salley

But Chuck and his mom weren't the only game cooks in the family. Brother Alex, who once was head chef at the Rice Paddy in Georgetown, has used his skills to create game dishes that, according to Chuck, are more like restaurant meals. Using those principles, the brothers have created sophisticated recipes for the game they kill. "If you know how to cook the meat, you can let the flavor speak for itself instead of covering it up with a heavy marinade."

Buzzy Bunch, owner of Blaze & Buzzy's Catering in Bamberg, also learned to cook game at family gatherings. "The whole family—grandparents on both sides, aunts, uncles and all the kids—would gather at one of our river camps on the Edisto and I'd watch them fry up venison with onions and potatoes, cook up catfish stew and grill pork loins. I learned from them."

Like Chuck Salley, Buzzy Bunch has put his own spin on family favorites. "We used to fry the turkeys, but I've found a way to grill them that keeps them even more moist than frying. We never fry them anymore." The recipe, a takeoff on chicken cooked over a beer can, uses butter and hot sauce for flavor. "You need

to add some fat to wild game, or else it'll be dry," he notes. "If anything seems like it might be too gamey, I do what my grandparents did and soak it in a mixture of mustard and water before I cook it. It will knock your socks off."

Although my mother-in-law wasn't a cook, my stepson Earle is, and his specialty is wild game. He developed the sweet & sour duck breast recipe over several seasons, and now feels that he's finally perfected it. ●

Piccata Sauce:

Add wine and juice from remaining lemon to pan. Turn heat to high and reduce by 1/4. Remove from heat and add capers and whisk in remaining butter. Plate the Turkey Piccata and drizzle sauce over strips.

Chuck Salley's WILD TURKEY PICCATA

- 1 wild turkey breast
- 2 lemons
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 2 egg yolks
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 stick butter
- 1 tablespoon capers

Combine egg yolks, juice from one lemon and Parmesan cheese into bowl and whisk until ingredients are well mixed (like batter).

Remove silver membrane and all ligaments from turkey breast. Cut breast into strips. Place strips on a chopping block and cover with Saran wrap. Using a meat mallet gently pound the strips until flattened. (Should look like a veal Piccata strip).

Dip turkey strips in Parmesan batter and remove. Dredge strips in flour (add salt and pepper). Cover bottom of non-reactive sauté pan with oil, add 1/4 stick of butter and turn on medium high.

When butter is melted and oil is hot, add turkey strips to pan. Turn heat down to medium, brown both sides of turkey (about four minutes per side). When brown, remove filets and place on cookie sheet lined with paper towel.

Earle McElveen's SWEET & SOUR DUCK

- 8-10 duck breasts, skin removed
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup red wine

Cut duck breasts into cubes and brown in the oil. Remove the duck, then sprinkle the flour into the drippings and stir for a few minutes to remove the raw taste of the flour. Add the water and stir until well blended and no lumps remaining. When the gravy is smooth, add the duck back into the pot, then add the brown sugar and the wine. Bring to a slow boil, then turn down the heat and simmer slowly for 20 minutes or so, stirring occasionally. Serve over wild rice.



Sweet & Sour Duck

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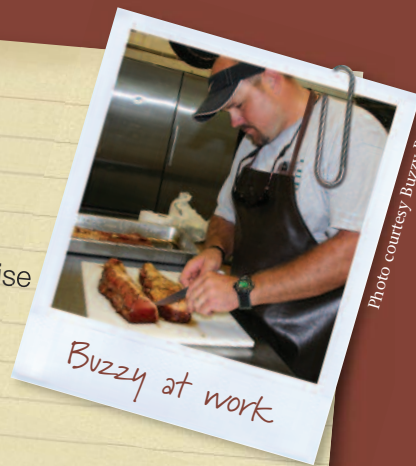
Buzzy Bunch's VENISON BACKSTRAP APPETIZER

Backstrap is the loin of the deer—the most tender part.

- 1 backstrap, cut into strips 2 x 3/4 inches
- 1 pound thick-sliced bacon, cut in half crosswise
- Dale's Seasoning
- Olive oil
- Banana or Jalapeno peppers, if desired, cut into strips 1 x 2 inches

Season meat liberally with McCormick Pepper Season-All and Cavender's. Mix one part Dale's with two parts teriyaki sauce, marinate seasoned meat in this mixture overnight.

Grill over high heat (300°-350°) for about 20 minutes per side, until internal temperature reads 145°. Remove from grill, let rest under a tent of foil for a few minutes and serve.



Buzzy at work

Photo courtesy Buzzy Bunch



Photo courtesy Chuck Salley

▲ Chuck Salley shows off what makes “early to bed, early to rise” all worth it.

Formerly a writer for **Gourmet** and **Modern Bride**, Katie McElveen is a freelance writer based in Columbia. Since 2006, Katie also has been our cooking columnist.

Find more wild game recipes at sandlapper.org.