Small game for dinner

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# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Game meat and domestic meat</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling freshly killed small game</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling small game in the kitchen</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game cookery</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook young and tender game by dry heat</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook old and less tender and tough game by moist heat</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge quality and tenderness of game</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook fresh, well-conditioned, choice game</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible ways to increase the tenderness of tough game</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking time influences tenderness, juiciness and flavor of game</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check for doneness</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use basic recipes for cooking small game</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make each game dinner an occasion</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic recipes for cooking game by dry heat</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roasting small game</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broiling small game</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination broiling and roasting small game</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panbroiling small game</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frying small game</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic recipes for cooking game by moist heat cookery</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braised small game</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaded small game</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pot-roasted small game</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small game stew</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simmered small game dinner</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oven-grilled small game</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuffings for game</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squirrels</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbits</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raccoons</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opossum</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musquash or muskrat</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 1. Roast small game for a choice holiday dinner. This 10-pound corn-fed raccoon, too large for the oven and roasted in two parts, owes its crisp, crackly surface to flour, dusted lightly over the surface after each basting.

Too large for a turkey platter, the roasted raccoon was served on a large tray with the joining of the halves camouflaged with parsley sprigs.
Do you like to eat game? Much of the unfavorable reaction which some people have to game as food is due to prejudice founded on little or no knowledge of wildlife.

After experimenting with the cooking of squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, opossums and musquash (muskrats) in the food laboratories at Iowa State College, and serving each game dish to a selected tasting panel (see acknowledgments), we concluded that the handling of the kill—both hunted and trapped—is as important as the cooking. If the game isn’t properly killed and handled, it won’t be good, no matter how you cook it. We have therefore devoted several pages to the handling of freshly killed small game, before discussing the cooking of game.

About 15 of the 56 kinds of wild mammals found in Iowa are taken for food or fur. Squirrels, rabbits (cottontails and jack rabbits), woodchucks (ground hogs) and deer are classed as game food mammals and have little value as fur bearers. Musquash (muskrats), raccoons, opossums and beavers are listed as fur and food mammals.

The edible small game mammals are not equally popular as food. Woodchucks, seldom eaten in Iowa, are a favorite game food in other states. Beavers, once almost extinct within the state, are considered a good food in many states. Deer are protected the year round.

GAME MEAT AND DOMESTIC MEAT

Regardless of source, all kinds of meat are essentially alike in their food value and place in the diet, in their care and preparation when slaughtered and in their cookery and service. Game meat, in common with all other meat, is an excellent source of high quality proteins. Game supplies other essentials for health and growth such as fats (unsaturated fatty acids), minerals (phosphorus, iron and copper) and some of the B vitamins (thiamine, niacin and riboflavin).

Game meat differs from domestic meat in flavor. Each

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1Research Associate, Iowa State College Industrial Science Research Institute Project No. 47 and Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station Project No. 839.
type of game and domestic animal has its own distinctive aroma and flavor. These are more pronounced in some species than in others, in some animals of the same species and in different parts of the same carcass. Flavor is more strongly marked in the older and more active animals, in the exercised muscles, in fat meat and in meat ripened for a long period. Many of the qualities of game meats can be attributed to the type of life the animals live and to their food. They live in the open. They are largely sanitary in their food and living habits. They are vegetarians chiefly, living mostly on plants, grasses, seeds, fruits and berries; soil, climatic conditions and seasons determine the character and choice of their food. Most game meats are at their best when the grains are harvested and after the first heavy frost. The flesh is likely to be “strong” or “high” during the breeding season.

HANDLING FRESHLY KILLED SMALL GAME

The success of a game dinner depends to a great extent upon the treatment the animal received when killed. Every slaughtered animal (game or domestic) requires prompt and proper bleeding, dressing and cooling under sanitary conditions to produce quality meat. Fundamentally, the methods for handling all animals are similar, though the technique will vary for each species and with each individual worker. Much good game has been ruined on the hunt. Good equipment for caring for the kill is important. Many hunters today include in their kit a good knife, tissues, wrapping paper, bags, clean cloths, string, soap and a disinfectant such as formaldehyde.

Several of the small game mammals are susceptible to infections, some of which can be transmitted to man. These are less likely to exist after the first heavy frost and during cold weather. A cautious hunter is interested in lively game only. He will avoid cutting himself while handling any game and will wear rubber gloves if he has any cuts or wounds on his hands. Thorough washing of the hands in strong soapy water, followed by the use of a disinfectant after dressing game, reduces the danger of any infection.
Reasons for each step rather than the technique for dressing game are stressed below. The facts given are well established through practices observed by many hunters and from research done in the handling of freshly killed domestic animals and fowls.

1. Bleed each game if necessary. The flesh of a poorly bled carcass is likely to be soft, watery and poor in flavor.
   (a) Bleeding usually is adequate in a small animal that has been shot, especially if it is eviscerated promptly. Holding it by the hind legs or head helps to drain the blood from the warm body.
   (b) Bleeding of a small game animal trapped for its fur can be difficult, especially when it is killed by drowning. The flesh can be made palatable by emptying the traps frequently (once or several times a day) and by skinning and eviscerating the animal promptly and carefully.

2. Remove the entrails as soon as possible, especially if punctured, to prevent tainting of the flesh and to reduce bacterial action and spoilage. Bagged squirrels, rabbits, woodchucks and other small game usually are disemboweled in the field while still warm. Wipe out the cavities with clean paper, cloth or grass and remove all blood clots. Do not wash the game in the field. Water softens the flesh and makes it more susceptible to bacterial action.

   Examine the liver of each animal, the rabbit in particular, for possible infections. The liver of a healthy animal is clear and dark red in color, firm and free from spots. The liver and heart of healthy animals are highly nutritious and make good eating when fresh. They are more perishable than muscle. Clean and wrap them in waxed paper. Do not place them in the cavity of a warm carcass. Allow them to cool in the air.

   Small white cyst-like spots, the size of a pea or smaller, on the liver may indicate the presence of tularemia or rabbit fever infection. Burn or bury deep all infected carcasses. Thorough cleansing of the hands is essential after handling an infected carcass. Tularemia may occur as a natural infection in over 20 different types of wild animals.
3. For easy removal, skin small fur-bearing game while warm. Squirrels and rabbits are skinned either in the field or as soon as they are brought home. Animals trapped for their fur should be skinned as soon as possible either at camp or at home. If small game are transported for any distance or if they are hung outside a camp to age or freeze, the skins should not be removed. The skin protects against contamination and excessive drying.

(a) Peel or pull off the skin with care. Stray hair on the surface may be a source of contamination. Remove any stray hair with a damp cloth.

(b) Remove scent or musk glands found on many of the fur-bearing small mammals if they do not come off with the pelts. They are likely to permeate and impart a strong flavor to the flesh if not removed promptly. These kernels or glands (small, waxy or reddish colored), located under the forelegs and along the spine or under the lower part of the abdomen, frequently come off with the skin. Cut out all imbedded glands, removing them always intact so as not to taint the flesh with a strong musk flavor.

(c) Keep each carcass skinned in the field clean and protected from drying out. Drop it into a paper or cloth bag or wrap it.

4. Cool freshly killed game promptly and thoroughly and keep it cold. Microorganisms, present everywhere, quickly attack a warm surface.

(a) Avoid stacking warm game animals or jamming them into bags, jacket pockets or trunks. Carry on outside or spread over floor of car to air thoroughly and draw out body heat.

(b) Keep cooled game cold in camp. Hang the protected carcasses (unskinned or wrapped if skinned) outside in the shade with free circulation of air.

(c) To ship game mammals by express, ice the chilled game thoroughly. Pack frozen game in dry ice; seal in moisture-proof cartons. Consult the express company for special instructions and observe the state laws regarding shipping and storing of game.
5. Group and label the freshly bagged small game mammals as to sex and age. No experienced hunter picks up his game without thinking of it in terms of its flavor and tenderness. The older animals usually are gamy and tough; the young ones, less gamy and more tender. The young (under 1 year) are lighter in weight and their bodies are more flexible after stiffening (rigor) passes. They are likely to have rather sharp, long and pointed claws (not blunt), soft and pliable ears (not tough and hard), bright and sharp but incomplete sets of teeth (not broken off or worn down), small clefts in upper lips (rabbits) and small paunches. These differences are much less marked in game between the ages of 1, 2 and 3 years.

HANDLING SMALL GAME IN THE KITCHEN

With the family cooperating, little time is lost in finishing the dressing of each carcass started in the field. When completed, the carcass should be table dressed (oven or pan dressed) and ready for aging, freezing or cooking without any additional cleaning. An oven-dressed carcass is ready for stuffing, if desired, and the roasting pan. A pan-dressed carcass is ready for the broiler, the frying pan, griddle or kettle; the carcass may be split in half down the back and along the breastbone and each half left whole or divided, or it may be disjointed and cut in pieces for serving.

1. Table-dress every carcass. Clean the eviscerated and skinned carcass thoroughly, removing all hair, any lung or other tissues which may have been left and any imbedded shots. Remove all blood clots and injured or mutilated tissues. Cut off all visible fat if it is “strong” or objectionably gamy. Rub the carcass with baking soda or a mild soap and wash the carcass thoroughly under running water but do not allow it to stand in water. Drain and dry. A moist surface encourages mold and bacterial action. Leave whole or pan-dress. For storing meat see page 198, point 9.

2. Soak a poorly bled carcass in a weak brine (¼ c. salt to 1 gallon of water) for a day or longer in a cold place, the refrigerator if possible; change the brine as necessary to draw out the blood. Drain and dry thoroughly.
3. Hold game for several days in a cold place (between 32° and 40° F.) to age or “season” and to increase in tenderness. As soon as the animal is killed a natural breaking down of the tissues begins and continues as long as the meat is held in storage. Age or ripen only quality or well-conditioned game (page 200)—never a poorly bled carcass—for a week or longer. Short-time aging of small game is done today in the home refrigerator. Wrap the dressed carcass in fresh meat wrapping paper which is porous; a limited amount of drying of the surface and some circulation of air are desirable for keeping the meat fresh.

4. Plan to cook game as soon as it is ripened to your liking unless you enjoy it “high.” Game continues to age and tends to increase in gaminess as long as it is held in storage.

5. Freeze table-dressed small game carcasses in home freezer or locker plant if they are to be held for any length of time. Wrap each fresh or aged carcass tightly in moisture-proof paper to prevent drying out of flesh; place paper between halves or pieces, stack and wrap. Quick freeze and store at 0° F. or lower according to instructions prepared by the state agricultural college, the experiment station or the extension service. Ripening takes place very slowly in the solidly frozen game.

6. Thaw frozen game by leaving it in the original wrapper in the refrigerator. Allow 4 to 5 hours for game weighing 1 pound or more. A large raccoon will require from 16 to 24 hours for total thawing. For more rapid thawing leave wrapped carcass at room temperature or unwrap carcass and place under cold running water, removing it as soon as it is pliable enough to handle.

7. Cook frozen game soon after it is thawed. Frozen game that has been thawed spoils more quickly than game that has not been frozen. Cook it like freshly dressed game.

8. Never refreeze frozen game when once thawed. Both flavor and texture will be greatly impaired.

9. Cover table-dressed game loosely with paper when storing it for a day or two in the refrigerator. Oven-dressed
game will keep fresh longer than pan-dressed or ground game. Place leftover cooked game in covered dish or wrap it to prevent drying out of the meat.

**GAME COOKERY**

All edible game (fresh and properly handled) can be made tender and palatable, cooked by either dry heat or moist heat. The choice of method for cooking each game carcass is determined by its quality or grade and relative tenderness.

**COOK YOUNG AND TENDER GAME BY DRY HEAT**

Young and tender game are at their best when cooked by dry heat (uncovered and with no moisture added) as in roasting, broiling (in broiler or over glowing coals), pan-broiling and frying (panfrying, shallow and deep-fat frying). Dry heat (basting with additional fat when meat is lean) develops and preserves game flavor.

![Fig. 2. Broil young, tender, choice game as you broil a choice steak —in the broiler or over the open fire. Cook at moderate heat until well done, basting generously with butter or drippings. When browned on top side, the halves are easily turned with tongs.](image)
Old and tough game are best cooked by moist heat (covered and with moisture added) as in braising, stewing and simmering. Moist heat softens connective tissue (collagen) and if prolonged, dissolves some of it; with the addition of seasoning, it decreases and modifies game flavor. Moist heat cooks the game by steam from its own juices or from a small amount of liquid added to the meat (browned or not browned) as in braising. Swiss steaks and pot roasts are cooked by braising. Game stews, fricassées, cooked or “boiled” game are prepared by simmering (below the boiling point) in hot liquid which partially or entirely covers the meat.

JUDGE QUALITY AND TENDERNESS OF GAME

Every experienced cook judges the tenderness and palatability of a meat by its grade or quality. More than 50 percent of the meat markets carry graded domestic meats. Factors such as age, sex, feed, climate, soil conditions, season and activity have a definite bearing on the quality of every animal. The measuring rule—conformation, finish and quality—used in judging quality in domestic meats, applies equally well in the grading of game. One who has learned to recognize quality in domestic meats detects differences in game carcasses and quickly grades them as to quality and tenderness by the same measuring rule. Each type of game is different, and standards for each will be established with experience.

Conformation refers to the build, shape or outline of a carcass. A plump, stocky or compact carcass with full loins, well covered ribs and thick shoulders is more desirable than one that is rangy and angular. Game animals are likely to be rangy with large abdomens and prominent and bony ribs.

Finish refers to the amount, quality, color and distribution of the fat. A generous covering of smooth, firm, creamy fat over the exterior surface and a visible intermingling of fat and lean (marbling) indicate the best finish.

Quality refers to the character of the fat, muscle, bone; each varies with the age, activity and food of the animal and
affects its tenderness and palatability. Game show little if any marbling. A firm (not oily), clear, light colored fat indicates a well-conditioned and young game. Muscle that is firm, resilient, smooth, bright colored, fine grained with a small amount of connective tissue, is the mark of a young, juicy and tender carcass. The bones of young animals, especially the backbone (chine), are reddish rather than white, soft and pliable—not hard, brittle or flinty; the ends of the ribs are soft and easily bent. See page 197 for characteristics a hunter looks for in judging the age and tenderness of his prey.

COOK FRESH, WELL-CONDITIONED, CHOICE GAME

Meats are a perishable food. Inspect each carcass or each piece for freshness before cooking it, especially if it has been held in the refrigerator several days before and several days after dressing.

1. **Check every carcass** for off odors or sour or tainted spots, around the bones especially, and cut them away. Soft or oily fat becomes rancid with storage, and bruised or congested parts spoil quickly. Remove fat if “strong.” Trim off any darkened surface and slight mold or slickness; rub with soda, rinse well and dry. Wipe fresh carcass with a damp cloth; washing of a table-dressed carcass (page 197) is not necessary.

2. **Soak a “strong” or poorly bled carcass** in a dilute salt or acid solution to remove some of the flavor and blood. Soak for several hours or overnight in the refrigerator or in a cool place; change the solution as needed. An acid solution modifies the flavor and darkens the meat.

3. **Parboil only “strong” or “fishy” game** to reduce gamy flavor when it is objectionable.

4. **Do not soak or parboil a well-conditioned game carcass**; some of the soluble nutrients (proteins, minerals and vitamins) are removed and the game flavor is reduced.

POSSIBLE WAYS TO INCREASE THE TENDERNESS OF TOUGH GAME

Several different methods of treating or preparing meats before or during cooking are used to increase their tender-
ness and palatability. Those most commonly used and equally effective in tenderizing game are discussed here.

1. **Aging or ripening** (page 198) increases the tenderness of game by a partial breaking down of the tissues and by increasing the acidity of the flesh. If game has not been aged, wrap it and store it in the refrigerator for several days before using it.

2. **Freezing** tenderizes by rupturing the tissues as the liquid (bound water) in the meat swells in freezing. A freezing temperature of $-10^\circ F$ or lower has been found to be more effective in tenderizing domestic meat than a temperature of $0^\circ F$.

3. **Grinding, scoring or pounding** the meat (with bone removed) tenderizes mechanically by cutting and breaking the muscle fibers and connective tissue. Ground game made into patties or loaf and scored meat are cooked by the same methods (broiling, frying and baking) used for tender game; pounded meat may be cooked in a short time by frying or braising.

4. **Marinating** in a vinegar solution ($\frac{1}{4}$ part vinegar, $\frac{3}{4}$ part water) tenderizes by breaking down the protein of the meats.

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**Fig. 3.** Try patties for older and tougher game and for those less desirable pieces. Plain broiled or barbecued, they are good for snacks, out-of-door or indoor eating.
part water, sugar and seasoning) in the refrigerator for 72 hours or longer, as for sauerbraten, will tenderize game; the acid penetrates slowly throughout the muscle. The connective tissue (collagen) is more quickly softened when the meat is acid and when it is cooked in the vinegar solution.

5. Adding acid (tomato juice or sour cream) to stews or Swiss steak has little or no tenderizing effect unless the meat is cut up in small pieces and simmered for a long time.

6. Lower cooking temperature has been found to increase the tenderness of game whether in roasting, broiling, frying, braising or stewing; the game is more juicy and palatable when cooked at a low rather than a high temperature.

7. Cooking tough game in the pressure saucepan or cooker cooks the meat quickly in steam at a high temperature (240° F. at 10 pounds pressure, 250° at 15 pounds) and leaves it tender when correctly timed and operated. The time required for cooking will depend upon the quality of the game and the pressure used. Use the cooker according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

COOKING TIME INFLUENCES TENDERNESS, JUICINESS AND FLAVOR OF GAME

Overcooking makes game tough, dry and less palatable. Most of the small game mammals should be cooked until well done but not overdone. Juiciness and flavor decrease and shrinkage increases with prolonged cooking. Basting with drippings or additional fat in roasting or broiling shortens the cooking period and increases the palatability of game which is lacking in fat.

CHECK FOR DONENESS

1. Use minutes per pound or total cooking time for roasting, broiling, frying, braising and stewing as an approximate guide only. Many factors affect the cooking time—cooking temperature; size, shape, fatness (surface covering may shorten, marbling may increase time); the initial temperature of the carcass; cooking meat covered or uncovered; the degree of doneness. When the time used is combined with practical tests for doneness, a chart can be developed which will serve as a real guide in cooking many game.
2. **Using a meat thermometer to measure the internal temperature** of the meat is the most accurate guide for determining when meat is cooked, especially in roasting. At an internal temperature of 185°-190° F, the game is well done. The thermometer, however, is difficult to use with game because of the small muscles. Insert the meat thermometer into the thick part of the muscle of the thigh of a large carcass. It should not touch bone and fat, and the bulb should be in the center of the muscle. By experimenting with putting the thermometer into the stuffing or into or between the thigh and body of a trussed carcass, a more satisfactory way for using a thermometer may be developed.

3. **Check for doneness** by several practical tests. In roasting, game is well done when the flesh shrinks slightly from the bone and skin, when the joints are easily moved and the flesh is soft when pressed with fingers. In broiling, frying, braising or stewing, pierce the muscle with a sharp skewer or fork, or slash it close to the bone; if the cut surface or the juice which oozes out is a uniform brownish gray or light color, the game is well done. Red or pink juice or flesh indicates rare or medium rare game.

**USE BASIC RECIPES FOR COOKING SMALL GAME**

In principle, the methods used for cooking all meats—domestic or wild—are the same, whether by dry heat or moist heat. The recipe pattern given for each method is based on experimental work done in the foods laboratory at Iowa State College with the different species of small game. Basic methods established for meat cookery were followed. Each recipe emphasizes temperature control and cooking at a low temperature (pages 206 to 213).

1. Judge the number of servings in a small or large carcass by its weight. The dressed carcass weight will average from 45 to 60 percent of its original weight. Allow from \( \frac{1}{2} \) to 1 pound dressed weight for each serving.

2. Preserve, enhance, supplement or modify game flavor by a wise choice and skillful blending of flavors (condiments,
herbs, spices, hot sauces and vegetables) in stews, and in braised, barbecued and baked dishes. Use them sparingly. Taste each dish before serving it.

MAKE EACH GAME DINNER AN OCCASION

With each member of the family participating in the planning, preparation and serving of the game dinner—company or family—each game dinner becomes a memorable occasion. With imaginations vying and enthusiasm running high, the bringing home of new game becomes an anticipated event and another incentive for fun and festivity.

1. Plan the table setting, menu and service around the game.

2. Arrange decorations suggestive of the out-of-doors or of the life of the game.

3. Follow the suggestions given (with each recipe) for foods to serve with each game as a guide only. Vary these to suit each member and to use foods that are in season and easily available.

4. Add interest to the meal by combining foods of contrasting color and texture.

5. Avoid serving the same food or same type of food in different forms in the same meal such as corn and corn bread; potatoes and other starchy foods—rice, macaroni or noodles.

6. Keep the dessert simple, light and appropriate to complete the meal; it should not climax it.

7. Serve the prepared game dish hot on a heated platter, in a bowl, tureen, casserole or baking dish.

8. Keep garnishes simple and few for easy carving and serving. Use parsley sprigs, fresh lettuce or celery leaves, water cress or curly endive, crisp celery or carrot curls, radishes, onion or green pepper rings, broiled or spiced orange or pineapple slices, apple rings, prunes, figs, etc.

9. Simplify carving and serving by supplying suitable tools. To carve roasted game (whole), split with shears (game, poultry or kitchen shears) along breast- and backbone and serve halves or quarters, or disjoint and serve one or several pieces.
ROASTING SMALL GAME
(Tender, Young, Quality Grade)

1. Use oven-dressed carcass. If too large for oven, cut in half crosswise.

2. Rub inside and outside with cut surface of onion, garlic, lemon or lime; season with salt, pepper, herbs and spices as desired.

3. Fill (do not pack) cavity with stuffing if desired (your favorite or see pages 214-215). Sew or lace edges together with small skewers (pointed thin nails) and string; fasten cheesecloth over cut ends of halves to hold dressing in place.

4. Truss and place carcass (crouched or on side) on greased rack in shallow pan or oven broiler pan. Brush lean carcass generously with fat (half butter); cover with cloth dipped in melted fat; if legs are very lean, wind each with strips soaked in fat to prevent drying out; basting is not necessary unless cloth dries out.

5. Roast in slow to moderate oven (300°-350° F.) for 1 to 4 hours, or until well done (pages 203-204). For lean game use 300°-325° F.; for fat game, 325°-350° F. Remove cloth the last 20 to 30 minutes to brown, basting with fat in pan or additional fat and dusting lightly with flour after each basting for a crisp surface.

6. Remove skewers, stitchings or lacings, and place on heated platter; keep hot. Put halves together and cover the joined pieces with broiled bacon or parsley sprigs; keep garnishes simple. Serve hot.

BROILING SMALL GAME
(Tender, Young, Quality Grade)

1. Split oven-dressed carcass in half; break ribs as needed to flatten pieces.

2. Brush lean pieces with a mixture of butter and drippings or a marinade (French dressing or salad oil and lemon juice or vinegar) ½ hour or longer before broiling.

3. Broil at moderate heat in broiler or over glowing coals, browning both sides and basting several times with drip-
pings or additional fat. Allow 1/2 to 1 hour for total broiling; meat should be well done (page 204).

4. Remove to heated platter, season, brush with butter, sprinkle with lemon juice, or pour pan drippings over meat. Serve at once.

**Broiling Game in Broiler**

Turn the oven regulator to broil or follow directions of manufacturer; preheat if desired. Place halves (skinned side down) on greased rack with top surface of game meat about 3 inches from source of heat. Broil until top is browned; meat should be about half done. To maintain a moderate temperature (350° F.) leave oven door ajar or open, or lower the broiler pan as needed to reduce the heat. Baste once. Season, turn and brush with fat; brown other side, basting once.

**COMBINATION BROILING AND ROASTING SMALL GAME**

(For Quantity Broiling)

1. Prepare game as for broiling.

2. Place halves or pieces about 2 inches from heat. Brown quickly, allowing about 5 minutes for each side.

3. Place broiler pan with browned pieces in slow oven (250°-300° F.) to finish cooking. Allow slightly longer time for total cooking than for true broiling.

4. Season, remove to heated platters, spread with butter or pour pan drippings over pieces. Serve at once.

**PANBROILING SMALL GAME**

(Tender, Young, Quality Grade)

1. Prepare game as for broiling.

2. Place pieces in heavy frying pan or on griddle, rubbing bottom of pan with fat if game is very lean. Cook (uncovered) slowly.

3. Turn occasionally for even browning and cooking on both sides.

4. Pour off fat if any accumulates. Only a film of fat should cover pan to prevent lean pieces from sticking. Allow from 30 to 50 minutes or cook until well done (page 204).

5. Season, remove to heated platter, brush with butter or pour pan drippings over pieces. Serve at once.
Broiling Game Over Glowing Coals

Place halves on grid over hot coals; or spear meaty pieces and hold over hot coals. Broil until done, turning to brown both sides, basting or swabbing several times with drippings.

FRYING SMALL GAME
(Tender, Young, Quality Grade)

1. Cut game (table dressed) in pieces for serving. Dredge in seasoned flour; or coat with flour, egg and crumbs and chill thoroughly; or dip in batter (1 cup flour, 1 egg, 1/2 teaspoon salt and about 3/4 cup milk).

2. Panfry or fry in shallow fat or deep fat, keeping fat below the smoking point and cooking game at moderate heat until browned, crisp and well done (page 204).

3. Remove from fat, drain on absorbent paper and serve hot on heated platter with a cream, mushroom, tomato or barbecue sauce.

Panfrying Small Game

Use a heavy frying pan with small amount of fat. Brown prepared pieces of game on both sides. Cook (uncovered) at moderate heat until well done, turning occasionally for even cooking. Allow 1/2 to 1 hour for total frying.

Frying Small Game in Shallow Fat

Use a heavy frying pan with a 1/2 to 1-inch layer of fat covering bottom; heat to about 350° F. (not smoking hot). Brown prepared pieces of game on both sides. Reduce heat and cook (uncovered) for 25 to 40 minutes, turning occasionally for even cooking.

Frying Small Game in Deep Fat (French Fried)

Use a heavy deep kettle with frying basket; add fat enough to completely cover the pieces of game while cooking. Heat fat to moderate (350°-365° F.). Cover bottom of basket with uniform pieces of game and lower into hot fat. Cook (without turning) until pieces are browned, crisp and well done, allowing 15 to 25 minutes.

To fry a quantity of game, remove pieces to shallow pan when lightly browned and finish cooking (uncovered) in moderately slow oven (300°-325° F.) for 30 to 45 minutes or until well done.
BASIC RECIPES FOR COOKING GAME BY MOIST HEAT COOKERY

BRAISED SMALL GAME
(Less Tender and Older Game)

1. Flour meaty pieces of pan-dressed game if desired.
2. Brown slowly in a small amount of fat in a heavy frying pan or Dutch oven, turning to brown all sides.
3. Season with salt, pepper, herbs and spices as desired. Add a small amount of liquid (1 to 2 tablespoons)—use water, stock, milk, cream (sweet or sour) or tomato juice.
4. Cover pan tightly and cook at simmering temperature (below boiling) over low heat or in a slow oven (250°-300° F.) until meat is tender and well done (page 204). Turn meat occasionally and add just enough water as needed to steam the meat. Allow 1 to 1½ hours for total cooking. Remove cover when nearly done to brown and crisp surface.
5. Remove meat to heated platter. Serve hot with gravy made from drippings and liquid in pan. (Page 216.)

BREADED SMALL GAME
(Less Tender, Older)

1. Dredge meaty pieces (pan-dressed carcass) in seasoned flour; dip in egg slightly beaten with 1 tablespoon water; roll in fine bread crumbs. Chill thoroughly.
2. Brown slowly in small amount of fat and simmer as for braising, adding just enough water (as needed) to steam the meat. Turn carefully to keep coating whole. Remove cover when nearly done to brown and crisp surface.
3. Serve hot on heated platter with pan gravy.

POT-ROASTED SMALL GAME
(Less Tender, Older)

1. Stuff and truss oven-dressed carcass, if desired, and dredge with flour.
2. Brown, season, cover and simmer as for braising (above), turning frequently to brown and cook evenly. Add ¼ cup liquid at a time or just enough to cook the meat in steam. Allow 1 to 4 hours for total cooking.
3. Remove meat to heated platter. Serve hot with gravy made from drippings and liquid in pan.
SMALL GAME STEW
(Older, Less Tender or Tough)

1. Use pieces of pan-dressed carcass cut in smaller pieces; or remove meat from bone and cut in cubes or strips.

2. For brown stew, dredge pieces in flour and brown slowly in a small amount of fat, turning to brown all sides; for light stew, omit the flour and browning.

3. Season meat (browned or not browned) with salt, pepper, herbs and spices as desired. Barely cover the meat with liquid, water or stock.

4. Cover kettle or Dutch oven tightly and simmer (below boiling) until meat is tender, allowing 1 to 3 hours for total cooking. Add vegetables (whole, diced, sliced or in strips) to the meat when nearly done, cooking them until just tender.

Remove meat and vegetables to a heated platter or vegetable dish and keep hot. Thicken stock with a smooth paste of flour and water (1 to 2 tablespoons flour to 1 cup liquid); pour over meat and vegetables or serve in a heated bowl.

SIMMERED SMALL GAME DINNER
(Older, Less Tender or Tough)

1. Flour oven-dressed carcass if desired. Browning in a small amount of fat is optional; cover with water or stock, hot or cold. Season with salt, pepper, herbs and spices as desired.

2. Cover kettle and simmer (below boiling) until tender, allowing 2 to 4 hours for total cooking. For “boiled” dinner add prepared vegetables when meat is nearly done, cooking them until just tender.

3. Remove meat to heated platter and arrange vegetables around it. Serve hot. If desired, serve it with a gravy made from part of the stock and highly seasoned.

4. Cool the meat in the stock if served cold; it will be more juicy and flavorful and will shrink less if cooled in the stock.

Barbecued Game Kabobs

Substitute Barbecue Sauce (page 216) for fat and lemon juice and proceed as for Game Kabobs.
211

Game Kabobs

(Broiling Small Game, page 206)

2 pounds game (squirrel, rabbit, raccoon or musquash)  
1/4 cup fat (butter and drippings)  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 medium onion  
2 tomatoes  
1/4 pound salt pork or bacon slices  
Mushroom caps, optional

1. Bone pieces of tender game and cut in 1 1/2 inch squares. Brush well with fat and lemon juice and let stand 30 minutes. Cut onions and tomatoes in thick slices. Partially fry or broil pork or bacon; cut in 1 1/2 inch squares.

2. On long skewers, green sticks or picnic spears, thread (loosely and in succession) pieces of game, onion, pork or bacon, tomato and mushroom. Repeat using four pieces of game and three each of the vegetables and pork or bacon. Brush with sauce.

3. Broil at moderate heat in broiler or over glowing coals, basting or swabbing (cloth wound on a stick and dipped in fat) frequently with fat and turning as needed for even broiling. Allow 30 to 35 minutes.

4. For out-of-door eating serve on skewers with toasted buns, crisp relishes and dill pickles and with broiled apples or pineapple and marshmallow kabobs.

OVEN-GRILLED SMALL GAME

(Young, Tender, Quality Grade)

1. Use oven-dressed game. Quarter squirrels, rabbits and musquash; cut raccoons in pieces for serving and use only meaty pieces. Rub with cut surface of garlic, lemon or lime 1/2 hour before cooking.

2. Cover bottom of heavy frying pan or 2-inch deep baking pan with a 1/2 to 1-inch layer of fat (part butter) and heat in very hot oven (450°-500° F.) about 10 minutes. Place pieces in hot fat and roast 25 to 30 minutes or until well done, basting every 5 minutes with fat and turning when browned.

3. Remove, drain on absorbent paper, season, arrange on heated platter. Garnish with parsley and broiled orange.

4. Serve hot with mushroom sauce, Fried or Popped Wild Rice (page 216), buttered spinach or snap beans, cabbage salad, toasted rolls and apricot conserve.
**Game Loaf or Ring**

(6 servings)

1 1/2 pounds game meat (squirrel, rabbit, hare or raccoon)  
2 ounces salt pork  
1 small onion, chopped  
2 stalks celery, chopped  
1 1/2 cups bread cubes or 1 cup cooked rice  
1 egg, slightly beaten  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
Dash of cayenne  
1/2 teaspoon thyme, marjoram or sage  
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
1/4 to 1/2 cup milk

1. Use less tender game; cut meat off bones, add pork and grind fine—twice if necessary. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Fry small sample to check seasoning.

2. Pack into greased bread loaf pan or ring mold. Bake in slow oven (300°-325° F.) for 1 1/2 hours or until browned and loaf shrinks slightly from pan. With “strong” or gamy meat brush several times during baking with a mixture of 1/4 cup ketchup and 1/2 teaspoon mustard.

3. Unmold on heated platter or large plate; garnish with parsley. Arrange browned potatoes and buttered snap beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts or carrots around meat; fill center of ring with buttered or creamed vegetable (cubed or small). Serve with a savory sauce, tossed green or grapefruit salad, spoon bread and chokecherry preserves.

**Game Pie**

(Small Game Stew, page 210)  
(4 to 6 servings)  

2 to 3 pounds game (rabbit, squirrel or raccoon)  
1/4 cup chopped onion  
1/2 cup chopped celery  
1/2 cup peas or carrots  
1 to 2 cups cubed potatoes  
1/2 cup cooked rice  
1 tablespoon flour  
2 to 3 tablespoons butter  
1/4 to 1/2 cup milk  
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
Pastry or biscuit dough

1. Use older game; disjoint and use pieces less desirable for braising. Brown in fat (half butter); add water to cover and seasonings. Cover and simmer 1 to 2 hours, or until tender. Remove meat, separate from bones and place in casserole or baking dish. (Vary the seasonings as desired.)

2. Cook vegetables about 10 minutes in stock; scatter on meat in casserole. (Other vegetable combinations can be
used.) Thicken remaining stock by browning flour in butter, adding stock (1 to 1 1/2 cups) and milk, and cooking until thickened. Pour over meat and vegetables.

3a. Cover with pastry (1/2 the usual recipe) rolled 1/8 inch thick; cut gashes in crust for escape of steam. Bake in hot oven (400° F.) about 20 minutes or until crust is browned.

3b. Or cover with biscuit dough (usual recipe) rolled 1/2 inch thick and cut into rounds. Bake in hot oven (425° F.) about 30 minutes, or until browned.

Well-seasoned mashed white or sweet potatoes may be used as covering; brush with butter and milk and heat in moderate oven (350° F.) until browned.

4. Serve game pie hot from casserole with baked corn-stuffed tomatoes or green peppers, a fresh or molded fruit salad, and finger rolls.

**Jugged Game**

*(Stewing Small Game, page 210)*

*(6 to 8 servings)*

2 to 3 pounds game (rabbit, raccoon, musquash)  
1 1/2 to 2 teaspoons salt  
1/8 teaspoon pepper  
1/2 cup flour  
1/2 cup chopped celery  
1/4 cup chopped parsley  
2 to 3 cups water  
1/2 cup rice  
2 tablespoons butter  
1 1/2 to 2 teaspoons thyme or marjoram  
1/2 bay leaf  
2 tablespoons ketchup  
1/2 lemon, sliced  
2 to 3 medium onions  
1/2 to 3 cloves

1. Use less tender game; disjoint or cut in pieces for serving. Dredge in seasoned flour. Fry in hot fat 10 to 15 minutes, turning to brown well. Remove meat to large bean jug or casserole.

2. Sauté celery, parsley and rice in drippings in pan, stirring to brown rice evenly. Add 2 cups water and boil 10 minutes; pour over meat in jug. Stick cloves in onions and place on meat. Add remaining seasonings and lemon, adding water if necessary to cover all. Cover tightly.

3. Bake in slow oven (275°-300° F.) for 2 1/2 to 3 hours, or until meat is very tender, adding hot water as needed. Thicken with remaining seasoned flour; add butter and season to taste.

4. Serve hot from jug or pot with parsley buttered carrots, coleslaw, Boston brown bread and apple butter.
Fig. 4. Try “jugged game” for all tough and strong game. Note how well browned the musquash pieces are as they disappear into the bean jug. With the variety of seasonings on the tray and with long slow cooking, any game can be made tender and palatable.

STUFFINGS FOR GAME

Savory Stuffing

(6 to 8 cups)

1 cup chopped onions

\( \frac{3}{4} \) cup chopped celery tops

\( \frac{1}{4} \) cup chopped parsley

\( \frac{1}{2} \) cup butter or other fat

6 to 8 cups soft bread cubes

1½ teaspoons salt

\( \frac{1}{2} \) teaspoon pepper

Dash cayenne

\( \frac{1}{2} \) to 1 teaspoon sage or poultry seasoning

1 teaspoon thyme

\( \frac{1}{2} \) teaspoon nutmeg

Brown vegetables lightly in fat in large heavy frying pan, stirring to cook evenly. Add bread cubes and stir and cook until well mixed and lightly toasted. Add seasonings, using larger amounts for more highly seasoned stuffing; toss with two forks to mix well.

Apple and Raisin or Prune Stuffing—Add 1 to 2 cups cubed apples, \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup raisins or \( \frac{3}{4} \) cup chopped cooked prunes. Add \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup nuts if desired.
Corn Bread Stuffing—Substitute corn bread crumbs for one-half or more of bread cubes. Add 2 to 4 tablespoons stock or water.

Moist Savory Stuffing—Substitute toasted or dried bread for fresh bread. Moisten with hot water or stock. Add an egg for increased moisture if desired.

Sausage-Cherry Stuffing—Sauté until lightly browned ½ pound sausage meat; remove meat and crumble. Cook vegetables in drippings instead of butter. Omit herbs if sausage is highly seasoned. Add 1 cup cherry preserves.

Cranberry Stuffing

(6 to 8 cups)

2 cups cranberries, ground
½ cup chopped celery tops
¼ cup chopped parsley
2 tablespoons chopped onion
6 tablespoons butter or other fat

1/2 cup sugar
6 to 8 cups bread cubes
½ teaspoon tarragon or dill, or ¼ cup chopped dill pickles
2 teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon pepper

Cook cranberries, celery, parsley and onion in fat in large heavy frying pan about 5 minutes; stir in sugar. Add bread cubes and seasonings and mix thoroughly.

Rice and Apricot Stuffing

(5 to 6 cups)

1 cup chopped celery tops
¼ cup chopped onion
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
5 tablespoons butter or other fat
½ pound dried apricots, washed, drained and shredded

2 to 4 tablespoons sugar
4 cups flaky, boiled rice
(1 1/2 cups uncooked)
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon thyme

Cook vegetables in fat in heavy frying pan about 10 minutes, stirring to cook evenly; remove from fat. Add apricots to fat, sprinkle with sugar, cover and simmer 10 minutes to plump fruit. Add, rice, cooked vegetables and seasonings and toss together lightly.

Pan Gravy

Add small amount of water or stock to pan drippings. Season to taste with salt, pepper, cayenne, Worcestershire sauce or Tabasco.
Brown Game Gravy
(1 to 2 cups sauce)

2 to 4 tablespoons drippings  
2 to 4 tablespoons flour or all water

Salt, pepper, cayenne

Pour off excess drippings from pan; add flour and stir until browned. Gradually stir in stock or water and cook until thickened. Season to taste; add 2 to 4 tablespoons cream (sweet or sour) if desired.

Barbecue Sauce
(2 cups sauce)

\[
\begin{align*}
\frac{1}{2} \text{ cup chopped onion} & \quad \frac{1}{4} \text{ cup tomato ketchup} \\
\frac{1}{2} \text{ cup chopped celery} & \quad 1 \text{ teaspoon salt} \\
4 \text{ tablespoons butter or oil} & \quad 1 \text{ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce} \\
\frac{1}{4} \text{ cup vinegar} & \quad \frac{1}{2} \text{ teaspoon Tabasco} \\
1\frac{1}{4} \text{ cups water} & \quad 1 \text{ tablespoon sugar}
\end{align*}
\]

Cook vegetables in butter or oil about 10 minutes; add remaining ingredients and heat thoroughly.

Barbecue Sauce for Kabobs
(\(\frac{1}{2}\) cup sauce)

\[
\begin{align*}
2 \text{ tablespoons lemon juice} & \quad \frac{1}{2} \text{ teaspoon salt} \\
2 \text{ tablespoons ketchup} & \quad \frac{1}{4} \text{ teaspoon paprika} \\
2 \text{ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce} & \quad \text{Dash of cayenne} \\
2 \text{ tablespoons drippings} & \quad 2 \text{ tablespoons butter}
\end{align*}
\]

Combine ingredients and bring to a boil.

Fried or Popped Wild Rice

Place 2 to 3 tablespoons clean wild rice (unwashed) in small frying basket. Lower into hot deep fat (380° F.) about 3 minutes or until grains pop open. Popped rice may be reheated the day after frying; turn into shallow pan and heat in moderate oven (350° F.), stirring carefully to heat evenly. One package (9 ounces) makes 6 to 8 portions.

SQUIRRELS

Squirrels rate high as game and food mammals. The two important game squirrels in Iowa are the fox squirrel, widely distributed in every county, and the gray squirrel, limited largely to the eastern counties which have more native tim-
Fig. 5. Squirrel with dumplings, an Ozark special, will find favor with you too. That fluffy dumpling might have been cooked on the stew. Served at once, it adds zest to the delicately flavored squirrel. Try rabbit or raccoon next time.

Squirrels live chiefly on nuts, fruits, buds, leaves and roots.

The dressed weight of the 15 fox squirrels prepared in the laboratory ranged from 3¾ ounces to 1½ pounds and averaged 12½ ounces; the four gray squirrels ranged from 4½ ounces to 12¼ ounces and averaged about ½ pound. Squirrels have angular and lean bodies with well developed backs and thighs, short hind legs, prominent and thinly fleshed ribs and small forelegs. The flesh varies in color from a pink or light red to medium red, becoming darker with age. Squirrel meat is velvety, short fibered, firm and lean with no marbling. It has little if any suggestion of gaminess. When promptly and properly dressed and stored, the meat should not be soaked or parboiled.

Squirrels make good eating. They can be prepared in many different ways. The methods used in the laboratory are listed in the order in which they were preferred by the tasting panel (from the highest down): stews (Ozark special, pie, Brunswick stew), breaded, roasted, oven grilled, braised, smothered, broiled. A few suggestions are offered
for cooking squirrel by the basic recipes given for small game cookery:

**Stews:** Keep the seasonings few and in small amounts to preserve the distinctive flavor of squirrel.

**Braised:** Dredge with flour or coat with flour, egg and crumbs (breaded); brown in bacon drippings, simmer 45 minutes to 1 hour. Remove cover when nearly done for crisper crust.

**Roasted:** Use your favorite chicken stuffing. Brush generously with fat (drippings and butter), wind strips of cloth dipped in fat around legs and cover carcass lightly with cloth dipped in fat. Roast at 325°F. about 1 1/2 hours. Remove cloth the last 30 minutes and place bacon strips over top.

**Broiled:** Baste frequently with a mixture of butter and lemon juice. Broil 35 to 40 minutes.

**Oven-Grilled:** Roast at 450°-500° F. for 20 to 25 minutes, basting every 5 minutes with hot fat in pan.

### Squirrel With Dumplings—Ozark Special

**(Small Game Stew, page 210)**

(4 to 6 servings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 squirrels, pan dressed</th>
<th>1/2 cup sliced onion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 tablespoons fat</td>
<td>1/2 cup diced celery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1/2 to 3 cups water</td>
<td>1 cup carrot sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 teaspoon salt</td>
<td>2 to 3 tablespoons flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 teaspoon pepper</td>
<td>Dumpling dough (recipe below)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Brown pieces in fat (half butter), cover with water, season and simmer about 1 hour. Add vegetables and water if needed and cook 15 minutes. Thicken with smooth paste of flour and 1/4 cup water.

2. Prepare dumpling dough, using 1 cup flour, 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1 tablespoon fat and 1/2 cup milk. Drop dough by spoonfuls on stew, cover tightly and steam 12 to 15 minutes; or drop on greased perforated top of steamer and steam over boiling water.

3. Serve at once on heated plates, in heated vegetable dish with dumplings on top or on heated chop plate with dumplings around the stew. Serve with a tossed green salad or a fruit salad, crusty rolls or corn sticks and a tart jelly.
RABBITS

The common American rabbit, the cottontail, is the most popular of the small game and food mammals. Cottontails, found in every county in Iowa, are generally most numerous in the southern area. By observing the few simple rules given in the section on handling the freshly killed small game mammals, pages 194 and 195, and by cooking rabbits until well done, the danger of contracting tularemia from infected animals is removed. The same precautions apply to the white-tailed jack rabbits present in small numbers in every county and most numerous in the northwest. Rabbits live chiefly on plant matter such as grasses, legumes, cereals, apples, berries, tender sprouts and shoots.

The 23 rabbits prepared in the laboratory averaged 1 pound 6 1/2 ounces, dressed. The one jack rabbit prepared in the laboratory weighed 4 pounds 2 ounces dressed. Cottontails are heavier than squirrels, but their bodies are much alike; rabbit flesh is slightly darker in color and less velvety. Properly handled and dressed rabbits require no soak-

Fig. 6. Roasted stuffed rabbit or squirrel for two. For easy carving and serving, cut along the backbone and center of breast with game or kitchen shears; serve stuffed half or quarter.
ing or parboiling. They can be used interchangeably with squirrels and chicken. Rabbits are good to eat; they are difficult to distinguish from squirrels when prepared in the same way. Rabbits scored higher than most of the game; there was little difference in rating rabbits cooked by the usual methods—roasting, broiling, braising and stewing. The suggestions offered apply to the use of the basic recipes given for small game cookery:

**Roasted**: Follow suggestions given for squirrel. Roast at 325° F. for 1 1/2 to 2 hours or until well done.

**Broiled**: Baste frequently with hot fat; broil 50 to 60 minutes or until well done.

**Barbecued**: Baste with a barbecue sauce in roasting. Roast at 325° F. for 1 1/2 hours or until well done.

**Braised**: Dredge with flour or coat with flour, egg and crumbs (breaded); brown in fat and simmer 1 to 1 1/4 hours.

**Stewed**: (Casserole or Brunswick) Simmer 1 1/2 hours.

**Ground Meat**: Use fresh or cooked meat in loaf (page 212) or patties. See Coonburgers, page 223.

The jack rabbit was stuffed, roasted at 300° F. for 3 1/2 hours and served at a game dinner. It was not popular with the panel, who thought it tough and disagreeably gamy. The jack rabbit had been held in the refrigerator for 48 hours before it was dressed, then frozen and stored for 3 months. With prompt and proper dressing, soaking in brine or an acid solution when gamy, seasoning highly and cooking with moist heat until tender, the jack rabbit should make good eating.

### Smothered Rabbit or Squirrel

(Braising Small Game, page 209)

(4 to 6 servings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 rabbits or squirrels</th>
<th>1/2 cup flour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 teaspoon salt</td>
<td>1/4 cup drippings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8 teaspoon pepper</td>
<td>1/4 to 1/2 cup sliced onion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dash of paprika</td>
<td>1 sprig parsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup top milk or light cream</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Use older game, pan dressed and cut in pieces for serving. Dredge in seasoned flour and brown well in hot fat in fryer or Dutch oven.

2. Scatter onion and minced parsley over pieces, add milk
or cream, cover tightly and simmer over low heat or in slow oven (300° F.) for 1 to 1½ hours or until tender. Thicken cream drippings if too thin.

3. Remove pieces to heated platter with gravy poured over meat and paprika sprinkled lightly over top. Serve with fluffy rice, buttered beets (shredded or diced) or carrots, coleslaw, hot rolls and quince jelly.

RACCOONS

The raccoon is one of the major fur-bearing animals in Iowa. It is also a favorite game animal and is used to a considerable extent as a food. Found in every county in the state, raccoons are most numerous along the timbered watercourses in the southern and eastern counties. They are considered one of the cleanest of game as to both habitat and food. Hollow trees along well-timbered watercourses make ideal shelters; ground holes and tile drains are also used. Raccoons live largely on berries in season, corn, insects, crayfish, mollusks and frogs.

Fourteen raccoons were prepared in the laboratory. The carcasses of the seven which were pen-fed for several months ranged in weight from 4 pounds 13 ounces to 9¾ pounds and averaged 7 pounds 9 ounces; the carcasses of the trapped animals ranged from 5¾ pounds to 11 pounds 13 ounces with an average of 8 pounds 14 ounces. Holding raccoons in captivity and feeding them modified their build, finish and quality. For a contrast between the pen-fed and trapped raccoon carcasses see illustration, page 222.

Raccoon flesh is dark and coarse and long fibered. The carcasses of the pen-fed raccoons had very slight, if any, gamy odor; when roasted they tasted sweet—much like young pork; they were equally good when fried in rendered raccoon fat or bacon drippings. The trapped raccoon carcasses coming from two different parts of the state showed marked differences due largely to the dressing and handling of the animals. Those from one section compared very favorably with the pen-fed in flavor as to both flesh and fat, while the others were on the whole objectionably “strong” and gamy. Soak only the “strong” and gamy carcasses
Fig. 7. Contrast carcasses of raccoons: (left) pen-raised, corn-fed and (right) wild, trapped. Pen-raised—note the compact, fat-covered body. A total of 3 pounds 5 ounces of firm, creamy white, odorless fat was removed from the outside and inside of the dressed carcass, which weighed $8\frac{3}{4}$ pounds.

The body of the trapped raccoon is rangy and muscular rather than fat. Only 1 pound 2 ounces of dark stringy and "strong" fat was removed from the 9$\frac{1}{2}$-pound carcass.

in brine or a vinegar solution for 4 to 16 hours; season highly.

Raccoons rated high with the judges especially when roasted, braised, stewed, ground and made into loaf or patties and broiled. In using the basic recipes given for small game cookery, follow the suggestions offered:

**Roasted:** Leave a layer ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) of fat on carcass; cover lean carcass with cloth dipped in fat. Roast at $275^\circ-300^\circ$ F. for 3 to 4 hours. Remove cloth the last half hour; baste several times with drippings and dust with flour after each basting for crackly and crisp crust.
Braised: Dredge with flour or coat with flour, egg and crumbs (breaded); brown in fat and simmer about 2 hours.

Broiled: Rub with garlic or onion or sage. Broil 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours, basting frequently with drippings.

**Coonburgers**

(4 to 6 meat cakes)

1 pound raccoon meat
1 ounce salt pork
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/2 medium onion
Dash of cayenne
1 stalk celery
1/2 teaspoon thyme
1/2-inch strip green pepper
1/4 cup bread cubes
1/4 teaspoon thyme
1/2 cup ketchup
1/2 cup ketchup
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1. Cut meat off bones and grind fine with salt pork and vegetables. Soak bread in milk; add with salt, pepper and thyme to meat and mix well.

2. Shape into 6 cakes and brown in fat, turning to brown well. Pour mixture of ketchup and Worcestershire over top, cover and simmer or bake in slow oven (300°-325° F.) for 30 minutes or until done.

3. Serve on slices of fried eggplant or green tomatoes, with browned potatoes, Harvard beets, coleslaw, corn bread and blackberry jam or mint jelly.

**OPOSSUM**

The opossum, one of the fur-bearing animals in Iowa, is in demand for low-priced furs. It is not used much as a food within the state. In the southern states the opossum is considered one of the choicest food mammals. Like the raccoon it seeks the timbered watercourses and is most numerous in the southern counties of the state. Opossums eat a variety of foods such as fruits, insects, frogs, fishes, carrion. In the South an animal is often held in captivity for a week or longer before the feast.

The 11 opossum's prepared in the laboratory averaged about 1 3/4 pounds, dressed. If held in captivity and fed for a week or longer, dressed promptly and prepared properly, they would, no doubt, find greater favor as a food. Opossum meat is light in color, fine grained and tender with generous fat deposits between ribbon-like bands of muscle. (See illustration, page 224.)
Soak the carcass from 4 to 6 hours or overnight in a weak brine (1 to 4 tablespoons salt to 1 quart water) or weak vinegar brine (2 tablespoons each salt and sugar, ¼ cup vinegar and 2 cups water). The vinegar brine darkens the flesh and modifies the flavor. If opossums are held in refrigerator for more than 3 days, freeze them; cook them as soon as they thaw out. They are perishable. Remove as much of the fat as possible before cooking to make the meat less greasy. The fat is not strongly gamy. The following suggestions are based on repeated tests in using the basic game recipes:

**Roasting:** See recipe given. Keep carcass out of the fat while roasting.

**Broiling:** Rub with sage. Broil slowly about 1¼ hours, basting occasionally with butter if drippings are strong.

**Barbecue:** Cut in half, place on rack, roast at 300° F. about 2 hours, basting with barbecue sauce.

Fig. 8. The opossum carcass is different from those of other small game. It is fat and greasy with heavy lumps of soft, creamy, granular fat in the groins, under the abdomen, between the ribbon-like soft muscles of the thighs and hind legs and over the pelvic organs. By removing much of the fat and stuffing with a highly seasoned dressing, the peculiarly flavored meat is more palatable and less greasy.
Braising: Remove fat which may collect in browning. Season highly and simmer about 1½ hours.

Stewing: Use tomato and season highly. Simmer about 1¼ hours.

**Roasted 'Possum and Sweet Potatoes**

*(Roasting Small Game, page 206)*

*(3 to 5 servings)*

1 opossum (2-2½ lb.)
Salt, pepper, sage
Apple and Raisin Stuffing *(page 215)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/4 to 1/3 cup flour</td>
<td>3 to 4 sweet potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 tablespoons brown sugar</td>
<td>2 cups stock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Rub inside of oven-dressed opossum with seasonings; fill with stuffing; truss, season and place on greased rack in shallow pan; if lean, brush with fat and cover with cloth dipped in melted fat.

2. Roast, uncovered, in slow oven (300°-325° F.) for 1½ to 2 hours, allowing 30 to 35 minutes per pound. Remove cloth the last half hour and place parboiled sweet potatoes (peeled and halved) around opossum; baste all several times with drippings in pan, dusting meat with flour and potatoes with brown sugar after each basting.

3. Place potatoes around opossum on heated platter, garnish and serve with buttered peas and turnip cubes, French fried green pepper rings, orange and onion salad, steamed brown bread and cranberry relish or quince jelly.

**MUSQUASH OR MUSKRAT**

*(Marsh Rabbit or Marsh Hare)*

The musquash is one of Iowa’s leading fur-bearing game mammals both in number and in total value. It is seldom used as food in Iowa, although it is popular in many states. Musquash are widely distributed in marshes, creeks, shallow rivers, drainage ditches and at lake edges with stabilized water levels. They are clean animals and live mainly on rushes, cattails, and other plants in and near water.

Approximately 100 musquash were prepared in the laboratory. They ranged in weight from 13 ounces to 22 ounces, dressed, and averaged from 7/8 to 1 pound. The musquash has a muscular, compact, lean body as seen in the illustra-
Fig. 9. The musquash carcass is lean and compact with a muscular back, thighs and hind legs, large thin apron-like flank, huge chest cavity and a “musky” or gamy odor. Dismember as indicated with kitchen shears and use the solid pieces for sauerbraten pictured on page 228 and the flank and ribs for grinding. Substitute other game for musquash. You’ll not notice much difference between them when prepared this way.

The flesh is dark red, soft, short fibred and tender, the bones are brittle and break with jagged edges. The pronounced game flavor apparent in many of the dishes was quite different from other game flavors. With frequent removal of the trapped musquash, thorough bleeding and prompt dressing, they should find greater favor as a food.

Soak all bloody and “strong” carcasses in a brine solution for 8 hours or overnight, changing the brine several times. Remove all fat from strong carcasses. Musquash were broiled, barbecued, braised, roasted, stewed and made into patties. The members of the tasting panel varied greatly in their scoring of the musquash dishes. Additional suggestions are offered for using the basic recipes given for game cookery.

**Broiling:** Rub with garlic, onion or sage; baste frequently with barbecue sauce. Broil about 1 hour.

**Braised:** Breading covers up the dark color of the meat and supplies a crisp crust which adds to the flavor. Brown and simmer about 1 1/4 hours.

**Roasted:** Use a savory or a vegetable dressing if stuffed.
Roast at 325° F. for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Basting with a horseradish sauce with orange rind improves the flavor. Or baste with a barbecue sauce.

**Ground:** Make into loaf or patties, well seasoned, and baste with barbecue sauce. See recipes, pages 212, 223.

**Stews:** Sauerbraten, jugged. See recipes, pages 210, 212.

### Musquash Sauerbraten

(4 to 6 servings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 musquash, pan dressed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 teaspoon salt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/8 teaspoon pepper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dash of nutmeg or ginger</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/2 cup vinegar</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 tablespoons sugar</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 cups water</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 bay leaf</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/4 cup fat</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 medium onion, sliced</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/4 cup chopped green pepper or parsley</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/4 cup chopped celery</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/2 to 1 cup raisins</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 tablespoons flour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4 cup sour cream</td>
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1. Use meaty pieces of older musquash. Rub pieces with mixture of salt, pepper and spice and place in bowl or deep pan. Bring vinegar, sugar, water and bay leaf to a boil; pour half of it (marinade) over meat and let stand 4 to 8 hours. The pieces should be covered with marinade. Remove meat, drain and dry; discard marinade used for soaking game.

2. Brown meat in hot fat; remove pieces to stew pan or Dutch oven. Cook vegetables in drippings in pan about 10 minutes, stirring to brown slightly; scatter over meat. Add remaining marinade to drippings in pan, bring to a boil and pour over meat. Cover tightly and simmer about 1 1/2 hours or until meat is very tender, adding small amounts of hot water as needed.

3. Arrange meat on heated platter and keep hot. Add raisins to liquid in pan; thicken with smooth paste of flour and sour cream. Pour small amount of raisin sauce over meat; serve remaining sauce in bowl.

4. Garnish platter with parsley or celery leaves and toast points. Serve with buttered asparagus tips or carrot sticks bunched in onion or green pepper rings, wild rice, molded vegetable salad and corn bread.
Fig. 10. Musquash sauerbraten (page 227) is not too different from beef sauerbraten. For a simple family dinner serve it with broccoli or snap beans (cut lengthwise) and potatoes, buttered and sprinkled with chopped parsley. For variety use the oven-dressed musquash whole. Truss it and leave it in the marinade in the refrigerator for 2 or 3 days, turning it once each day. If you are adventuresome, prepare musquash or other game by your favorite sauerbraten recipe.

REFERENCES


Stiles, Bruce F., Speaker, Everett B., Bailey, Reeve M., and Hendrickson, George O. Wildlife resources of Iowa. The Iowa State Conservation Commission, Des Moines, Iowa. 1946.

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