

Sunday, October 14, 2001

2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

Keep fall flavors alive longer with winter squash

On a recent Saturday, I made my annual pilgrimage to the Eastern Market in Detroit. I arrived at 8:45 a.m. and the market already was bustling and busy. It was cold enough that I could see my breath, but the smell of fall was the perfume that thickened the market air.

I sampled apple cider and made my way through the corn stalks in search for fall's pride and joy: winter squash. I looked up at acorn, butternut, spaghetti and hubbard squash.

Wonderful flavors mix

Mother Nature certainly had a grand plan by having foods like squash concurrent with the arrival of fresh apple cider and maple syrup. Strong flavors that might otherwise be too sweet for savory dishes work wonderfully with the richness of winter squash. Crisp nuts, wild mushrooms and hardy herbs, such as rosemary and sage will not overpower, but complement, the wonderful winter squash varieties.

Handling Squash

Look for squash that feel heavy and have hard skin with no cracks or hard spots.

Store squash in a cool dry place. Do not refrigerate them.

Take care when preparing squash. A sharp heavy knife is needed to safely cut through their rough coat skin. With larger squash it may be necessary to put them in a heavy paper bag and place on the floor before they can be cut.

Baking or steaming squash in their skins is a great way to get around the peeling part of preparation and it will have more flavor and vitamins.

As winter squash vary so much in size and density, it is difficult to establish an exact cooking time. Try piercing the skin. If a fork will slide easily into the flesh, it's done. You can enjoy fall's splendor at either meals, along with Michigan produce and spend a little quality time with family members, friends and loved ones.

Squash, along with other

members of the genus cucurbit, such as cucumbers and gourds, are indigenous to the Americas, and are often referred to in many history books of early settlers. It is one of those rare gem foods that can be stalked, piled and used for substantial winter consumption without perishing.

Historians speculate over what winter squash sustained settlers through barbaric winters. Many varieties we eat are similar to those cultivated hundreds of years ago by native Americans. There has been a multitude of new hybrids, developed in beautiful shapes and colors that have been added to the family.

What's ripe and when

Fall's first ready-to-eat squash includes acorn, turban, pumpkin, spaghetti and summer squash. This family is generally yellow fleshed and requires little to no curing time after they are ripe. They are also the first to fade after losing their flavor and become fibrous after a couple months of storage.

The next group to ripen are the C. Maxima squash, which can be recog-

Please see 2 UNIQUE, D2

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- German cooking
- Culinary Adventures

hometownnewspapers.net

Wild game meets the flame

Time, patience will help you prepare dishes

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

Game meat. It is a delicacy enjoyed by thousands of hunters in Michigan, an autumn bounty reaped from the hours spent outdoors in the woods in the crisp climate.

When the hunter of the household comes home with a buck, duck or pheasant, normal cooking methods aren't enough.

Wild animals and birds lead active lives and seldom have access to an abundance of food available to farm animals, such as cattle, which means the wild animal has more muscle and less fat than animals bred for food. That means it's essential to include fat in the preparation of game otherwise the result will be a dry, tough and stringy portion of meat.

Venison enjoyed

Canton resident Mark Woodward prepares venison in a less traditional manner when dinner guests are not accustomed to eating game meat, but they still want to try it.

"I wrap venison steaks in bacon and then broil them to ensure a less gamey taste," Woodward said. "Another great way to use game is to combine different flavors by grinding an equal portion of venison and beef for burgers. My venison-beef burgers are always popular when I barbecue."

Game birds also require special attention in preparation.

Field birds such as pheasant, quail, woodcock and quail eat grains and seeds so their meat is generally dry and lean. Water birds such as duck and goose have extra layers of fat so they are generally fatter.

It is important to match your cooking ingredients to the type of meat. The fat substitute must be suited to the game. Large and strongly-flavored game tastes best with bacon, salt pork, suet or beef fat back. Game birds that are more delicate taste

better with sweet butter or olive oil. Trim away fat before cooking if this was not done when the game was cut. Wild game fat left on meat when cooking gives it a "gamey" flavor.

Preparing wild birds

My husband, Andrew, has been a bird hunter for 25 years. After his hunting trips, he likes to prepare pheasant, quail and other savory dishes.

He prefers to use a marinade for cooking. Excellent ingredients for marinades are vinegar, tomato juice, fruit juice, Worcestershire sauce and dry red wine; cooking sherry tenderizes the meat. Cover the meat to at least half its depth for 24 to 48 hours. Turn the meat several times while marinating. Keep the meat covered during cooking to hold in the aroma of the marinade.

Meat	Size	Protein	Fat	Calories	Cholesterol
Quail	3.5 oz.	21.8 g	4.5 g	143	0 g
Rabbit	3.5 oz.	30.9 g	5 g	177	0 g
Venison	3.5 oz.	29.5 g	2.2 g	146	0 g
Buffalo	3 oz.	35.0 g	2.8 g	150	39 mg
Ostrich	3 oz.	22.0 g	2 g	97	58 mg

Shelby Township resident Mike Szudarek enjoys hunting. "I find hunting very rewarding because it is great to be outdoors and I also enjoy the meat," said Szudarek. "Being very health conscious, I look forward to deer hunting. Each year, I stock my freezer with venison from November through March, using the venison just like red meat for steaks and burgers. Duck breast meat is great in steaks."

Szudarek recommends cleaning the meat as soon as possible, within hours of killing the game. Learn how to do this yourself or make certain that your hunting companions are familiar with cleaning meat.

The meat's flavor and texture depends on how it is handled following cleaning. The meat should be chilled without delay to 40° F or lower to prevent spoiling. It should be rinsed thoroughly in cold water and drained. Keep everything that touches the meat clean. Trim off all gristle, bruised spots and excess fat before freezing.

Avoid metal mixing bowls, baking pans and cooking utensils for game meat since they may impart an "off" flavor. Herbs compatible with most game meats include rosemary, sweet basil, mace, salt, and sugar.

Cover it up

Slices of bacon, lard or ham fat also are a great covering when roasting breast meat of birds. This protects the breast against the intensity of the heat and enhances the flavor.

To braise meat, season it with salt, pepper and herbs, rub with flour and brown all sides in hot fat. Add about 2 1/2 cup water and cover tightly, simmering slowly until tender (or 2-3 hours). Add

Please see GAME, D2

QUAIL IN Michigan Cherry Sauce

3 tablespoons butter or margarine
8 (4-ounce each) quail, semi-boned, dressed
4 ounces cherries, dried; Michigan
1 cup cherry juice, canned
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 tablespoon thyme, fresh
1 tablespoon lemon juice, fresh
1 tablespoon cornstarch
4 teaspoons water, cold
4 teaspoons water, cold

Rinse quail in cold water and drain well. Add quail and brown on both sides. In large sauté pan, melt butter or margarine. Add quail and cook until quail reach 165° F. Transfer to roaster pan and place into 350° oven and cook until quail reach 165° F. While quail are cooking, combine the cornstarch with cold water and mix to dissolve. Put cherry juice, sugar, thyme and simmer until thickened. Keep warm for service. Add the dried cherries and cook until slightly plump. Keep warm for service. Place the dried cherries and cook until slightly plump. Keep warm for service. Place the dried cherries and cook until slightly plump. Keep warm for service. Place the dried cherries and cook until slightly plump. Keep warm for service.

Taste and add salt, if necessary. Remove browned, cooked quail from oven. Place on serving platter. Pour cherry sauce over each quail. Serves 4; with serving sizes of 2 quail each.

Nutritional information per serving: 698 calories, 59 grams protein, 42 grams fat, 273 milligrams sodium, 632 milligrams potassium. Recipe courtesy of HDS Services of Farmington Hills. For another recipe, see Inside Taste.

Rich shiraz wines hail from land down under

South Australia produces more than half of all the wine in Australia. Its major city is Adelaide and its dominant winery is Penfolds.



Penfolds original winery and 12-acre vineyard now known as the Magill Estate, was founded by Dr. Christopher Rawson Penfold in 1844. Located 20 minutes from the heart of Adelaide, you can tour the winery, see the Penfolds' first house, the Grange Cottage and eat at the winery restaurant.

The greatest thing about the restaurant is a wine list with old vintages of Penfolds wines, particularly Shiraz, the greatest Australian grape.

Today, the Penfolds production facility is located in the Barossa Valley, a warm growing region north of Adelaide particularly well known for big, rich, and lush shiraz.

We've tasted the latest releases of Penfolds red wines from an \$11 Shiraz-Cabernet blend to the 1996 Grange at \$195 and thought this a great opportunity to introduce you to some of the best drinking from Down Under.

Please see WINE D2

Wine Picks

Better than any California winery, Robert Mondavi is able to show appellation differences among its wines. To learn what this appellation "stuff" is all about, try the following wines in pairs. Sorry folks, it's impossible to make such comparisons with under \$20 wines.

■ Chardonnay: 1999 Robert Mondavi Carneros (\$23) and the 1999 Napa Valley (\$23).

■ Merlot: 1998 Robert Mondavi Carneros (\$35) with lush dark cherry fruit and mellow finish in contrast to the big, rich, full, and plump 1998 Robert Mondavi Stags Leap District (\$35).

■ Cabernet Sauvignon: 1998 Robert Mondavi Stags Leap District (\$50) is pure fruit-forward 100 percent cabernet with violet and red fruit aromas finishing deepthroat and lush in comparison to 1998 Robert Mondavi Oakville District (\$50) with cassis, blackberry, brown spices, cedar, vanilla, tight tannins and screaming for a great steak!

Ken Abramczyk, Editor 734/954-2412

k.abramczyk@oe-homecomm.net