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HOME SMOKING

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After skinning the carcass, let it hand for a week or more at 40' F. to age or ripen. You may have it butchered at a locker plant or you may cut it up yourself if you have the proper equipment. The cuts are the same in deer, elk, antelope and moose as they are in beef.

Smoking enhances the flavor of most fish and game and lengthens the time they may be kept before being either eaten or frozen. Smokehouses need not be elaborate. A large barrel, an old ice box, or a simple cabinet with two-burner hot plate will serve as the basis for one. Also, some of the barbecue sets now on the market convert into practical smokers.

To make the simplest type, take a large barrel. knock out both ends and set it over a hole about two feet deep and a little smaller than the barrel bottom. Nail two wooden strips opposite each other just below the rim of the barrel. Rest other sticks on these and hang meat or fish from them.

Dig another hole about 12 feet from the barrel for your fire. Connect it with the pit under the barrel by means of a length of 12-to 14-inch pipe. A stove pipe will do although a clay pipe will hold up better. Fit both fire hole and barrel with loose covers.

Fish and game meats may be either hot smoked or cold smoked depending on the flavor and texture desired and how long the meat is expected to keep.

To prepare fish for smoking, clean them, remove heads, brine and lay on trays. Or leave heads on and string fish on stiff wires or rods that can be hung in the smoker. Larger fish should be filleted and placed on trays skin side down.

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Meat should be cut in easily handled pieces. Cut meat for jerky cross grain in strips not more than one inch thick.

HOT SMOKING:

Make a brine by dissolving from 1/2 to 1 Pound of salt in a gallon of water. Soak fish or meat for 12 to 24 hours. Beginners might compromise on 11 ounces of salt and 12 hours in brine. Remove and soak in basin of fresh water for 2 to 4 hours. Drain, dry with towels and let stand in air till surface of fish or meat dries. Place meat or fish on oiled trays and put in smoker. Don't remove milk-like secretion that forms on fish. Process with warm smoke for 4 to 6 hours and finish with hot smoke or oven heat (150' F.) to cook through.

COLD SMOKING:

Use same strength of brine as above but do not freshen meat or fish. Drain, dry thoroughly, let stand in air for a while and then place in smoker. Process in 90' F. smoke for one to five days. For a completely dry product, leave meat or fish in smoker under heat (but no smoke) for a longer period or transfer meat to oven. Keep heat very low and door open.

SMOKING TURKEYS, DUCKS OR GEESE:

Kill, pick and draw the birds. Pack in crock and cover with brine made from 6 pounds of salt, three pounds of sugar and 3 ounces of saltpeter for every 4-1/2 gallons of water. Be sure birds are kept completely covered. Keep cool. Leave in brine 1-1/3 to 1-1/2 days per pound of dressed fowl. A crock full of 1-1/3 pound ducks, for instance, would be left for 2 to 2-1/4 days; a group of turkeys averaging 12 pounds each would stay in for 2 to 2-1/2 weeks. Remove from brine, dry thoroughly and process in 100' to 110' F. smoke for several hours or days, depending on the smoke flavor desired.

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SMOKING TIPS:

Successful smoking is an art. The best results come after practice has made the sportsman completely familiar with process and his equipment.

Keep fire smoldering; do not let it flame. Most home smoker failures can be traced to too hot a fire.

Non-resinous woods are best for smoking: oak, hickory, apple, cherry, alder, ash. Remove bark as it may give food a bitter taste.

Sawdust from the above woods or chips are better than larger pieces of wood. They smolder more easily, make more smoke and rarely flare up.

Smoking need not be a continuous day and night process but it should be completed as quickly as possible.

Fish and game meats may be frozen and then thawed later for smoking. Smoked meats also may be frozen.

Most home smokers are better suited to hot smoking than to cold smoking. Smoked turkeys and other fowl should be refrigerated. Cook before serving.

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