

Venison Preservation

If there is a hunter in your family, chances are that you may find yourself with some venison to prepare or preserve. Due to the discovery of bovine TB in the wild deer population in Michigan the concern about venison food safety and handling issues are prevalent during hunting season. The Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan State University and the United States Department of Agriculture have produced an informational leaflet, "Bovine Tuberculosis in Michigan—Human Health and Food Safety" to assist with answering questions about human health factors, meat safety, milk safety, and bovine tuberculosis in Michigan. Hunter-harvested deer information is also addressed. Your MSU-Extension office has a supply of these leaflets plus other helpful information about venison preparation.

FREEZING

Freezing is the easiest way to preserve venison. To prepare venison for freezing, trim away connective tissue and fat, the source of strong "gamey" flavor. Protect the meat by wrapping it in moisture vapor-resistant packaging materials. Package in quantities your family will eat in one meal. Label each package with the date and cut of meat.

Freeze quickly at 0 degrees F. or below. In a home freezer, freeze no more than 2 pounds per cubic foot storage space at one time.

Overloading slows down the rate of freezing, and foods that freeze too slowly may lose quality.

Once the packages of venison are frozen, they may be stacked. Keep the freezer temperature at 0 degrees F or below. Use a freezer thermometer to monitor freezer accuracy.

For best eating quality, use frozen ground venison within 3 months. Frozen venison steaks or roasts should be used within 8 to 12 months. Venison should be thoroughly cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F for 15 seconds to kill bacteria.

CANNING

Venison may be canned according to directions for canning beef, veal, pork, lamb, and mutton found in the **USDA's Complete Guide to Home Canning**. For a copy of the specific directions and other directions, please contact your MSU Extension county office or visit the following Web site:

<http://extension.usu.edu/publica/foodpubs.htm>

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