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# HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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Answers from home economists and forestry specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- How cook wild meat
- How keep wild duck moist
- Supply of fuel wood.

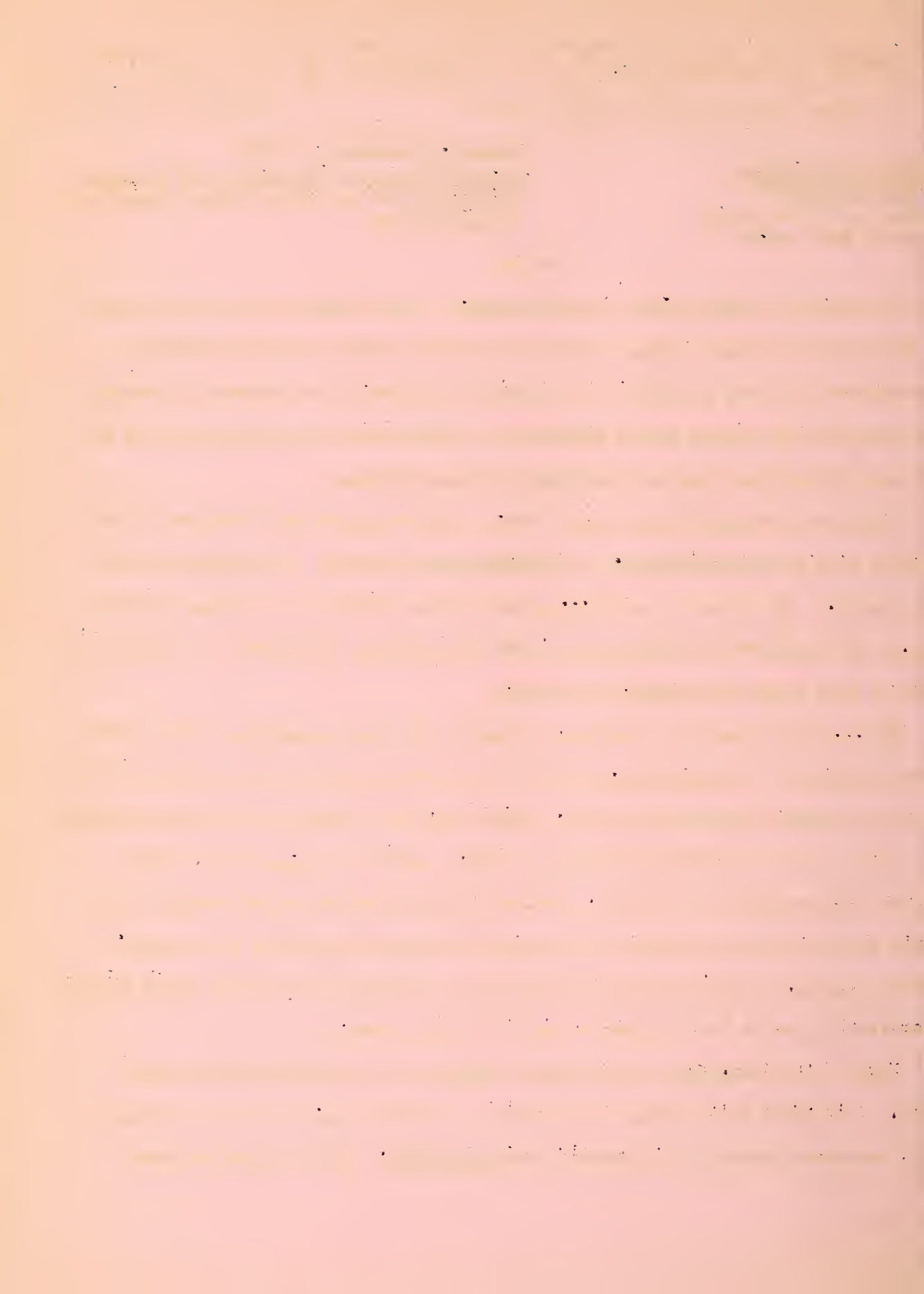
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Our questions today have an outdoor flavor. One homemaker asks us about cooking the game her husband brings in from his hunting jaunts and another wants to know whether fuel wood is going to be scarce this winter. Our answers on cooking game come from the United States Department of Agriculture home economists and the fuel wood information from the Department's Forest Service.

Let's take the questions on game first. This homemaker says that every year she runs into the same situation. Her husband goes hunting. He brings home the game proudly. She tries to cook it...using the best methods for cooking meat she knows. And they both are disappointed with the results. "What makes the wild meat I try to cook tough and stringy." she asks.

Well...for an answer to that one, I went to the home economists in the United States Department of Agriculture. They tell me that most wild meat is likely to be dryer and tougher than domestic meats. After all, game animals lead vigorous lives. They cover miles of territory hunting for food. They're tense...on the alert against their enemies all the time. Of course their muscles become tough. They aren't likely to have as much fat as animals that have been raised on the farm. For this reason, we can't always cook wild meat successfully using the exact methods we ordinarily use on beef or pork or other domestic meats.

Much of the time, game needs longer cooking at low temperature than other meats. It's often better when it's cooked in a covered pan. Home economists, you know, recommend cooking most domestic meats uncovered. But in preparing game



animals, we'll do better a large part of the time to use the long, slow, moist cooking that tenderizes tougher meats.

This is especially true when we're cooking the older animals. Everybody knows young animals, wild or domesticated, take less cooking than older ones and it's best to separate the young animals from the older ones. Cook them at different times. Then the older ones can be tenderized somewhat if we let them "age" for several days and parboil before we finally cook them.

Another way to tenderize wild meat is to baste it with orange juice. Besides giving the meat a delicate orange flavor, the acid in the juice helps break down tissue and tenderizes the meat.

Since many game animals are either very lean or the fat they do have has an objectionable flavor, we'd better add fat when we cook them. Opossums, of course, are an exception to the rule. Woodchucks are another. We may want to take off some of their fat to keep them from being greasy. But the flavor is good. Beavers and raccoons have a strong flavored fat that most people don't like. So it's better to remove all the natural fat and add one of a more pleasing flavor when we're preparing the beavers and raccoons.

Outside cooking most game animals in a covered pan for a longer time and adding fat, we can use the same methods on them we use on domestic meat and poultry. Young tender animals can be successfully fried, broiled or roasted. Older ones are better braised or fricasseed.

The next question is specific. The homemaker wants to know how to keep wild duck from being extremely dry. To begin with...wild duck meat is naturally darker and dryer than domestic duck. There are several suggestions for keeping the wild duck moist...or for adding moisture. The first one is to put a few strips of bacon over the breast of the bird when we roast it. If we cook wild duck in a covered roaster, it'll help. And if we like, we can baste it with one cup of orange juice while it's roasting. A last pointer is to serve wild duck rare.



Roasting time is from twenty to thirty minutes.

Now about that fuelwood situation. It calls for immediate action. If we haven't already done so, we'd better start now to make arrangements for getting the wood we'll need during the rest of the winter.

You see, according to a recent survey made by the United States Forest Service, the demand for fuelwood exceeds the supply in every part of the country. Chief reason...labor shortages. There just aren't enough men to cut all the wood we'll need. This is not a new story to most of us who heat our homes with wood. The supply was short last year too. And for the same reason.

To meet the problem last year, many consumers bought their wood directly from farmers. That's a good idea for us to follow again. Farmers are being urged to cut fuelwood supplies not only for themselves but also for the general market. So if you can get in touch with one who has fuelwood for sale, you'd be smart to order from him.

Some people who live in suburbs or in small towns made arrangements with nearby farmers to buy and cut their own wood last year. Cutting wood may be strenuous, but it's good exercise for the men in our families. And it gives us a grand opportunity to get in an all-day family picnic in the woods. It also solves that problem of labor shortage as far as our own wood supply is concerned. Of course, if we make that kind of arrangement, we have to follow the farmer's instructions carefully about which trees are best for fuelwood and which should be left to grow.

But whatever we do to get our wood, we'd better do it now. The national fuelwood situation is tight and time is growing short. We don't want to be caught without enough wood to keep us warm.

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