

UPLAND GAME BIRDS COOKING CARE

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UPLAND GAME BIRDS — COOKING CARE

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Game birds provide variety to meals of families of Texas sportsmen and contribute high quality nutrients. Utilization of this wild game means conservation of a valuable resource and can be a food budget stretcher the year round.

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How Game Birds Fit into the Basic Four Food Groups

Meat Group

Game birds fit into the meat group of the basic four food groups. Like domestic meat, game bird meat is rich in protein, minerals and vitamins. There is one difference — it is generally low in fat. It can furnish the two servings of meat needed daily. Serving size is 2 to 3 ounces of lean meat.

Protein, which is furnished by game bird meat, is needed for growth and repair of body tissues, muscles, blood, skin and hair.

Game bird meat also provides iron, thiamine, riboflavin and niacin.

Part of the servings of meat group foods may come from other foods included in this group, such as poultry, eggs, fish or shellfish, or meat alternates — dry beans, dry peas, nuts, peanuts or peanut butter.

Vegetable-Fruit Group

Choose four or more servings from the fruit and vegetable group daily. Include one serving rich in vitamin C or two servings of a fair source. Also include one serving at least every other day of a good source of vitamin A. If the food chosen for vitamin C is also a good source of vitamin A, the additional serving of vitamin A food may be omitted.

The remaining one to three or more servings may be of any vegetable or fruit including those that are valuable for vitamins C and A.

Count $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetable or fruit as one serving, or a portion ordinarily served such as one medium apple, banana, orange or potato, half a medium grapefruit or cantaloupe or the juice of one lemon.

Some good sources of vitamin C are oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, broccoli and green pepper. Fair sources of vitamin C include lemon, raw cabbage, greens, tomatoes and potatoes in the jacket.

Good sources of vitamin A include dark green and deep yellow vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, greens, pumpkin and winter squash.

Milk Group

Include milk, cheese or ice cream in daily meals. Milk is the leading source of calcium needed for bones and teeth. It also provides high quality protein, riboflavin, vitamin A and many other nutrients.

Recommended amounts of whole fluid milk are: children under nine years of age — two to three cups (8-ounce cups); children 9 to 12 — three or more cups; teenagers — four or more cups; adults — two or more cups; pregnant women — three or more cups; and nursing mothers — four or more cups.

Part or all of the milk may be skim milk, buttermilk, evaporated milk or dry milk.

Cheese and ice cream may replace part of the milk. The amount is based on calcium equivalents in milk: 1-inch cube of cheddar type cheese = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cottage cheese = $\frac{1}{3}$ cup milk; 2 tablespoons cream cheese = 1 tablespoon milk; and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ice cream = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk.

Bread-Cereal Group

Choose four or more servings daily from the bread-cereal group. This group includes all whole grain or enriched breads and cereals. If no cereals are chosen, have an extra serving of bread or baked goods.

Count as one serving: 1 slice bread; 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal; $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of cooked cereal, cornmeal, grits, macaroni, noodles, rice or spaghetti.

Foods in this group include breads, cooked cereals, ready-to-eat cereals, cornmeal, crackers, flour, grits, macaroni and spaghetti, noodles, rice, rolled oats, quick breads and other baked goods if made from whole grain or enriched flour.

Foods in this group furnish worthwhile amounts of protein, iron, several of the B vitamins and food energy.

Other Foods

To round out meals and meet energy needs, almost everyone will use some foods not specified in the four food groups. Such foods include unenriched refined breads, cereals and flours; sugar; butter, margarine and other fats. These often are ingredients in recipes or are added to other foods during preparation at the table.

Try to include some vegetable oil among the fats used.

Include Game Birds in Meals Planned According to Basic Four Food Groups

Game birds fit readily into meals normally featuring domestic fowl, adding variety to weekly menus. Dishes can be simple or gourmet according to family preferences and the cook's experience. Regardless of the recipe or the occasion, meals featuring upland game birds are always special.

Suggested Menus with Game Birds

	Meat Group	Milk Group	Vegetable-Fruit Group	Bread-Cereal Group	Other
Breakfast					
Grapefruit Half			X		
Broiled Woodcock	X				
Waffles				XX	
Maple Syrup					X
Coffee/Milk		X			
Lunch					
Quail with Wild Rice	X			X	
Buttered Yellow Squash			X		X
Tossed Garden Salad			X		
Hard Rolls				X	
Milk		X			
Supper					
Dove a la Dusty	X		X		
Buttered Broccoli			X		X
Cheesy Yeast Bread				X	
Fresh Fruit Compote			X		
Milk		X			
Breakfast					
Cranberry Juice			X		
Fried Quail	X				
Cream Gravy		X*			
Biscuits				X	
Milk		X			
Lunch					
Pheasant with Rice					
Stuffing	X			X	
Cranberry-Orange Relish			X		
Brussel Sprouts			X		
Almond Ice Cream		X*			
Sugar Cookies				X	
Coffee/Milk		X			
Supper					
Roasted Wild Turkey	X				
Dressing				X	
Glazed Carrots			X		
Pickled Peaches			X		
Spinach Salad			X		
Orange Sherbert		X*			
Coffee/Milk		X			

*Calcium equivalent is not equal to 1 full serving.

Proper Field Care

Upland birds — quail, dove, pheasant, turkey, woodcock or rail — are popular game for Texas hunters. Proper care of birds in the field and during cooking assures tasty gourmet meals for the family table.

Several steps must be taken immediately following the kill to maintain top eating quality. Game should be field dressed as soon as possible. For larger birds such as pheasant and turkey, use a knife to cut a slit just below the breastbone and down to and around the vent. Remove all contents of the body cavity. Avoid breaking the gall bladder sac on the liver. Save the gizzard, heart and liver for eating purposes. Place giblets in a plastic bag. Cut near the base of the neck and remove the craw.

Wipe the body cavity clean with a moist cloth or rinse with water. Moisture spreads bacteria which cause spoilage. Most hunters remove the two oil glands found on the upper surface of the tail or the entire tail structure.

Cool the bird by allowing air to circulate in the body cavity. A small stick inserted in the cavity will help hold it open to speed cooling. Place the birds in a cooler if the outdoor temperature is not cold.

For smaller game birds such as quail, dove, woodcock or rail, hold the bird in one hand and use the thumb of the other hand to remove entrails and the craw. If the smaller game birds are not dressed in the field, they should be dressed at home the same day.

Dressing

Retain moisture and flavor of pheasants and wild turkeys by plucking the feathers and leaving the skin intact rather than skinning. To pluck, remove the wings at the joint nearest the body. Cut off the feet at the first joint above the feet. Most hunters prefer to pick the birds dry rather than wet. The fingers can be moistened occasionally to facilitate plucking. The thumb and index finger are used to pick feathers while the bird is firmly held with the other hand. After "rough picking," the down feathers can be removed by "skidding" or rubbing across the bird firmly with the thumb. Use a knife blade and the thumb as a stop to pull pinfeathers. The bird can be singed over a flame to remove down. Remove the head and most of the neck.

If skinning is preferred, use bacon strips across the bird during cooking to add moisture.

Smaller birds can be either skinned or plucked. More flavor and moisture are retained if the skin remains intact. Remove wings and feet with shears before skinning or plucking.

Aging at a temperature just above freezing for 24 to 48 hours generally removes some of the gamey flavor which might detract from eating pleasure.

Storage

Freeze upland game birds immediately after packaging. Keep the meat at 0°F. or lower until it is used. Quality meat correctly wrapped in moisture-vapor-proof freezing paper may be kept frozen at this temperature from 9 to 10 months to a year. The heart and liver should be used within 6 months. Thaw game birds by placing the package in the refrigerator for 12 to 18 hours. This slow thawing will tenderize the meat.

Preparation and Recipes

Pheasant

Pheasants have white-meated breasts and wings and dark-meated legs. The cock usually weighs from 2¾ to 5 pounds and hens from 2 to 3 pounds. Like other game birds, it is best to consider age when cooking pheasant. Age can be determined by the claws. Short, round claws indicate a young bird and long, sharp claws an older bird. Broil or bake young birds and braise or stew older ones. Pheasant meat tends to be dry; roast with strips of bacon on the breast and baste frequently. Most chicken recipes are suitable for preparing pheasant.

PHEASANT WITH RICE STUFFING

2 pheasants, about 2½ pounds each	1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons salt	½ cup butter or margarine
1½ cups long-grain rice	1 cup finely chopped celery
3 cups water	3 tablespoons minced onion
½ cup mushrooms, sliced	¼ teaspoon savory
⅛ teaspoon crushed sage	6 strips bacon
⅛ teaspoon crushed thyme	

Sprinkle 1 teaspoon salt into cavity of each pheasant. Brown rice in dry frying pan. Transfer to saucepan; add water, 1 teaspoon salt and cook until tender. Melt butter or margarine in frying pan; add celery, onion and mushrooms; and cook about 10 minutes. Add to rice along with herbs. Stuff bird lightly. Extra stuffing may be baked in a greased, covered casserole during the last 30 minutes of roasting time. Truss birds. Brush birds with melted butter or margarine and place bacon across breast. Place on rack in roasting pan, cover and roast at 350° F. for about 2 hours or until tender. Serves six to eight.

ROASTED PHEASANT

1 pheasant	1 teaspoon salt
1 quart boiling water	⅛ teaspoon pepper
3 stalks celery	4 strips bacon
1 onion	1 cup water

Put pheasant in pan and pour boiling water over bird and into cavity. Put the celery and onion in bird. Do not sew up. Sprinkle bird with salt and pepper. Place in roasting pan and put bacon over breast. Add 1 cup water and roast uncovered at 350° F. for 2 hours or until tender. Serves six to eight.

FRIED PHEASANT

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| 1 pheasant, cut in serving pieces | 1 teaspoon salt |
| ¼ cup flour | ⅛ teaspoon pepper |

Roll pheasant in mixture of flour, salt and pepper. Brown well in hot fat. Cover, reduce heat and cook slowly until tender, about 1 hour, turning occasionally. Add ¼ cup water during latter part of cooking period.

Wild Turkey

Wild turkeys vary in weight from an average of 14 pounds for the male and an average of 8 pounds for the female. When roasting wild turkey, allow ¾ to 1 cup stuffing per pound of ready-to-cook meat.

ROASTED WILD TURKEY

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| 1 turkey, 8 to 10 pounds, ready-to-cook | 1 teaspoon salt |
| Salt and pepper | ¼ teaspoon pepper |
| 8 cups partially dry bread cubes | 1½ cups chopped onion |
| ¾ cup finely chopped celery | ¼ cup butter or margarine |
| ½ cup chopped walnuts | ¼ cup water |
| 2 to 3 teaspoons sage | |

Sprinkle turkey inside and out with salt and pepper. Combine bread, celery, walnuts and seasonings. Cook onion in butter or margarine until tender, but not brown; pour over bread mixture. Add the water and toss lightly. Spoon stuffing lightly into body cavity. Put remaining dressing in a greased casserole. Cover and bake in oven with turkey during last 30 minutes of roasting time. Truss bird. Cover breast with bacon slices and cheesecloth soaked in melted bacon fat. Place turkey, breast up, on rack in roasting pan. Roast at 325° F. for 20 to 25 minutes per pound or until tender, basting frequently with bacon fat and drippings in pan. Remove cheesecloth, skewers and string. Serves eight to ten.

BARBECUED TURKEY

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| 1 turkey, about 8 pounds | Barbecue sauce: |
| Salt and pepper | 1 cup catsup |
| Liquid smoke, if desired | 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce |
| Celery leaves from 1 bunch of celery | 1 cup water |
| 2 coarsely chopped onions | ¼ cup vinegar |
| ½ to ¾ cup salad oil | 2 or 3 dashes hot sauce |
| 1 recipe barbecue sauce | 1 tablespoon sugar |
| | 1 teaspoon salt |

Remove turkey neck if still attached, but leave skin. Rub cavity of bird with salt and brush with about 1½ teaspoons liquid smoke. Stuff with celery leaves and onion. Truss bird. Add 1 teaspoon liquid smoke to salad oil; brush on bird. Sprinkle well with salt and pepper. Place on rack in roasting pan and roast at 325° F. for about 3½ hours or until tender. Brush with oil mixture several times during cooking. Add remaining mixture to hot barbecue sauce 30 minutes before cooking is completed. Brush bird with sauce several times during last 30 minutes.

*Barbecue sauce: Combine ingredients. Heat to boiling and simmer 30 minutes.

Quail

Quail are small birds weighing about 4 to 6 ounces. When considering the number of servings, allow at least one bird per person to be served. Quail meat is white and tends to be dry. It needs a protective cover of bacon or other fat and frequent basting.

ROASTED QUAIL WITH MUSHROOMS

4 quail	Juice of half lemon
4 slices bacon	½ cup hot water
1 tablespoon butter or margarine	1 3-ounce can broiled mushrooms, drained

Wipe quail inside and out. Bind each bird with a slice of bacon. Put birds into a buttered pan and roast at 350° F., basting occasionally, for about 30 minutes or until tender. Remove birds and add butter or margarine, water and lemon juice to drippings in pan, stirring to make gravy. Add mushrooms. Serve the birds on toast with gravy poured over them. Serves four.

FRIED QUAIL

4 quail	1 teaspoon salt
¼ cup flour	⅛ teaspoon pepper

Dredge quail with mixture of flour, salt and pepper. Have deep frying pan half filled with hot fat. Brown quail on both sides. Cover skillet and reduce heat. Cook slowly until tender, about 20 minutes, turning once to brown evenly. Serves four.

QUAIL WITH WILD RICE

10 quail	1 green pepper, chopped
1¼ cups melted butter or margarine, divided	2 cloves garlic, minced
1½ pounds chicken livers	2½ cups cooked wild rice
2 large onions, chopped	2 cups chicken broth
	1½ cups port wine

Sew together body cavity of each quail; saute in ½ cup butter or margarine until quail are browned. Place in baking dish. Cover and bake at 225° F. for about 30 minutes. While quail are baking, saute livers, onion, pepper and garlic in ¾ cup butter or margarine. Do not let vegetables brown, but cook until transparent. Stir in rice, chicken broth and wine. Spoon rice mixture into a 3-quart baking dish; cover and bake at 325° F. for about 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Serve quail over rice. Yields eight to ten servings.

Woodcock and Rail

Woodcock and rail are small migratory game birds with rich, dark meat. Season lightly and always roast or broil with a generous amount of bacon, butter or margarine to prevent dryness. Woodcock and rail are similar in flavor to dove, thus recipes for one are appropriate for the other.

BROILED WOODCOCK OR RAIL

4 woodcock or rail	¼ cup butter or margarine, melted
Salt and pepper	
4 slices bacon	1 tablespoon chopped parsley

Sprinkle birds inside and out with salt and pepper. Wrap each bird with a slice of bacon and fasten with string or toothpick. Place birds on broiler grid and broil

about 6 inches from source of heat 8 to 10 minutes on each side, or until tender. Baste frequently with butter or margarine. Remove string or toothpick, sprinkle with parsley and serve on buttered toast. Serves four.

BAKED WOODCOCK OR RAIL

Split birds in half, dip in milk and dredge with flour. Fry until brown; salt and pepper. Place in a casserole and cover with sweet or sour cream. Bake at 350° F. for 30 minutes or until tender.

Dove

Doves are dark-meated and the young ones are tender. They are considered a delicacy in many families, especially when prepared to be tasty and tender. Two doves are considered a portion for serving. To fry dove, follow the procedure given for quail.

BRAISED DOVES

Salt and pepper the doves and dredge in flour or a combination of flour and corn meal. Heat fat in heavy pan, such as a Dutch oven. Brown sides quickly on both sides. Remove most of the fat; add a small amount of water; cover and simmer 1 hour over low heat. Serve hot.

DOVE PIE

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| 6 doves | 2 tablespoons flour |
| 1 quart water | 2 tablespoons butter or margarine |
| 1 onion, chopped | Salt and pepper |
| 1 small bunch parsley, chopped | Parsley for garnishing dish after cooking |
| 3 whole cloves | |

Clean and split the doves; cover with water, and add onion, parsley and cloves; and cook until tender. Remove the doves. Skim liquid. Thicken the liquid with paste made of flour and butter or margarine. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat. Line a baking dish with pastry. Place cooked birds in dish. Cover with gravy. Top with pastry. Bake at 350° F. for 1 hour or until crust is brown. Serves four to six.

DOVE A LA DUSTY

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| 10 dove breasts | ¼ cup wheat germ |
| 5 medium potatoes, pared and cut in half lengthwise | 1 teaspoon salt |
| 5 slices bacon | Pepper to taste |
| ½ cup bread crumbs | ¼ stick margarine, melted |
| ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese | 1 large browning bag |

Cut bacon slices in half. Wrap each dove breast with ½ slice of bacon. Combine bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese, wheat germ and salt. Dip potatoes in melted margarine and then in above mixture. Place flat side down in a large browning bag. Roll dove breasts in mixture and place on top of potatoes; pepper to taste. Bake at 350° F. for 1 hour. Serves four to six.

References

Cone, Joan, *Easy Game Cooking*, McLean, Virginia: EPM Publications, Inc., 1974.

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