

Alaska's Game is Good Food: Rabbit

Using Rabbit

If your winter meat supply is getting rather low and you have stretched the pocketbook about as far as it will stretch, consider using some wild rabbit. Although the fall, rather than winter, is the best time for getting rabbits, you can catch rabbits during many times of the year.

Many years rabbits are plentiful. In some areas of the state there is no season on rabbits and no limit to the number of rabbits you can get. If, however, you plan to hunt, check with the fish and game department as to the regulations that apply in your area. Rabbits may generally be found in hardwood areas.

Rabbits in most of Alaska are not really rabbits but snowshoe hares, which are larger than the cottontail and jack rabbits found in many of the lower forty-eight states.

Tularemia

When hunting, watch the reaction of the rabbit when it is flushed from cover. If he behaves sluggishly or erratically, avoid shooting it for food as he may have tularemia (rabbit fever). It is rare to shoot a rabbit with tularemia, but the possibility is certainly present. Tularemia is contracted through cuts or other injuries on the hands as well as through eating, fluid contact with eyes, inhalation or bare hands. At a minimum it is wise to use rubber gloves when cleaning the animal. If a rabbit has tularemia, there will be little white or creamy-colored spots on the liver and/or spleen.

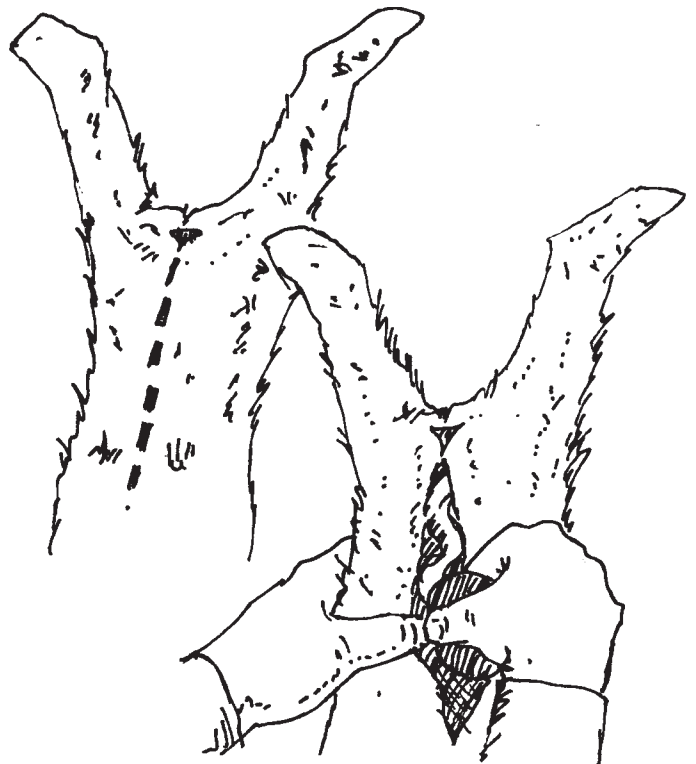
Although cooking rabbits until well done will kill this bacteria, it is better not to use meat from sick animals.

Care in the Field

Most hunters prefer to dress rabbits immediately after they are shot, removing the entrails and letting the blood drain.

To clean, make an incision down the belly from the anus to ribs, taking care not to pierce the intestinal casing. Remove the entrails. Cut off the head. Wipe out the body cavity with paper towels. Do not let your dog eat the entrails because rabbits are intermediate hosts for tapeworms, which can infect dogs.

Leave the skin on the rabbit until ready for cooking or freezing to help keep the flesh clean. Rabbits can be skinned in several ways. Three of these methods are explained on the following page.



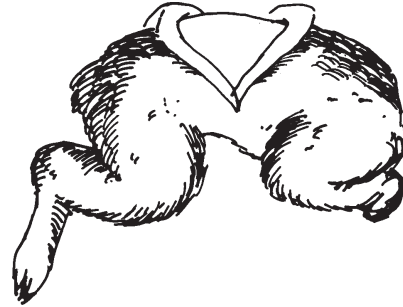
Skinned Cased

1. Casing involves peeling off the skin inside out, before the animal is dressed. Cut the skin down the back of the legs and around the anus, then pull the skin toward the head. Cut off the paws. This method reduces the number of cuts in the skin and keeps hair away from the meat.



Skinned Torn

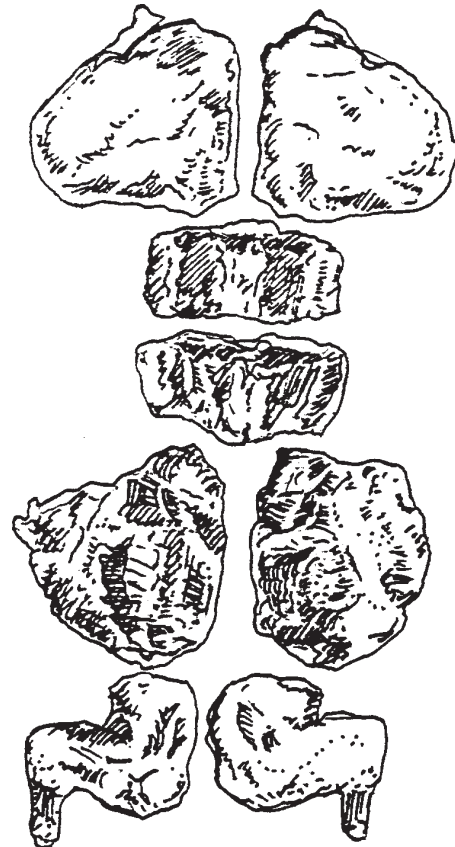
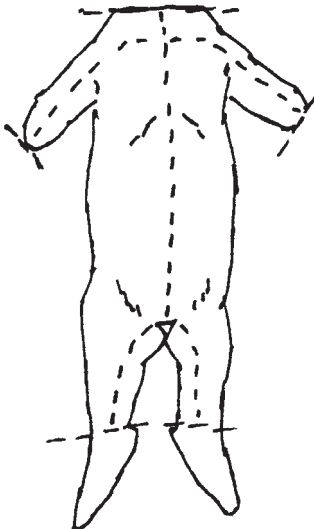
3. Hare may be skinned by tearing the pelt from a cut across the back since hare pelts often have little value. Raise a handful of skin just below the shoulders and insert a knife, with the sharp edge up, at right angles to the spine, and cut across the back. Grasp the skin on both sides of the cut and pull steadily toward the head and tail, tearing and peeling the skin off inside out in two parts. Cut off paws and tail with skin attached.



After skinning, wipe the carcass with a vinegar soaked cloth to remove hair on the meat.

Skinned Open

2. This method may be used when the animal is dressed in the field. Extend the body cavity incision to the throat and to each foot. Peel back the skin from the body cavity incision.



Rabbit Cuts. One method of cutting up a fryer rabbit.

Cooking Rabbit

Rabbit Baked in Milk

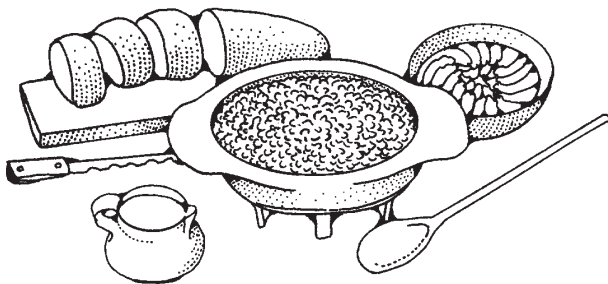
1	rabbit
1/3 cup	flour
1 teaspoon	salt
1 teaspoon	sage
3 tablespoons	fat
3	bacon slices
4 cups	white sauce

Dress and clean one rabbit and disjoint into pieces for serving. Mix the flour, salt and sage in a bowl. Thoroughly coat the pieces of rabbit with the mixture. Sauté until brown on both sides. Place the rabbit in a casserole and lay the bacon over the surface. Pour the thin white sauce over and around the rabbit. Bake in moderate oven of 375° F. for two hours or until meat is tender.

White Sauce

4 tablespoons	fat
4 tablespoons	flour
4 cups	milk
1 tablespoon	salt

Melt fat in saucepan. Stir in flour and salt. Slowly add milk and stir until the sauce bubbles. Lower heat, cook and stir until it thickens, about three minutes.



Sweet & Sour Rabbit

1	small rabbit
2 tablespoons	fat
1 cup	pineapple juice
1/4 cup	vinegar
1/2 teaspoon	salt
1 cup	pineapple pieces
1	medium green pepper
1 1/2 tablespoons	cornstarch
1/4 cup	sugar
1/2 cup	water
	flour, salt, pepper

Cut rabbit into serving pieces. Cut green pepper in thin half slices. Roll rabbit in mixture of flour, salt and pepper. Heat fat or oil in a heavy pan and brown pieces on all sides over moderate heat. Add pineapple juice, vinegar and salt. Cover pan; cook over low heat 40 minutes or until meat is tender. Add pineapple and green pepper; cook a few minutes longer. Mix cornstarch and sugar and stir in the water. Stir this mixture gradually into liquid in the pan and cook slowly about five minutes.

Serves 6

Hasenpfeffer

1	rabbit
	vinegar
	water
1	sliced onion
	butter
3	cloves
1	bay leaf
1 cup	sour cream
	salt
	pepper

Cut up rabbit. Place in a crock or glass dish with enough vinegar and water of equal parts to cover. Add onion, cloves, bay leaf, salt and pepper.

Let meat soak for two days (in the refrigerator). Then wipe dry and brown in hot butter, turning frequently. Slowly add some freshly-made vinegar, water and spice solution to a depth of 3/4 inch. Cover tightly and simmer until tender (about 30 minutes). Do not allow to boil. Just before serving stir sour cream into sauce.

Rabbit Fricassee

1 rabbit
1/3 cup oil
2 cups hot water
4 cups raw vegetables*
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup flour
flour, salt, pepper

Roll cut up rabbit in mixture of flour, salt and pepper.

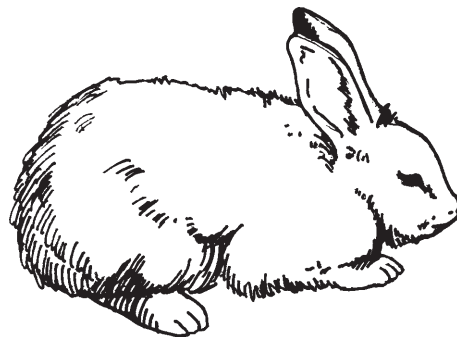
Heat oil and brown the rabbit slowly, turning often. Add water and cover the pan.

Cook slowly on top of range about one hour, or until rabbit is almost tender. Add water if needed during cooking. Add vegetables* and salt and cook about 20 minutes longer, or until vegetables are done.

Or, after browning, bake the rabbit at 325° F. about 1 1/2 hours, add vegetables* and bake about 30 minutes longer.

Mix the 1/4 cup flour with a little cold water, add a few tablespoons of hot liquid from the pan, and stir the mixture into the liquid in the pan. Cook 15 minutes longer, or until sauce is smooth and thick.
Serves 8

*Vegetables may include peas, coarsely chopped carrots, potatoes, onions and celery.



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