

IMPACT



University of Idaho Canyon County Extension 501 Main St., Caldwell, ID 83605; 208 459-6003

Wild Cooking!!

The Situation

According to Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho has some of the best and most varied hunting in the west. Idahoans hunt species of deer (mule deer and whitetail), elk, antelope, upland game, turkey and waterfowl. Some individuals hunt trophy game such as moose, bighorn sheep and mountain goat, Idaho covers it all. Idaho Fish and Game sells approximately 290,000 hunting licenses each year. Hunting continues to increase in popularity but often the game is wasted because of improper handling in the field.

Safe game cooking and high quality meat begins in the field. Wild game treated properly in the field and cooked correctly enhances its distinctive flavors, family enjoyment and prevents food borne illness.

Our Response

University of Idaho Extension Educators have taken a proactive approach. Instead of waiting for a deadly outbreak of a foodborne illness, they armed Idaho's hunting families with practical, field-to-table food safety education.

The educational approach was action packed and designed to meet the needs of hunters and those who cook game meats. Classes were offered in both Ada and Canyon Counties. Five speakers addressed three different topics related to food safety and the hunt. Jim Allen and Don Sturtevant, Idaho hunter safety instructors, taught participants how to take measures

in the field and during transport to minimize spoilage and maximize flavor and food safety. These hunter educators showed how to clean and cool big and small game and upland birds.



↑ Leah Clark prepares Idaho Trout Fajitas.



↗ Rachel Knickerhelm shows participants how to prepare a dish using elk sausage.



↖ Joey Peutz demonstrates safe jerky techniques.

⇒ Don Sturtevant explains "in-the-field" food safety concerns.



Joey Peutz, UI Extension Educator, demonstrated safe preparation and dehydration of meat for jerky. Participants also had an opportunity to taste test comparison samples and discover which method (pre-cooked or vinegar marinade) they preferred. Leah Clark, marketing specialist for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, and Rachel Knickerhelm, chef and owner of Wild West Bakery, taught how to prepare Idaho elk, trout and other game meat. They shared recipes and tips for creating safe and flavorful meals using game meats.

Program Outcomes

Over 50 community members participated in Wild Cooking workshops in Ada and Canyon Counties. Participants were asked about the information and knowledge they gained from the Wild Cooking workshop. Over 97% of the respondents said that they increased their knowledge of the care of game animals in the field and how to prepare jerky safely. One hundred percent of respondents said they gained knowledge on where to purchase Idaho game meat and trout.

Respondents also shared personal thoughts about their wild game cooking and hunting experiences with the class. Most individuals (85%) said that they would try the new "safe" jerky recipes.

University of Idaho Extension is viewed as an unbiased and reliable source for food safety information. Jim Bailey shared that although he is not a hunter himself, his neighbors were in for a treat. Bailey came to the workshop to learn how to make jerky out of the game his neighbors bring him. Distrustful of Internet recipes from questionable sources, Bailey said, "I didn't want to make jerky until I came here. I figured that, by going through Extension, I would learn the safest way."

The benefits of food safety education are clear. USDA's Economic Research Service estimates (in 2005 dollars) that the annual economic cost of illness caused by *E. coli* 0157H7 is \$431,444,157 (73,480 cases)*. If the Wild Cooking educational class prevented just one very serious case of *E. coli* foodborne illness we have saved approximately

\$5,871.58 in medical cost, lost productivity, premature death, etc.

The Future

The Wild Cooking program is part of several food safety programs offered by UI Extension. The Food Safety Advisor program will be offered in 2006. Lulla Northup, a participant at Wild Cooking, has registered to take the in-depth workshop series on all aspects of food preservation. A variety of consumer food safety classes are planned for 2006 in addition to the six-session food safety advisor program.

Cooperators and Co-sponsors

Idaho Department of Fish and Game
ISDA, Idaho Preferred Program
Wild West Bakery, Eagle, Idaho

For More Information

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Reference:

*<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FoodborneIllness/>