

PREPARING THE KILL



A HUNTER'S GUIDE TO
FIELD DRESSING GAME

Contents

PREPARING THE KILL	3
Bleeding	3
Skinning.....	4
Working on your own	5
Skinning small animals	5
Gutting	5
Jointing meat.....	6
Hamming.....	7
OFFFAL.....	7
Liver.....	7
Stomach (Tripe).....	7
Kidneys.....	7
Melts	8
Lites	8
Heart	8
Intestines.....	8
Sweetbreads	8
Tail.....	8
Feet	8
Head.....	8
Brain.....	8
Bones.....	8
PREPARING SHEEP-LIKE ANIMALS.....	9
Preparing Pig:.....	9
Preparing small animals:.....	9
Preparing reptiles:.....	9
Preparing birds:.....	9
Bleeding:	9
Plucking:.....	10
Drawing (removing innards):	10
Cooking:	10

PREPARING THE KILL

PREPARING THE KILL

No part of a carcass should be wasted. Careful preparation will give you the maximum food value and make full use of the parts you cannot eat. Set about it in four stages:

- Bleeding, which is essential if the meat is to keep, and without which the taste is very strong.
- Skinning: so that the hide or fur can be used for shelter and clothing. (Pigs are not skinned because they have a useful layer of fat under the skin. Birds are plucked but not usually skinned.)
- Gutting, to remove the gut and recover offal.
- Jointing: to produce suitable cuts for cooking by different methods.

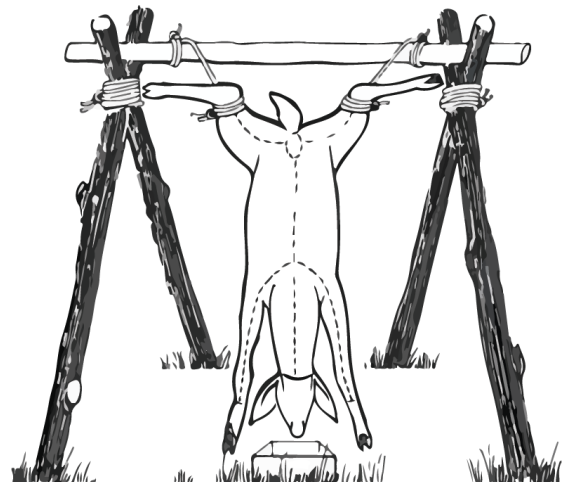
Bleeding

Do not waste blood. It is rich in vitamins and minerals, including salt, that could otherwise be missing from the survivor's diet. Cattle blood is an important part of the diet of many African herdsmen. Cannibals who drank their enemies' blood found vision and general health improved, and giddy spells, induced by vitamin deficiency, cured: the blood provided the missing vitamins and minerals.

Any animal will bleed better if hung with the head down. Tie ropes around the hoek (NOT the ankle - it will slip off) and hoist it up a branch or build a frame, placing a receptacle beneath to catch the blood.

For a frame you need a strong structure. Drive the posts into the ground and lash them firmly where they cross to make A-frames and, then rest the horizontal bar on top.

Bleed the animal by cutting the jugular vein or carotid artery in its neck. When the animal is hanging these



will bulge more clearly and should be easy to see. The cut can be made either behind the ears, stabbing in line with the ears to pierce the vein on both sides of the head at the same time, or lower down in the V of the neck, before the artery branches. Unless you have a stiletto type knife the latter is best. An alternative is to cut the throat from ear to ear. This has the disadvantage of cutting through the windpipe and food from the stomach may come up and contaminate the blood which you are trying to save, but if your knife does not have a sharp point it may be necessary.

It is particularly important to very thoroughly bleed pigs. If blood remains in their tissues, which have high moisture and fat content, it will speed deterioration of the flesh.

Skinning

It is easier to skin any animal when the flesh is still warm, as soon as it has been bled. First remove any scent glands which might taint the meat. Some deer have them on their rear legs, just behind the knee. Felines and canines have a gland on either side of the anus. It is wise to remove the testicles of male animals, as they can also taint meat. Before attempting to remove hide, cut firmly through the skin, as shown by the broken line in the main illustration:

1. Make a ring cut around the rear legs just above the knee. Take care not to cut the securing rope.
2. Cut around the forelegs in the same place.
3. Cut down the inside of the rear legs to the crotch, carefully cutting a circle around the genitals.
4. Extend the cut down the center of the body to the neck. Do not cut into the stomach and digestive organs: lift skin and insert two fingers beneath, set knife between them, sharp edge outward and draw it slowly down, cutting away from the body.
5. Cut down the inside of the forelegs.

Cutting in this way, you avoid cutting prematurely into the gut cavity. With the fingers lift the skin as you go, the knife, sharp edge outwards, slips in and cuts along. Do not hurry. Do not cut yourself. Do not damage the skin. Taking care will pay dividends later when you want to use the skin.

Now ease the skin of the rear legs from the flesh. Use the knife as little as possible. Roll the skin outwards, the fur inside itself, and pull it down.

Having cleared the back legs, cut around the tail (you have already cut around the genital area). As soon as you can get your hand right down the back of the carcass use your fingers to separate flesh



from skin. Now peel the skin from the front legs. You will have a single piece of hide. As you work your thumbs down the neck they become bloody at the point where the throat was cut. A strong twist of the head will separate it. Cut through remaining tissues.

Working on your own

Lifting a large animal takes considerable effort. If on your own you may have to skin and gut the animal on the ground. To prevent the carcass from rolling, cut off the feet of hooved animals and place them under it.

Lay the carcass down a natural slope; scoop an impression in the ground in which to place a collecting tin or other vessel so that the animal bleeds into it. Follow the same pattern of incisions in the hide then skin the animal from one side to the backbone, spread out the hide and then roll the animal onto it to finish skinning the other half - this helps keep the meat from rubbing on the ground.

Skinning small animals

Rabbits and smaller animals can be skinned by making a small incision over the stomach (be careful not to cut into the organs). Insert the thumbs and pull outwards — the skin comes away easily. Free the legs and twist the head off.

If you have no knife available to make the first incision snap off the lower part of a leg and use the sharp edge of the break to cut the skin.

Gutting

With the carcass still suspended remove the gut and recover the offal. Pinch the abdomen as high as possible and in the pouch of flesh you have raised make a slit big enough to take two fingers. Do not stab into the flesh or you may cut through to internal organs. Insert the fingers and use them as a guide for the knife to cut upwards towards the anus. Now cut downwards in the same way, using the hand to hold back the gut, which will begin to spill outwards (see illustration). Cut down as far as the breastbone.

The initial incision, made in the pinched-up flesh, need only accommodate two fingers. Cut in the same way as skinning (previous illustration). First up, then down (the back of the hand prevents the gut from spilling).

Let the gut spill out; allow it to hang down so that you can inspect it. Remove the two kidneys and the liver.

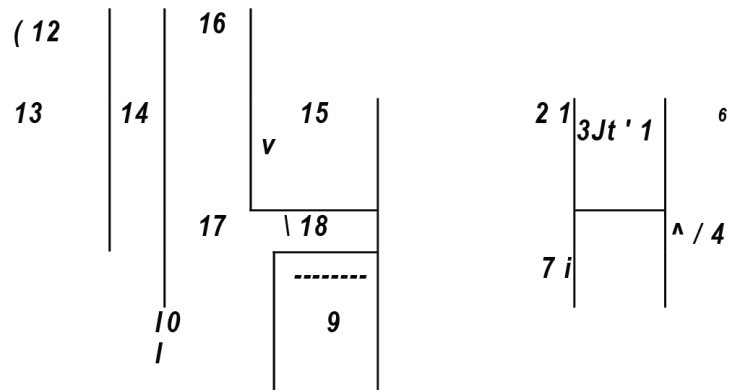
The chest cavity is covered with a membrane and easily missed in small game. Cut through the membrane and remove heart, lungs and windpipe.



Ensure that the anus is clear - you should be able to see daylight through it (push a hand through with large animals). The carcass is now clean.

Jointing meat

Large animals can be quartered by first splitting down the backbone and then cutting each side between the tenth and eleventh rib. The hindquarters will contain the steaks (rump and fillet) and the choicer cuts; the forequarter meat is more stringy and needs slow cooking to make it tender.



The cuts into which a carcass is divided will differ according to the kind of animal and the cook's preference.

1. **Fillet** or **undercut** the most tender meat - only 1 per cent is fillet Ideal for preserving.
2. **Sirloin** Next most tender. Fat free strips can be cut for preserving.
3. **Rump** Ideal for frying, little cooking needed. Can also be dried in strips.
4. **Topside** Muscle from the top of the leg. Cook slowly, it tends to be tough. Cut into cubes for boiling.
5. **Top rump** Muscle from front of thigh. As for topside.
6. **Silverside** Muscle on outside of thighs. Good for roasting.
7. **Hind flank** Belly, ideal for stews and casseroles.
8. **Leg** Tough and sinewy, cut into cubes and stew.
9. **Flank** Muscular extension of the belly. Ideal for stews. Usually tough so needs long simmering to make tender.
10. **Brisket** Same as Flank.
11. **Shin** Foreleg, best cubed for stews.
12. Neck
13. **Clod** Ideal for stews. Contains less tissue than leg. Cook slowly.

14. **Chuck and blade** quite tender but usually cut up as stewing steak. **15-18 Ribs** are ideal for roasting but cook slowly.

Hamming

Offal should be eaten as soon as possible but the rest of the meat is better hung. In moderate temperatures leave the carcass hanging for 2-3 days. In hot climates it is better to preserve it or cook it straight away.

When the animal is killed, acids released into the muscles help to break down their fiber, making the meat tenderer. The longer it is left the tenderer it will be and easier to cut, with more flavor too, and harmful parasitic bacteria in the meat will die. You must keep flies off the flesh: if they lay eggs on the meat it will quickly spoil.

OFFAL

Liver

Liver is best eaten as soon as possible. Remove the bile bladder in the centre. It is quite strong and can usually be pulled off without difficulty - but be careful, the bile will taint flesh with which it comes in contact. If any animal has any diseases they will show up in the liver. Avoid any liver that is mottled or covered in white spots. If only some is affected, cut it off and eat the remainder.

Liver is a complete food, containing all essential vitamins and minerals. If eaten raw no food value is lost. It requires little cooking.

Stomach (Tripe)

Stomach (tripe) takes little digesting, so is a good food for the sick or injured. Remove the stomach contents (which make ideal 'invalid' food) wash the tripe and simmer slowly with herbs. The contents may sound unpalatable but could save an injured person's life, for the animal has done most of the hard work of breaking the food down. Lightly boiled, stomach contents are nourishing and easily digestible.

In some countries pigs are fed nothing but apples prior to slaughter. They are cooked with the stomach still in. The subtle flavor of apple impregnates the meat. The stomach is removed after cooking and the contents used as sauce.

Kidneys

Kidneys are a valuable source of nourishment and ideal flavoring for stews. Boil them with herbs. The white fat surrounding them (suet) is a rich food source. Render it down to use in the preparation of pemmican.

Melts

Melts are the spleen, a large organ in the bigger animals. It has limited food value and is not worth bothering about in small game such as rabbits. It is best roasted.

Lites

Lites are the lungs of the animal, perfectly good to eat but not of great food value. Any respiratory complaints will show up in the lungs. Do not eat any mottled with black and white spots. Healthy lungs are pink and blemish free and best boiled. They could be set aside for fish or trap bait.

Heart

Heart is a tightly packed muscle with little or no fat. Roast it or use its distinctive flavor to liven up stew.

Intestines

Intestine consists of lengths of tubes and they are best used as sausage skins. Turn them inside out and wash them. Then boil them thoroughly. Mix fat and meat in equal proportions and then stir in blood. Stuff the mixture into the skin and boil them well. Before putting them into boiling water add a little cold to take it just off the boil - this will counter any risk of the skins bursting. This makes a highly nutritious food which, if smoked, will keep for a long time. Dried intestines can be used for light lashings.

Sweetbreads

Sweetbreads are the pancreas or thymus gland, distinctive in larger game. Many people consider it a great delicacy and it is delicious boiled or roasted.

Tail

Skin and boil to make an excellent soup for it is full of meat and gelatin.

Feet

Feet are chopped off during slaughter but should not be wasted; boil them up to make a good stew. Clean dirt from hooves or paws and remove all traces of fur. Hooves are a source of nutritious aspic jelly.

Head

On larger animals there is a good deal of meat on the head. The cheeks make a very tasty dish. The tongue is highly nutritious. Boil it to make it tender and skin before eating.

All that is left, or the whole head with small animals, should be boiled.

Brain

The brain will make brawn and will also provide a useful solution for curing hides.

Bones

All bones should be boiled for soup. They are rich in bone marrow, with valuable vitamins. They can also be made into tools.

PREPARING SHEEP-LIKE ANIMALS

Follow the instructions for larger animals and then:

1. Split in two down the line of the spine, keeping exactly to the center of the backbone.
2. Remove rear leg. Try to cut through the ball and socket joint.
3. Remove front leg. There is no bone to cut through, follow the line of the shoulder blade.
4. Cut off neck.
5. Cut off skirt (loose flesh hanging below the ribs).
6. Cut between each rib and between the vertebrae. This gives you chops.
7. The fillet, lying in the small of the back, is the best meat for preserving.

Preparing Pig:

Do not attempt to skin a pig. Gut it first then place it over the hot embers of a fire and scrape the hair off. Hot water - just hotter than your hand can bear - will help to loosen the hair. Water that is too hot will make the hair more difficult to remove. Pigs attract many parasites: ticks, crab lice and worms so cooking must make sure of killing them. Boiling is therefore the best way of cooking pork.

Preparing small animals:

Follow the same basic procedure as for larger animals - they all need to be gutted.

Preparing reptiles:

Discard internal organs, which may carry salmonella. Reptiles can be cooked in their skins, and large snakes can be chopped into steaks and their skins can be used for clothing. To prepare a snake cut off head well down, behind poison sacs; open vent to neck, keeping blade outwards, to avoid piercing innards, which will fall clear. Use the skewer to suspend and ease of skin towards tail.

Preparing birds:

Birds are prepared in much the same way as animals — though they are usually plucked and cooked with the skin on instead of being skinned. Follow the sequence below.

Bleeding:

Kill birds by stretching their necks, then cut the throat and hang head down to bleed. Or kill by cutting just under the tongue, severing main nerve and main artery. The bird dies easily and bleeds well. Handle carrion eaters as little as possible - they are more prone to infection, lice and ticks.

Plucking:

Plucking is easiest straight after killing while the bird is still warm. Hot water can be used to loosen feathers, except in the case of water birds and seabirds, in which it tends to tighten them. Keep feathers for arrow flights and insulation. Start at the chest. For speed you can skin a bird - but that wastes the food value of the skin.

Drawing (removing innards):

Make an incision from the vent to the tail. Put your hand in and draw out all the innards. Retain the heart and kidneys. Cut off the head and feet.

Cooking:

Always boil carrion eaters in case they carry any disease. Boiling will make stringy old birds tender but you can roast younger ones on a spit or in an oven.