

Freezer
Jan?

Feb.

March

April

May
to YNP

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

Pate?

Pancake + Waffle mix

Pasture stew. 1st fish meat

{ Deer + buttersauce
Freezer ok now: he & he, here

{ Rhubarb topping / Huckleberries + walnuts
Brookies on a worm or from Yellowstone.

{ To host from Lake. (Roasted?)
White butter? Rat + Lake?

(Eut Collins)

{ Brook trout grilled over campfire
Topping (Huckleberries, rhubarb, walnuts)

{ ~~Deer soup~~
Herbix - roasted w/ cider + Eve pie
seen w/ grain too

Robertson - Tender venison

{ Zora (fried pheasant
Duck. Never freeze fireplace gib. (honey?).

Roast pheasant
(One one we carried around for 10 days.)
Horse

(See ph toys in December. The story.)

Tea (in-text)

{ Natural
{ Cakes?

Nettle soup

Deer
chokeberry syrup
+ pie?

Duck -

||

10
June ~~7~~, 1988

Mr. Slaton L. White
Senior Editor
Field & Stream
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036

Dear Slaton:

The enclosed is supposed to be a query. I put it on a separate page so you could scrawl on it and send it send it back. You pointed out that mood pieces can't be queried and there would be some mood in this one, but more on the game than on the wine that goes with it. I'm guessing that most people are tired of writers who go all silly about wine.

Yours,

Enclosed: Wine & Wild Food (query)

WINE & WILD FOOD

The dry air of autumn distills the odors of fallen leaves and a hundred old hunting trips eddy on the same breeze. Spring is old grass steaming as snowbanks melt back from trout streams. Summer savors of balsam needles, raspberries, and bass. You don't have to hunt or fish to remember these things, but a smell becomes imprinted with the emotion that accompanied it, once, when a grouse flushed in a thunderstorm of fermenting leaves.

Wine remembers too. If you want to make a pheasant taste even better, wine will do it. Wine can recall the blackberries that fattened the rooster in July and the hazelnuts of November. That much is accurate, even scientific, like the connection between smell and memory.

(Much of the rest of the wine mystique smells of baloney. The problem, I guess, is that few of us Americans grew up with wine on the table, so we tend either to ignore it or dance away on the twinkling feet of nymphs. But we grow the good stuff in most states now, not far from our fish and game. My local supermarket sells, for \$3.79, an Idaho wine that the New York Times commended a restaurant for listing at \$16. When it comes to Bordeaux, how many of us want to spend more for a bottle of it than for the rest of the meal? Wine labels are the most expensive form of literature. I'd give tips on wine that makes sense in 1988 for for birds, fish, and big game; for every day and for a wild turkey. These foods taste better than anything else, so outdoorsmen have special opportunities.)

About 900 words
June 19, 1992

Datus Proper
1085 Hamilton Road
Belgrade, MT 59714
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MRS. THOMPSON'S FRIED PHEASANT

You can't rush a rooster to the table.

Zora Thompson is the kind of lady you would like to have for a grandmother, and she lives exactly where you wish that your grandmother had settled. You have to slow down on the gravel road so that you don't hit a deer. A pair of mallards flushes as you turn in to the farmhouse, and when you slam your car's door a pheasant crows at you from the river's bank. Trout always seem to be rising down by the willows. There are varmints around too but Mrs. Thompson keeps a rifle by the door to discourage them. Nothing could persuade her to move from the old place, she says, though several realtors have tried.

Zora was from West Virginia and Cecil Thompson was from

Montana, so of course they met in Chicago. That was America's pivot, back in '38. She met him when he came to town to sell a load of spuds and then she rode the Northern Pacific west and the two of them built a life. It was a big change, she says. After West Virginia's rolling hills and short horizons, the farm in Montana seemed like exaggeration, broad flat valley edged by mountains rising sharp.

The flat and the steep were both fertile with game, however. Cecil is gone now, but Zora tells how he used to ride from farmhouse to mountains and come back with never less than fifteen birds hanging from his saddle -- big sage hens from the lower country, little ruffed grouse from the creek bottoms, and medium-sized blues from the high ridges. The old blue and sage grouse were strong-tasting, but the younger grouse of all kinds were good. The very best birds for eating, however, were the pheasants right there at the farm. You just had to treat them right. You couldn't rush through the process and expect them to taste the way they should, she says.

My wife and I had dinner with Mrs. Thompson last Sunday, and don't let the simplicity of her recipe fool you. You could not find a better pheasant dish if you flew to Paris for the purpose. This is the gentle, rolling, West Virginia truth.

Bear in mind, however, that frying is for young pheasants only. If you bag a rooster with long, sharp spurs, Mrs. Thompson recommends roasting it instead.

Zora's Fried Pheasant

2 cock pheasants with short, rounded spurs

4 large strips streaky bacon

Salt to taste

Flour for dusting and making gravy

2 cups pheasant stock (optional)

Hang the birds in a cool place until next Sunday, or keep them in the refrigerator with space to dry out. Pluck them when you get a chance. The skin should be intact for this method.

Remove the crop and the contents of the body cavity. Save the liver, heart, gizzard, neck, and feet. Pull the veins out of the liver. If you have not drawn a pheasant before, don't worry: it will smell much better after it has been cooked.

Mrs. Thompson took over at this point. She cut each bird into five pieces, all with the bones left in: two breast halves, two legs with thighs, and the back.

She put the backs, necks, giblets, and feet (scrubbed) in a saucepan and brought them to a boil in stock made from pheasant bones and scraps. Plain water would have been all right too, she said. Then she covered the pan and simmered its contents while the rest of the cooking went ahead.

The fat was rendered from the bacon in two cast-iron skillets -- 8" and 10" sizes -- over low heat. Then Mrs. Thompson removed the bacon and turned the heat up. The four legs went into the smaller skillet and the four breasts into the larger. She

browned the skin for about 15 minutes, sitting by the stove and adjusting the burner so that the fat never got hot enough to splatter. When she had turned the pieces a couple of times and was satisfied with their color, she poured a little stock from the saucepan into the skillets -- enough to keep the birds from burning but not to cover them. Then she lowered the heat, put loose-fitting lids on the skillets, and simmered the meat for about half an hour longer, for a total cooking time of 45 minutes.

Mind you, only my wife and I watched the time. If there is a secret to Mrs. Thompson's method, it is that she pays attention to the contents of the pan rather than the clock. She tested the legs and breasts with a fork till the juices began to run clear, beyond which point the meat would have lost flavor and grown tough.

The legs were done first, so she removed them from their skillet, kept them warm, and used the empty skillet to make gravy, stirring in flour little by little and letting it brown. Then some of the stock from the saucepan was added and stirred to get out the lumps. When the breasts were removed from the other skillet, she added the rest of the stock to that one, deglazing it. The juices from this second pan were poured into the first and blended with the gravy, which was then poured into a serving dish.

The pheasants went to the table with the gravy, real mashed potatoes, peas, red wine, and a reverent hush.

June 21, 1992

Mr. Slaton White
Field & Stream
2 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dear Slaton:

I'm rushing this one to you with the thought that you might need it for autumn. If so, I will soon have slides that should serve at least as scrap for an artist. Mrs. Thompson might also let me go through her family pictures for something of nostalgic interest.

Yours,

Enclosed: "Mrs. Thompson's Fried Pheasant"

Writers' Hunger: Food as Metaphor

11/19/86

By JOYCE CAROL OATES

PRINCETON, N.J.

WHEN I was interviewed by a friend who is a well-known food specialist, it quickly became clear that we operated from different sensibilities while speaking the same language.

"How do you reward yourself for having worked all day at writing?" I was asked. Sounding rather unconvincing I tried to explain that writing itself seemed to be the reward.

"Do you ever indulge in food fantasies, for instance about childhood foods?" my friend asked. This baffled me: Why, I wondered, would anyone waste precious time daydreaming about food?

"If you have to ask," my friend said sagely, "you wouldn't understand why."

Of course I understand that food is

symbolic: a kind of poetry. In even moderately affluent societies it seems scarcely to exist in itself, but rather as an expression of metaphor.

For some, food must be symbolic or it is nothing — it must be encapsulated in an "occasion" or it is nothing. Eating in the wrong circumstances, or with the wrong people, or under duress, or pressure, or in haste is deeply repugnant if not impossible. (This is not to suppose that genuine hunger would not change our attitude, and fairly swiftly.)

"Food is love," I was once told. The occasion was one of tension and the tone was both reproachful and belligerent: The secret meaning — "If you don't eat the food I've spent hours preparing for you, and lots of it, you don't love me" — was not really a secret. The beleaguered dinner table has become a staple of American drama — the family ritual-gone-wrong from which participants, usu-

Continued on Page C14

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Among Writers: A Hunger That Serves Up Metaphors

Continued From Page C1

ally children, yearn to escape but dare not.

A friend of mine found himself in a bizarre situation, which approached situation comedy: His mother and his wife's mother were so bitterly jealous of each other that he and his family had to eat complete — repeat, complete — dinners at each house on Thanksgiving Day. An added complication was that, to prevent heart-break, neither mother could be allowed to know about the other's dinner. Each thought she was the Thanksgiving hostess. Thus my friend came to associate Thanksgiving with a unique species of hell.

Nor did he much like, as I recall, the other holidays.

In affluent societies thinking about food in abstract and codified terms can come virtually to replace eating itself as a symbolic activity. Not what one eats but how it is prepared; not what food is but what it means; who has prepared it for you, or for whom you have prepared it.

For really good cooks it is the preparation of meals that arouses excitement and anticipation, the experimentation with new combinations, exoticism of a domestic sort. One well-known cook here in Princeton assembles virtual collages of food. Another prepares not only vegetables grown in his own garden but vegetables grown with exactitude from seedlings he has himself cultivated. Many men bake bread and speak of it in such ecstatic terms that one must believe them — though one is not much tempted to test it out. When the bread symbolism is so immediate, so palpable, what margin remains for the imagination?

In such societies the willful resistance to food — fasting to the point of anorexia nervosa, for instance — is a way of defining the self; the "will" as

superior to "appetite." When the anorexic instinct is contained within a culturally coherent symbol system — such as religious fasting and self-mortification — it has the value of a transcendent act; to fast 40 days and nights in the desert is a gesture of self-abnegation, not self-enhancement. When the anorexic instinct is unmoored, so to speak, from a social context, it seems merely stubborn, self-destructive, suicidal.

In literature, eating and not eating are always symbolic. Food always means something other than mere food. Eating scenes, particularly scenes of overconsumption, seem to shade inevitably into comedy, satire — the famous eating episode in Fielding's "Tom Jones" (food as sheer sensuality, gluttony, sex-to-be); banquets in Flaubert's "Madame Bovary" and in the more sumptuous "Salammbô"; the claustrophobic holiday dinner in Joyce's "The Dead"; the "artificial sensation" of Huysmans's "A Rebours" ("Against the Grain") — involving as it does, in one passage of inspired silliness, the Decadent hero "playing internal symphonies to himself [by] providing his palate with sensations analogous to those which music dispenses to the ear." Like any infant the Decadent wants to put the very world in his mouth — or is the world a mouth?

Many-coursed Victorian dinners of stupefying excess are described in Dickens's "Our Mutual Friend" and Mann's "Buddenbrooks" by way of poetically commenting on a self-indulgent bourgeoisie. The Buddenbrooks's Sunday dinner is so heavy as to be fatal to one of the gentlemen. In Charlotte Brontë's "Villette" the ascetic heroine, Lucy Snowe, registers fierce contempt for a Renoirlike painting of a woman "extremely well fed: very much butcher's meat" whose "hearty health" is particularly offensive.

One of the most powerful interludes in "Jane Eyre" is that of Jane's near-

starvation as, in flight from her beloved Rochester, she must beg food from strangers: A crust of bread becomes the symbol of her humbled pride. Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" is a virtual fruitcake of a poem, studded with delicacies of startling suggestiveness. (The goblins offer their wares to innocent young women in "sugar-baited" voices: "Plump unpecked cherries," "bloom-down-cheeked peaches," "wild free-born cranberries," "Currants and gooseberries, / Bright-fire-like barberries, / Figs to fill your mouth, / Citrons from the South") — a feminist cautionary tale of subversive ingenuity.

By contrast, Hemingway's fiction abounds in scenes, often protracted, involving the convivial consumption of food and drink. Lovers, friends, comrades all bond themselves, so to speak, by ritualistic excess; machismo demands a hearty self-indulgence in the pleasures of the flesh.

When Emily Dickinson writes, "It would have starved a Gnat / To live so small as I — / And yet I was a living Child — / With Food's necessity / Upon me — like a Claw —" and "I had been hungry, all the Years — / My Noon had Come — to dine —" she is speaking of spiritual and emotional deprivation, and giving poetic voice to the variegated hunger of women of her place and time.

Kafka's Hunger Artist, whose art is that of fasting for extraordinary periods, is both an embodiment and parody of the artist who deprives himself of normal nourishment in the service of his art — an art of dubious significance, in any case. (It demands the constant attention of an audience even as the Hunger Artist scorns his audience.) Dying, it might be said, to spite the very instinct to live, the Hunger Artist confesses, "If I had found [the food I liked] I would have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else." The "Representative Person" of Emily Dickinson's poetry does not romanticize her predicament; Kafka's protagonist does — and becomes, ironically, both victim and agent of his own fate.

When poets — as diverse as Horace and D. H. Lawrence, Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams, Theodore Weiss, Maxine Kumin, Diane Wakoski, Robert Haas, Daniel Halpern, Erica Jong, Sandra Gilbert — and numerous others — write about food it is usually celebratory. Food as the thing-in-itself, but also the thoughtful preparation of meals, the serving of meals, meals communally shared: a sense of the sacred in the profane. If food is poetry is not poetry also food?

THIS IS JUST TO SAY

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox
and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast
Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

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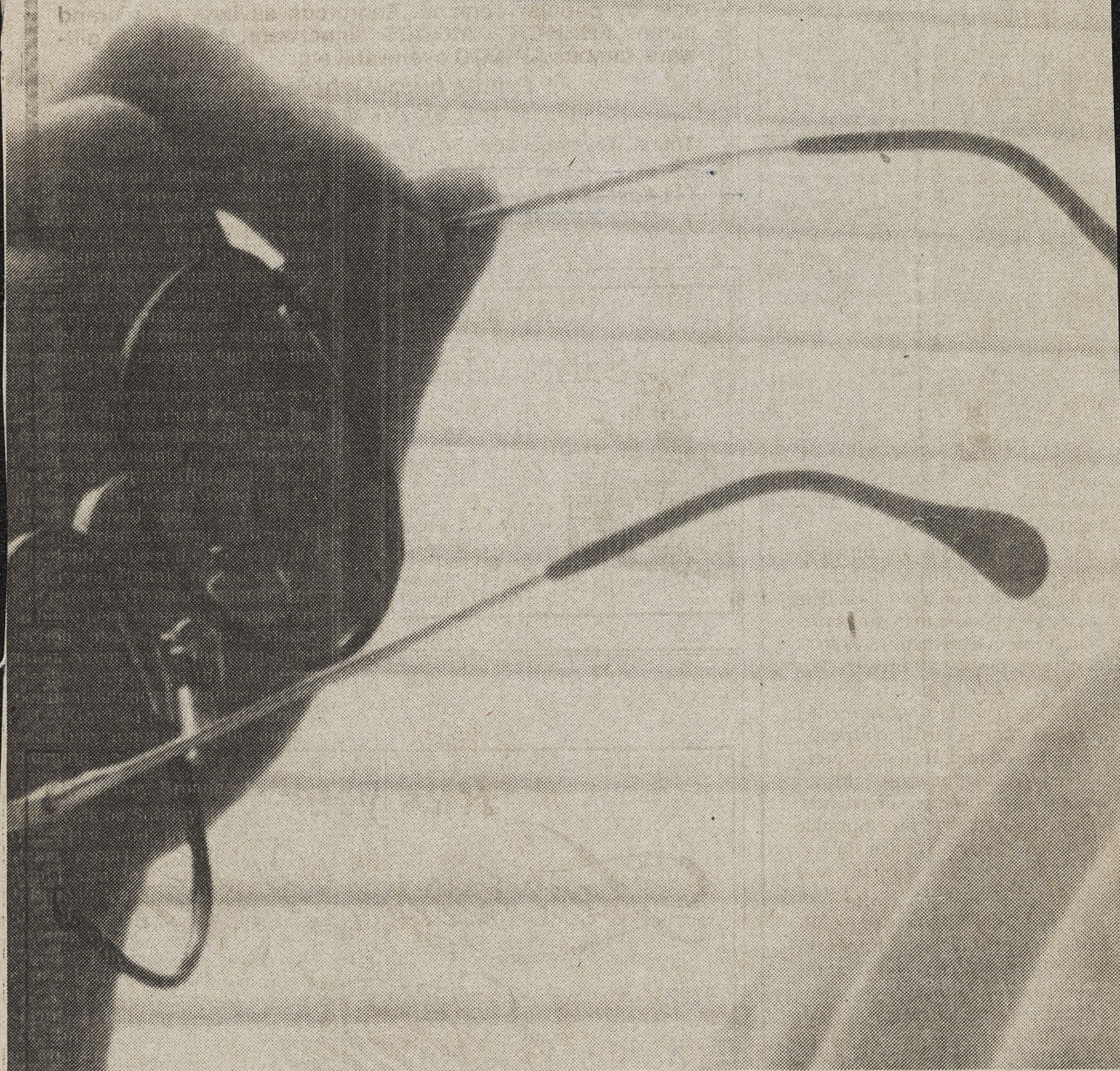
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About 2000 words

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RESPECT

"Our harvest being gotten in, our
Governour sent foure men on fowling,
that so we might after a more speciall
manner rejoyce together, after we had
gathered the fruit of our labours...."

--Edward Winslow letter, Dec. 11,
1621, about the first Thanksgiving

My wife sent me fowling in the same season, but 363 years
later. Non-hunters would have to celebrate with tame turkey --
full of growth-hormones and empty of flavor -- but we hoped to do
better. It was the second Saturday before Thanksgiving, and my
mission was to bring home a cock pheasant. It would age on our

back porch, just as birds were shown in old still-life paintings. The feathers would glow like autumn leaves. On the holiday, twelve days later, we would dry-pluck the bird, taking care not to tear the skin. I would then discard the crop, intestine, and lungs. Almost everything else would be saved. The heart, liver, gizzard, feet, and neck would be used in making the sauce. We would have the best dinner in our nation's capital -- full of the emotions and flavors of the field.

My old pointer hit scent along a weedy Maryland hedgerow. If we had arrived ten minutes earlier, we might have had a shot. Instead, we pushed the pheasant toward two hunters coming in from the opposite end. We heard six quick shots, which would usually mean a miss but in this case did not. My dog brought me the warm remains. The hunters who got the bird had "breasted it out" on the spot -- ripped open the skin and pulled off two warm chunks of flesh. They had then thrown out the rest, which included half of the meat, most of the flavor, and all of the beauty. It seemed a safe bet that the torn fragments they took home would not appear on the Thanksgiving table.

When hunters show disrespect for the hunted, something fundamental has been lost. Killing one's prey and honoring it have been inseparable actions since men became men. We know this because ancient paintings on the walls of caves are real art, which shows that the artists were real humans. Most of the paintings are of species eaten by the hunters. The connection has reached down through the millennia, and in some cultures there

are still rituals for fallen game. People everywhere fuss over game cookery, too. When I lived in Europe, where wild game could legally be sold, a pheasant cost several times more than a chicken, and people who went to extra expense always showed respect, at least for their investment.

In America too, our ancestors would not tolerate waste. A friend who is in his seventies says that his mother would have paddled him if he'd skinned a bird. The reward for thrift was flavor, and that's still the secret of great cooking around the world. Whether you pronounce the dishes in French, Italian, or English, they squeeze out all the flavor. The taste is elegant but there's no squeamishness in the preparation. And there are no secrets because all of this has been going on since long before 1621.

The old skills have, however, been withering since Americans moved to town and began buying chicken parts wrapped in plastic. When my wife and I were learning how to cook game birds, we were advised to braise those tough pheasants or bake them in pies. We read the recipes of famous lodges and hunters who were too busy to dress game in the old ways. A book titled Easy Game Cooking opined that "all this talk about letting game hang, is nothing but medieval twaddle. The sooner a bird is drawn, plucked, and frozen or cooked, the better it will be."

On the table as in the field, however, we found pheasants deceptive. When cooked fresh, they were the toughest and most tasteless of upland game. When aged, plucked, and roasted, a

single pheasant made the best of holiday dinners -- big enough to serve our family of three, mellow and robust enough to go with old red wine.

In birds as in wine, the biggest flavors take longest to develop. I don't know why pheasants need more aging than other game birds, but they do. Even young cocks are best when hung for a week. For special dinners, my wife and I prefer the biggest, oldest, fattest birds -- the ones over three pounds with wicked spurs -- and they are tough till they have hung two weeks. We have often let them go for three weeks rather than freeze them, because they are never quite as good after a stay in the freezer. Bear in mind, though, that no game could be hung this long under poor conditions. We live in Montana now, and by November our garage stays between 30 and 40 degrees.

If the weather is warm, age the bird in a refrigerator, preferably on wire shelves for good air circulation. Don't use a plastic bag. Fortunately, the weather is usually cool enough, by pheasant season, to allow aging on an insect-free porch or in a garage. Hang a bird by one foot -- not by both feet and not by the head. Keep an eye on it. Sniff it. If it has been chewed by your dog, don't push your luck. And if your pheasants are full of shot, promise yourself to switch to an improved-cylinder choke tube, for a single-barrel gun; cylinder and modified for a double.

Normally, no field dressing is needed: just get the pheasant out of your game bag and into a place where it can cool off

quickly. If the day is unseasonably hot, insert a forked stick in the vent, twist, and pull out the whole intestine. Some knives come with special hooks for the job. The idea is to remove the part of the innards that is most prone to spoilage, but without tearing the skin. If you open the body cavity in the normal way, you will find it difficult to pluck the bird later.

The rest of the process of dressing is summarized in the first paragraph above. Dry-plucking tries your patience but produces better flavor than plucking wet. If aged correctly, the bird's skin will look good underneath the feathers. You may be surprised by the mildness of the smell, too. A pheasant drawn shortly after it is shot has a violent odor; you would guess that it is half-rotten already. It is not. The viscera of an aged rooster can be removed in the kitchen, where you are likely to do a better job than you would in the field.

We all talk about "cleaning" game. It's Anglo-Saxon queasiness, but we're stuck with it. The problem is that cleaning sounds like water -- maybe even a soak. Don't do it unless the pheasant is badly bloodshot. Wild birds are clean and healthy already; they must stay in top condition to survive, because no one feeds them antibiotics. Save all the blood you can, like a European chef preparing a free-range chicken in the kitchen. When the pheasant is cooked, you can call the blood "juices." They make the best natural sauce in the world, without cream. Unlike most holiday dinners, this one will leave you in good shape for chasing your next pheasant.

The cooking is easy, once you get over two pitfalls.

First, if you have a great chicken recipe, don't use it for wild pheasants. The basic pheasant method given below does not work for chickens, either. (The sauce fails.) The two birds are relatives, genetically, but in the kitchen as in the field, they are at opposite extremes.

Second, avoid moist heat for pheasants in good condition. For leftovers, a pie is all right; and braising lets you make something edible with a cock that has been shot-up or skinned. If there is a moist-heat method that can develop the flavor a pheasant ought to have, however, we have not found the recipe. We have tried clay pots, crock pots, oven-bags, pressure-cookers, casseroles, and pans with tight lids. We have tried every additive from mushroom soup (an American tragedy) to flamed brandy (a French farce). We have sampled every dish friends brought to game dinners. Some of the sauces were good. The thighs were not bad. The breasts were best pushed to the back of the serving dish for somebody else.

High-fat methods taste better. Every year we fry a few of the youngest cocks in a little bacon grease, and the old-fashioned gravy is a treat.

Roasting, however, has for centuries been known as the best of methods for pheasants -- and less fat is needed. Our ancestors spit-roasted in front of a fire, with a drip pan underneath. Sometimes they added elaborate ingredients. We have found the

method equally adapted to simple recipes in modern ovens.

Roast Pheasant -- Basic Method

Pheasant aged & dressed as above, skin intact

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 tablespoons butter

1 cup game-bird stock (in an emergency, chicken broth)

1 bay leaf and 6 peppercorns

Sweet sherry to taste

Salt to taste

Bread stuffing -- with chestnuts if possible

Half an hour before you start to roast the bird, heat the stock in a small saucepan. Add the bay leaf, peppercorns, feet, skinned neck, gizzard, heart, and any blood left from the body cavity. Cover and simmer while the pheasant is roasting. Add the trimmed (deveined) liver for a few minutes at the end.

Have the bird at room temperature for even roasting. Do not truss it, and heat the stuffing separately. A stuffed and trussed pheasant would force you to overcook the breast in order to make the stuffing safe.

Use a thick pan just a little larger than the bird, with raised sides. Melt the butter and olive oil over medium heat till a drop of water sizzles when flicked in. Spend ten minutes searing the pheasant from as many angles as possible, turning with tongs (not a fork). The breast skin in particular should be

nut-brown.

Turn the bird on its back and put it (uncovered) in an oven heated to 350 degrees. After thirty minutes -- less if the bird is small -- check. Lift the pheasant with tongs and pour the juices from its body cavity into the pan; they should be barely pink. Prick the breast with a sharp two-tined cooking fork; the juices that run out should be slightly pink or just clear.

Put the bird on a carving board and cover with foil to keep warm. Pour the sherry into the roasting pan, scraping with a spatula to mix in anything stuck on the bottom. Pour in the simmering stock and all of its contents. Reduce at a slow boil while you test for taste, adding salt and more sherry as needed.

Strain what is now the sauce back into the small, empty pan in which the stock was simmered. Retrieve the heart, gizzard, and liver from the strainer. If they still have any flavor, chop them and add to the sauce. Discard the rest of the material strained out of the stock.

Carve the pheasant with a very sharp knife. Make a deep horizontal cut between wing and breast on each side, then slice the breast lengthwise into thin slices. If you do it right, almost every bite of the breast will have a piece of crisp skin, like Peking Duck. The thighs and pieces off the back should be good too. Save the carcass and tough meat from the legs for making stock.

Plates should be warm. Spoon sauce over the sliced meat and the stuffing. Think of the stuffing not as a separate dish but as

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Proper

a pheasant-surrogate that soaks up sauce, stretches the dish, and rewards you with one of the world's great flavors.

With some game, there is no problem. Doves are easy to pluck and can be eaten right away. Ducks can be run through a mechanical plucker and do not demand aging, though in cool weather I have hung them for up to three weeks [] and found none of the off-flavor that their fat picks up in the freezer. Snipe and woodcock are tolerant: good right away, better when aged a few days, and still good after lengthy [] hanging. Like doves, however, snipe and woodcock are often shot in warm weather, in which case they must be aged in the refrigerator -- preferably on wire shelves that allow air circulation. Never put them, or any bird, in a plastic bag.

I do not recall eating a gallinaceous bird that was at its best without aging. Ruffed grouse, young blue grouse, bobwhites, and Mearns quail are good after four or five days, though they will usually stand more aging if you are not ready to cook them.

And maybe we have become a little greedy, too. Hunting birds is more fun than getting them ready for the oven. If you can bribe somebody else to do the work right, more power to you. But if you cannot, there is always time to do the job. You just stop the shooting and start dealing with its consequences. Because this is not only about flavors.

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a trophy, full of feathers and flavors. Expensive restaurants use cock pheasants as centerpieces -- short-tailed game-farm birds at that. Trooper and I thought we knew where to find one of the real thing, in a certain weedy jungle along a hedgerow. We were right, but two other hunters beat us by about ten minutes. We heard five or six quick shots, which would usually mean a miss, but didn't in this case. Trooper got there before me and was doing his best to wolf down the warm remains before I could take them away. As best I could reconstruct the crime, one of the hunters had ripped the rooster's breast skin apart and torn off two chunks of meat. Maybe his wife didn't want a mess in the kitchen, so he left it in the field. He also left all of the beauty, most of the flavor, and much of the meat. I'd wager that the sad little bits he took home did not appear on the Thanksgiving table.

Now let me take you to other fields, these in Portugal, on the evening before I hoped to shoot a red-leg partridge or two. It wasn't a vacation. I was working there five or six days a week, then working harder for my birds on the weekend. The land was like the California wine country, with folded hills, yellow grass, timbered ridges, and low-spreading oaks. The human part was different. Henrique and I stayed with friends of his in a peasant village at the end of a gravel road. There was much dust and no electricity. Low houses lined the few streets, each of which led to the spring where the women got water. Those women

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Proper

whitewashed the houses every month, and the village gleamed. Inside, linen was always being washed in a tub or ironed on the dining table. There was a smell of air-dried sheets, ewe's-milk cheese, and bread fresh from a clay oven.

We had no game yet, so the women killed a chicken from the yard and two pigeons from the coop. These were served in a soup, and if you don't think domestic pigeons are good, you ought to try them that way. Local red wine gurgled from an old pitcher. Best of all, though, was a dish called cabidela. I didn't know what it was, at first, but discovered giblets and wings in a brown sauce, with lots of rice. The feet and heads were in there too -- not for the meat but to add flavor to the stock. The sauce had been made from the blood. Not a bit of those birds had been wasted, and none of their contribution went to waste on my plate, either.

Everything in that dish would have been thrown out by a lot of cooks. The peasant family ^{Our ancestors could not} ~~couldn't~~ afford to waste, and ~~its~~ ^{their} reward for thrift was flavor. ^{Today} ~~Perhaps~~ when you think of expensive restaurant meals, you ^{may} think of fancy ingredients, but the costly ^{part} ~~ingredient~~ is usually labor. The great dishes around the world are produced by squeezing every last bit of flavor out of natural foods. ^{Good} cooking has become important in America, too, and maybe we now have cooks who get free-range chickens and save their blood. If so, they're getting closer to 1621 traditions.