

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for December 7, 2020
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about making jerky.

Once again, Coshocton County led the state for deer taken on opening day of deer gun season last week. Anyone looking for ways to preserve venison may have making jerky on their list.

I recently discovered an interesting statistic. Almost 10,000 people viewed the OSU Extension fact sheet "Making Jerky" during 2020, making it the most popular food preservation topic. But I guess it shouldn't surprise me. Jerky is a tasty snack packed full of protein.

We humans have been drying meat for thousands of years. Jerky is meat that is dehydrated at a low temperature for a long time. When it is made safely, jerky is nutrient dense, shelf stable and light weight. There is a surprising amount of moisture in meat. Once dried, a pound of meat is typically reduced to about 4 ounces.

According to OSU Extension Family and Consumer Science educators Kate Shumaker and Chris Kendle, jerky can be made from just about any meat, poultry, or game. Meat selections should contain less than 10 percent fat as fattier meats may become rancid quickly.

This time of year, venison is a popular meat for making jerky. When making jerky from game harvested in the wild, it is possible that the animal may be carrying the *Trichinella* parasite. To destroy the parasite, meat can be frozen in small portions (no thicker than 6 inches) to zero degrees Fahrenheit or below for at least 30 days.

The biggest safety concern when making jerky is that bacteria that can cause human illness could grow to high levels in the warm, dry environments of a food dehydrator or oven drying process. The temperatures of dehydrators and oven dehydrating are not high enough to destroy harmful microorganisms that are typically present in raw meat. Even though fully dried jerky may appear done, it is not safe to eat unless it goes through an additional heat treatment. This can be done before or after the meat is dried.

The safest option that is recommended by the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline is pre-cooking the meat. Meat that is pre-cooked will take less time to dehydrate. However, it may be different from traditional jerky in color and texture. During this method meat is marinated first and then

pre-cooked. This can be done by simmering or steaming the meat in the marinade or by baking in the oven at 325 degrees Fahrenheit.

The other recommended procedure is to heat the jerky after drying. Dried jerky strips can be heated on a baking sheet in an oven preheated to 275 degrees Fahrenheit. Jerky should reach an internal temperature of 160°F (165°F for poultry).

Jerky can be dried in an oven or in an electric dehydrator. When oven drying, it is important to keep your oven at a constant low temperature, between 145 and 170°F. Air should keep circulating in the oven. When using an electric dehydrator, the unit must reach a minimum of 145°F to safely be used for making jerky.

Jerky will typically take many hours to dry fully. Once cooled, the jerky should crack slightly but not break completely when bent. Properly dried and heat-treated jerky can safely be stored for up to two weeks at room temperature or three to six months in the refrigerator. For highest food quality, store in a cool and dry location.

You can find the “Making Jerky” fact sheet, as well as “Freezing and Canning Venison” and “Canning Meat, Poultry, and Game” on our website coshocton.osu.edu under Home Food Preservation. There are also recorded presentations about a variety of home food preservation topics including “Making Jerky”.

Our office recently received new information from our OSU Administration regarding the operation of business as COVID-19 cases continues to rise across the state. Starting Monday Dec. 7th our staff will only be available by appointment for in person clients who need assistance. We are still available by phone and email Monday through Friday. To schedule an appointment, please call 740-622-2265. We will continue to update you as we receive information from our administration. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. We appreciate your patience and kindness during this time.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!