

Food Safety: Handling Wild Game

Volume One, Number Three
 May 2008

www.alaskafood.org

Unique Wild Game
 in Alaska 1

Regulations
 on Distribution 1

Rejecting Wild
 Game Donations 2

More Resources 2

“From salmon to caribou, Alaska has a wide variety of wild game meats that, no matter where you live in the state, continue to be a part of our daily diets.”

Unique Wild Game in Alaska

One of the biggest reasons why people love living in Alaska is our access to vast, untamed wilderness. We have pristine waters and unimaginable open spaces that support plentiful, healthy populations of wild game and fish. From salmon to caribou, Alaska has a wide variety of wild game meats that, no matter where you live in the state, continue to be a part of our daily diets. The opportunity to use these resources to feed hungry people is available but, unlike other foods, accepting wild game can be a confusing process.

Regulations on Distribution

While Native populations have existed on various subsistence foods for thousands of years, Alaska’s Department of Environmental Conservation has determined that a small list of wild game products can not be distributed for public consumption. These include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Fox meat | Fermented game meat (<i>beaver tail, whale or seal flipper, maktak</i>) |
| Walrus meat | Fermented seafood (<i>salmon eggs, fish</i>) |
| Bear/Polar Bear meat | Home-canned foods |
| Seal or whale oil,
with or without meat | Home vacuumed-packaged goods |
| Home-smoked or dried
meats/seafood | Shellfish from unapproved source |

Prohibited items aside, there are several wild game products that can be accepted for public consumption. These include:

- | | |
|-------|-------------|
| Fish | Beaver |
| Hare | Reindeer |
| Duck | Caribou |
| Goose | Sea mammals |
| Moose | |

The kind of food distribution you have will determine the conditions of acceptance for each approved wild game product.

Food Distribution Sites (food pantries/food shelves)

If your agency distributes food for later consumption, you cannot accept wild game that has been home-processed. If the game meat is packaged and prepared by a commercial processor that is inspected by the USDA, you can accept the product. The one exception to this rule allows you to accept freshly harvested, not diseased game meat that is received whole, gutted, gilled, as quarters or as roasts without processing. It is then the agency's responsibility to conduct any further preparation or processing of the food in a separate time and location of other food preparation. Appropriate protocol for cleaning and sanitizing surfaces must be followed and final product must be labeled with the name of the meat, the donor source and the date of processing.

Meal Preparation Sites

If your agency cooks and serves meals for immediate consumption, you have far fewer regulations regarding approved game meat. Unlike food distribution sites, meal preparation sites can accept home-processed, though not home-canned, approved wild game products. These agencies may also accept recently harvested game meat, as long as they follow the same rules for processing stated earlier.

The difference in acceptance rules for meal preparation sites is that these facilities are cooking to approved temperatures (165 degrees for meat and 145 degrees for fish) before serving, thus removing most of the potential for contamination.

Rejecting Wild Game Donations

What do you do when a donor, unaware of the food code regulations, shows up at your door with food that is either prohibited or you are unable to take it into your program?

First and foremost, thank your donor for thinking of hungry Alaskans. Next, explain the food code to them and finally, if they have home-processed, but approved game meat, direct them to a facility that can handle the donation. Any nonprofit organization that prepares meals on-site would be grateful for the referral.

More Resources

Are you unsure about a wild game donation or want clarification on approved items or any other food code issues? Contact the Department of Environmental Conservation, Food Safety and Sanitation at 907.269.7501 in Anchorage or get online <http://www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/fss/establishments/sanstaff.htm> to find contact information for the other offices in the state.

Just what do you cook with caribou meat? Find this out and see more tasty wild game recipes when you visit these websites:

RecipeLand.com Caribou Recipes: <http://www.recipeLand.com/category/view/?cid=321>

Hunting Society Moose Recipes: <http://www.huntingsociety.org/MooseRecipes.html>

Wild Game Recipes: http://www.wildliferecipes.net/Game_recipesLarge_Game_Recipes/Moose_recipes/index.asp

Salmon Recipes: <http://www.thesalmons.org/lynn/salmon-recipes.html>

*Next Month:
Creating a
Budget*