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Hunting and fishing equals delicious dining

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL



Callen Dusek can talk about when he accompanied his father, Lucas, on a South Dakota deer hunt, getting the backcountry experience from a bird's-eye view.

Hunting and being afield is just a small part of the overall experience attracting thousands of North Dakotans outdoors every fall and early winter.

Just consider the wild game dining aspect of the total experience: Its meat – low in fat and lean – is healthy. Meat from wild big game animals such as deer and elk is also high in all-important omega-3 fatty acids.

Living in McLean County also affords ample hunting opportunities for a wide variety of species. For a couple of McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) employees, preparing and cooking wild game brings the entire experience full circle.

Turtle Lake-based line foreman Travis “Shorty” Voth loves to hunt whatever is in season, whether it’s waterfowl, pheasants or deer. So, too, does Garrison-based lineworker Lucas Dusek. He admits, though, that matching wits with a mule deer in a classic spot-and-stalk technique ranks highest on his list. Glassing with binoculars and planning the ultimate sneak on a wary mule deer buck can be gratifying, yet humbling.

While it’s difficult to beat the delicious taste of traditional venison country sausage links, Voth and Dusek agree what they enjoy about their favorite wild game – elk or venison, for example – are simply the different ways of preparing steaks. Dusek suggested marinating steaks in olive oil – even vegetable oil – with minced garlic and pepper overnight and searing to a gentle red.

Voth also enjoys pan-fried venison



Travis and Kelly Voth's son, **Thaddeus**, and daughter, **Jocelyn**, are all smiles after a morning duck hunt with dad.



A true Labrador retriever, Travis Voth's dog, **Charmander**, loves waterfowl hunting as much as his owner, including the opportunity to retrieve when the Voth family hunts near Turtle Lake. Voth is McLean Electric Cooperative's Turtle Lake outpost line foreman.



PHOTOS COURTESY LUCAS DUSEK AND TRAVIS VOTH

Lucas Dusek and his son, **Cohen**, with their dog, **Remington**, after a morning goose hunt near Garrison. Dusek is a McLean Electric Cooperative lineworker based in Garrison.

back straps with butter. While experimenting with a variety of spices, he admits he's discovered a new favorite: Essie's South American Style Sauce.

"It takes all of the wild game (taste) out of it," he added. It has become his "go-to" seasoning, especially when grilling dark meat. Pan-frying venison in butter, Worcestershire sauce, garlic, salt and pepper is also tops on his family's favorite foods list.

"The main thing with wild game is to think ahead a day and let it marinate or season overnight," Voth offered. It's hard to beat cooking with a seasoned cast-iron skillet, he added.

One of the most common mistakes in cooking wild game is forgetting that because it's so lean, it lacks the moisture content of traditional beef or chicken. Don't overcook it, they suggested. If it's pink, it is likely overdone.

Spices don't cover or hide the taste of wild game meat. Instead, they enhance it. "We use a lot of minced

garlic," Dusek added, and spices can be as simple as his go-to garlic and pepper.

Or they can be as varied as one's own imagination and taste.

Dusek and Voth's children have grown up eating wild game and fish in a variety of meals, but one simple way Dusek's family enjoys pheasant is when he makes them into "chicken" strips.

Stir-fry is another great way to enjoy any type of wild game, Voth added, using any of the wide variety of stir-fry sauce recipes served over rice or pasta. Plus, the diversity of slow cooker recipes works equally as well with wild game as they do with other traditional meat.

Another aspect to consider when contemplating the "wild game" taste of wild game is that North Dakota's wildlife has the opportunity to dine on a multitude of crops, whether it's corn, alfalfa, wheat, soybeans or others. Its "gamey" taste is often less gamey compared to sage-fed pronghorn and mule deer or even elk or mule deer who feast on a

diet of pine or juniper needles and branches and other plants more common in western states.

However, while cooking and eating wild game is the culmination of the overall hunting experience, field care can also play a major role in taste. Whatever a hunter bags has to be properly cared for once it's harvested to help ensure a delicious meal.

"Keep it cool," Voth stressed.

He debones animals such as pronghorn in the field, especially if it's warm or early in the season, and immediately gets it on ice. He's found that freezing water in white plastic milk jugs helps ice last much longer than in one-half gallon carton containers or even clear plastic gallon jugs.

Both Dusek and Voth tend to process big game shortly after harvest, although aging a carcass under proper conditions when it's slightly above freezing is an option, weather and storage conditions permitting.

With hunting season rapidly

approaching and McLean County providing such a variety of opportunities, it's a good time to be creative with wild game cooking. Experiment with a variety of sauces and spices based on family taste. Remember to "cook low and slow" – slow cooker or low oven temperatures for a longer cooking duration – or "hot and fast" – searing or braising. Explore different marinades and plan ahead.

Cooking with wild game doesn't have to be an all-day cooking experience.

It can be a matter of substituting wild game for domestic meat,

keeping in mind that it's leaner meat. Add water, wine or both, for example, to a white sauce with pheasant for any of the variety of Alfredo recipes. Mix it up and experiment with stir-fry or when grilling steaks.

Find an antique cast-iron skillet and season it well, Or get a new one – nowadays they're available in a variety of enameled cast-iron for a trendy, modern look.

The internet has a wealth of information about caring for and seasoning cast-iron, plus the history of cast-iron cooking and cookware can be a fascinating, entertaining

read. Or go to the Lodge Cast Iron website, www.lodgemfg.com, to learn different ways to season and clean cast-iron, recipes, and even debunking cast-iron myths.

Regardless of whether it's grilled, baked, deep-fried, cooked over cast-iron or in a slow cooker, when it comes to eating wild game it's a way to bring the entire hunting experience to full circle.

And for folks like Travis Voth and Lucas Dusek, it might almost be as much fun as being afield. ■

Outdoor opportunities abound

With the Missouri River, Lake Sakakawea and Lake Audubon embracing McLean County's western boundaries, its residents and visitors are treated to a wide variety of outdoor opportunities.

N.D. Game and Fish Department hunter surveys reveal that McLean County often ranks high in the number of pheasants harvested each year, for example.

The agency paid more than \$700,000 to counties throughout North Dakota in payment-in-lieu of property taxes (PILT) in 2019. Only Renville and Traill counties don't receive payments, because the Game and Fish Department doesn't own or lease any land for Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in those two counties.

McLean County received the largest share of PILT dollars – \$116,089.12 for its 2019 payment – in large part because of the amount of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers administered land it leases as WMAs along Lake Sakakawea,

the north shore of Lake Audubon, and a portion downstream of Garrison Dam.

Six WMAs are located along Lake Sakakawea alone in McLean County – Deepwater Creek, Douglas Creek, deTrobriand, Custer Mine and Wolf Creek. Audubon WMA follows the north shore of Lake Audubon.

The answer to the trivia question, "Name the two WMAs in McLean County on the Missouri River," would be "Riverdale (two miles south of Riverdale) and Painted Woods (along the Missouri River on N.D. Highway 1804 south of Washburn)."

In addition, a smattering of WMAs are located in eastern McLean County: Blue Lake WMA is six miles northeast of Turtle Lake, Charles Schroeder WMA is 10 miles south and a mile east of Butte, and the newest WMA in the county, Coal Lake, is 1 mile south and 1.5 miles east of Underwood.

The Game and Fish Department Private Lands Open To Sportsmen

(PLOTS) Guide identifies public lands across the state, as well as private land enrolled in the PLOTS program open for hunting during legal seasons. It can be a great way for outdoor enthusiasts ideas to find public areas to view wildlife, birds and enjoy hiking and winter cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Go to the Game and Fish Department website for a downloadable PLOTS guide and WMA regulations, www.gf.nd.gov.

Toss in other areas along Lake Sakakawea that the Corps manages for wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Waterfowl Production Areas, and hunting opportunities such as the late season pheasant hunting after the deer gun season closes on Audubon National Wildlife Refuge – which McLean Electric Cooperative serves – along with the refuge's auto tour route for wildlife viewing, and there are plenty of reasons McLean County residents and McLean Electric members can enjoy the great outdoors in the fall. ■

Electrical equipment is never in season!

As various North Dakota hunting seasons approach, please remember that electrical insulators, conductors and electrical equipment are **NOT** on the hunting season list.

McLean Electric Cooperative encourages hunters to be aware of electrical equipment while enjoying the great outdoors this season.

Hunters and other gun owners should not shoot near or toward power lines, power poles and substations. A stray bullet can cause damage to equipment, could be deadly to the shooter, and potentially interrupt electric service to large areas.

Be aware of what's behind that big buck or it might cost big bucks. Repairs can be costly and damages cause outages to our members. As a nonprofit cooperative, owned by the members, we all share in this expense.

We recognize the majority of hunters practice safe hunting and understand the potential risks when discharging a firearm. We encourage experienced hunters who are familiar with the area to identify the locations of utility properties and equipment to young or new hunters in their group and remind them to avoid shooting toward these facilities. Enjoy the great outdoors. Just be sure to hunt only what's in season. ■

Hunting safety tips:

- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Familiarize yourself with the location of power lines and equipment on land where you shoot.
- Damage to the conductor can happen, possibly dropping a phase on the ground. If it's dry and the electricity goes to ground, there is the possibility of electrocution and fire.
- Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Do not use power line wood poles or towers to support equipment used in your shooting activity.
- Take notice of warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment on the poles can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them, causing shock or electrocution.
- Do not shoot at, or near, birds perching on utility lines. That goes for any type of firearm, including pistols, rifles or shotguns.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Anything attached to a pole besides utility equipment can pose an obstruction – and a serious hazard – to electric cooperative employees as they perform utility operations. ■

Work safely around grain bins

Make sure everyone, including family and employees, working around stored grain understands the hazards and proper safety procedures.

“Too many people ignore safety practices and suffer severe injury or death while working around grain,” says Ken Hellevang, North Dakota State University Extension agricultural engineer. Never enter a bin while unloading grain or to break up a grain bridge or chunks that may plug grain flow. Flowing grain will pull you into the grain mass, burying you within seconds. Use the “lock-out/tag-out” procedures to assure equipment will not start before entering the bin.

Bridging occurs when grain is high in moisture content, moldy or in poor condition. The kernels stick together and form a crust. A cavity will form under the crust when grain is removed from the bin. The crust isn’t strong enough to support a person’s weight, so anyone who walks on it will fall into the cavity and be buried under several feet of grain.

Determine if the grain has a crust before any grain has been removed. If work needs to be done with a crust, it must be done before any grain is removed.

To determine if the grain is bridged after unloading has started, look for a funnel shape on the surface of the grain mass. If the grain surface appears

undisturbed, the grain has bridged and a cavity has formed under the surface. Stay outside the bin and use a pole or other object to break the bridge loose.

If the grain flow stops when you’re removing it from the bin, a chunk of spoiled grain probably is blocking the flow. Entering the bin to break up the blockage will expose you to being buried in grain and tangled in the auger.

If grain has formed a vertical wall, try to break it up from the top of the bin with a long pole on a rope or through a door with a long pole. A wall of grain

can collapse, or avalanche, without warning, knocking you over and burying you.

Never enter a grain bin alone. Have at least two people at the bin to assist in case of problems. Use a safety harness and rope that prevents you from descending rapidly more than a couple of feet when entering a bin.

“Take time to think of all options before entering a bin,” Hellevang advises. ■

Grain bags are suffocation hazard

Never enter a grain bag, because it is a suffocation hazard. If unloading the bag with a pneumatic grain conveyor, the suction can “shrink wrap” a person so he or she cannot move and will limit space for breathing.

SERVICE AWARDS



35 YEARS OF SERVICE

Renee Fetzer

Customer service rep.
administrative assistant



5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Jesse Carter

Lineman

MCLEAN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS

The McLean Electric Cooperative scholarship committee has chosen Ross Hardy and Joshua Thompson as recipients of the McLean Electric/Basin Electric scholarships. These scholarships were awarded based on academic excellence, which includes the following criteria: ACT scores, work experience, and participation in school and community activities. Both scholarships were for \$500 each.

This year, 11 applications were received. All applicants were rated favorably, which is an indication of the quality of students we have in McLean Electric's service territory.



ROSS HARDY

Ross will graduate from Minot High School and is the son of Glen and Konnie Hardy of Minot. He will be attending Minot State University to earn a degree with a double major in computer science and math. As a long-term goal, he hopes to use his degree to continue to learn more about the use of computers. Ross participates in track; he is a member of the Science Bowl team and National Honor Society. He also volunteers at the local animal shelter and YMCA.



JOSHUA THOMPSON

Josh is the son of Jeremy and Karen Thompson of Max. He graduated from Max Public School in 2019 and is attending the University of Jamestown pursuing a degree in history secondary education. Josh has a strong dedication to his family and farm. He was scheduled to travel with the University of Jamestown band to Europe at the end of this school year giving him a unique experience in music and world history. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the trip will be rescheduled.

MCLEAN ELECTRIC SCHOLARSHIP

Each entry had to include a short statement for an essay question to be eligible for the \$500 scholarship. This year's essay question was: *Describe how cooperatives can be economic engines for their local communities.*



RACHEL GOVEN

Rachel will graduate from Turtle Lake-Mercer High School and is the daughter of Gerard and Jill Goven of Turtle Lake. She will be attending the University of North Dakota to major in business/marketing and hopes to become a successful businesswoman and entrepreneur. Rachel was McLean Electric's delegate to the 2018 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.; N.D. Youth Leadership Council (YLC) in 2019 and U.S. Senate Youth Program delegate in March 2020.

YOUTH TOUR ESSAY WINNER



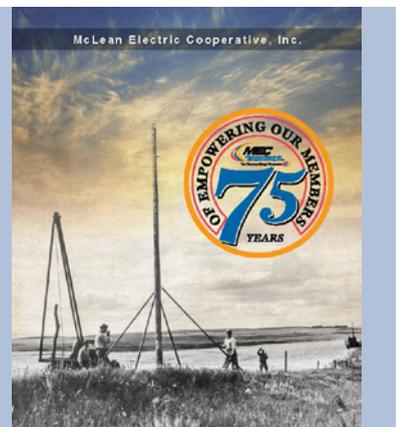
WYATT KERSTEN

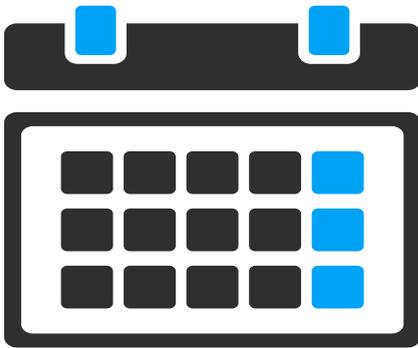
Wyatt is a sophomore at Max Public School and is the son of Holly and Allen Kersten. He enjoys raising different types of animals like poultry, beef, goats and rabbits. He also enjoys playing basketball, 4-H and FFA. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's youth tour was canceled. Wyatt is planning on attending next year for McLean Electric.



DON'T FORGET TO GET YOUR FREE COPY

If you didn't pick up your copy of McLean Electric's hardcover book, "75 Years of Empowering Our Members," at our 75th annual meeting, please stop by the office and pick one up. *(One per account member.)*





McLean County community calendar:

Events and activities to see and do

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Please visit McLean Electric Cooperative's website, Facebook page and your *North Dakota Living* local pages for announcements of the upcoming 75th anniversary celebration, date and other details, which was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines.

McLean County food pantry distributions:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood:** 4-6 p.m. Sept. 3, 10 a.m.-noon Sept. 19, and 4-6 p.m. Oct. 1, 208 Lincoln Ave.
- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry, Garrison:** Sept. 24, noon-2 p.m., 5-7 p.m., back door, former Lazy J's building.
- **Our Saviors Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** Sept. 21, noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., Max City Hall, 215 Main St.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** 2-4 p.m. Sept. 10, 10 a.m.-noon Sept. 26, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St.

- **Wilton Food Pantry, Wilton:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone; full distribution, Sept. 17, 4-6 p.m., Wilton Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave.

PLEASE NOTE THAT SCHEDULED EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE PENDING CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PRECAUTIONS. PLEASE FOLLOW HEALTH GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTACT EVENT SPONSORS FOR DETAILS AND UPDATES.

Tentative September events:

- **Sept. 12:** Aw Shucks Corn Fest, 11:30 a.m., Garrison City Park, Main Street.
- **Sept. 26:** Sakakawea Pheasants Forever banquet, Garrison City Auditorium. ■

McLean County organizations and communities can contact Patricia Stockdill, (stockdill.patricia@gmail.com) or telephone 701-337-5462 to submit community events.

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