

SPECIAL EDITION INSERT TO THE *AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER*

THE JUNIOR Shooter

AN INTRODUCTION FOR JUNIOR SHOOTERS & HUNTERS



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Front cover photo by Thomas Tabor

Editorial

Bob Green
SSAA National President



Following the success of the first *Junior Shooter* newsletter in May this year (available for free download at www.ssaa.org.au) and the very positive feedback we have received from juniors, parents and club members alike for encouraging juniors to get into our sport, we are happy to welcome you to the second edition of *The Junior Shooter*.

In this edition, you can test your firearm and safety knowledge in the 'Junior sporting shooters quiz', learn some helpful hints for becoming a good target shooter from Field Rifle and Metallic Silhouette shooter Alice Styles and find out from a professional photographer how you can take great outdoors photos.

Don't forget to enter the competition on page 16 for your chance to win one of two SSAA junior prize packs.

As juniors, you are vital members of the SSAA, Australia's largest shooting organisation. If you've got some ideas about what you'd like to read in the next *Junior Shooter* or want to give story writing a go, contact Associate Editor Kaye Jenkins on 08 8272 7100 or edit@ssaa.org.au (Age restrictions may apply for story submittals.)

For more information, news, free stories and the chance to have your shooting or hunting photo in our gallery, visit the SSAA Juniors website at www.ssaa.org.au/juniors ●

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Junior sporting shooters quiz

by Technical Advisor Brendan Atkinson

Go to page 22 to check your answers.

1. You are handed a firearm with the bolt closed. What is the first thing you should do?

- a. Pull the trigger to test how heavy it is.
- b. Ask if the gun is loaded.
- c. Open the action to check for yourself.

2. You have loaded your rifle to take a shot at a rabbit. The rabbit escapes before you can shoot. What should you do next?

- a. Leave the gun loaded and cocked, but put the safety catch on.
- b. Open the action and remove the unfired shell.
- c. Raise the bolt to uncock it but do not remove the unfired shell.

3. Until what range are rimfire .22LR bullets considered dangerous?

- a. 500m.
- b. 1000m.
- c. 1600m.

4. You have loaded your rifle, but it fails to fire. What should you do next?

- a. Immediately open the action and eject the shell.
- b. Wait about 1 minute before opening the action and remove the unfired shell.
- c. Remove the bolt and magazine and take it to a gunsmith for examination.

5. When carrying your firearm out hunting what should you do?

- a. Always have a round up the chamber ready for a quick shot.
- b. Only load the firearm just before firing it.

6. You have finished a weekend hunt and have about a dozen shells left over. What should you do with them?

- a. Put them into the campfire with other burnable rubbish.
- b. Keep them in their original container for next time.
- c. Put them in the household rubbish when you get home.

7. You drop your rifle when hunting and the muzzle is blocked with mud. What should you do to clear it out?

- a. Point the muzzle in a safe direction and fire a round off to clear it.
- b. Locate a small piece of wire and pick the obstruction out.
- c. Do not fire the rifle until it has been properly cleaned.

8. You have to climb over a fence when out hunting. What should you do before climbing over the fence?

- a. Lean the rifle, with safety catch on, against the fence.
- b. Open the action, remove the magazine and place the rifle on the ground over the fence.
- c. Hang on to the rifle while climbing over the fence.

9. When storing your rifle at home, what do you need to do?

- a. Keep the rifle and ammunition together for convenience.
- b. Leave the magazine loaded in the rifle for quick use if needed.
- c. Store the ammunition in a locked container away from the firearm.

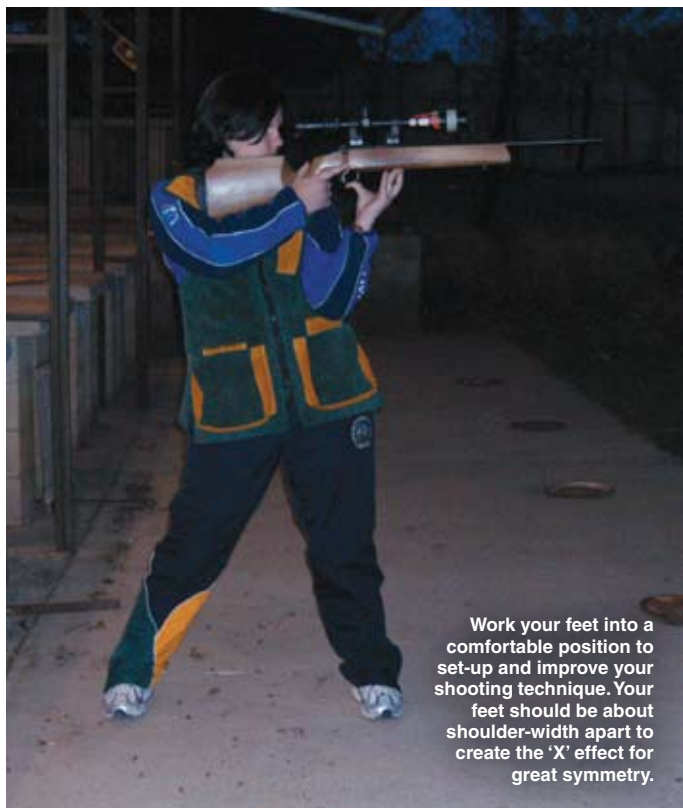
10. You are handed an unfamiliar firearm to shoot. How do you know what sort of ammunition should be used?

- a. Ask the owner what ammunition they use.
- b. Check for this information engraved upon the firearm.
- c. Use what comes with the firearm and assume that it is correct.

Helpful hints for the young or new shooter

by Alice Styles

As you all know, becoming a good shooter involves dedication, commitment and consistency. To help you improve your shooting overall, you can train your technique, trigger control and breathing; you can practise dry firing, your rhythm, sighting the target and firing the shot; and understand how to deal with match pressure.



Work your feet into a comfortable position to set-up and improve your shooting technique. Your feet should be about shoulder-width apart to create the 'X' effect for great symmetry.



The straighter you are, the better your centre of gravity should be.

Technique training

Technique is a method of performing a particular task. When you're training your technique, try to focus on two main things that you need to work on; for example, foot position and sighting (your natural point of aim). The way I find my natural point of aim is:

Set-up: Does everything feel right? Try working your feet into a comfortable position for your shooting technique. Once you have established this, work on your hips. Are they in line with your feet and square to the target? Next are the shoulders. Do they feel in line with the target and your hips? Lastly your head position. Is it as straight as possible?

Look away: Once you have your set-up established, look away from the target for approximately three seconds then look back at the target. Where are the sights pointing? If the sights aren't pointing in the centre of the target, look at re-setting your position. You may just need to move your foot backwards or forwards or move your hand away from your body or closer to the trigger.

Trigger control

When the rifle has settled, you fire the shot. You don't think of what your finger is doing to the trigger. If you dry fire some shots, have a feel of what you're doing to the trigger - you may be surprised. When I first started shooting, my trigger control was not all that good, but with practice, it became better. At first, I 'snapped' at the trigger and most of my shots would miss the target - whether it was a silhouette chicken or a 10.1 in Field Rifle. However, now, when I practise, I make sure that I gently take up the first stage of

my trigger and then squeeze the second stage, which I have found provides a smooth release.

I also now have great 'follow-through'. This means that when you fire the shot, your finger is still holding the trigger and you should then be able to see the shot. Follow-through is the key to a good shot. You will find that when you don't follow through with the shot, most of the time the shot will be bad, but, if you do follow through with the shot, then you see where your shot went and whether or not it was a good shot. You should fire the shot and hold on the 10 even though the shot has gone.

Breathing control

Breathing is essential when you are shooting. It helps with muscle control, steadiness and clear sighting of the target. Breathe normally until the rifle settles. Once the rifle has settled, then you can cease breathing to fire your shot. Only cease breathing for 4 to 6 seconds. If you cannot get your shot off during that 4 to 6 seconds, then put the rifle down and start again. Holding your breath for more than 4 to 6 seconds starts to disrupt the oxygen flow and becomes a challenge as the body starts to react.

Sighting the target

When you're sighting the target, try to keep both eyes open. You can do this by using a 'blinder'. This can be a headband and a piece of milk carton cut out into a small rectangular shape or you can purchase proper blinders that fit onto your scope. Keeping both eyes open helps your eyes avoid fatigue and strain, allowing the muscles on your face to stay relaxed.

Try to look as straightforward as possible, as this will help with your balance. If your head is tilted to the right, you find that you eventually start to fall right. If your head is straight, then everything will fall into place and you will find you're not falling over in the direction that your head is tilted.

Shooting rhythm

To shoot a 10 on the target each time, you must have the same position as the last shot. Everything must feel like it is in place and you have your natural point of aim. Make sure your position is in the same place as before. Make sure your feet are still the same, that your hips and shoulders are in the same position and that your head is straight. This all goes back to making sure your set-up is correct.

Why is rhythm important? The human body likes rhythm and it tends to relax more when you have a rhythm. Your shooting performance may become better with a good shooting rhythm because our body functions better when in a rhythm.



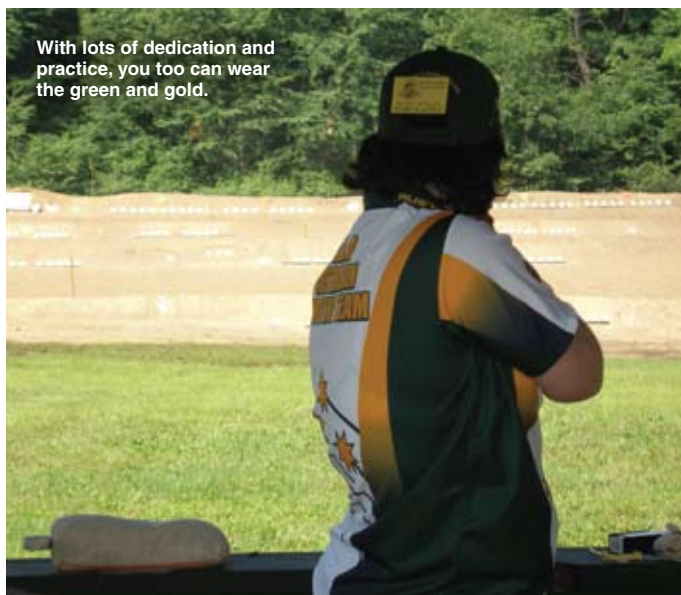
The sight-picture. This is what you should see when you are looking through your scope.



When you're sighting the target, try to keep both eyes open. A blinder can stop distractions when you shoot with both eyes open.

How can you improve your rhythm? Once your basic set-up is right, find a friend who is willing to time your shooting. You need to identify the point of when the timing is to start and when the timing is to finish. Your friend will need to note the duration of the shot and the score, but to get any kind of statistical view you will need to shoot at least 40 shots. This is one way to find your shooting rhythm, but should be used only in training, as with competition, you won't be allowed to have your friend standing behind you timing every shot and telling you how long it took for you to fire the shot.

The way I find my shooting rhythm begins with finding my shooting position. Once everything is set up right, then I will start to fire my shots. If I am hitting 10 after 10, then I replicate what I was doing at the time I shot those 10s. If I shoot a 9, I don't analyse the shot, I just come to the conclusion that I must have released the shot faster than what I was doing when I was shooting 10s. People always told me to slow down when you shoot, but I say go with whatever works for you. I find that when I shoot slowly, I begin to analyse the shots, so if the shot was a 9, I would shoot another 9 and I would get myself into a hole and wouldn't be able to dig myself out again.



With lots of dedication and practice, you too can wear the green and gold.

Dry firing

Dry firing helps your body memorise its natural shooting position. It helps persuade your body to accept a particular course of action over time. It also trains the body, so that the muscles will feel comfortable and be reliable with your demands.

I dry fire to help find my shooting position. When I am setting up, I hold on the target and look away for 3 seconds, then I look back to see where my rifle is aiming. Once everything is set, I then dry fire two or three shots before firing the real shot. This can also be a good exercise to find your natural position. You can do this by setting up your position and dry firing two to three shots to make sure your position is in the right spot. If it isn't in the right place, break your position and try again until you have got it right. Then, you can fire the real shot when you think everything is in the right position and you know it is going to be a 10 or that you are going to knock down that silhouette target.

When you dry fire, make sure you focus on your follow-through because if you don't have good follow-through, then you will end up with a bad shot. If you know it is a bad shot, just wait for three seconds before bringing the rifle down again.

Match pressure

If you are nervous just before a match and you're worried of what people might think of you - don't! You need to maintain the frame of mind that you are shooting and competing for yourself. Just shoot like no-one is watching you. Imagine you're in a place where you're the only person there. Just shoot to please yourself - not anyone else.

If you're shooting your first competition ever, try not to worry what people may think. They certainly won't see

you as a threat. With my first ever competition, all I could worry about was what would people think if I shot a bad score. However, at the end of the day, I surprised myself and everyone else there. I was told by a shooter once, "You go to a competition as a nobody, shoot as a nobody and leave as a somebody." This is true because it happened to me. I went to a competition and didn't know anyone there. I shot my match and I left the competition with a medal and everyone knew who I was.

When you're shooting a match, just go through everything as you would in training. Go through the checklist:

- Set-up: Is everything in place?
- Sight-picture: Is it visible?
- Trigger: Is it a smooth motion?
- Follow-through: Is it a smooth motion?

All shooters want to know what to think of during a match. Simple, just think of nothing. This is easier said than done and you might ask 'So what is nothing?'. Nothing could be a number of things including a blank board, an empty sky or a black hole. These things can make the mind work to picture these images and now, nothing suddenly became something.

Try not to analyse your shots too much because if you analyse them from every angle, then it will only focus the energy towards the analysis and away from what you're doing. Just keep persevering, you will win more than you lose.

Games

Finally, to make practice more fun, here are some games you can play while shooting:

Longest string of 10s: What is your best number of 10s in a row? Or, how many silhouette targets can you hit in a row?

Bull: Shoot a predetermined number of 10s or silhouettes. For example, 25 10s or 25 silhouettes should take 25 shots. See how close you can go to that number.

Remember to give yourself new challenges, new ways of enjoying the hard work that is needed to improve. Go back to the basics and work on the shot process. Good training leads to good competition. Practice makes perfect and without practice, you will never become a good shooter. ●



How many silhouette targets can you knock down in a row? Keep practising until you can hit all 10 in a row and then see how many lots of 10 you can get!

A very tired Andrew La Vista after his first proper spotlighting trip. As his dad said, it will be one that he will never forget.

The hunting bond

by Andrew La Vista



It was 13 years ago, when I was around five years old, that I accompanied my father on my first hunting trip on my grandfather's farm, located near Meningie in the Upper South-East of South Australia. It is no accident that most of my earliest memories are those of hunting with my father and grandfather and this is no doubt the same for many hunters around Australia. These moments would be those that began my enthusiasm for hunting and strengthen the sacred bonds between father and son, between grandfather and grandson.

As a child growing up in Adelaide, hunting trips were always confined to the school holidays and many hours were spent scouring various hunting magazines in preparation for the coming hunt. As a five-year-old schoolboy, no excitement in anticipation of any event could ever match that of going to the farm in the holidays. In the days before, much conversation would occur between my father and me as to which firearms we were taking and I made many plans with

my mum in regards to what food we chose to take. When the day finally came, every minute of it became part of the adventure - from waking up super early to helping carry the gear and loading up the car.

When we would set out for a hunt, it was always my job to carry Dad's 25-round shotgun belt with his hunting knife attached. I was also in charge of carrying any shot game we obtained throughout the hunt. I thought this was a fantastic job and I felt that I was an important part of the hunt, rather than just tagging along.

One of the most memorable hunts of my childhood was a quail hunt with my father, grandfather and older brother on a neighbouring property. It was the first time I had seen quail and the hunting was highly successful, seeing us bagging out very quickly. I recall watching in awe as Dad worked his Winchester pump-action shotgun. He hunted the quail with an 18" barrel and open choke. Upon arriving back at the farm, I was shown how to pluck and dress the shot

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quail and how to use a small flame to rid the bird of tiny, unplucked feathers. Later on, of course, came the best job of all - enjoying the quail at the dinner table!

Growing up as a young hunter, I consider hunting with my father's or grandfather's firearms a great honour - even now as I am preparing to make an application for my firearms licence. Most of my hunting to date has been with Dad's trusty Beretta S55 and I have used my grandfather's old Italian side-by-side hammer gun on occasion. One of the most recent hunts saw me carrying Dad's Beretta and Dad carrying his father's old Brno Model 5 .22. Although that particular hunt didn't eventuate in any game, it was still a fantastic experience and you could feel the history behind those guns. I have learned that patience and perseverance plays a large role in hunting. Even though some hunts are unsuccessful, in that, you might not get a chance at the game, I have enjoyed them all to a great extent - that's why we do it!

It was only five years ago, at the age of 13, that I began my journey as a hunter. Camping out near a local rabbit warren in a self-constructed hunting blind, I took my first rabbit with my mother's Savage Arms .410 - to say I was happy would be the understatement of the century.



Dad's first rabbit with one of his son's guns!



The christening of Andrew La Vista's new left-hand CZ .17HMR. This rabbit was taken, as always, under the skilled direction of Andrew's dad.

Although I had successfully bagged my first *coniglio* - the Italian word for 'rabbit', as used by my grandfather - I still had a lot to learn about hunting techniques. This remains the same today and I am always asking older, more experienced hunters for pointers in this area.

I was fortunate enough to shoot my first fox in the July school holidays this year, once again with Dad's old Beretta. The many congratulations and, most importantly, looks of excitement and approval from my father and grandfather meant as much to me as the carefully tanned trophy skin that now adorns my bedroom. Little did I know that my first vehicle spotlighting hunt would follow soon after, on which I bagged around 20 rabbits and a couple of huge hares. Dad was definitely pleased about that one!

And so, I say to the hunting mums, dads, grandfathers and grandmothers - take your sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters with you next time you embark on a hunting trip. This requires little effort and the youngsters will have the time of their lives - trust me, I know! There is no better way to introduce the next generation to hunting than by taking them with you when you go out. In this way, you will create memories in their minds that will last longer than the sweet, strong scent of powder solvent and gun oil. ●

Cleaning your firearm

by Technical Advisor Brendan Atkinson

It had been a good day. Having to get up in the dark and head off at four in the morning was a hassle, but a nap in the car as Dad drove out to the farm made up for some lost sleeping time. As daylight arrived, the shadowy figures of rabbits could be seen darting around the blackberries along the creek. It was going to be a good hunt.

By morning tea time, between you, there were 14 bunnies and one unlucky fox. Next came the messy bit - cleaning the rabbits while Dad skinned the fox. It was no big deal, as you had done it all before. With the rabbits cleaned up and packed into the car fridge, it was time for a good wash of the hands and some tucker.

The afternoon proved fruitful too, with more prime bunnies packed into the fridge. At the end of the day, it was two weary hunters who travelled back home after a most satisfying hunting session.

The rabbits were cleaned, the hunters were cleaned and Dad even gave the car a clean - but had we forgotten something? What about the firearms that had given us such good service and enjoyment throughout the day? They deserved a little TLC too.

Cleaning a firearm should not be a chore, so let's not make it one. If correct procedures are followed, it can be done in a very short time and your firearm will reward you with years of faithful service.

There are four parts to cleaning a hunting firearm. Firstly, the barrel must be cleaned to remove the byproducts of fired cartridges. Secondly, the bolt should be cleaned to remove dust, grit and other foreign material that may have found its way in. Thirdly, the enemy of most metals is rust and we must protect all metal surfaces from this problem. Last of all, the other exterior surfaces need a wipe over to remove any dirt or mud and don't forget to check the scope lens for dirt.

So, let's take them in order. Before you start, you will need a good one-piece cleaning rod with bore guide, jag and brushes, some cloth patches, a good bore solvent, some gun oil and a few pieces of flannelette cloth or similar material. Buy a pack of those disposable rubber gloves from the supermarket, as bore solvents can sometimes cause reactions with sensitive hands, so why take the chance?



This is the best way to spear a patch on a jag. Other type jags may be modified to form a spear point at the tip.



Push the patches right through the bore and out of the muzzle - they will drop off when the rod is withdrawn.



This is a nylon brush with a steel core that can be used to anoint the bore with copper dissolving solvent. Apply the solvent with the brush clear of the muzzle.

The barrel

The best way to use a cleaning patch is to spear it on a jag and push it right through the bore and out the end. Drawing back on the rod will cause the patch to fall off. Do not pull patches back through the bore - you want to remove the fouling, not wipe it up and down, and just remember that carbon is harder than steel. Brushes should be passed through the bore until they stick out of the end.

Solvent is then applied to them and the bore can be brushed. By doing it this way, we avoid the dangers of dropping solvent down into the trigger mechanism - a bore guide would prevent this if you have one.

If you have one of those brass jags that was designed to wrap a patch around, you can modify it by chucking it up in a variable speed drill and with a file, carefully grinding a sharp point on it. >

The Junior Shooter

Rimfire barrels are usually the easiest to clean. If less than 100 shots have been fired, you can get away with passing two or three patches lightly anointed with solvent through the bore. The last patch should be a dry one. If it shows no marks, then pass another patch through lightly anointed with a good gun oil. This will prevent any rust forming. Just remember to put a clean dry patch through the barrel before using it again.

Centrefires and shotguns require a little more attention, as the fouling is put there at high temperature and pressure. In the case of centrefires, copper fouling from the bullet jacket may build up over time. With shotguns, it may be lead fouling or some fouling from the wads as they pass through the barrel.

To clean a centrefire, it will be necessary to pass a number of solvent wet patches through the bore until they come out reasonably clean. This indicates that you have removed most of the loose powder fouling.

Next, using solvent and a bronze brush on the cleaning rod, give the barrel around 10 strokes. Patch-out the removed fouling and then another 10 strokes with the bronze brush as before. Wait a few minutes and then patch out until no color appears on the cloth.



This bolt face shows evidence of surface rust and general neglect. It only takes a few minutes to keep your equipment clean, so why not make the effort?



Now, take a clean patch and put some solvent on it. Pass it slowly through the bore and let the rifle stand, muzzle-down, for at least half an hour. If no color appears upon a fresh patch, you can be fairly certain that the bore is now clean. Finish the job with a patch and some gun oil (as for the rimfire) and that part of the job is done.

If you have a barrel that is more difficult to clean, it can help things along by using a nylon brush with a steel core to apply more heavy-duty copper solvent such as Sweets 7.62 or Tetra Gun. Using a brush with a bronze core will give 'false positives', as the blue color on the patch may have come from the core rather than the barrel.

Always remember to wash your brushes in some Shellite to remove bore solvent. The solvent is designed to dissolve copper in your bore and will also eat the bronze brush if left on there. Sweets 7.62 is water-based and should be rinsed off under the tap.

Shotguns are cleaned in the same manner as centrefires. Though, you will need a specific shotgun cleaning kit, as the brushes, jags and patches have to be much larger than for a rifle.

A good rod guide will stop solvent and dirt dropping into the trigger area when cleaning. It will also centre the rod in the bore.



Any of the solvents shown here will do a very good job of cleaning your firearms when used correctly.



The bolt

With the bore clean, we can turn our attention to the rifle bolt. For centrefires, a good wipe over with a lightly oiled rag is usually all that is required. Don't forget the front of the bolt too, where grime may accumulate in the extractor recess.

Rimfires are another matter, as they are grubby little things and can leave bullet lube and other crud around the back of the chamber and the front of the bolt. I have found that an old toothbrush is an excellent tool for cleaning the extractors on a rimfire bolt. Do not use bore solvent here; use mineral turpentine, Shellite or similar instead. Do not use kerosene. I have heard of people using diesel fuel for this, but I have found it rather messy. Finish the job with a wipe over with an oily rag.

Metal parts

All metal parts on the rifle should be wiped over with a lightly oiled rag. Do not use too much oil, as it does attract dust. Even stainless steel rifles can corrode - this is more likely to be from human sweat left on the metal.

External parts

The stock should be wiped over with a damp cloth to remove dust, dirt and mud. If you have a wooden stock that does not have an epoxy finish, ask your parents or someone who knows what sort of wood-protecting finish would be best. Some of the more common furniture cleaners will do the job nicely.

Check the scope lens for any dirt, but be extremely careful cleaning them - a scratch will be there forever. A very soft cloth, available from any optical store, is needed for this - never use normal tissues. Always use a good lens cleaning fluid, also available at optical stores.

Conclusion

So there you have it. If you establish a routine, it won't take long to clean your firearms. Do not fall into the trap of saying that they can wait until tomorrow because it seems tomorrow sometimes takes a long time to arrive.

You keep yourself clean and tidy for appearance - why not do the same for your guns? ●



This rimfire rifle bolt shows grime and blowback after firing only 60 rounds. It can easily be cleaned up with a toothbrush.

A daughter's first hunt

by North American correspondent Thomas Tabor

A father's relationship with his daughter is often something very special and when that bond includes a common enthusiasm for hunting and the outdoors, it can be a truly wonderful thing. That was the case in my own family. My daughter Cheri had always taken a very keen interest in wildlife and had developed into a true hunter at heart. Long before she actually hunted herself, she became my constant hunting companion, eagerly shadowing me on every hunting trip. Eventually, we formed a pact that when she turned 14, the legal age for hunting in the western US state of Wyoming, we would travel there and hunt pronghorn antelope together.

Wyoming is the state of many Wild West tales and legions, but aside from that, it is a land containing huge herds of pronghorn, deer, elk and a virtual hodgepodge of other game. The old saying, "Where the deer and the antelope roam" describes Wyoming perfectly.

In preparation for Cheri's very first hunt, we travelled many times to our local gun club in order for her to get comfortable shooting her 6mm single-shot Ruger rifle. Even though the recoil of a 6mm is considered by most people to be light, when you weigh less than 44kg, as Cheri did at that time, even 'light' recoil can be viewed as substantial. So she would only fire a couple of three-shot groups on each occasion, then we would return home to discuss the situation.

Over time, Cheri's shooting proficiency began to develop and before I knew it, she was keeping most of her shots within a 2.5cm circle at 100 yards from the bench. However, like many young shooters, Cheri didn't have the upper body strength to shoot accurately offhand, so we began practising in the prone and sitting positions using a rifle-mounted bipod. It is believed that pronghorn possess eyesight equivalent to 8x binoculars, so long shots and steady rifle barrels are what hunting this species is all about and the bipod provided Cheri a perfect alternative to shooting offhand.



Pronghorn are often spotted in the distance, followed by a stalk on foot.

Shots can often be long when hunting pronghorn.



In order for a non-resident to hunt pronghorn in Wyoming, you must apply for and draw a licence and fortunately, we were both successful in that fateful year of Cheri's 14th birthday. Now, all that stood between us and our long-awaited pronghorn adventure was about 2100km of bitumen.

The long drive provided an opportunity for us to go over the many hunting and shooting details that we had discussed virtually hundreds of times before. Where the vitals of the pronghorn are located, how much to allow for the drop of the bullet, where the bullet entry point should be for broadside shots as well as for angling shots, wind drift and of course how to maintain composure at times of intense adrenalin rush were all discussed. It was all old information, but it was still good to talk about and it made the miles go by as if they were wisps of smoke from a warm rifle barrel.

Anticipating that Cheri would likely have to shoot further than the 100 yards she had gotten use to, we sighted-in her rifle to shoot 6cm high at that range. Because of the flat trajectory of the 6mm, it would permit her to hold dead-on an animal as close as 50m or as far as 300m and still have her bullet drop cleanly inside the lung/heart kill zone.

The pronghorn is a unique animal in many ways. It is the only species in the world that carries horns (as opposed to antlers) that are shed annually. Its hair is hollow, providing a substantial degree of insulation during the winter months when temperatures can plunge to -40C and below. In the summertime, the mercury can sometimes soar upward to 45C and on occasion, even greater heights. In order to help the pronghorn to survive such extremes, the species has

the ability to raise and lower its hair to provide insulation in the winter or to allow the winds to blow through the hair in the summertime to produce a cooling effect.

Differing from animals such as deer and elk, the pronghorn is diurnal by nature. In other words, it does not typically move about during the night-time hours. So, if you spot an animal late in the evening and it is not disturbed through the night, there is a good chance it will be in the same spot when the sun comes up the next morning.

Arriving in camp a day before the season opened permitted us time to scout the area for animals and before long, we had looked over a couple of hundred before Cheri spotted a buck she took a particular liking to. This animal had



The pronghorn is the second-fastest animal in the world, second only to the cheetah of Africa. On the run, the pronghorn can reach speeds of more than 65kph.



Pronghorns are curious animals and that curiosity often leads to a hunter's chance at a shot.

unique wide-leaning horn tips that would surely make a nice trophy for any hunter. In fear that we could spook the buck if we stayed in the area, we watched only a few minutes at a distance of about 750m, then quietly moved out of the area.

Left undisturbed, we hoped that the buck would remain in that area until morning. But not being able to resist the temptation, we returned one more time just before sunset to make sure he hadn't strayed. After a few minutes, we located him again. He had wandered about 500m, but remained in a good location for a shot and as the sun dropped out of sight, our hopes were fulfilled. As the last glimmering rays of daylight began to fade, the buck dropped to his knees and bedded for the night. Without disturbing him, we both made a mental note of his location, then headed back to camp full of anticipation for the next morning.

Everyone turned in early that night, but sleep did not come easily for either of us. Dad's mind was filled with the fear that his daughter's first real hunting experience would not turn out to be a memorable one and Cheri's sleep was hindered by anticipation of her long-awaited hunt and maybe just a little unwarranted fear that she might fail and disappoint ol' Dad. Long before the alarm clock had an opportunity to sound off, we were both up and once again making our way to where we had hoped to find Cheri's trophy buck.

Fearing that we could easily spook him and not get an opportunity for a shot, we stopped a full kilometre short of where we'd watched the buck bed down the evening before and carefully proceeded on foot. The memorable and fragrant smell of sagebrush filled the cool morning air as we silently and ever so slowly placed each foot ahead of the other. We both carried loaded rifles, but I knew full well that I would not be firing a shot on that day. Nevertheless, Cheri had insisted that I also have my rifle.

As we made our way through the early morning darkness, illuminated only by the rays of moonlight, not a word was spoken between us. Later, Cheri would tell me how she had a knot in her stomach, seemingly the size of a watermelon.



With a spotting scope mounted on the window of a hunting rig, Cheri Tabor scans the countryside for a good-quality trophy buck to fill her licence with.

By the time we had reached our destination, the sun was just peeking over the horizon permitting us to now make out the faint shapes of morning. We stayed low and maintained our silence, but our guarded approach failed to go unnoticed. Without warning, the silence of morning was broken by the unnatural (to us!) sound of a pronghorn snort. We had been spotted, smelled, heard or our presence had simply been sensed. We both strained our eyes to see where the alarm came from. We scanned every clump of sagebrush before I spotted the buck, the same buck we had put to bed the night before. Knowing he wouldn't hold long, I whispered to Cheri to put her bipod legs down and to move to the prone position for her shot. Within moments Cheri was in position, or at least I thought she was at the time.

Peering through my binoculars with my eyes fixed on the buck, I whispered once again, "You have to take him in the chest. He is facing us and won't hold long. Put the cross-hair where you want your bullet to hit and be sure and squeeze the trigger slowly."

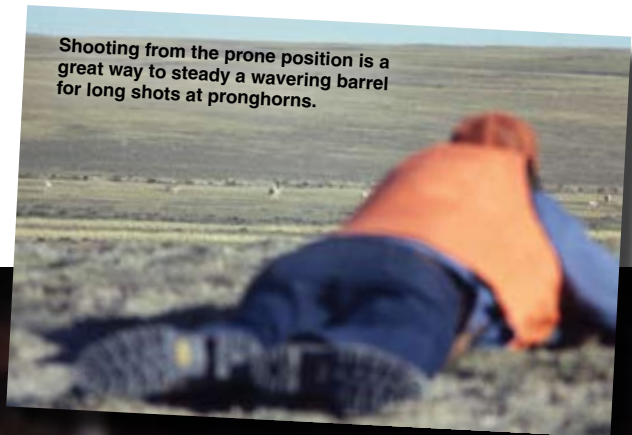
As Cheri struggled to get anchored I found myself anxiously awaiting the sound of her rifle going off. I could see that the buck was getting extremely nervous and feared he could take off at moment when to my surprise, Cheri exclaimed, "That's a doe!"

Surprised and puzzled, I took my binoculars down in order to see what Cheri had become focused on. It was true! She had her cross-hairs not on the buck, but on a pronghorn doe barely visible with the naked eye, standing about 450m away.

Quickly analysing the situation I explained, "No, no, not that one," and pointed in the direction of the buck. Refocusing her attention, Cheri twisted around to reposition herself, but in the moments it took to do so, the buck figured out that we were a major threat to his well-being and broke into a high-speed trot to the left. Cheri's disappointment was earth-shattering as she recognised what had happened and started to rise to her feet.

"No, no, stay down. He may stop. Just keep your cross-hairs on him," I said.

Sure enough, the buck's curiosity got the better of him and after a short dash, he came to a halt perfectly broadside to Cheri.



Shooting from the prone position is a great way to steady a wavering barrel for long shots at pronghorns.



Cheri spent many days practising on the rifle range in preparation of her very first hunt with Dad.

The Junior Shooter

"Get on him. Behind the front shoulder, but take him quickly," I whispered.

Cheri positioned her cross-hairs just as the buck decided that it was in his best interest to put some distance between him and the perceived threat. However, this time, just as the buck's front leg came off the ground, the 'crack!' of Cheri's rifle could be heard far and wide. The shot was successful. Cheri's trophy buck instantly collapsed on the spot. As we had discussed, Cheri stayed in her shooting position, quickly

reloading her rifle, but a second shot was obviously not necessary. After a few twitches, the buck lay still, partially hidden against a clump of sagebrush.

Clearly, Cheri's pronghorn was a trophy by anyone's standards and a particularly good one to start out a lifelong hunting career with. The unusual wide-spaced horns measured 30cm in length and its dark facial markings made this animal particularly attractive. The Nosler Partition 95-grain bullet had severed the backbone and spinal cord producing an excellent, instant and humane kill. Cheri wouldn't have wanted it any other way. I later paced off the shooting distance and it took 210 long strides to reach the buck.

Soon after arriving back home, Cheri's horns and cape were at the taxidermist shop and ol' Dad was bragging to everyone willing to listen about his daughter's long-range one-shot-kill pronghorn hunt.

You might be wondering by now how ol' Dad did on his portion of the hunt. Well, let's just say that Cheri's buck beat her dad by a considerable margin and you know what, that is the way it should be and Dad doesn't mind that a single bit. ●



Both male and female pronghorn carry horns formed from fused hair. The bucks often sport impressive black-colored horn sheaths sometimes reaching a length up to about 46cm. On the other hand, with a few exceptions, the female's horns usually do not exceed 2 to 5cm.

Equipment used on this hunt

Manufacturer: Sturm, Ruger & Co

Model: 1B

Calibre: 6mm

Weight: 3.6kg (rifle only)

Sights: Leupold 3-9 Vari-X II

Action: Falling-block single-shot

Barrel: 61cm (24")

Stock: Walnut

Magazine: None

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Junior Competition,
SSAA Media & Publications,
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or online at www.australianshooter.com.au

Winners randomly drawn December 10, 2008



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'Roo hunting memories

by Rachael Andrews

The sun was barely peeking over the hills near the town of Burra in South Australia when I set off on my first real hunting trip. I had been looking forward to going hunting with my father and my uncle for years before I had the chance to go and I could barely contain my excitement at this chance to accompany them on this kangaroo culling trip.

There had been light dew overnight and in the distance, I could see a group of 'roos feasting on the newly sprouted crop. My father had told me just as the sun was coming up and just before it set was the best time to go 'roo hunting and now I could see why - they were out eating. The property belongs to a brother-in-law. With the appropriate culling permits in hand, my father and his brothers had been hunting there for years and they knew the places to go.

As we crested our first rise, our small group split. I was given a pair of earmuffs and my father laid down the ground rules. The things he told me are still with me to this day. We were walking along the creek bed with near vertical hills on each side.

"If you ever get lost, you can follow the creek bed home," my father said.

"Never fire at an animal close to the crest of a hill; you can't see where the bullet will go."

"When I take a shot, keep an eye out for movement on the other hills."

We had only walked a few hundred metres along the creek bed before I heard some noises echo through the hills. My father pointed towards a group of about five kangaroos cresting the rise, running straight towards us. I remember being fascinated at how he managed to aim and hit a moving target that was bouncing up and down.

After several hours in the hills, we headed back to the farmhouse, via the creek bed. After swapping stories, we set

off through the hills again that afternoon. It was June and the kangaroos were tempted to come to the flat ground to eat the sprouting crops. For many property owners, kangaroos are a constant pest and there always seems to be a pack of animals out in the paddocks.

On this trip in the hills, we went to an area nicknamed 'Pothole Valley' and we hid ourselves in the trees.

"It's all about strategy," my father said. "Your uncle will scare the animals towards us."

The lie of the land was as important as the time we were hunting. In our new hiding spot we could see kangaroos had been in the area. There were tracks and faeces in this sheltered area.

Not long after settling in, gunshots echoed in the distance and my father and I were on the lookout. Without fail, a group of kangaroos were moving straight towards us.

For years after my first hunting trip, I have spent many weekends spotting kangaroos, scaling near vertical hills to find the perfect hiding spot and learning how it is possible to hit a moving target that is some distance away. ●



For many property owners, kangaroos are a constant pest and there always seems to be a pack of animals out in the paddocks. Photo by John Pond.

Hunting with a camera

by Alistair McGlashan



When it comes to hunting, one of the best ways to improve your stalking skills and understanding of game species is to hunt with the camera.

Hunting is a pastime that is all about the chase. Most genuine hunters will admit that hunting is really all about the thrill of the hunt, stalking and outsmarting the game and being outdoors. In fact, it seems the more I hunt, the more I come to realise that I enjoy being out in the bush. On one trip, I was hunting a lightly timbered range with my mate Nathan. We had spotted a patch of goats feeding on the ridge above and after watching them for a while, we started the stalk. However, instead of a rifle, I armed myself with a camera and slowly stalked in on them.

With no cover, it was a tough stalk, but I managed to reach a single tree some 50m away from the goats. If I'd had a rifle I would have taken a shot, but with the

camera, I just sat and waited. Nathan and I ended up watching the goats for more than an hour, studying their behaviour, snapping images all the time. Eventually, a nanny-goat literally walked straight into me before sounding the alarm and sending the whole mob scampering for the hills.

These days, I work as a full-time photojournalist and I spend a lot of time hunting. I have always liked stalking up close before taking the shot, but once I turned my passion into a career, I found my stalking skills needed some serious refining if I wanted to get close enough for a photo.

Photography really has added to my hunting, not just for wild game shots, but also for capturing those lasting images of the excitement of the hunt. The introduction of the digital camera age has really revolutionised photography for hunters, but there are still a few tips to ensure you get awesome shots as opposed to average pictures.

Stalking for still shots

Stalking is no different whether you do it with a rifle, bow or camera, except for how close you are going to need to get to the target. To get a good full-framed photo means sneaking right up on your subject. Even with medium-sized animals, such as a pig or goat, you still have to be within 30m, even with a 400mm zoom lens. A rabbit, on the other hand, has to be a quarter of that distance!

When you've found something worth photographing, don't just rush in for the shot. Sit back and watch. Get a feel for where the animal is headed. Is it moving quickly or is it just ambling around?

When you move in, do it slowly. Watch your quarry and read their body language. When an animal gets nervous or feels threatened, it will make it known through its behaviour - it will freeze, tilt its head and listen, then it may stamp its feet, grunt or stick its tail in the air. If you were hunting, you would just take the shot, but with a camera, you have no such luxury.

The best way to get a really good shot of live game is to get in front and let the subject come to you. After studying the animal, devise a plan to intercept it. Take the wind, available cover and light into consideration. There is a certain amount of luck involved with stalking, but the more you do it, the better you will understand your quarry and the closer you will get.

To complicate matters further, you also need to factor the sun into the equation. Not only do you need to get close enough to fill the frame, but you also need to determine which angle is going to give the best light on the subject. Getting in close is one thing, but being on the right side with the sun over your shoulder is another. Also, all too often factors such as the wind spoil the hunt. Think of it this way - if you look through your scope towards the setting sun, it is almost impossible to see anything, but if you turn



Getting in close with the camera is exciting and the rewards of a good image are priceless. The Aussie bush has natural wildlife, as well as game animals, which both make for great photography.

and look the other way, you get a great view. It is exactly the same with the camera lens. Therefore, to get good photos that are rich in color, it is imperative that the sun is behind you. Otherwise, the only option is a silhouette-styled shot, which may be great for one-off photos, but not often.

Another important point to consider is the background. Many animals are naturally camouflaged and blend in with the background, making for poor definition in the photographs. A pig will blend in with the shadows, a rabbit sitting beside some spinifex is almost invisible and even a big animal such as a deer will all but disappear in the undergrowth.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way around this problem and all you can do is try to be ready for that moment when your quarry moves into the position with the best backdrop. Although, sometimes a shot with the animal naturally camouflaged against the background can make for a unique shot, so always try to be creative. See how much harder it is to stalk with a camera rather than a rifle!

When it actually comes to taking the shot, the best advice I can offer is to get down to the subject's level. Looking down at an animal creates a dull and uninteresting image. The trick is to get down to eye level with your subject to create the most exciting image. Simply by crouching down as a fox walks towards you will create a dramatic shot that is full of life, especially at close range. Of course, sometimes the terrain doesn't allow for it, but if you can get down to their level then all the better.

It is also important to have the animal looking towards you or side on to you. This is why it is important to get in front and let the animal come to you. There is nothing



While this shot is composed well, it would have been a lot better if the photographer had zoomed in a bit more and the hunter had taken his cap off to get rid of the shadows.

The Junior Shooter

A nice silhouette captures the essence of hunting in the twilight zone.



worse than getting a great shot of an animal's backside! If you do get caught in this situation, a subtle noise or a cough can get the desired effect of getting it to look your way. Mind you, try not to make it too obvious, otherwise it may bolt.

In a lot of cases, wildlife photography is shot in lowlight conditions and even a fast lens such as an f2.8 lens will still need too much light to be hand held. As a result, I always shoot from a monopod to obtain the sharpest possible images. A handy tree branch makes a great substitute when you're out in the bush too!

Being very patient is definitely an asset to the wildlife photographer. I have spent countless hours sneaking up on game animals trying to get that perfect shot and have had far more failures than success. However, there is an added bonus to spending so much time stalking - it allows you to observe and learn about their habits. This, in turn, makes you a much better hunter. I know from my own experience that I have dramatically improved my hunting skills since I started working as a professional photographer. I know, especially for young hunters, that being patient can be really hard at times, but I guarantee that if you can hold back, you will be a much better hunter.

After the shot

Capturing live game in the wild is awesome, but at the other end of the scale is the opportunity to capture the excitement of downing a trophy animal. There is no better way to capture the excitement of a good hunt than a decent picture. However, all too often the photos turn out poorly. The problem is that hunters rarely take the time to compose the picture correctly. Most hunters I know take a few happy snaps of the animal exactly where it fell and hope for the best. Well, there is a lot more to getting a decent image and if you take the time to set up the shot, you will be rewarded with some great pics to show off when you get home.



Kids and photos go hand in hand and it is a great way to help introduce them into the bush.

The first step is to consider the light. I know I keep talking about light, but it can make or break you in the world of photography. If you have just shot a big boar in thick lignum, drag the animal out into a clearing, away from the shadows and into the sunlight. Clean up the animal and make sure there is no blood - blood makes all photos ugly.

The next step is to get the hunter into position behind the animal. Often, I like to get two or possibly even three people in the image, depending on the size of the animal. The sticky point is the rifle. To make the shot tasteful only ever include one rifle and avoid the 'Rambo' look at all costs. The hunter should hold the rifle well away from the trigger and always pointing it in a safe direction away from the camera, photographer and other hunters. If possible, keep the bolt of the rifle open to show that the rifle is clear and safe.

Always get your subjects to smile. It never ceases to amaze me how many pics have hunters who look miserable. When you compose the shot, make a joke and get the hunters to smile or even look at each other. If you have hunters who refuse to smile, take the shot and then take another straight after as they relax.

Once you have composed the shot, always fill the frame. I see countless photos where the subject is a tiny spec in the distance. Fill the frame with the hunter and animal, not the background - who wants to see the background? Obviously, on top of this, you do want both the animal and the hunter in the picture and not with the hunter's head cut off or half the animal missing.

With almost everyone using digital cameras these days, there is no excuse not to take heaps of shots. The more pics you take, the more likely the chance of producing some awesome images, so don't hold back. The more images you shoot, the more adventurous you get and the better your pics will be. It also goes without saying that you should constantly inspect the shots on the camera to confirm they are good.

In some cases, like on an overcast day, a flash is required to 'light up' the subject. Most cameras have a built-in flash, so remember to read the instructions and learn how to use your camera properly. A flash is a major advantage on close-up shots, even on sunny days.

Remember also to take spare batteries for the camera. I'm sure we can all remember times when we have been in the bush miles from anywhere with a camera full of flat batteries!

These days, digital cameras are compact and incredibly easy to use, which makes it easy to get great shots to ensure you have incredible images to show everyone when you get home. So next time you're in the bush, make sure you take



The gun should always be unloaded and never have any 'gung-ho' hunters posing with their finger on the trigger.

the camera out. With a bit of effort and creativity, you will have some great photography and I guarantee you will be pleased with the results!

What you need

The standard approach is to buy the best camera you can afford. Compact cameras are great, but if you're really serious, you can't beat a decent SLR. A reasonable SLR camera will start at around \$1000, which is fine for entry-level photographers. As far as lenses go, the more you spend, the better they are. However, for wildlife photography, a 200mm telephoto lens is really the minimum required. A 20-50mm lens is perfect for close-ups of the hunter and animal. ●

Junior sporting shooters quiz answers

1. You are handed a firearm with the bolt closed. What is the first thing you should do? c. Open the action to check for yourself. You should treat every firearm as though it were loaded.

2. You have loaded your rifle to take a shot at a rabbit. The rabbit escapes before you can shoot. What should you do next? b. Open the action and remove the unfired shell. If another shot presents itself, you may place the unfired shell back into the magazine.

3. Until what range are rimfire, 22LR bullets considered dangerous? c. 1600m.

4. You have loaded your rifle, but it fails to fire. What should you do next? b. Wait about 1 minute before opening the action and remove the unfired shell; rimfire ammunition sometimes misfires. Try another shell and if this one misfires too, you should then remove the bolt and magazine and take it to a gunsmith for examination.

5. When carrying your firearm out hunting what should you do? b. Only load the firearm just before firing it. Until you are ready to shoot, keep the firearm safe by pointing the muzzle in a safe direction.

6. You have finished a weekend hunt and have about a dozen shells left over. What should you do with them? b. Keep them in their original container for next time. It is extremely unsafe to dispose of ammunition either in a campfire or in a normal rubbish bin.

7. You drop your rifle when hunting and the muzzle is blocked with mud. What should you do to clear it out? c. Do not fire the rifle until it has been properly cleaned. Unless all of the mud is removed, damage will occur in the barrel.

8. You have to climb over a fence when out hunting. What should you do before climbing over? b. Open the action, remove the magazine and place the rifle on the ground over the fence; you need both hands free to climb a fence. If you have incorrectly placed the rifle against the fence, it may dislodge and fall and knock the sights out of alignment.

9. When storing your rifle at home, what do you need to do? c. Store the ammunition in a locked container away from the firearm. The other two choices are unsafe and are more than likely an offence in your state. Be aware of the firearms and ammunition storage laws and regulations in your state.

10. You are handed an unfamiliar firearm to shoot. How do you know what sort of ammunition should be used? a. Ask the owner what ammunition they use.

Recipes for

Goat meat burgers

Ingredients (serves 4)

- 600g goat meat - minced
- 130g bacon - finely chopped
- 1 onion - chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ground black pepper - hold off on the salt as bacon and soy are salty
- 2-3 tablespoons soy sauce
- plain flour for dusting
- olive oil for frying

Method

Place all of the burger ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Shape into 8 burgers and dust lightly with flour.

Heat a little oil in a large, heavy-based frypan that will take the burgers in one layer. Add the burgers and fry for 3 to 4 minutes. Turn carefully and fry on the other side for another few minutes, then continue cooking until done. The length of time will depend on the thickness of the meat, but 8-10 minutes should just about do it.

Place the burgers on paper towelling when cooked, then serve with vegetables and/or salad. Tomato halves added to the pan during the latter stage of the cooking process make an agreeable accompaniment. ●



juniors

by Erica Wright

Pan-fried kangaroo with blueberry sauce

Ingredients (serves 4)

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 kangaroo steaks 180-200g each, trimmed of all sinews
- 1 clove garlic - crushed
- 1 tablespoon vinegar - balsamic for preference
- ½ cup game or beef stock
- 2 tablespoons redcurrant jelly
- 120g fresh or (thawed) frozen blueberries
- salt and pepper

Method

Heat the oil in a heavy-based frypan. Add the steaks and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, turn and cook for a further 3 to 4 minutes. The total cooking time will depend on the thickness of the meat and how well done you like it, but kangaroo



is best not cooked past medium. When cooked to desired doneness, remove the meat from the pan and set aside to rest - covered with foil will do fine.

Stir the garlic into the pan, then add the vinegar, stock and redcurrant jelly. Stir over a fairly high heat to blend everything together then season with salt and pepper. Lower the heat and add the blueberries, including any juices, and heat through. Finally, add the juices from the resting steaks into the sauce.

Serve the steaks with the sauce spooned over them with vegetables of your choice. Pan-fried sweet potato or kumara goes well, as their natural sweetness is a good match with the sauce. ●

Venison stroganoff

This is a quick and easy recipe that should be served as soon as it is cooked. Have the noodles on the boil and vegetables organised before you start cooking the venison.

Ingredients (serves 4)

- 750g venison - fillet, rump or topside
- 40-50g butter
- 1 onion - chopped
- 250g mushrooms - sliced
- nutmeg
- salt and pepper
- ½ cup sour cream

Method

Slice the meat very thinly and cut into strips about 1x5cm.

Melt 30g of the butter in a frypan. Add the onion and mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft. Remove from the pan and set aside.

Add a little more butter to the pan and melt. Add the venison strips, tossing about to coat them with butter and brown a little - this will only take a few minutes.

Return the onion and mushrooms to the pan, season with salt, pepper, a little grated nutmeg and stir in the sour cream.

Heat through without boiling and serve over noodles with your vegetables of choice. ●



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