

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER



Converting to open-sights

Shotgun shooting hacks

The dawn of a shooter

Hunting for the table

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Editorial

Rachael Oxborrow

Australian Women's Shooter has an extensive back catalogue with knowledge and advice from some of the country's top shooters. Inside, both Suzy Balogh, who is one of our country's best in her own right, and myself, refer to some of these previous issues. So don't only enjoy this new edition but take a trip down memory lane and refer to these issues we mention, plus more.

Suzy's story brings together her decades of experience in clay target shooting and coaching to give us some handy shotgun shooting hacks. Everything is covered, from how to have a shotgun that grows with juniors, to a makeshift centre bead that MacGyver would be impressed with.

Meanwhile, my story is an ode to my newfound favourite shooting discipline, Lever Action Silhouette. As a committed scoped rifle shooter, my enthusiasm for this style of shooting was a real surprise to me, but I've embraced the change and shared my observations from adapting to this competition.

We also feature former AWS Editor Gemma McNabb (nee Dunn) on the moment she was introduced to shooting and how this chance meeting changed the course of her life. Our columnist Laetisha Scanlan's commentary encourages us all to share our sport and help it grow.

Visit ssaa.org.au and click on 'Our Media' then 'Our Publications' to view our back catalogue, and female shooters and hunters can email us at aws@ssaa.org.au if interested in writing for AWS.

Rachael

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AUSTRALIAN
**WOMEN'S
SHOOTER**

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Taking aim

with Laetisha Scanlan

Elevating participation through corporate events

While membership with the SSAA, and other shooting organisations, continue to remain steady in Australia, there's significant opportunity to nurture participation and foster future growth of the shooting sports. Historically, numerous shooters, myself included, have entered the sport through family connections. While these bonds are invaluable, there exists a significant opportunity for us to broaden our horizons.

Embracing corporate days at local clubs presents a multitude of benefits, not only for seasoned enthusiasts but also for those curious about the world of sports shooting.

For more than a decade, I've had the privilege of working as a clay shooting coach with Go Shooting. Our primary focus has been on hosting engaging 'have a go' events, unforgettable bucks' parties and tailored corporate bonding experiences for businesses.

There's an undeniable thrill in introducing novices to the sport and reshaping perceptions surrounding firearms and shooting while fostering a safe, supportive environment for all participants. Whether it's instilling confidence in newcomers, challenging existing stereotypes, or simply providing a space for people to experience the sport in a positive light, our efforts often culminate in individuals eagerly joining their local clubs.

This experience of empowering individuals to step outside their comfort zones and embrace the joys of the shooting sports is incredibly rewarding. It's not just about breaking the most clays; it's about building friendships, fostering healthy competition and igniting a passion for a sport that can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

Lately, I've observed smaller clubs taking on their own corporate shooting events/days. This development is undoubtedly positive, as it empowers these clubs to generate revenue, with a clear goal of growing membership

and encouraging greater participation. This progress is crucial for advancing our shooting community as a whole. Given the escalating costs associated with living, coupled with the rising prices of targets and ammunition, there's a risk of decreased engagement among enthusiasts. Therefore, it's imperative that we unite to actively recruit new members. Corporate events serve as a powerful gateway, offering individuals the chance to immerse themselves in the sport they may never have considered through the enticing invitation to simply have a go.

In essence, embracing corporate days at local clubs isn't just about recognising the potential for boosting membership and participation; it's about nurturing a stronger, more inclusive shooting community. By acknowledging the role these events play in attracting new members and showcasing the countless benefits of the shooting sports, we ensure that the legacy of this cherished tradition continues to thrive for generations to come.

WOMEN'S-ONLY COMPETITION

Only female SSAA members are eligible to enter. One entry per member. To enter, simply write your name, address and membership number on the back of an envelope and send it to:

Australian Women's Shooter
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or online at
ssaa.org.au/win



Competition closes August 31, 2024

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New HORIZONS

How open-sight shooting has won Rachael Oxborrow over

After roughly 20 years of target shooting with strictly scoped rifles and the occasional dabble in 10m air rifle or air pistol, I am officially an open-sight rifle shooting convert. But this realisation, via the Lever Action Silhouette discipline, has meant I've needed to learn a new way of shooting and change a lot of habits along the way. While not as daunting as starting out in target shooting as a newbie, it still tested my confidence and required me to sit in the uncomfortable until I worked out how to adapt as a shooter. Now to the uninitiated, Lever Action Silhouette rifle shooting comes under the Metallic Silhouette umbrella of shoots, but with the added bonus of slightly larger targets. You fire one of three classes of lever action rifle:

- Centrefire rifle of .25 calibre or more with a tubular magazine
- Pistol cartridge lever action rifle with a tubular magazine firing a rimmed centre-fire pistol cartridge of .25 or more and with a cartridge no greater than 42mm
- Smallbore rifle using .22 calibre cartridges.

The shoot itself traditionally involves 40 targets featuring 10 targets placed in banks of five of chicken, pig, turkey and ram animal shapes at distances respective to the calibre of choice. I prefer the smallbore competition and in this scenario the animals are placed at 40m, 50m, 75m and 100m, but as your

calibre increases, so does your distance. You are allowed two minutes to fire five shots at each bank of targets in order, with a 30-second ready period prior to your course of fire, where you can perform tasks such as loading your magazine and putting in distance settings. No lens sights are permitted, but there are a variety of open-sight combinations that can be used, and this is very much up to shooter preference.

Metallic Silhouette in .22 calibre with a scoped rifle has always been a firm favourite of mine, with a little dabble in 3-Positional and Field Rifle at times. But Lever Action Silhouette is a different beast and while you'd think it was 'easier' as the metal silhouettes are larger, it's a distinct set of skills that are tested.

The sights

My first hurdle has always been the change from scoped target shooting to an open-sight. I am a left eye-dominant shooter and have never mastered closing either eye on command. The concept of left-eye dominance was written about in Issue 1 by Gemma McNabb (née Dunn). Members can jump online at ssaa.org.au to download that edition for free and learn more about it. Gemma is primarily a shotgun shooter, and this discipline presents its own set of circumstances where you're moving and focusing, but in my chosen area of positional shooting, I've had a different experience.

In terms of static positional shooting using a telescope, I have adapted to wearing shooting glasses that cover my left eye, allowing my right eye to do the work. For Gemma shooting shotgun, she uses both eyes for aiming and target tracking.

In my transition to open-sight shooting, I have trialled shooting with and without glasses and found my left-eye dominance to be less of an issue. Where I would normally have the two fields of vision competing when looking through a scope, focusing through an open-sight has presented little issue. Out of habit, I have stuck with my shooting glasses with the left eye covered, but on cloudy and grey days I have opted to not use the glasses and take advantage of the extra light in my vision.



Rachael at the SSAA range.

This brings me to another concept Gemma has covered in a previous *Australian Women's Shooter* edition - knowing and using the different tint options with your shooting glasses. Shooting with open-sights on a cloud-grey day, or on a particularly warm and hazy day, are conditions that do present a special challenge to my new favourite discipline. Often there are options for the silhouettes to be either white or black in those situations, but this depends on what resources the SSAA range has available.

Now, I've been target shooting for a long time and I will admit to not paying a single second of attention to this concept until now, and I have regrets! I have a set of shooting glasses with interchangeable lenses and have opted to test a few out during my sighting-in before competition to see what I feel comfortable with on the day.

Make sure you go back to Issue 11 for the full rundown and considerations when it comes to shooting glasses and lens options, but of interest is Gemma's rundown of general guidelines of tints:

Orange - Great all-round lenses for black and fluorescent targets against broken backgrounds (trees, bushes, grass, sky).

Yellow - Good for reducing blue light and glare factors, in lowlight conditions and when targets are presented against open sky.

Red/amber/vermilion - Excellent for fluorescent targets and black/banded. Good for reducing blue light and glare intrusions and against broken backgrounds (trees, bushes, grass, sky).

Purple - Works well in lowlight conditions and when targets are presented against open sky.

Gemma also recommends that when you have selected your lens, make sure to give your eyes an adjustment period of at least 30-40 minutes prior to shooting. This is so you gain the best performance from the tint after your eyes have adjusted and therefore relaxed into the new information being received.

The pre-shooting period

There is a different level of prep work in the pre-shooting 30-second period before starting the course of fire, and it still presents a challenge I must plan for. Lever action magazines can differ by model, but this is something to be prepared for and practice before the shoot itself.



The SSAA Lever Action shooting community is friendly and supportive.

The lever action magazine of the Marlin 39A I use is pre-loaded via a tube and I still find this process quite fiddly. My experience with bolt-action rifles has me quite adept at loading a magazine while in this time period, but the tube magazine is one that needs practice.

Another factor to practice and be ready for is adjusting the sights for distance, as this mechanism also varies depending on the type of sight and make of the firearm. This is quite the norm for all scoped rifles as well, but it is worth noting and being familiar with the function if you, like me, find the tubular magazine loading a challenge.

The course of fire

The ease of shooting the course of fire and maintaining my position is probably my favourite part about shooting a lever action rifle.

I am well aware that I don't have the stamina to hold a heavy firearm or shoot back-to-back competitions. I have always tailored my shooting to preserving my strength and energy as I find as soon as I tire, my scores suffer. This means I will use a magazine when I can, take breaks and use my full time allowance in competitions such as 3-Positional and in the case of Lever Action shooting I'll take the fast and short approach if I'm on a roll. I shot my first ever full bank of 10 animals while doing Lever Action Silhouette and this course of fire was one where my momentum aided my success.

The lever action is perfectly suited to this approach as you can cycle the chamber without losing your position or even moving your hand to the bolt. That said, knowing when to down tools for a short reset is also something I have to be mindful of when using this type of firearm.

A change is as good as a holiday

Having the confidence to try something new with my shooting was a big step for me, as I like to be comfortable and know all of the ins and outs of what I'm doing. This adventure has been one I'm glad I took, with the support of my father Tony and encouragement of the SSAA Lever Action Silhouette shooters in South Australia, who have been so welcoming. So much so, that I'm planning to test myself again and try my hand at handgun shooting, something I have very little experience with.

If my story achieves anything for my fellow SSAA members, I hope it is the knowledge that stepping out of your comfort zone, asking for help and trying something new could be the path to your new favourite competition. ●



Rachael's first bank of 10 animals in any silhouette competition.

SHOTGUN SHOOTING HACKS





Decades of experience see **Suzy Balogh OAM** well-equipped to help clay target shooters

Sadly, there is no super-quick way to speed up the skills needed to become a competent clay target shooter. My advice, however, is to start with getting good, qualified coaching and setting yourself up with suitable equipment that fits. Both will definitely speed up the process. Then just shoot targets, practice, train, compete and review then adjust where needed and repeat. 'SHOOT, SLEEP, REPEAT.'

Nevertheless, there are some equipment hacks that I have found helpful and may be useful in helping you work out what your needs are. They also might make you more comfortable and help with progress.

Fully adjustable stocks

Getting a stock of a gun to fit perfectly off the shelf is quite difficult for most people, particularly females, but getting a gun to continually fit a rapidly growing junior is even harder. These days a lot of gunstocks have adjustable combs, which allow for the stock to be adjusted up and down and side to side. These can also be added at a later date by a stock maker.

Sometimes this just isn't enough and either

a handmade, custom stock artfully tailored by a stock maker to fit you perfectly or a fully adjustable stock is required. Fully adjustable stocks can even be tailored to some degree, such as palm size, left or right handedness, the choice of rubber cheekpieces and even one or two kick pads that can be offset to different angles. The key benefits of fully adjustable stocks are that they can continually be adjusted to meet the needs of a growing junior, can be greatly reduced in scale for petite shooters and can also allow different people to use the same firearm with just a few adjustments.

There are many brands of adjustable stocks out there such as TSK, Shoot-Off, Futur-K 6AM, Knight Adjustable and Precision Fit.

Temporary centre bead

One of the ways to assist checking that a gun is properly aligned with a shooter's eye and head placement is the use of a centre bead in reference to the front sight. Ideally the shooter will see one barrel, and, on that barrel, the front sight and centre bead will be aligned down the middle of the rib. When looking down the barrel towards the front sight from the shooter's perspective, the distance between the centre



A Shoot-Off fully adjustable stock with a soft cheekpiece.

bead and the front sights can vary.

The way these sights are aligned, eg, the centre bead just lining up with the bottom of the front sight like a figure '8', a gap between them or the centre bead seen entirely inside the front sight, relates to the gunstock height where the cheek is placed in reference to the rib. The alignment of these sights will affect the elevation of the central point of impact of the shot pattern when the gun is fired.

Not all guns are fitted with a centre bead, so it's more difficult to identify eye dominance issues, or ensure that the gun fits the same as it did last time it was mounted.

A quick work around I use when coaching is simply sticking a sewing pin onto the top of the rib at the midpoint of the barrels. The shooter looks along it and can decide quickly whether they have eye dominance or double vision issues, decide whether the barrels are held straight or cantered, or for more advanced shooters, decide what the likely impact point of the shot will be.

If you are someone who likes to make sure their gun is aligned every time, adjust your stock regularly for different disciplines or are just someone who yo-yos with their weight, which alters the sighting profile, then getting a permanent centre bead fixed is a good op-

tion. I recommend anyone with an adjustable stock to get a permanent centre bead.

Occlusion dots

To (again) recap from Issue 1 of AWS 'Ocular cross-dominance in women shooters', the dominant eye is the eye that receives the visual information first. If the eye on the side where the gun is shouldered is not the dominant eye, then you will have aiming issues.

I have major ocular cross-dominance issues, among other vision problems, that I have sought extensive expert help for. With both eyes open I sometimes see multiple barrels, multiple front sights and multiple centre beads. But not always the same amount of each, either. Clarity is altered, and the angles, however common for people with ocular cross-dominance, result in the centre bead being off to one side of the barrel.

The best option in the long run is to switch to shouldering the gun on the side that the eye is naturally dominant, even if it's against your handedness. But if switching to the other shoulder is not feasible or effective, then closing the dominant eye or obscuring it with a patch or occlusion dot will likely help.

Closing an eye or using an occlusion dot correctly positioned corrects my vision issues

instantly. I had my left eye closed and wore a big map of Australia sticker over my shooting glass lens, just in case my eye opened, when I won my Olympic Gold. Using two eyes is ideal but if you can't it doesn't have to limit you. Go see a sports optometrist, they can work wonders. There are also several optical training aids around, such as the Ed Lyons Sports Vision Training Kit, and eye alignment systems such as the Rib Point Pro, which may be of assistance.

However, if you are a novice or even a seasoned competitor and know that you need to force the eye on the non-gun shouldered side to not be dominant, then an occlusion dot or even a full eye patch may be the answer. These can come in different styles such as gridded, coloured to match your lenses and opaque/solid. In my Hitting Targets Try Shooting events, for a quick fix we plonk a pirate patch sticker to the outside of the shooters' safety glasses – a bit of fun that generally solves the problem instantly.

Cheek lift cheat

I'm 166cm or 5'6", which is the average height of Australian women, so I'm luckily the height where I can fit most (suitable) standard off-the-shelf shotguns. However, I do struggle to look down the sights of a gun with a sporting style stock with its large drop in cheek and heel. This is where the comb of the stock doesn't run parallel to the gun's rib but angles down away from the face.

This style of gun is designed for field shooting and having the gun quickly mounted in place. With these guns I can't see past the back of the receiver or top lever to even get

To create a temporary centre bead, insulation tape and a sewing pin can be used.



Occlusion dots for a right-handed but left eye-dominant shooter.

a look at the sights. People shorter than me will likely have greater difficulty. Check out 'All about the Fit' in Issue 2 of AWS.

If an adjustable stock is not fitted to lift the stock comb up higher so you can see the full rib of the gun, then a quick 'MacGyver' temporary fix is to use a stubby holder slipped over the barrel end of the gun, manoeuvred over the triggerguard and pushed up into position on the stock. The negative with a stubby holder is that they also thicken out the side of the stock and may alter the alignment of the head too far away from the centre of the stock. Alternately, in some cases they help with padding for bony protruding cheek and jaw bones, reducing bruising.

If a stubby holder helps you elevate your head on the gunstock and actually allows you to see down the sights of a gun, then it is a definite sign you will need to find a more permanent fix. These can be getting an adjustable stock added to your gun, getting a custom stock made, fitting a fully adjustable stock or at least affixing a rubber lift to the top of the stock. It's important to know that the stock should fit snugly up alongside your face. It is the underside of the cheekbone that should be held down on the top of a stock, not the outer side of your cheekbone – ouch!

Toe tag gun rests

One of the things experienced clay shooters get used to is settling their break-open shotgun on their foot – WARNING: this is an open gun only - never closed, as you don't want to accidentally shoot your own foot!

The practicality of settling the gun on a toe tag on your foot is to firstly keep it out of



Toe tag gun rests go over and then under the shoelaces with a press stud to secure them.



A neoprene stubby holder over the stock raises the 'drop at face' so a shooter can clearly see down the barrels to the front sight.

the dirt, mud and water, which could cause a blocked barrel and thus an exploded barrel. A toe tag also protects your barrels from getting dirty or scratched, maintains the integrity of the front sight, stops water and grit from penetrating into choke tubes and helps take the weight of the gun. It also allows a consistent starting point for your shot routine to commence from, but most of all it stops your shoes getting dirty with gun smoke residue.

Blinkers

As a 'one eyed', right-handed shooter, I can get distracted by shooters to the right of me who are partly mounting their guns while I'm setting up for my shot. Also, by shooters who hold hands up to visualise target presentation or even shooters with extra-long 'crying' towels flapping in the wind. 'Left hand' shooters can similarly be distracted by the shooter to their left having finished a shot. Moving about afterwards can be caught in their peripheral vision.

One way of minimising distractions is to wear 'blinkers' on shooting glasses (similar to a racehorse wearing blinkers in a race) to limit distractions. Blinkers serve several other purposes, such as reducing wind and dust particles entering the eyes and blocking out glaring sunlight low on an horizon. They can aid the shooter to mentally focus, as they give a feeling of being encapsulated in a controllable environment. Blinkers are also another surface for doing a little bit of advertising or adding some flair.

Combination locks

Very early on in my career I travelled to Suhl in Germany for the Shotgun World Cup. I was at the time sporting a brand new Beretta

steel mesh travel/security cover over my hard shotgun case. The cover bag had a lovely strap to make it easy to sling the case over my shoulder, something much appreciated when traipsing up the massive hill at that venue from the armoury to the range.

As usual, being a shooter from Australia with a surname starting with a letter close to the start of the alphabet, I was again 'randomly' squadded into the first wave of shooters on competition day. The bus was running an hour late and the queue for getting my shotgun out of the armoury very long, so when I finally made it to the shotgun range to put my gear together I was in a rush.

At this stage I realised I had left my lanyard with the keys to the padlock for the special hardened steel lock back in the motel room. I ran around like a headless chook trying to find something to break this lock. Eventually someone suggested I go for a 'short walk' to the caretaker's cottage. The short walk was a quick run of about 1 km lugging my case and once there, this marvellous man that spoke no English but understood what my desperate eyes were pleading, pulled out an angle grinder, cut through the lock and broke into the bag. I managed to make it for my first round of targets just in time. Fortunately adrenaline works for me and I managed to qualify for the final that day. Lesson learnt on that trip – use combination locks.

If you don't have lovely pivot locks on your Negri gun cases, sometimes the little plastic loops on a case can get worn and broken. Some cases don't even have a locking option. I have found that a combination padlock and a bit of chain, or in my case a spare dog choker chain, works really well. ●

A woman wearing a dark cap and jacket, smiling, holding a rifle in a field. The background shows trees and a hazy landscape under a bright sky.

SLIDING

DOORS

Rachael Oxborrow on the ‘inconsequential’ moment that changed Gemma McNabb’s world forever

One moment in time shaped the course of Gemma McNabb’s (née Dunn) personal and professional life. At the age of 13 she was on a family holiday at a coastal NSW caravan park when her link to clay target shooting was made via a fellow park visitor. The teen had no concept of the sport or the trajectory her life would take

once she hit the range for the first time.

It was this story that the former *Australian Women’s Shooter* Editor told to a roomful of female shooters in the hopes to inspire and encourage her peers on their journeys. She was presenting at the March Women of Shooting event in Rockhampton, run by The Outpost Arms & Munitions. Gemma was referring to the first time she met Taylah Turner,

a competitive ISSF and Universal Trench shooter, who is the daughter of Olympic Double Trap shooter Tom Turner. “I think about this moment a lot,” she said. “There is a single moment in time for me where everything changed forever and for the better.”

To an outsider, this moment might seem insignificant in the context that Gemma holds

Gemma at the most recent Women of Shooting event.



Gemma has represented Australia in the shooting sports.



The taste of success.



a 390-plus kilometres per hour land speed record in motorsport and has represented her country in both baseball and clay target shooting. But for Gemma, it was the moment that was to spawn her deep love of the shooting sports and change the trajectory of her entire life.

“This is the moment in time I attribute my life changing its course forever,” she said.

“Since that very first shot fired at Newcastle Gun Club I’ve never looked back.

“I went from learning the ropes, to travelling to shooting competitions all over the country, to winning my first national title in under a year, and then went on making it to Olympic Trap teams travelling all over the world.

“Not only this, but I managed to meet a fellow member of the Australian Trap shooting team and, well... we fell in love.

“And 12 years later, we are still in love. In fact, I married him just last year.”

When Gemma shifted her focus from competitive shooting to her professional career, the shooting sports was a logical place to start. Gemma was the Shooting Sport Operations Manager at the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and up until last year, was the Coaching and Membership Development Manager with the Sporting Shooters’ Association of Australia (SSAA Inc). Gemma was the founding editor of AWS, and this publication is linked to her direct motivation for working in the shooting sports into the future, encouraging and supporting women in shooting.

“Over the past six years, I’ve dedicated myself to increasing Australian female membership in the shooting sports,” she said.

“Fostering a sense of community and providing support tailored to female shooters has been my focus.

“And the results speak for themselves - a significant growth in participation, driven by a shift in family and community attitudes towards shooting.”

Gemma left SSAA Inc in March 2023 to take an opportunity with Beretta Australia and has since been working on this goal in the most practical way possible. Connecting people with shooting through hands-on exposure and by supporting up and coming shooters. Because after all, the sliding door that was opened by meeting a new friend in a caravan park at the age of 13, was moved with one seemingly insignificant connection. ●

Gemma holds an Australian land speed record.



Comprehensive Guide special *Game meat and cooking*

Our SSAA'S Comprehensive Guide to Shooting & Hunting in Australia covers all the disciplines/competitions and everything you need to know about shooting and hunting. There's over 150 pages of rifles, shotguns and handguns along with tips, safety, etiquette, diagrams and a glossary.

Here's a section from the magazine on game meat in Australia to hopefully encourage you to get out and hunt:

In addition to hunting as an environmental management tool or for recreation, many people choose to hunt for food for the family table. Choosing food that has been sourced, either by ourselves or others, from our fields and waterways has been a common practice throughout history, but it appears to be becoming increasingly popular with people who wouldn't necessarily call themselves hunters.

Health experts continue to espouse the benefits of eating wild and game meats because of its low-fat, low-cholesterol and high-protein content, and even reality television shows are turning to meats such as rabbit and duck as tasty and nutritional alternatives to more conventional meats such as beef and chicken.

Rabbit

Rabbit meat is lean and low in fat and can therefore be a beneficial meat source for those monitoring their cholesterol levels. It has a distinctive but very mild taste and the

flesh is tender and fine-grained. The meat from wild rabbits is usually quite dark, with farmed rabbits generally having a lighter flesh.

Rabbit can be cooked in various ways including frying, baking, grilling and barbecuing. However, braising or casseroles are particularly suited to this meat because the slow cooking in liquid stops it from drying out and helps to tenderise it. Rosemary, sage, bay leaf, thyme, fennel and basil will complement rabbit meat well, while mustard adds a piquant note.

Duck and quail

Duck has a faint game flavour and is considered a white meat, although it can be darker depending on the breed. It is a versatile meat that responds well to a range of cooking methods including roasting, pan-frying, stir-frying and braising or casseroles. Duck combines well with citrus and sweet flavours such as barbecue sauce and pineapple, the piquancy of green apples, or pungent condiments such as soy sauce.

Quail, like duck, can be easily overcooked and the key is to retain moisture to gain a good-tasting delicate meat. The mild taste of quail can be complemented by both sweet and savoury flavours. Curry, honey, mustard, chilli and garlic team well with quail, as does bacon or pancetta wrapped around the meat during cooking, which also helps to preserve the moisture.

Pork

Pork is commonly known as 'the other white meat'. Pigs don't move around as much as cattle, which means less oxygen and blood runs through the muscles and consequently, the meat is much more tender and lighter in colour. Pork has more nutrients than chicken and has a low fat content. Wild pork contains less fat again than farmed pork, with the meat being a little darker and the grain tighter. The gamey flavour of wild pork is often preferred in European-style restaurants.



Rabbits, which are plentiful in most parts of Australia, offer a lean, low-fat meat option for the hunter-chef.

There are many different cuts of meat available from a pig and they all suit varied cooking methods. Larger pieces of meat are well suited to roasting and slow cooking, while thin strips are perfect for stir-frying.

Goat

Goat meat is much lower in saturated fats than beef, lamb and pork and is rich in protein and flavour. It can be treated very much like lamb when cooking and the cuts of meat are very similar.

Goat meat responds best to slow cooking, preferably with moisture, as its low-fat content means it can easily dry out. Marinating before grilling or pan-frying or slow cooking in stews or curries are good cooking methods; so too are burgers made with bacon, as the bacon will keep the meat moist. The meat teams well with thyme, olive oil, citrus and white or red wine. Cumin, chilli, garlic and rosemary are other good additives.

Kangaroo

Kangaroo meat is used by some of the world's best restaurants because of its high quality and unique flavour. The meat has a slight gamey taste and is high in protein and iron. It has virtually no fat, so care must be taken when cooking to avoid the meat drying out.

There are many ways to cook kangaroo meat. Consider roasting cuts on the bone, slow-cooking the shanks, using the tail in a broth or casserole, or using the leg meat for stir-fries or kebabs. Health-conscious families are choosing minced kangaroo meat for pasta sauces and sausages for their low-fat properties. And for those who like their meat rare, quickly cooked roo fillet on the barbecue or grill pan, left to rest while you make a quick sauce, is hard to beat.



In addition to providing majestic antlers for the trophy hunter, deer can be hunted for their venison, which can be cooked in many ways.

Venison

Venison is the meat from deer and is best served rare to medium-rare; otherwise, it tends to dry out. When preparing venison for cooking, trim off as much fat as possible, as this can adversely affect the flavour of the meat. It is better to use another form of fat when cooking such as butter, olive oil or even bacon. Avoid adding salt before cooking, as this draws out the meat juices; instead, keep the meat moist during cooking, and add any salt afterwards.

Loin and rib cuts of venison can be used as chops or roasted and served medium-rare. When using a cut such as a shoulder or diced venison, consider slow-cooking it in casseroles or curry or using it as a pie filling. Venison is fine-textured and has a richer flavour than beef. It is well complemented by red wine and

most spices, and soaking the cut with vinegar water prior to cooking can remove the slightly gamey taste. Try adding herbs such as rosemary, marjoram, thyme and sage to bring out the natural flavour of the meat.

Buffalo

Buffalo is a dense, dark meat that is very similar to beef, but has a lighter, sweeter and gamier flavour. The meat has similar muscle groups as beef and can be butchered to make the same cuts of steak, as well as roasts, burgers, mince, sausages and jerky. Some cross-breeds of buffalo are also used for milk production to make mozzarella cheese or curd, which make tasty additions to an antipasti plate.

Buffalo meat is high in protein, iron, zinc and phosphorus and is a healthy red meat option, having around 70 per cent less fat and around 50 per cent less cholesterol than beef. Due to its low fat content and its tendency to dry out, it is recommended that the meat be marinated or cooked with liquids such as red wine or tomatoes, with perhaps the addition of honey, chilli or mustard. ●



Goat meat can be cooked very much like lamb, but responds best to slow cooking.

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