

Dove Meat Is No Bargain

by Lee Keck

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Dove hunters are fortunate that the season for these popular game birds comes only once a year. It permits a hunter adequate time to heal from the emotional and physical scars experienced from the previous season.

Memories of the sunburn, insect bites and missed shots are quickly forgotten as the next year's hunt approaches. Add in a Department of Natural Resources' forecast for a good dove season and we even begin looking forward that first day in the field.

Best of all, these predictions proved accurate a couple of years ago for a few of the half-dozen hunters at a private field west of Dorchester. While a few of the hunters found excellent success, many of the regulars who annually hunt this site found it difficult zeroing in on the elusive targets.

Such was my story as I occasionally dropped a bird on the carefully groomed sunflower field. Though it was the third day of the actual season, it was my first to test this year's shooting skills.

While I did my share of missing, I can say, with some authority, that my shooting prowess had not worsened. However, it is important to note that it also did not improve.

As a hunter, I've always taken great pride in the fact that I'm bringing home food for the table. For the mere price of a few shotgun shells, my family can enjoy an inexpensive and nourishing meal of wild game.

In fact, it was necessary to point this out to my wife just before heading to my annual dove hunt. She mistakenly thought a few home repairs were of greater importance than providing meat for the freezer.

After the usual amount of whining (on my part), she finally came around to my way of thinking. Seizing this opportunity, I quickly loaded the car and departed before she had a chance to change her mind.

It was an enjoyable trip in spite of my limited shooting abilities. I spent time with the guys doing all that manly stuff. I even managed to return home with a few birds for the freezer.

This, I figured, would be the perfect opportunity to prove just how much the savings would be reflected on the family grocery bill.

However, after looking at the results of my calculations I began to doubt the validity of this argument. I must admit the tiny bowl of dove breasts appeared somewhat unimpressive. Still, there had to be some sort of bargain as the doves were free.

Recounting the expenses of my trip I found I had spent about \$5 for gas. It appears the old truck doesn't get the gas mileage it once did.

The cost of my hunting license and habitat stamp totaled \$18. I figured only 10 percent of my hunting time each year is spent dove hunting. Therefore, this equated to \$1.80 of the costs of my hunting license.

As usual, it was necessary to pick up a couple of boxes of shotgun shells that were on sale at our local discount store for \$7 a box. I won't even figure in the \$100 worth of other bargains she purchased while there.

The only other expenses were a bottle of soda and a candy bar totaling about \$1.

Was the dove meat a bargain? I guess it depends upon how you look at it.

Each dove breasts weighs about two ounces. Expenses for the trip totaled \$21.80. This figures out to be slightly less than \$1.09 an ounce for dove meat. That, of course, includes the bone.

Since T-bone steaks regularly sell for about \$10 a pound, perhaps I better save this argument for deer season.

Still, those wishing to take advantage of the relatively inexpensive dove meat, still have plenty of time. The first segment of the 2020 dove season wraps up Nov. 14. The season then reopens Dec. 26 and continues until early January.