

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Immediate Release

"Meet the meat shortage by eating domestic rabbit meat," is the counsel offered today to housewives by the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior.

With the shortage of red meat on the Pacific Coast becoming more acute and likely to spread to other parts of the country, Service officials are emphasizing the importance of domestic rabbits in supplying meat both for restaurants and for home consumption. The meat of the domestic rabbit is pearly white, fine-grained, nutritious and palatable, and may be served throughout the year.

At the present time rabbits are raised by the millions, in every State and in every climate, from California to Maine, with the city of Los Angeles alone consuming more than 2 million dressed rabbits during 1942.

With food as vital now as bullets, the Service is attempting to stimulate the increased production of rabbit meat to replace meats which are now short or will be included in the rationing category. Since they have no objectionable features, rabbits may be kept in the city backyard as well as on the farm, in fact, wherever poultry raising is permitted. Their hutches can be constructed of scrap lumber, used poultry wire, crates, and like material that can be obtained at little or no cost. Clean table scraps, garden waste, lawn clippings, palatable weeds, and small limbs trimmed from fruit trees may be utilized to supplement their regular rations.

Rabbit meat is quickly produced--only 90 days are required from the time the doe is mated until the young rabbits are ready for the table. It is economical, too, for only 4-1/4 pounds of feed are required during this period to produce 1 pound of live weight. Older and heavier rabbits--those beyond the fryer age--are excellent for a fricassee or a roast.

Rabbit raising in Europe has long been a well-established industry for, according to information recently received by the U.S. Rabbit Experiment Station at Fontana, Calif., operated by the Service, England has about a quarter million producing does; in Germany there are between 15 and 20 million producing does, while the Italian householder is required to maintain at least one doe.

Information useful in acquainting the American family with the domestic rabbit and the desirability of keeping 3 or 4 does and a buck to augment the family meat supply is contained in a new pamphlet recently published under the title, "Domestic Rabbits in the Food for Freedom Program." Leaflet No. 218, as it is known, deals entirely with the small unit operated for producing rabbit meat as economically as possible for home consumption, and is available free of charge upon request to the Publications Office, Fish and Wildlife Service, Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Ill.

Most domestic rabbits are marketed at 8 to 10 weeks of age, and are then termed "fryers". In preparing the meat for cooking care should be taken to break the bones in such a way that they do not sliver. Like young chickens and tender steaks and chops, young rabbits can be cooked by the quick methods of frying or broiling. The older rabbits need longer, slower cooking. They are excellent served in fricassees, casserole dishes, rabbit pie, croquettes, salad, chop suey, and all the other ways adapted to mature fowl and the less tender cuts of meat. If first simmered until tender, these older rabbits may also be fried in batter, smothered in individual casseroles, and used in a number of other dishes for short-order service in restaurants and hotels, as well as to give variety to the home menu.

The recipes given below are merely typical of the many suitable for cooking this white-meated, delicately flavored domestic rabbit.

Roast Rabbit

1 rabbit
Salt
Pepper

Sage stuffing
2 tbsps. fat

Wash dressed rabbit thoroughly in running water. Sprinkle with salt and pepper on the inside. Fill with sage stuffing, fasten opening securely and spread with fat. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and roast in an uncovered pan in a moderate oven (350 degrees F.) for 1-1/2 hours or until tender. Serves 4 to 6. (Mississippi Valley section of the U.S. Regional Cook Book)

Rabbit en Casserole

Wipe the rabbit meat with a damp cloth, cut into pieces for serving, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and roll in flour. Brown lightly in hot fat in a skillet, transfer to a casserole, add some of the fat from the skillet and 1/2 cup of hot water. Cover and cook in a moderate oven (350 degrees F.) for 1-1/2 to 2 hours, or until the meat is tender. Remove the meat, and thicken the gravy slightly. To each cup of liquid allow 1 tablespoon of flour, mix with a few tablespoons of cold water, add to the meat drippings, return to the oven, and stir occasionally until thickened. Season with salt and pepper and finely chopped parsley, replace the meat, and when thoroughly hot serve in the casserole. (Rabbit Recipes, Leaflet 66, U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

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