

## Dove hunt, dove recipes

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Monday afternoon, I went on the best dove hunt of my life. It was in a sunflower field near Clarksdale, a hunt that was sponsored by the Miller Point Hunting club in Coahoma County. They had a 50 acre-ish field planted in sunflowers, which alternated wide bands of cut and not-cut sunflowers, all prepared by their member Cliff Heaton. The wind was in my face (remember Monday was when the hurricane-related weather was just starting to come into north Mississippi) and the birds came across toward my side of the field like they were jet propelled. From behind, they'd come slowly, but they'd take a slight turn and rocket off. All of that made for challenging shooting.

Opening day for dove hunting can be a large social event, and this hunt had aspects of that. But the real and serious focus was on the field that was spectacularly full of doves.

Doves are among my favorite game to eat. At the opening day hunt where I was invited, the tradition the night before the hunt is to serve the host's grandmother's recipe of doves-with-gravy. It's a wonderful dish (I'll try to get the recipe but make no promises).

For those who aren't hunters, I would guess the first recipe would work with squab, which are actually harder for me to come by. I think you want darkish meat, so quail wouldn't really work as well.

These are a couple of dishes that I more or less made up as I went along, based on ingredients at hand. Almost every ingredient in the first is local—doves from the Delta, then onions, okra and purple hull peas from the Oxford Farmers Market, garlic from a grower in Taylor, rosemary and garlic chives from my yard, pancetta from Dan Latham's Pancetta Ranch, which is in turn made from hogs raised near Sardis. I go outside Mississippi for cane vinegar (to Louisiana) and olive oil (ok, Italy). I have no idea where the celery was from, although I am aware it doesn't grow very well around here. Well, also there's the sea salt, red pepper flakes, and black pepper

I served as another side dish on the first recipe the okra and garlic chives dish I posted in a prior entry. Fresh (non garlic) chives will work almost as well as garlic chives. I'm not sure what would work you can't get fresh rosemary for the doves. If you're in Oxford, give me a yell; I've more rosemary than I can possibly use.

Recipes below the jump.

### Broiled Doves with Rosemary, Pancetta, and Purple Hull Peas

Serves 2

6 doves, with the necks reserved

8 sprigs of rosemary

4 oz or so of pancetta, sliced into very thin slices (If you can't get thinly sliced pancetta, bacon might possibly work, but it needs to be VERY thinly sliced)

Kitchen twine

2 tbs Steens cane vinegar (I'm not sure what would sub here. Sherry or white wine vinegar, I suppose)

7 tbs olive oil

A half rib of celery

Half of an onion

¼ tsp red pepper flakes

Sea salt and fresh ground black pepper

About a cup and a half of fresh purple hull peas

A large clove or so of garlic, chopped

1. Pull the leaves off 2 sprigs of rosemary, chop them, and combine them with the vinegar and 4 tbs of the olive oil. Put the doves in them (except the necks) and put some salt and pepper on them and mix thoroughly.
2. Put the dove necks, half onion, and celery in a small saucepan and put some water in there and begin to simmer. Make sure to regularly add water to keep just a smidgen of water in the saucepan. You may doubt whether the necks are enough to make a difference in the stock here. Based on my experience last night, you are wrong
3. When the doves have been in the marinate a while, take them and tie up bundles with the rosemary sprigs on the inside, with pancetta over them tied up with sting. Put back in the marinate and mix thoroughly.
4. The last step will use about half the pancetta. Cut the remaining pancetta into pieces that are slightly smaller than lardons.
5. Bring a saucepan of salted water to a boil, with enough room to add the peas. When the water is at a boil, add the peas
6. Heat a broiling pan in the oven with the door open. Warm plates there.
7. Put the doves on the broiler and add the remaining marinate to the stock. When the pancetta is crispy on a particular side of the doves, turn them. Keep turning them. Here, it matters what kind of doves you have—if you are cooking mourning doves, about the time the pancetta is crisp on



all sides, it will be done. With the Asian doves (which are much larger) that are in the flyway now (they are much larger), when the pancetta is brown and crisp, they'll still be pinkish inside. . Both were good with me. Make your own on doneness here but be careful about overcooking to avoid toughness.

8. Heat a small skillet and put the pancetta lardons in it and cook them until they are crisp. Reserve the lardons. Keep the remaining fat in the small skillet. Heat the rest of the olive oil in it. Cook the garlic until it is not brown in the garlic oil then add the pepper flakes. Set aside.
9. When the doves are done, reserve them in a warm place. Pour the stock/marinade over the broiling pan and then strain and reserve it off the pan in a warm place.
10. When the peas are cooked enough to be soft, strain them, and toss them with the olive oil/garlic pepper flakes and the cooked pancetta and taste for salt and pepper. Reserve in a warm place
11. Strain the stock/marinade mixture. On a serving plate, do a mound of the peas, then place the doves on top, and pour the strained stock mixture on them. Serve beside it the okra/garlic chive/butter/vinegar dish noted above.

### **Braised Doves with Dove Dirty Rice and Wild Mushrooms**

Serves 4

12 or so doves with the livers reserved when you clean them (the livers are optional but I recommend them. I used the livers from 16 doves...)

1/3 or so cups of dried Italian mushroom

2/3 cup of water

4 tbs butter

4 tbs canola oil

4 cups of homemade chicken stock (do not use canned stock on this recipe)

An herb bouquet of celery, parsley, thyme, bay leaf, half an onion, tied up with kitchen twine

4 or so cloves of fresh garlic, chopped

2/3 cup or so of chardonnay wine

1 1/4 cups of basmati or other long grain rice

1/2 cup onions

Enough green beans to serve four people (use smallish ones)

¼ cup flour

1. Bring the 2/3 cup of water to a boil and pour over the dried mushrooms
2. Chop the dove livers.
3. In a pot sufficiently large to braise the doves, put the canola oil under medium high heat. Brown the doves and remove them as they are browned.
4. Pour off the fat. 1 ½ cups of the chicken stock, wine, herb bouquet and bring to a simmer. Return the doves to the pot and cover. Check to make sure it stays at a simmer and move the doves around a bit.
5. When the mushrooms have been in the water about 15 or so minutes, strain them—reserving the liquid—and roughly chop them. Add half the mushroom liquid to the simmering doves.
6. Put 2 tbs of butter in a saucepan. Add ¼ cup of onions and half the garlic and cook until softened. Add the dove livers and cook until they are just browned. Add half the wild mushrooms and heat through. Add the rice and mix thoroughly and cook a moment.
7. Add 2 ¼ cups of the chicken stock to the rice, bring to a boil, stir with a fork and cover. Cook 16 minutes then take off heat. Check for salt and pepper and mix thoroughly with a fork.
8. Cook the green beans in salted boiling water until just done (8 minutes or so)
9. When the doves have cooked 45 minutes or so check them and see if they are tender. Reserve in a warm place. Strain the braising liquid. Return to pot and bring to a boil and simmer to reduce.
10. In a saucepan, melt 1 tbs of butter. Add 2 tbs of onion and the rest of the garlic. Cook to soften. Add the wild mushrooms. Strain the braising liquid into it. Bring to a simmer and reduce while the rest of the cooking goes on. Taste for seasoning. **On reflection I realized I should have added madeira at this stage, probably about a quarter cup.**
11. Melt a tbs of butter in a skillet. Add 1 tbs of onions and cook until softened. Toss the green beans in that till heated through.
12. Serve the doves on the rice with the sauce on top and with the green beans spread around it.