

SHOOTING THE BREEZE

Finding the right elk hunting buddies

Good friends, I must admit that I am pessimistic when it comes to Oregon public lands hunting. I will be the first to admit that I am not the best, most dedicated hunter to have roamed the wild woods of Eastern Oregon. For me it is hard to keep motivated when, during a long-awaited draw hunt, one has a better chance of seeing more hunters than animals actually being hunted.

To this end, I have decided to focus on meat and damage hunts locally to help soften the damage done by winter herds to our local ranchers and farmers. One such friend and rancher has been “unfortunate” enough to have need of a few people each year to “scatter the herd” to encourage the local elk to move away from the lower ag lands.

This past season was my first to only apply for point savers on most game species. Deer, elk and antelope preference points can be saved up to focus on applications in better-producing public land units one might wish to hunt in the future.

Therefore my family and I decided to only hunt damage tags this season for elk. Elk are not small critters, and having one dead on the ground is only the very beginning of the work that is entailed in securing the meat for the freezer.



Marc LeQuieu

Now to the point of this rambling: picking the right hunting partner. This has to be a person or people that are willing to share in all the joys and hardships hunters face out in the wild in pursuit

of game. I have, like many of you, spent most of my life hunting with family predominately, but as I age along with my traditional family hunting partners, I find that our party size is dwindling fast due to age, availability and health. Not that my abilities are remotely what they were 10 years ago, but finding people to share in the “experience” of hunting is one of the most critical choices hunters must make.

It is not easy to find a person or group of people that hunt in the same style, or same pace that you do. It may be that some hunting parties focus on traveling open forest roads looking for fresh tracks, or some people like to back country hunt where they carry every necessity with them on their backs, or even on horses and mules. No matter how you choose to spend your time in the woods, finding someone with the same or similar hunting styles can make party hunting more pleasant and



Contributed photo

Columnist Marc LeQuieu and Don Speakman pose after a successful elk hunt Nov. 29.

relaxing for everyone involved. There are few things as frustrating as trying to integrate into, or integrate someone else into, a group of people who have hunted a certain way for years, only to be saddled with a member of the party that simply has done things differently when in the woods.

I was fortunate to find men and families through working connections that started as professional

associations. These relationships morphed into friendships that eventually developed to be trusted enough to share the hunting experience over time. You see, hunting is a very personal activity, and it is emotional as well.

Hunting partners need to share the same value for the game and value for the time spent together in camps and woods living as part of the natural world. Giving new

people the opportunity to share these experiences takes a bit of faith and some trial and error, but the rewards are lifelong.

What are your experiences, trials and errors in your search for new people to share our outdoor heritage with? Write to us at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com!

Marc LeQuieu is a former wildland firefighter and African hunter turned gunsmith.

GUEST COLUMN

Dutch oven dumplings and dilemmas

I first met “Ol’ Dutch” at a cooking event in a park. “Here he is,” said the camp cook. He hefted a cast iron pot with three stubby legs and a lid with a rim. “My camp Dutch oven can fix anything you can bake in an oven.”

The cook served up samples of chicken and dumplings and a cherry pie.

“Don’t mix up a camp Dutch oven,” he added, “with a stove Dutch oven with no legs and a rounded lid. They’re suited for kitchen cooking.”

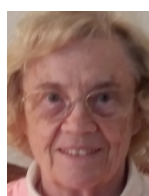
The camp Dutch oven club provided a demonstration to the public. Club members offered food tasting and invited the public to join them for their next cook-out.

I signed up and persuaded a niece to join me. The pros had pots with smooth, clean interiors they wiped out after cooking. I scavenged up a couple rusted pots. First, scrubbed with suds, rinsed and dried. I read that to obtain the non-stick properties, I needed to “season” them which consisted of oiling the Dutch ovens and heating them in a hot oven. Smoke poured from the house and drove mosquitoes from the neighborhood. Not that hot of an oven.

At the next club cooking event, my niece and I unloaded supplies from brown grocery bags, cardboard boxes and a cooler. We chose to cook stir-fried chicken with fresh vegetables spooned over Jasmine rice and topped off with a dessert concocted from a cake mix and a can of 7-UP.

Club members unloaded wooden camp boxes from trailers and pulled out more cooking accessories than I had in my kitchen. I poured briquettes into the top of my metal charcoal chimney starter, and crumbled newspaper into the bottom. The starter directions read, “Light the newspaper and zap — hot coals in about 15 minutes.”

I lit the newspaper and zap — hot coals in 15 minutes, at which time the bot-



Jean Ann Moultrie

tom of the starter dropped out and scattered hot coals over the cooking area. We bumbled through the rest of the evening and managed to produce edible, if not on time, food.

Later a son invited me to join his family for a camping trip in the mountains.

“Let’s try camp Dutch oven,” he suggested.

I brought pots and a metal cooking table. My son ventured into berry pie, and I stirred up a stew. In my quest for cast iron, I’d unearthed a cast iron waffle maker. Trying out the gadget, I turned out nicely toasted waffles. My son aimed his camera to capture my culinary triumph.

I tilted the plate forward for a better view, which resulted in the waffles sliding off into the forest floor duff. The increased activity of ants indicated they’d given me a 10 for presentation.

Months later my son called and invited me to fly out to his home for a visit.

“Mom,” my son said, “I entered us in a camp Dutch oven cook-off contest.”

“YOU MUST BE OUT OF YOUR MIND!” I calmly said. “I’ve used camp Dutch ovens twice, and you’ve baked with them once. Besides, I can’t

fly with cast iron pots and a cooking table that weigh as much as much as a small Volkswagen.”

“I’ll get the supplies,” he said.

When I arrived at my son’s home, he tipped up a flat sheet of metal the size used in road construction for vehicles to navigate over holes.

“Don’t look,” he said.

I thought he meant at the futility of the project. He meant don’t look at the arc welder flame as he welded pipe legs to the metal to construct a table strong enough to hold the cast iron pots.

We practiced fixing our dishes that afternoon. I worked on a pork loin fileted out to a flat slab, then stuffed with butter-browned apple slices and chopped and toasted hazelnuts. I rolled up the pork, tied and browned it and baked it in the camp Dutch oven. My son perfected a blueberry cobbler. Admittedly, we didn’t finish until well after dark, the area illuminated by the light of floodlights my son rigged up. Afterwards, my son soaked the smoldering briquettes so no spark could ignite the deck.

The next day at the competition sign-in, the coordinator announced eight teams would compete. The other

contestants donned their matching aprons and oven mitts and hung vinyl team signs and banners.

My son pulled out our matching outfits we’d gotten “on sale.” The aprons sported chrome-yellow, suede leather — welders’ aprons enhanced with red leather welders’ gloves. I pulled mine on and felt like a farrier on his way to shoe a horse.

A team next to us went to work on paella with enough seafood that would sink our budget. Another team backed up a trailer to their site and set up a four-sided kitchen complete with sink! The husband mentioned they catered reunions and wedding receptions as he unwrapped a trophy-sized salmon.

My son and I unloaded supplies from brown grocery sacks, cardboard boxes and a cooler. I spread our 99-cent, red-and-white plastic tablecloth across a picnic table and unpacked my journal notebook and pen I carry for entries written “on site.” My son hung our butcher paper team sign decorated with crayon flowers courtesy of grandchildren.

We muscled the metal table into place and tried to start the briquettes. I burned all the newspaper and still couldn’t get the briquettes

to glow. Perhaps the bag got damp from the previous night’s fire prevention. We turned to burning strips of brown paper bags and chunks of cardboard and still fell short.

“What’s Grandma doing?” a granddaughter asked.

“She’s ripping pages out of her journal to keep the flame going.”

Judges armed with clipboards and meat thermometers in pocket protectors circled our cook site like wolves circling a wagon train. Lacking an official “lid lifter,” I hefted a hot lid with the claw end of a claw foot hammer.

The announcer notified teams that, at the end of the cooking time, contestants were to bring their entries to the judging table in scheduled five minute increments. A five minute window? I’m pleased to have food finished the same day I start.

Thanks to my journal, we ignited briquettes and I cranked up the heat on my stuffed pork roast high enough we could weld should the need arrive.

With seconds to spare, we turned in apple and hazelnut crusted pork roast reclining on a bed of kale and a bubbling blueberry cobbler.

While we waited for the judging, a crowd gathered.

Our family goal — not come in last place.

We didn’t place last! Then, seventh place announced — and it wasn’t us. Then the hope — we might win! Top prizes consisted of camping equipment and gift certificates.

“Placing number six,” said the announcer, “the Moultrie team.”

That’s what happens. We fervently wished not to be last, we become greedy and then experienced the crush of disappointment at sixth place. We claimed our prize — water bottles with gas station logos.

Ultimately, we were beaten out by seafood paella with the grand prize going to cedar-planked smoked salmon garnished with asparagus tips, and a mile-high chocolate cake.

My son and I resolved never to enter another cooking competition. We kept the resolve.

The rest of the family clamored for a camp Dutch oven dish at a family reunion.

“This potato soup is delicious!” a daughter said at the end of the reunion meal.

I whispered to my son, “Let’s not tell them we intended to cook scalloped potatoes.”

The author is a freelance writer in Grant County.

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The surviving Resistance faces the First Order once more in the final chapter of the Skywalker saga.
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MON-THURS (3:30) 6:30 9:30
*No Late Show on Christmas Eve

JUMANJI: THE NEXT LEVEL (PG-13)
Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, Kevin Hart. The gang is back, but the game has changed.
FRI - SUN (1:00) (4:00) 7:00 9:40
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