

Hare

By Errol Corry

The first successful colony of hares to establish in Australia was on the shores of Westernport Bay in 1862. The following year another hare colony was established on Phillip Island by the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria for the use in the sport 'coursing'. Hares released on the mainland thrived with limited hunting pressure.

European hares were relatively abundant and widespread throughout much of south-east Australia by 1870. Spreading at an approximate rate of 60 kilometres per year, hares crossed the Murray River in 1875, where they made their way along the western slopes and tablelands of New South Wales. By 1900, hares had reached the Queensland border and become a major agricultural problem in northern and western Victoria.



The European hare belongs to the family *Leporidae*, along with the rabbit.

The male European hare is called a 'Jack' while the female is called a 'Jill'. Offspring under one year are referred to as 'leverets'.

Male hares are generally smaller than females. Leverets are born with hair and their eyes open and can move about soon after birth. Like rabbits, juvenile hares have a white star on their forehead.

Unlike rabbits, hares do not shelter in warrens or burrows. Instead they rest in a shallow depression in the ground called a 'form'. A hare's form is usually found amongst long grass, rocks, logs or branches, oval in shape and around 400mm × 200mm in dimension. Leverets are born into a type of nest created within a form. Unlike rabbits hares are born above ground.

Hares have similar physiology to rabbits but are much bigger. Hares have larger ears, often with black tips which play a large part in controlling their body temperature. In hot weather, the ears are held away from their bodies and appear flushed, while in

cooler weather, the exposed areas of the ears are held close to the body to prevent heat loss.

Like the rabbit, the hare's hind limbs are longer than its front limbs. The fur of the European hare has a flecked appearance, made up of tan, black and white hairs, ruddy brown or grey above and white below. This allows the hare to blend in well with dry grass.

Rabbits have a similar appearance to hares. Hares are larger than rabbits and have longer ears and longer legs. Generally, hares and rabbits can be distinguished from each other by the way they run. Hares run with their tails down, and the tail appears black, while rabbits run with their tail up and their tail appears white.



Hares and Rabbits

Many hunters will hunt Hares in a similar way they hunt Rabbits with suitable calibres ranging from .22 to lighter load shotguns & heavier calibre centrefire rifles for longer distance shots. The Hare will also provide an excellent animal to eat & like the rabbit and other introduced animals have fed many Australian families over the last 150 years.

Hares are found on most of our Club properties, check with the landowners though before shooting them though most are fine with it.

Hare Stew – SBS

Ingredients

- 2 whole hares
 - 8 carrots
 - 1 leek, trimmed
 - 5 French shallots, peeled
 - 1 purple garlic bulb, cloves peeled
 - 10 kipfler potatoes
 - 50 g (1/3 cup) plain flour
 - 80 ml (1/3 cup) olive oil
 - sea salt flakes
 - freshly ground black pepper
 - 3 rosemary sprigs
 - 3 thyme sprigs
 - 3 bay leaves
 - 1 litre (4 cups) fresh pinot grape juice (see Note)
 - pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
 - 300g peeled chestnuts (see Note)
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Cook's notes

Oven temperatures are for conventional; if using fan-forced (convection), reduce the temperature by 20°C. | We use Australian tablespoons and cups: 1 teaspoon equals 5 ml; 1 tablespoon equals 20 ml; 1 cup equals 250 ml. | All herbs are fresh (unless specified) and cups are lightly packed. | All vegetables are medium size and peeled, unless specified. | All eggs are 55-60 g, unless specified.

Instructions

Prepare the hares by cutting into a sauté cut (the front and back legs, followed by the loin cut across the backbone into 3–4 pieces). You can ask your butcher to do this for you.

Wash the vegetables, then chop the carrots in half and slice the leek into 6 pieces. Leave the shallots, garlic and potatoes whole.

Heat the olive oil in a large braising pot that is big enough to fit both hares and vegetables. Dust the hare pieces in flour. Heat the oil in a frying pan over high heat and cook the hare, seasoning with salt and pepper, until browned and sealed on the outside. Remove the hare once browned and put to the side on a deep dish or bowl to catch the juices that are released while it is resting.

Now, add the carrot, leek, shallot and garlic to the braising pot over medium heat and cook for about 10 minutes. Return the hare and juices to the pot on top of the vegetables, then add the potatoes, rosemary, thyme and bay leaves. Pour over the pinot grape juice and add the grated nutmeg. Bring to the boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to a rolling simmer. Cover with a lid.

Check the hare every hour to make sure it is not catching on the base and that is a rolling simmer, not boiling.

The hare should be ready in 3–5 hours, depending on the age and sex of the hare. Add the chestnuts about 30 minutes before ready to serve.

To eat, simply serve out of the pot with chunks of good crusty bread.

Note

- If you cannot get fresh pinot juice then use a 50/50 ratio of red wine to chicken stock or water.
- To peel chestnuts, score 400 g whole chestnuts top and base with a knife. Roast at 180°C for 10–15 minutes, or until the skin splits. Cool slightly then peel off the outer and inner

References for this article

Agriculture Victoria

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