

JIM CASADA OUTDOORS

May 2015 Newsletter

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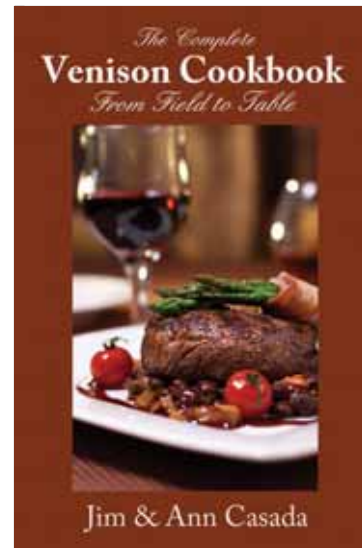
May's Magic

Thanks to a variety of circumstances—some concerns on the home front, a big backlog of work, responsibilities I didn't have until quite recently, and the fact I don't seem to be able to get as much done as once was the case—this month's newsletter is woefully late. I can't promise much except that I'll try to do better in the future. With that out of the way, I thought it would be appropriate to list some of the almost endless reasons I have always found May so magical. Along with October, it's my favorite month of the year. Here, in no particular order of importance, is a sampling of some of those delights.

- Ripe strawberries. As a boy growing up in the Smokies I had access to an abundance of wild strawberries. They were tedious to pick, equally demanding when it came to working them up, fragile, and did not keep well. However, the taste of wild strawberries more than made up for all those shortcomings. When Izaak Walton wrote of strawberries, hundreds of years ago, that "Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless he never did," he surely had wild ones in mind. Over shortcake, sliced atop a bowl of vanilla ice cream, made into a trifle (see recipe below), in home-churned strawberry ice cream, used for preserves or jelly, topping for cereal, or just eaten by themselves, they are a joy beyond compare.
- Barefooting it. My days of wandering around outside unshod are long behind me, but I still look back with good vibes on the boyhood days

This Month's Special

Since all of the recipes but the first one for this month feature venison, and since all come from *The Complete Venison Cookbook*, I decided to make it this month's special.



Copies of the 200-page cookbook, with some 200+ recipes and detailed information connected with handling, storing, and cooking venison, are \$12 postpaid.

The recipes are, for the most part, practical and down to earth—simple fare and simple cooking, and for what it's worth we kitchen tested every single recipe before they went into the cookbook.

The book has done extremely well since it was originally published in 1996, and I think you'll find recipes for every occasion, every season, and every cut of deer.

when it got warm enough to go barefooted, the incomparable feel of newly plowed ground beneath your feet, and stomping around in mud just because you could. By the end of May my feet would be rounding into summertime levels of fitness, which is to say they were tough, covered with a good layer of callus, and suitable for walking most anywhere except on asphalt in the middle of the day or underneath a honey locust tree.

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- Fishing for trout. It's likely, given current circumstances, that my days of wading streams and savoring the solitude of wild country are pretty well at an end. Still, I've been extremely fortunate to cast to trout in the Smokies for more than six decades and the latter half of that period saw me on distant waters around the world.
- Enjoying the garden's early produce. Although we've been dry as a cow chip (exactly .2 inches of rain in the first 25 days of May), I've still been enjoying some spring vegetables—lettuce, broccoli, squash, and I'll dig new potatoes any day now. I picked the first blueberries earlier this week and the main crop will start "coming in" sometime early in June.
- BBQ. This past Saturday, as he does about every Memorial Day weekend, a good friend, hunting buddy, and exceptionally talented callmaker, Darrin Dawkins, hosted a BBQ. He has flat out got it mastered when it comes to preparing Boston butts and beef brisket, and he knows how to make my kind of baked beans as well. Suffice it say I ate too much and enjoyed some grand company of fellow hunters.
- Watermelon. In my boyhood you never, ever saw watermelons on store shelves before June, but that has changed dramatically. We've already been enjoying this treat that means so much to me both because I love it and a "watermillon," as Grandpa Joe called it, always brings back warm memories of my wonderful mentor. In my mind's eye I can still see him, humped over with a tow sack across his shoulder, walking up the path from town carrying a big old melon. A few hours later, after soaking it in ice water in an old wash tub, we would end a session of hoeing corn or yard work by cutting into the melon. I'll always be a kid with it comes to watermelons, even if many of today's offerings don't have seeds for spitting.
- Simple food treats. The end of spring and the onset of summer, never mind what the calendar tells us, have always come at the beginning of June for me. In days gone by, and to a lesser degree today, that meant eating cold meals at supper. In the summer months we always had our big meal of the day at dinner (and for the uninitiated that's the midday meal), and whether Mom or Grandma prepared it, there would be plenty of provender hot from the stove and oven. Supper, on the other hand, meant cold things like cornbread crumbled in milk, sandwiches made from leftovers (a personal favorite was a biscuit with a big chunk of fried streaked meat in the middle), maybe some fruit, and pickles.
- Boyhood games. Rolly-bat, marbles, slingshot competitions, bike riding, rock skipping at the river, building forts, swinging on big grape vines, "riding" slender pines or poplars, and other carefree activities filled hours without number in my youth.
- Swimming. I'm not sure I ever swam in a man-made pool until I was grown, and certainly I was able to swim long before I ever paddled in anything other than a creek or river. Youngsters always rushed the season and the first dip in icy cold Deep Creek would leave your lips blue and your body covered with goose bumps in no time at all.
- Float tubing. An adjunct to swimming was floating down the creek on an inner tube, back when all tires came with them and when they were made of real rubber. This was usually done after a big rain when the creek was high and the ride was an exciting one. Today "tubing" is big business where I grew up, and I'd

as soon walk around Times Square in New York City as to mingle with the hordes covering a creek in the Smokies from bank to bank.

- Just being a boy. More than anything else, I look back with longing on the days, especially those immediately after another session of school had come to an end, when I got up in the morning without anything specific in mind yet knowing the day would be filled with fun (and work—from the age of 7 or 8 I had designated chores). No planning was necessary. With other boys I might decide to go seining for minnows, spend a few hours catching salamanders to sell as fish bait, laze along the riverbank waiting for a bobber to bounce, pick wild strawberries, take a hike with my slingshot or BB gun in hand in search of adventure, admire wildflowers growing close to home, or spend the day with my grandparents. Simple things brought sublime pleasure, and looking back I realize that I was truly blessed in enjoying a Smoky Mountain boyhood.

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Jim's Doings

April wasn't exactly the finest one I've ever experienced. Although it's exceptionally dry here now, a total of almost six inches of rain in April delayed a lot of garden chores and I'm still running behind and things like tomatoes, although now thriving, are late. The turkey season was pretty much a bummer too, with gobbling as sparse as I've ever witnessed here in South Carolina. I only hunted my home ground and Tennessee, and the latter experience was a high point to my turkey doings. Hunting with a couple of buddies, Larry Proffitt and Fred Markland, I did get to hear a passel of gobbling and reached a major milestone in my turkey hunting career—killing my 300th bird. I've kept records since the first one, oh so many years ago, doing so by retrieving the spent shotgun hull and writing up a little story describing the hunt. I stick the tiny scroll of paper, along with the bird's beard, in the hull.

Other recent activities included a delightful talk and book signing in Camden, S.C., where I shared some of my thoughts on Archibald Rutledge and even was privileged to share a table with his great grandson.

I also was part of a panel talking about Rutledge at the annual South Carolina Book Festival in Columbia in connection with the release of *The Doom of Ravenswood*. This is the second in a series of five rare Rutledge tales being reprinted. All feature an Introduction by yours truly, fine artwork by noted artist Stephen Chesley, and an afterword by a noted writer (in this case Charles Waring, III, the editor of the *Charleston Mercury*).

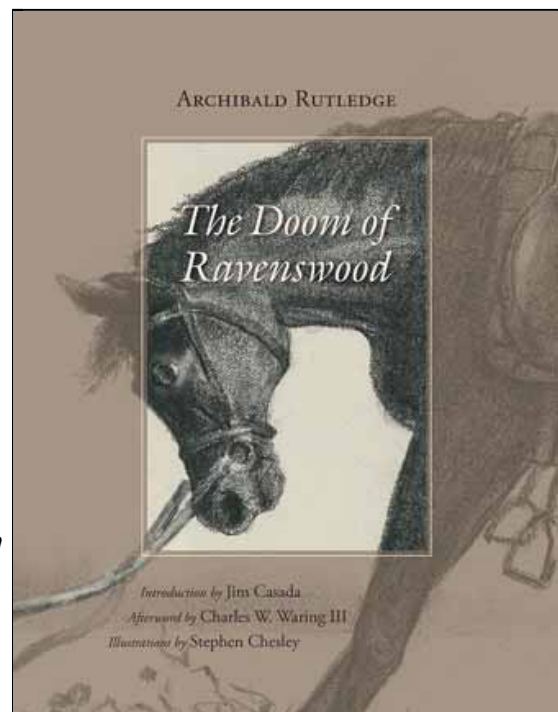
I have copies of both *The Doom of Ravenswood* and its predecessor volume, *Claws*, available for \$24.95 + \$5 shipping. A number of you acquired *Claws* when it first appeared and likely will want to do the same with *The Doom of Ravenswood*.

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The Doom of Ravenswood

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Claws



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RECIPES

STRAWBERRY TRIFLE

Bake your favorite pound cake (or buy a yellow pound cake or cream cake at the store). Break and crumble a portion of the cake in a trifle bowl or any large bowl (clear glass is ideal, because it shows the end result to good advantage). Atop that add a layer of Kool-Whip or, if you are really energetic, homemade whipped cream. Next add a layer of sliced strawberries (including the juice). Finally, add a layer of vanilla pudding. Repeat the layers in this order until you fill the container. Conclude with whipped cream, adorned with whole strawberries, on top. The dish is best after it sits in the refrigerator for a day or two so the layers can mix, mingle, and marry into sheer culinary delight. I first had trifle (and you can make a similar one with most kinds of berries) in Scotland and a small bed-and-breakfast run by two elderly spinsters. I won't go into any detail except to say that the sisters were amazed at my appetite in general and my love for the trifle in particular.

CHEESEBURGER PIE

1 pound ground venison
 ½ cup evaporate milk
 ½ cup ketchup
 1/3 cup dry bread crumbs
 ¼ cup chopped onion
 ½ teaspoon dried oregano or two teaspoons fresh oregano
 Salt and pepper to taste
 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
 1 8-inch prepared pie shell

Combine venison, milk, ketchup, bread crumbs, onion, and oregano. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Prepare pastry to line an 8-inch pie plate (use use a prepared shell). Fill with venison mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Toss cheese with Worcestershire sauce; sprinkle atop pie. Bake 10 minutes more. Let stand 10 minutes before slicing and serving.

VENISON TACO SALAD

Make venison chili using your favorite chili recipe (there are several in *The Complete Venison Cookbook*), making sure you don't simmer to the point it is too thick.

Other Ingredients

Tortilla chips or corn chips
 Chopped or shredded lettuce
 Grated cheese
 Chopped tomato
 Salsa
 Sour cream
 Fresh chives, chopped
 Additional toppings of choice

Place chips on a plate and let each individual cover them with chili, cheese, and the various toppings. Simple and scrumptious, and heating up frozen chili lets you prepare this summer treat in short order.

QUESIDILLAS

½ pound ground venison
 ¼ cup chopped onion
 ¼ cup salsa

Brown ground venison and onion; add salsa and set aside.

1 cup shredded Monterey jack cheese
½ cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
4 flour tortillas (8-inch size)
Additional salsa

Spray tortilla with vegetable cooking spray and place on a cookie sheet. Sprinkle half of cheese on tortilla and arrange venison over cheese. Top with salsa. Cover with another tortilla and lightly spray top with vegetable spray. Repeat for second tortilla on a separate sheet. Bake at 400 degrees about 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Serve with additional salsa and sour cream.

CHEESEBURGER VENISON PIZZA

¼ to ½ pound ground venison
¼ cup chopped onion
3 slices bacon
1 pizza kit
8 ounces mozzarella cheese (in addition to cheese in kit)

Brown venison and onion in a frying pan. Cook bacon in microwave on paper towels. Place sauce on crust. Top with kit cheese. Spread venison on top and crumble bacon and spread it on top as well. Top with additional 8-ounce package of mozzarella cheese. Bake at 425 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes or until crisp and cheese is melted and golden. Slice and serve.

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