



Photos by - Neil McIntyre and Glyn Satterley



# Know your Venison



*This leaflet is produced by the Scottish Venison Partnership and Nichola Fletcher, author of Ultimate Venison Cookery, in conjunction with the Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association with support from Scottish Natural Heritage.*

*More information [www.scottish-venison.info](http://www.scottish-venison.info) or [www.nicholafletcher.com](http://www.nicholafletcher.com)*

**Venison** – the prestigious meat from our iconic Scottish deer. With its healthy image and fantastic flavour it has everything going for it. Not surprisingly, venison has been experiencing a surge in demand.

[www.scottish-venison.info](http://www.scottish-venison.info)





## Essential facts about venison for butchers and their customers.

The four deer species found in Scotland are:

### Red deer (males: stags females: hinds)

Red deer are native to Britain and our largest land-mammal. Many country and forest estates gain substantial revenue from recreational stalking and/or venison production. They are also found in many deer parks. Most of the farmed deer in Scotland are red deer. Red deer that live out on the open hill are often smaller than those in forests or on farms.

**Dressed carcase weights:** stags about 50-55kg but can go up to 100kg; hinds about 30-35kg up to 60kg.

### Sika Deer (males: stags females: hinds)

Sika deer are non-native, and were first introduced into Britain in the 1860s. They are smaller than red deer and their antlers are less impressive. Their numbers are increasing and they interbreed with native red deer.

**Dressed carcase weights:** stags about 25-30kg but can go up to 70kg; hinds about 20kg up to 30kg.

### Fallow Deer (males: bucks, females: does)

Fallow deer are not native but have been in Britain since Norman times. They are one of the most important ornamental park species in the UK and there are also some herds living in the wild.

**Dressed carcase weights:** bucks about 30-40kg but can go up to 80kg; does about 20-25kg up to 30kg.

### Roe Deer (males: bucks, females: does)

This small deer species is widespread and native to Britain. Roe frequent low ground woodland, farm and scrub land and their population is growing rapidly. They are unsuitable for farming. Only about a quarter of the size of a red deer, roe venison has historically been exported or sold to restaurants. Rather like a slender lamb carcase, there is good potential for retail sales as well.

**Dressed carcase weights:** bucks about 10-15kg but can go up to 18kg; does 8-12kg up to 14kg.

## Close seasons and availability

All deer need to be managed to maintain a healthy population, in balance with their habitat and the land use of the area that they live. Wild and park deer are governed by open and close seasons which are different for each species and each sex. However,

because of these differences, and also because deer that damage crops and forestry can legally be shot out of season, it is usually possible to buy some kind of wild venison throughout the year. Farmed deer are exempt from all close seasons so farmed venison is available all year round. Some venison dealers also handle imported venison.

## Sourcing and selling venison legally

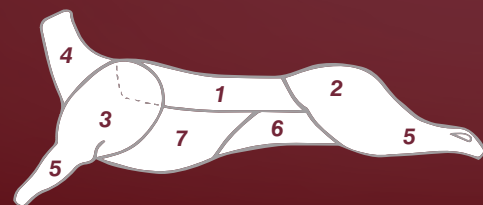
In order to sell venison (wild or farmed) you must generally be registered as a venison dealer. The licence for which, is obtained from your local authority's Department of Environmental Health. You can sell venison, if it has first been procured from a licenced venison dealer.

Butchers should source wild venison from a licenced Venison Dealer - preferably one accredited by Scottish Quality Wild Venison - and from an Approved Game Handling Establishment (AGHE). This will ensure the highest standards of handling and hygiene. Venison can also be bought direct from estates or deer management groups, where the supply should be undertaken by trained staff and is subject to various exemptions under the Hygiene Regulations.

There are two types of legislation to comply with; the Deer (Scotland) Act and the Meat Hygiene Regulations. One is concerned with the sale of venison and the other, more familiar to the butchery trade, regulates the conditions under which the meat is cut and processed for the consumer. Farmed venison may be purchased direct from farms if they slaughter their own deer, or from marketing groups. Farmed venison comes under the red meat regulations.

For a butcher to procure through the wholesale market the meat must come from an Approved Game Handling Establishment and must have the FSA plant number.

## Main cuts of venison on a deer carcase



**1. Saddle (back) – breaks into rack, loin, fillet** Traditionally, caterers buy whole saddles cut between the 11th and 12th rib. Increasingly they buy boned out loins and/or fillets. To avoid confusion between

these terms, it is more helpful to refer to loins as loin or loin fillet and to the true fillet as filet mignon, undercut or tenderloin. A carvery saddle is cut between the 6th & 7th ribs.

**2. Haunch (back leg).** Can be cut into bone-in joints if young or from roe deer haunches, or boned and rolled, or sliced into steaks. Older venison is best seam butchered to remove sinew which can be tougher than on domestic meat. This produces pavé cuts which are becoming increasingly popular.

**3. Shoulder.** The shoulder is most commonly diced for stews or casseroles. It can also be sold boned and rolled (and stuffed for added value) for braising. Shoulder joints from young deer are also suited to roasting. Old venison shoulder is often minced for processing. Occasionally wild deer have shot damage in the shoulder so look out for bruising or bone shards.

**4. Neck.** Good for mince or making venison stock. From young deer, diced neck makes a good stew.

**5. Shank.** Can be minced for processing or diced for a slow-cook stew. Can also be cut into neat shanks or sliced into osso buco.

**6. Flank.** From young deer, flank can be stuffed and rolled. From older deer in the autumn it can be over-fat and is either discarded or used for processing.

**7. Rib/Breast/Brisket.** Processing mince, rolled stewing joint.

A full guide to cutting, jointing and boning for butchers can be downloaded from [www.scottish-venison.info](http://www.scottish-venison.info)

## Healthy eating

Venison is one of the most nutritious of all red meats. Young deer have less than 2 per cent fat (less than skinless chicken), so venison is an excellent source of healthy protein. Some older deer can carry fat in the autumn but this is easily trimmed off and there is little or no marbling.

It's also a really good source of iron delivering more than any other domestic meat, and much more than vegetables, and is high in Vitamins B6, B12, potassium, phosphorus, riboflavin, niacin - and is a source of zinc.

As important as being lower in fat and saturated fat than domestic red meats, venison is higher in polyunsaturated fats, with a highly favourable saturated to polyunsaturated (P:S) ratio and omega n-3 to omega n-6 ratios. This is largely because

deer feed on grass and vegetation rather than high-energy cereals.

It may also be because they have not been artificially bred for centuries to produce fat; indeed venison is the meat our ancestors ate for millennia, it is really the meat that humans have evolved to eat.

## Some simple tips on cooking venison for your customers:

**Venison steaks** are most tender and juicy when they are cooked rare or medium rare. Easiest way to do this is to brown them, undercook them, then leave them to rest for a few minutes. Delicious! When cooked to well-done they need a good sauce as they can be dry. Steaks can also be cooked in the oven.



**Venison roasts.** Like steaks, best cooked pink or rare. Easiest way to do this is to brown them, undercook them, then leave them to rest. Using a meat thermometer, rare is 60 C and medium is 65 C. For well-done, braise or pot roast as below.

**Pot-roasts & braising.** Braised joints are most succulent when your butcher has larded or stuffed them. Cook gently in a liquid such as stout, wine, or fruit juice for a ready-made gravy.

**Stews and casseroles.** Use beef cooking times for most venison; a bit longer for older. Tart-sweet flavours go well, try orange juice, redcurrant or rowan jelly, prunes, apricots. Fennel, celery and wholegrain mustard are also good.

**Venison mince** takes quite a long time to brown and needs cooking in a little fat or oil as it is so lean. Keep breaking it up if it forms lumps. Then add the liquid. It's well worth the extra time needed to brown it as the flavour is truly fantastic.

**Venison burgers and sausages.** Great for the barbecue or for cold winter nights. Make your own from mince (try fresh grated ginger and garlic), or try your butcher's specialities.