

The sweet new meat

By DEBORAH QUAILE

They're tall and graceful, and they're taking over many of the farm fields north of Halton where we used to run beef cattle.

Elk are the second largest species of deer in the world. For centuries, native North American cultures have assigned mythical qualities to the elk and its meat, revering it in spiritual beliefs. As well, Asian and Eastern Russian cultures from time immemorial held elk as one of the most sought after meats.

Neil Vandendool farms elk on 4th Line just north of Rockwood and is very enthusiastic about his unique farm.

"I've been raising elk for about seven years: it's my first foray into farming. I enjoy it a lot because elk are a beautiful, majestic animal."

Although elven - as elk meat is called - is a form of venison, it's not the same as red deer venison served in restaurants. The flavour is much deeper and subtly sweeter, with a delicious tenderness that is distinctly above the "gaminess" often found in wild or farmed deer. Elven is also lower in fat, calories and cholesterol than chicken, making it a perfect dietary source of protein for health-conscious individuals. Neil has about 70 head that are naturally pasture raised with almost no use of antibiotics or growth hormones.

"In many beef operations, antibiotics are used constantly and the animals are crowded into a small space. Elk live in a cleaner, natural environment and you don't have the disease levels as you do in crowded beef, pig, or poultry farms.

"Elk are also raised for their growing antlers," Neil notes. "One of the primary parts of elk ranching is the harvest of the growing antlers. The growing antler is cut off - it's a regrowth tissue. Antlers taken as a dietary supplement (available in North America in pill form) contain compounds that are good for the joints and cartilage, and are also good for supporting the body's cardiovascular system.

And now, to prepare dinner...

Elven is a very lean product, and care must be taken not to dry the meat with overcooking. For example,

elven absorbs heat much more readily than beef due to its denser consistency. Neil recommends that grilled products not be served well done. As flavours are readily absorbed, the meat is ideally suited to fruit and wine flavourings. Cubed meat should be marinated, and then cooked very slowly for approximately five hours to maximize tenderness. This form of elven is ideal for use in stews, goulashes and a wealth of other recipes as a replacement for beef.

Elven fits nicely into the lighter culinary style of today. As a naturally lean meat, it's ideally suited for cooking quickly over the high heat of a barbecue, grill, or oven. It can also be stir fried. Overcooking leads to a dry and tough product. Tests have shown that the most suitable endpoint cooking temperature for optimal tenderness is 67°C (152°F). Since the meat is low in fat, elven reaches the desired doneness more quickly than other meats, so monitor steaks closely during grilling - a meat thermometer is recommended when cooking roasts to avoid overcooking.

Neil's elven is available locally at Cristello's Village Market in Campbellville and is a popular special at the Harrop Restaurant in Milton. It was served to rave reviews at the Harrop Restaurant as Milton Hospital's fundraiser last fall.

Cristello's carries a selection of meats from cubed elven, to smoked sausage, to precooked cranberry smoked roasts - only reheating is required before they're ready to eat. The roast is also reported to be an excellent sliced deli meat.



TALK of the TOWN

A monthly feature from the Town of Milton

Watch for Parks & Trails Development in 2003

Expect to see changes happen to some of our parks and trails along with the development of new multi-purpose trails in our community. This work is proceeding at this time due to \$2,000,000 in funding support approved (over 3 years) from the "SuperBuild" program. The SuperBuild program is a funding partnership of the Federal and Provincial governments, requiring municipal and community funding support, that contributes to the development of community infrastructure. The Town was able to put forward an application showing community partnership with financial contributions and/or services in kind from a number of local businesses and service clubs. The SuperBuild projects include:

- Re-development of Rotary Park Outdoor Pool and a new park building
- Final design and development of Lions Sport Park including the Skate park
- Re-development of Drumquin Park
- Walkway lighting improvements to some existing trails
- Implementation of the Trails Master Plan. New trails will be developed to connect our existing and new urban areas including trails through woodlots, along tributaries, and existing utility easements.
- Design and re-development upgrades to Melanie, Fay, and Thompson Parks

Mohawk Slot Proceeds Support Our Community



The current policy of Milton Council of allocating the slot revenue places a major emphasis on funding infrastructure in lieu of other sources of funding. Without this new source of funding, capital projects would have to be delayed, reduced in scope or funded from debt which would impact on property taxes in future years.

Town Council has a high interest in supporting the community in other ways as well, and has allocated \$500,000 annually to the Milton Community Fund and \$225,000 annually for additional policing services in the Campbellville area.

If this source of funding were to be reduced or eliminated, then it would create a need to restructure the timing, scope and financing of infrastructure, and rethink support for the community fund and extra policing services.

The Town of Milton receives this funding as a result of an agreement with the Ontario Lottery & Gaming Corporation. The amount received each year is calculated based on a percentage of total revenue at the Mohawk Slot location. To date, the municipality has received the following amounts:

1999	2000	2001	2002
\$2,536,462	\$6,373,745	\$5,602,366	\$6,193,295

Because it is not a consistent amount, Milton Council reviews the total revenue proceeds annually to determine the allocation for each new year.

To date,

- 88% has been designated to support projects in the community - road improvements, new equipment for fire services, park and building enhancements, new equipment needed to support the upkeep of our roads and parks.
- 8% has been allocated to the Milton Community Fund, which provides support to community organizations, and individuals whose primary purpose is to provide activities that enhance the quality of life within our community, or enhance the image of the Town.
- 4% has been allocated to Halton Regional Police to support increased police services in our community.

In 2003, Council approved continued support for the Milton Community Fund and over 4.5 million dollars to support projects to be undertaken by the municipality.

Some examples are:

- New and upgraded fire protection equipment
- Intersection improvements at Main Street and Wilson Drive
- Road improvements on Derry Road, 6th Line, and Puslinch Town Line
- Sidewalk and bridge repairs
- Road improvements to Lydia, Sarah, Garnet, Sydney, Elm, George, Court and Broadway streets
- Technology Services
- Melanie, Fay, and Thompson Park improvements
- Walkway and lighting improvements

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