

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

Riley Brook I

Nighttime you can still see the stars at Riley Brook, New Brunswick. Even pick out the satellites as they speed through the heavens. May be a street light somewhere but I never discovered it and back porch lights hardly made a difference in the dark. Clean, sort of like stepping back into an early “Life” magazine article, a town unscathed by time. Riley Brook is an outpost community with population unlisted in the atlas. Nearest town of any consequence is Plaster Rock, (population 1,220) some thirty miles south. A collection of log cabins with chimney smoke destined for the stars interbred with small houses banked for coming winter. Woodsheds full and more wood stacked neatly nearby anticipating the shoveled paths through drifts in the imminent winter. Surrounding hills filled with color weeks ahead of our home in Maine. Storybook setting.

We were gathering there, old friends, for St. Partridge Day. Sacred first day of bird season, October 1. Start of the hunt when mighty fearless hunters mount multi-thousand-dollar vehicles to pursue dumb defenseless grouse over hundreds of miles of woods roads. Only the second year husbands and boyfriends had been invited to this all female event. Begun some 27 years ago by friends and avid bird hunters “Susie” Toner, protector of the Rideout family farm and “Toodie” Mulhern. St. Partridge Day had grown to include several women friends and as albums and journals manifest the contest became hot for each days “top gun” and overall bird kill. Spotting skills were honed as the ladies jockeyed for spots in vehicles and favorite roads.

This year AJ and I felt quite honored to be included and we’d been in high anticipation for the week leading up. Lists were drawn, scribbled on, updated, rejected, and begun again. Seventy degrees weather in September fogs the brain. Hard to focus on cold clothes and real socks again. And so we assembled there, pickups and SUVs overflowing with “our share of food,” totes of “well, we might just need it” for the week. The ante room cum pantry soon filled to overflowing. Loaves of bread filled one entire shelf. Counted a good dozen bags of tortilla chips. Three refrigerators and one freezer were soon filled. A large table was quickly commandeered in one of the two living rooms to serve the assembled collection of libations.

AJ and I were in charge of dinner the first night—Maine lobster, naturally enough—so with rooms delegated and cookers set up and bloodies in hand, we set off in convoy to explore the area. Up along the famed Tobique River, in and out of a few woods roads and over the only side town road to Tobique Valley Outfitters and sporting camp to meet Dave McLure and Belinda Wilson. This young couple had just recently taken over the operation. Located on the Tobique River, they offer a smorgasbord of outdoor sports from bear and deer

hunting, rabbit, coyote, to multi-species fishing. Camp is new with a beautiful dining area overlooking the river. For newcomers, however, Dave and Belinda host a unique daily event.

Around 5:30 in the afternoon the Rebar “Bell” is rung and within 15 to 20 minutes deer (mostly does) can be seen working their way through the woods toward the barn. Apples and forage are slowly dispensed as the standoffish bucks begin to filter through. Dave, talking softly holds out apples to be taken from his hand. One large buck steps up while Dave picks up a horse brush and begins to brush this statuesque animal’s coat. As we came to realize, deer are a big event in Riley Brook. Everyone feeds them like pets. See them around many of houses in towns. Best speed limiter for traffic there is.

With a tour of the camp complete and a stop for ice and hunting licenses at the only store, only retail place in town, we headed back to the farm to get ready for dinner and the evening’s coming entertainment.

To be continued....

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This is a recipe from *Gourmet*, Jan. 2004, which the grandbabies helped me prepare. We substituted Ritz crackers for the bread crumbs. AJ and I thought it was great—grandbabies weren’t so sure.

Low Fat Turkey Meatloaf

Serves 6

1 1/2 cups finely chopped onion	1/3 cup finely chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon minced garlic	1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon ketchup
1 teaspoon olive oil	1 cup fine fresh bread crumbs (from 2 slices firm white sandwich bread)
1 medium carrot, cut into 1/8 inch dice	1/3 cup 1% milk
3/4 lb. cremini mushrooms, trimmed and very finely chopped in a food processor	1 whole large egg, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon salt	1 large egg white, lightly beaten
1/2 teaspoon black pepper	1 1/4 lb. ground turkey (mix of dark and light meat)
1 1/2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce	

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cook onion and garlic in oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over moderate heat, stirring, until onion is softened, about 2 minutes. Add carrot and cook, stirring until softened, about 3 minutes. Add mushrooms, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid mushrooms give off is evaporated and they are very tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Stir in Worcestershire sauce, parsley, and 3 tablespoons ketchup, then transfer vegetables to a large bowl and cool. Stir together bread crumbs and milk in a small bowl and let stand 5 minutes. Stir in egg and egg white, then add to vegetables. Add turkey and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper to vegetable mixture and mix well with your hands. (Mixture will be very moist.) Form into a 9- by 5-inch oval loaf in a lightly oiled 13- by 9- by 2-inch metal baking pan and brush meatloaf evenly with remaining 2 tablespoons ketchup. Bake in middle of oven until thermometer inserted into meatloaf registers 170 degrees, 50 to 55 minutes. Let meatloaf stand 5 minutes before serving.

Good roads and fair winds.

Lee S. Wilbur