

WILD GAME RECIPES

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Cook'n
with **Kristine**



Summer is a time for kicking back and enjoying the sunshine, the water and the outdoors. What better entertainment than catching fresh bluegills and sipping a steaming cup of hot coffee... or perhaps better yet a cold can of beer? While others are trolling for walleye and bass, I prefer the battle with a feisty bluegill as he tips my bobber and I quickly set the hook.

My fondest memories are on Big Silver Lake with my grandfather searching out the beds and waiting for "the bite". Now one must understand that my grandfather didn't always have the best of luck, but his eagle eyes were constantly on the look-out... scoping the horizon. He carefully watched the surrounding water... and yes, the surrounding fisherman. If someone was hauling them in, before you knew it, my grandfather would just happen to be drifting that direction and... walla... we were in business! In no time at all, we would have our limit and be on our way home with a mess of huge gills.

Cleaning the gills properly was a very important project ... one didn't dare leave a scale on. Of course, I always had to put them out of their misery before I could begin the task of preparing these tasty morsels for the frying pan.....so a little "bonk" on the head was only humane. In those days we simply scaled, gutted and then fried the fish whole. We all sat around the dinner table, mouths watering, while my grandmother warmed up her electric skillet and made enough for each of us to have a fish to eat. Carefully picking the tender meat off the bones was sometimes a real challenge and crunching on the crispy tails was always a delicacy. Homemade potato pancakes and an over easy fried egg was a perfect combination. The use of bacon grease added a wonderful smoky taste and was the perfect compliment to the fresh fish.

Since then I have learned a few tricks when it comes to cleaning my gills. We always used to do this chore outside on a solid table and the scales went flying. For those of you who still do that, may I suggest scaling your gills under water. I have learned to ice them down first so they are easier to handle and with a solid table fork scale each fish completely submerged. This totally eliminates the problem with scales. In the winter, I scale my fish in the sink and catch the scales before they go down the drain. This procedure is much more comfortable, I might add. Of course, now I have

learned the art of filleting and there is no need to agonize over the tedious job of removing the meat from the little carcass.

Yep! Fresh Bluegills, my friends, are the best! My favorite recipe follows below along with two others that I have found very tasty ... homemade Potato Pancakes and if it is breakfast, don't forget the eggs. If it is dinner, try a little home grown corn on the cob. This is comfort food at its freshest and finest.

Potato Pancakes

4 medium potatoes peeled and diced (about 3 cups)
3 green onions sliced fine approx. 4" into the greens
1/4 cup flour
3 large eggs
1/2 tsp smoked paprika
1/4 tsp sea salt

Process well in blender or food processor. Spoon into hot skillet with a quarter inch of oil (I like Olive Oil). Brown about 3 minutes on each side. Serve with sour cream and bacon bits, or syrup.

Bluegills

#1 (My favorite) Melt 1/4 cup bacon grease in a cast iron skillet or heavy frying pan. Pat fillets dry and dredge in white flour. Place in hot pan and sprinkle with sea salt and pepper. Brown about 2 minutes on one side and 1 minute on the other.

#2 For 16 large fillets: Place 1 cup Italian bread crumbs and 1 T. Old Bay Seasoning in a plastic bag. Whisk 1 cup milk and 1 large egg in a bowl. Dip each fillet in egg/milk wash and coat with seasoning mixture. Fry in hot vegetable oil approx. 2 minutes on each side or until browned.

#3 For 24 large fillets: Place 1 1/2 cups Italian Bread Crumbs and 2 heaping Tablespoon Shore Lunch Original Recipe in a plastic bag. Whisk 2 eggs in a shallow bowl. Dip each fillet in egg wash and coat with seasoning mixture. Fry in hot vegetable oil approx. 2 minutes on each side until browned. 