

# Game On

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A BIRD HUNTER'S TABLE, RELOADED



*Recipes from friends, family and the field.*

SARAH AND WHITNEY TILT



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# FIRSTS

**FIRSTS**, noun, adjective, adverb.

1. *Being before all others with respect to time, order, rank or importance.*
2. *Beginnings, start of a series.*
3. *Our first experiences in the outdoors, such as first pheasant, first elk, first sunfish, etc., etc.*

Regardless of the number of times we've gone hunting, fishing, hiking, or any other outdoor activity, our first experience is commonly among the most remembered. Our first deer, our child's first trout, our pup's first point. Our "first" may not have been the biggest or the most; the first quail may not have been a particularly difficult shot, or the first trout, a particularly exacting cast (in fact it may have been a worm), but we remember it because it was first.

Our firsts also have smells. The smell of Hoppes Famous #9 gun solvent will forever take us back to cleaning guns for our elders. A newly popped can of Budweiser takes one of us back to the first deep sea fishing excursion for sailfish, while the smell of trout frying in a pan forever reminds the other of the first trout caught on a fly. As for the distinctive mustiness of oiled leather and canvas, it will forever bespeak gun cases and duffles ready for an outing.

Robert Ruark in his classic of American Sport, *The Old Man and the Boy*, gives us the opening note that "anyone who reads this book is bound to realize that I had a real fine time as a kid." The book, a must read for any outdoors person, addresses the world of firsts throughout its pages. For example, this excerpt from Chapter 1, "It Takes a Gentleman to Approach Another Gentleman":

"The way you shoot is simply this: You carry her across your body, pointing away from the man you're shooting with... When the birds get up, you look at a bird. Then your reflexes work. The gun comes up under your eye, and while it's coming up your thumb slips the safety and your finger goes to the trigger, and when your eye's on the bird and your finger's on the trigger, the gun just goes off, and the bird drops. It is every bit as simple as that if you start at it right."

It is every bit as simple as that when you start at it right. But of course, starting it requires the parents, grandparents, next door neighbors and others who introduced us to our firsts. It takes equipment and practice, more practice, and learning through making mistakes. Yes mistakes, such as the Boy in Ruark's story who following the Old Man's advice above, took his first practice mounting and dry firing of a gun, forgetting to check if the gun was loaded:

"I threw the gun up and snapped. The gun went off with a horrid roar and scared me so bad I dropped it on the ground... that ended the first lesson"

As a Beginning.

Appetizers, starters, hors d'oeuvres. In French, hors d'oeuvre translates into "outside the work," meaning not part of the courses in the main meal. But Firsts, as the name suggests do come first, and therefore, they are your guests' first exposure to the food they will experience from your kitchen. Here we present a collection of our favorite firsts. The majority are intended to be simply prepared and presented, and can be part of an overall meal. In the case of the paté and Hunters sausage, you will need to prepare in advance.





## Four Generations

BY SOPHIE MAY

It was my first time bird hunting and I was with my Dad and Granddaddy. I was very nervous because I was with two very experienced hunters and I had no idea what I was doing. I had killed a buck and spent some time in a deer stand with my Dad, but that seemed like shooting at the side of a building compared to shooting a flying bird.

We were hunting in the Shields Valley and we had been walking for an hour and a half. We had our English Pointer, Dexter, and Copper, my uncle Kendall's German Shorthair with us. It was a very hot day in mid-October and the dogs were showing signs of dehydration and losing a bit of their stamina. We decided to head back to the truck. We had come upon a few birds throughout the day but the dogs had not been on point. Following behind my father and Granddaddy, I walked up rocky terrain to a hill side and immediately Dexter was on point. We waited for what seemed like the longest moment watching Dexter and scanning the horizon with our eyes.

I took my gun off safety and suddenly two birds flew up. Almost instantly I shot, followed by a shot from Granddaddy. I did not think there was any chance I had hit a bird until it came fluttering down from the sky. I stood there in complete shock as the dogs went to retrieve the birds. My dad came up behind me and slapped me on the back in disbelief. My granddad and I had both killed birds.

The walk back to the truck was great. I was so proud of myself and proud to have done it with my Dad and my granddad. As we drove home, Granddaddy reminisced about the day he made his first shot with his own father. We all had quiet tears in our eyes as we listened to his soft voice recall a 65 year old memory. The heat, the smells, the mountainous terrain—I knew I would never forget the day I went on my first bird hunt.

## Spicy Asian Wild Duck Poppers 🦆

*A great appetizer for any occasion, whether with hunting buddies or friends who have never tasted duck. Also a perfect way to use those duck tenderloins. Serves 6-8 as a hors d'oeuvre.*

**4 duck breasts, pounded and cut into 1-inch squares**  
**4 slices of bacon (½ slice per breast)**  
**2 tablespoons Tabasco**  
**2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar**  
**2 tablespoon Hoisin sauce**  
**2 tablespoons sesame oil**  
**¼ red onion, sliced into rounds and then 1-inch pieces**  
**Fresh cilantro**  
**Jalapeño peppers, fresh or canned**

Blanch the raw bacon in boiling water for 30 seconds. Set aside to cool. When cool, cut each strip in half. Pound the duck breasts to tenderize and flatten. Slice into 1-inch squares.

Mix the rice vinegar, Hoisin sauce and sesame oil together. Marinate the duck for 30 minutes.

Preheat your grill to medium-high.

Prepare poppers by placing a duck piece in ½ slice bacon (place the duck meat across the bacon rather than lengthwise), topping with a sprig of cilantro, 1-2 pieces of red onion and jalapeño pepper. Roll up neatly in the bacon and fasten with a tooth pick.

Grill over medium-high heat until bacon is crisp, turning every 2 minutes, 7-10 minutes total. Do not overcook.

*“Every moment spent in the woods should be enjoyed. Whether you’re alone with nature, or with closet friends, you’ll be in good company.”*

UNKNOWN



## Arizona Quail Jalapeño Poppers

Contributed by Will Lassiter 

*This recipe can be made with Hungarian partridge, mourning dove, or any other small gamebird. It is equally as good with or without the cream cheese. Serves 8-10 as a hors d'oeuvre.*

**8-10 breasts of quail**  
**½ jalapeño for each breast**  
**Softened cream cheese**  
**Bacon**  
**Salt and pepper**

Filet the breast meat from the quail. Salt and pepper to taste. Cut jalapeños in half lengthwise and remove the seeds. Fill each pepper with the cream cheese, approximately 1 teaspoon per half.

Preheat your grill.

Wrap one breast around one jalapeño half. Wrap each with one slice of bacon and secure with a tooth pick. Grill over medium-high until meat is cooked through, 7-10 minutes, turning several times.

## Tangy Duck Nuggets

*A take on traditional sweet and sour, this presentation is great served straight out of the pot with tooth picks or as a passed hors d'oeuvre. Serves 8-12 as an appetizer.*

**6 duck breasts**  
**1 teaspoon each of ground nutmeg and ginger**  
**¼ teaspoon freshly ground cloves**  
**¼ teaspoon each ground cinnamon, cayenne pepper, and allspice**  
**½ cup flour**  
**¼ pound butter**  
**2-3 green onions finely chopped**  
**½ cup red currant jelly**  
**¼ cup port wine**  
**2 tablespoons brandy**  
**Salt to taste**

Cut duck breasts into bite size pieces, removing any sinew. Combine dry ingredients in a bag. Add the meat and shake to coat. In a skillet, sauté the meat in butter until light brown. Add the onions and currant jelly, port and salt to taste. Simmer 12-15 minutes until tender. Add brandy and flambé. Serve as hors d'oeuvres either with tooth picks or on a slice of cucumber.

## Dad's Duck Appetizer

*A classic in the Davies household and always available for a spontaneous gathering. This recipe is also great for preparing duck for dinner. We always cooked more than we needed, froze the extras to save and serve as appetizers when needed. One duck breast serves 4-6 as an hors d'oeuvre.*

**Duck breasts**  
**Olive oil**  
**Soy sauce**  
**Brown sugar**  
**Red wine**  
**Juice from one orange (you may also grate the rind into the marinade)**  
**Tabasco**  
**Spices of choice (celery salt, sage, oregano, etc.)**

There are no hard and fast measurements, and you can make the marinade to your taste.

Place all ingredients into a bowl and mix. Add the duck breasts to the marinade, cover with plastic wrap, and let sit at room temperature for several hours. You can marinate overnight if you like.

Preheat your grill. When the grill is hot, cook the duck on high heat for 3 minutes on each side. Cutting against the grain, slice the duck breast very thin and serve with a bowl of sesame seeds and a honey mustard or condiment of choice.



BAG OF GREENWING TEAL, SASKATCHEWAN, PHOTO BY WHITNEY TILT






*“Wilderness is not a luxury  
but a necessity of the human spirit.”*

EDWARD ABBEY





*“Don't tell fish stories where the people  
know you; but particularly, don't tell them  
where they know the fish.”*

MARK TWAIN



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## *Authors and Sous Chefs*

Sarah and Whitney Tilt share a love of hunting, fishing, and being outdoors. They equally enjoy preparing game for the table and bringing people together to enjoy it. Both have been fortunate to have long careers in conservation and each have worked for some noted organizations including the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Trout Unlimited, National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and Ecotrust.

Whitney currently serves as Director of Land & Wildlife Conservation for the Arthur Blank Family Foundation and the Mountain Sky Guest Ranch. He has published several books including *The Flora of the Yellowstone* (2015) and is a partner in High Country Apps LLC, developing interactive field guides for smart phones and tablets.

Sarah is currently the Executive Director for the Jack Creek Preserve Foundation and the Yellow Dog Community and Conservation Foundation. She previously published *A Bird Hunters Table* in 2013.

When not working, Sarah and Whit hope to be found hiking, fishing, bird hunting, or otherwise enjoying the outdoors, along with some cooking and entertaining.



*"Game On reminds us to take care of our wildlife and natural resources, and to enjoy the bounty of what we have worked hard to conserve."*

- WHIT FOSBURGH | PRESIDENT AND CEO, THEODORE ROOSEVELT CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP



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*Game On, A Bird Hunter's Table Reloaded* continues in the same tradition of friendship, a love of the land, dogs, and creating memorable meals begun by *A Bird Hunter's Table*. *Game On* features our favorite gamebird, fish and big game recipes. The book is not just a cookbook, though. *Game On* shares the stories of favorite hunts, and the rewards of bringing wild food to the table. Its photos give a glimpse of the wonderful landscapes we are fortunate to travel, as well as the dogs, the game, and the fellow travelers. The essays within these pages connect the tradition of hunting and fishing with the history of land and natural resource conservation, particularly the protection, restoration and enhancement of the habitats on which fish and wildlife depend.

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