

DUCK SOUP *for the* SOUL



Words by Amy Buchan Siegfried • Photography by Brooke Allen

Mother Nature and I go way back. We go back to playing in the mud in the great outdoors on long summer days. As the seasons changed, the heat of the summer gave way to the cold of winter.

In many parts of the country winter is the time of year to hunker down inside by a fire. Not in Oklahoma, where winter means it's hunting season. Many of you probably remember your first hunt, which could've been as young as elementary school. Mine, on the other hand, was at a full-grown age when that child could be my own. I guess you'd say I am a late bloomer.

The first time I observed a duck hunt my borrowed waders had a hole in them. For those of you who don't know what waders are, picture camouflage overalls with built-in boots that are waterproof for trudging through a swamp. Let's just say the tale of the hunt is much funnier as an afterthought. So, when I was asked to go on a hunt as an actual shooter I cautiously agreed. As a wise friend taught me, always try anything twice. I crossed my fingers and hoped the second time was drier than the first.

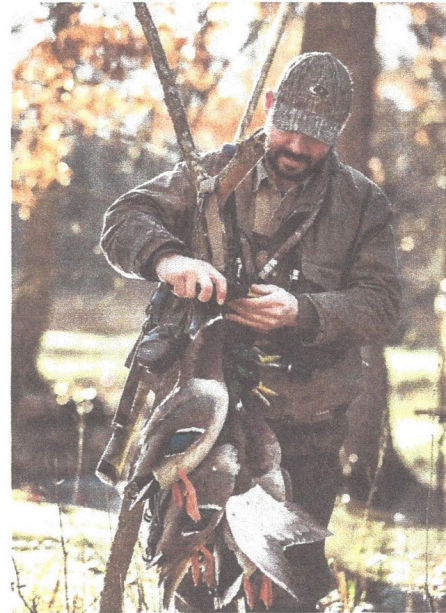
I should've prefaced this story by telling you that I grew up in the western part of the United States where hunting, let alone duck hunting, is not prevalent. The only hunting for meat I did was sifting through the pre-packed ground beef at the grocery store. I never wanted to think

about where my dinner came from—the faceless package of meat was just fine with me. Therefore, I was a bit apprehensive about shooting my dinner but was adamant that I would eat what we brought down.

Since this was all new to me, I was grateful to be able to hunt private land managed by wildlife biologist and rancher Shane Olson. The first thing that came to my mind when hunting with an expert like Olson was a quote that states “shopping with your husband is like hunting with the game warden.” This was an outing with the big dogs; I hoped I wouldn’t mess anything up.

The morning came and we geared up. Duck hunters must have warm hearts because when most of us are cozying up to a warm fire on a cold day, they’re headed out into the elements. Layering is essential—the more the merrier, as long as it’s camouflage so the ducks don’t see you. By time we were geared up I looked more like Humpty Dumpty than outdoor Barbie.

Olson expertly set us up in the middle of a forest of flooded timber, where we were knee

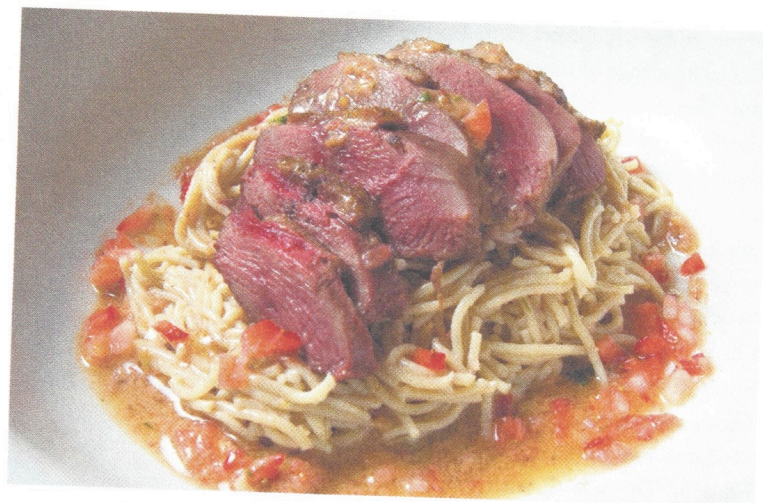


deep in water and mud. “It’s been a great season for duck hunting,” he said. “This year was just one of those years when everything came together perfectly with the right amount of water and an excellent food source in the bumper acorn crop. The mild January temperatures also kept the birds in the area when in years past they’ve always moved on south.”

As the sun rose, hiding us in the shadows, Olson began to call and I started to realize that hunting was about so much more than the hunt. Here I was, sharing this experience with a great group of people in the outdoors, listening to nature start its day while watching the sunrise through the mist over the water.

That Zen moment was short lived as our first flock came in. With Olson’s patient guidance, all that anxiety I had about messing something up disappeared. I took a deep breath, found my target and took down my first duck. The day grew colder as the sun woke up but the chill didn’t dampen our spirits. As I felt the resident specialty, duck





soup, warming my insides, I smiled watching Nelli, a black Labrador, dutifully retrieve the downed ducks. The excitement shown by the wag of her tail is the equivalent of a football player's touchdown dance. Thanks to Nelli, our great guide and some stellar hunting buddies we were able to bring home eight ducks for dinner.

If you would've told me five years ago I'd be writing an article on duck hunting, I would've told you that you had the wrong girl. Alas, here we are. Duck hunting is much like sharing a meal with someone. It's truly about the experience, the ambiance, the company and the conversation, not simply the food itself. As I sat down to enjoy my duck, I acknowledged its life and thanked Mother Nature for our many days together spent in the mud.

Bio:

Always up for an adventure, Amy Buchan Siegfried has lived internationally and continues to travel anywhere to experience what the world has to offer. In her day job, she's the co-founder of LastNightsGame.co, a site for the sports curious; a safe haven to empower those who want to learn about the world of sports but don't know where to start. She's a master of small talk, bringing people together and the handwritten note (the art is not dead). You can often find this lady, who is married to Raegen, not sweating the small stuff while embracing her inner domestic goddess or talking sports.

Duck Soup

Duck soup contains no duck, it is simply a soul warming concoction to share with your fellow duck hunters.

(use a standard soup can for measuring)

Ingredients

1 can beef consommé

1 can water

1 can dry sherry

1 chicken bouillon cube

1 beef bouillon cube

Lots of Lawry's pepper

Boil and then simmer. Pour into a Thermos to stay warm in a duck blind.

