



WITH BASC'S CONOR O'GORMAN

A taste for game

Conor O'Gorman looks at how butchers are playing a key role as ambassadors for shooting

Public acceptance of shooting is influenced by the number of people eating game. Interest in game meat has seen something of a surge in recent years and high street butchers have played a key role in this.

I live in the historic and beautiful city of Chester. One of the jewels in its crown is Ernest W. Edge & Son, one of the best butchers in the country. I recently met up with Bruce Edge, who is the third generation owner of the business.

Bruce said: "My grandfather Ernie started up here in Handbridge in 1937 and we have been trading from the same premises ever since. There used to be 12 butchers in the local area and now we are the only one. Ernie and my late father, John believed in providing better quality and better service than anybody else and that's something that we as a team continue to hold true in our values today."

It is, therefore, no surprise that Bruce, a BASC member who shoots and reads *Sporting Shooter*, stocks an impressive list of quality game meat. The list includes locally-shot pheasants, woodpigeon, rabbits, mallard, and even pintail, teal and wigeon on occasion. Venison is sourced from the Grosvenor Estate a few miles away from October to January, and Scottish-sourced venison is available all year round.

"Our most popular items are stewing venison and our venison, redcurrant and rosemary burgers

– they fly off the counter. Mixed game pies topped with cranberries also sell very well," Bruce said.

Bruce also sells grouse. "We kept getting requests for grouse so we included those as on-order items from Yorkshire and Scottish shooting estates. Later in the season we sometimes display some in the counter for spontaneous sales also," he added.

I asked Bruce if there was anything shooting organisations could do to help promote game meat. "The marketing materials for Taste of Game and Game to Eat are really good, so keep pushing those campaigns," he said.

Butchers are playing a key role in introducing people to game meat – the more butchers that sell game, the more it becomes part of 'everyday' life. When I visited Bruce he had freshly-shot woodpigeon breasts in amongst chicken and beef fillets. Game is increasingly on restaurant menus also. However, it can still be a trick to get non-shooters to try their first taste and the mission of BASC's Taste of Game and Countryside Alliance's Game to Eat campaigns is to get more people eating game.

Annette Cole, Taste of Game Development Manager said: "Our campaign is encouraging more people to enjoy the great taste of game and providing help to those who sell game to reach a wider public. A really good way for butchers to encourage people to buy game is by adding sauces, stuffing, or dressing with herbs. If it's



ready to cook, people are more likely to buy it."

BASC has come up with an innovative new way to introduce game flavours to a wider audience: Britain's favourite snack – crisps. With over six billion packets sold in the UK each year, this could be a great way of introducing people to what might be unfamiliar flavours. Our Taste of Game Grouse & Whinberry and Smoked Pheasant & Wild Mushroom crisps were launched at the CLA Game Fair.

David Iisley, BASC's Head of Marketing and Membership Services said: "The crisp market is very competitive, but we believe that we have two unique flavours."

If these crisps are successful they will help to make shooting part of the everyday. In Sweden, 87% of the public find shooting acceptable. The key driver for this is people knowing someone that shoots and people having eaten game meat. If our crisps help people to make the next step towards buying game from their butchers or ordering game in a restaurant that would be wonderful.

These are challenging times for butchers so please help support your local butcher by shopping regularly and recommending them to friends and family, especially if they sell game.

If you are interested in buying our crisps, visit www.tasteofgame.org.uk/crisps ■

Local butcher Bruce Edge has seen an increase in requests for grouse and other game meats



PICTURES: CONOR O'GORMAN