

BY: Bea Segura

Women Hunt™

In October of 2021, I was chosen as one of twelve women from across the North American to attend a first time ever opportunity conceived by Renée Thornton of the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF.) WSF was so generous to fund a trip for twelve women to attend the hunting training program for women who had little or no experience hunting big game. The program which was conducted at the FTW Ranch in Texas was held during the first week of October, 2021. I was ecstatic when I got the news that I had been chosen from New Mexico as one of the participants!

I have always loved fishing with my dad. It was a hobby we shared growing up, but when it came to hunting, I was always told that it was too dangerous, and “girls don’t hunt”. “They stay home and help in the kitchen”. As I got older, hanging out with my peers and friends, it was still a trend that “hunting is a man sport” and that “women aren’t invited nor allowed on ‘man’ hunting trips”. I never really thought anything of it, nor cared to hunt because my perception of hunting was a ‘disrespectable sport to kill animals for fun’. Like other women who may have the same thoughts, I never understood or cared to learn about it.

Just recently I acquired several food allergies to preservatives and processed foods. The last couple years have been a challenge for me to find a balanced diet that wouldn’t exacerbate my allergies. So, I started choosing to eat more natural meats and organic vegetables. I found great pleasure in bringing home the fish I caught and began to enjoy natural game meat provided by friends.

I met, my new mentor, Jeff Laskie, who works for Game and Fish at the 7 Springs Hatchery in Jemez, New Mexico. He taught me how to shoot a traditional style Horse Bow. He started teaching me techniques to track and hunt wild turkeys up in Jemez. I thought this would be a great source of natural food, and as my curiosity grew, the opportunity to apply to the new hunter Wild Sheep Foundation Women Hunt™ Program came up. Jeff was so excited to support women in the field and explained that when he was growing up, it was a tradition that all the women in his family participated in the hunt. I had never heard of this before and began to realize “maybe this is the real deal”. I started looking up different women hunt groups on social media and started getting motivated to learn more about something I had always rolled my eyes at. When I got selected for this hunt program, I started asking Jeff more and more questions. He was very patient with me and willing to give me some pointers and critical information about ethical hunting. He also took me out to determine my eye dominance so I could learn to properly shoot a rifle for the first time. I was so grateful to learn from him that I am a left-hand shooter because of my eye dominance!

I am also a single mom of 2 amazing kids who are 10 and 9. I thought this opportunity to learn about wildlife conservation and ethical hunting would allow me to pass down the information and experiences

to them. I would be able to show my kids, especially my daughter, that as women, we can do anything we put our minds to and that we should never be told that our place is in the kitchen and that “girls don’t hunt”. My son on the other hand, looks up to me and tells his friends he has the coolest mom “because she’s not afraid to get dirty”. They motivate me every day to show them that I can be an independent mom and role model. Also, to teach them how to provide natural food sources and support wildlife conservation, while at the same time, be leader and role model in my new outdoor world.

I don’t really know where to begin to explain how much I learned at the FTW ranch. I must give a sincere thank you to all the staff at the ranch for the hospitality, but more importantly to all the guides and instructors for the respect and patience they have for new hunters like myself. They explained so much about ethical hunting that my entire perspective of hunting drastically changed in just 4 days. Gray and Renée Thornton with the Wild Sheep Foundation gave an amazing presentation about wildlife conservation. I had no idea about the history or how important and critical these programs are. I immediately started taking notes about how I might go home and spread the awareness among other women, who like me, may have had mis-informed negative thoughts about the “sport”. I have now learned that hunting is not a sport in my eyes. It’s a way of living. And to me, it’s important to know that I am now confident I can provide natural food to my little family and know that I’m being respectful and ethical towards wild game.

Not only were the instructors at the ranch informative, but they were extremely patient with a group of 12 women, some of which, had never even shot a gun before. We learned gun safety, precision shooting, consistency, and ethical shots. The slogan on the ranch is “Because you only have one shot”. I think this is an amazing mindset. We came to believe we never want to injure an animal, and that we should only shoot at a distance that is practical. I can’t thank the instructors enough for helping me grow my confidence in shooting targets and ultimately, taking home my first white tail doe!

Not only did we learn about ethical hunting, but we also had an amazing cooking class. Chef Josh Schwencke presented different ways of preparing game meat and taught us about natural food sources and how we can use every single part of that animal so that nothing goes to waste. This was important to me and was one of my favorite parts of the training. It is one thing to bring home the meat. It is another to know how to prepare the meat for your family so that everyone enjoys.

As soon as I came back home, I reached out to our state WSF chapter President, Bryan Bartlett who has supported me since day one of submitting my application. I immediately asked him how I could get involved in supporting women groups in New Mexico and spread hunting conservation history and awareness. Bryan graciously put me in contact with a few women in NM Department of Game and Fish who are hunters, and I can’t wait to be a part of a new community that is ready to start a movement to teach women and youth, (also men) who have never hunted before, and specifically those who do not understand how natural and ethical this lifestyle can be.