



Why Field to Fork Worked For Me

GROWING UP ON Air Forces bases, I would go out to the street with the other kids to play baseball. I knew the rules of the game, but until I got with the other kids, I didn't know what the street rules were.

After five minutes with the kids on the block, I knew everything I needed to know and had fun playing for the rest of the day. For example, when you're playing baseball on the street, you have to learn where the bases are that day. And you don't yell "Car coming!" if everyone knows the car and that

it is going to turn before it ever gets to the ballfield.

I didn't grow up with anyone teaching me how to hunt or showing me the hunting rules. As an adult, I can go to any baseball game, sit down and know exactly what's going on. I feel part of the game. But when it came to hunting, there wasn't anything there for me – nothing to relate to, nothing to fall back on to get me started. Hunting wasn't in my vocabulary.

I'm retired. I own a farm and have a place to hunt. Field to Fork was perfect for teaching me how to hunt. It wasn't a book to show me the rules, it was a team.

During the program, all the "kids on the block" got together in a room and within five minutes, I was learning what hunting was all about. For example, you don't shoot as soon as you see an animal. You wait until it's the "right" animal, the "right" shot and a safe shot. Field to Fork showed me how to hunt, how to field dress and, more importantly, how to safely handle the meat. All of this gave me the confidence of the complete game.

Going hunting with a Kentucky Fish and Wildlife mentor was the

First-time hunter Tim Wolfe with his first turkey.

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most important part to me. I got to watch two hunters – their patience, the way they moved and the way they called the turkey in. I didn't take a shot that day, but I got more out of the experience than just a shot could have done. I had "played baseball" on the street with the kids.

The last thing my mentor said to me was "You've got two days of season left. Go out on your own and do it now."

So, on the last day of the season, I set up my blind and called. Two hens came and I watched them go by. A tom came, but he was a jake. Then, I called one in. I had him in my sights, but I couldn't see his beard. I stayed calm and followed him as he walked in front of me. He finally stuck his head up high enough and there was his beard! Boom! I had my first turkey. He weighed 21.5 pounds, had a 9.5-inch beard and 1-inch spurs.

I cleaned him, just like I learned in Field to Fork. The next day, we had roast turkey breast for dinner. The next week, we had turkey noodle soup with broth made from the legs and thighs. It was the best tasting turkey I ever had. Thank you, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, for letting me join you on the street and for teaching me the game. I am now a successful hunter who can harvest his own food. I can't wait for deer season. ■

Author Tim Wolfe lives in Beattyville.



PHOTO COURTESY TIM WOLFE