



FORMING TRADITION AT FISHING CREEK

An endeavor of passion from farm
beginnings to the private family atmosphere.

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My experiences in life, and also in the field, have taught me that bigger is seldom better—and that privacy is infinitely more valuable than publicity. I guess, to me, hunting nuances matter. With those thoughts in mind, I am somewhat conflicted about sharing my recent experiences at Fishing Creek Farms, located outside Atlanta, Georgia. You see, my introduction of Fishing Creek to the broader hunting community will inevitably lead to difficulties in me securing a return visit to a place where details matter.

Having completed only its third season with paying guests being allowed, Fishing Creek Farms is already being spoken of as one of the premier commercial hunting destinations in the United States.

Founded in 2002 as a private hunting retreat for construction executive Rob Taylor and his family, Fishing Creek has since expanded with the addition of guest lodges and dining facilities. Further land purchases have extended the property lines that, together with road upgrades and habitat enhancements, have allowed Rob and his team to increase and offer their fabulous hunting opportunities to paying guests.

Being one of the fortunate few to have hunted at Fishing Creek during its inaugural year and each subsequent season, I have witnessed firsthand the remarkable rise of this unique facility. And while the expansion of the campus-style lodge,

addition of new quail courses, and overall habitat improvements are noteworthy, what is perhaps more significant is that Fishing Creek has retained a private family atmosphere and exclusive use approach.

Maintaining this intimate feel is perhaps the result of a strong philosophy, with a focus on quality and continuous improvement, that has been enthusiastically adopted by the staff at Fishing Creek. From the house staff and land management team to the wingshooting guides, Fishing Creek appears as an endeavor of passion.

From the moment I arrived at Fishing Creek and was met by house staff, my experience was exceptional. I brought two dogs with me, which is usually an excellent way to judge a lodge team. Will my precious cargo be respected or rebuffed? Thankfully, the Fishing Creek team couldn't have been more welcoming to my two cockers: Austin (Powers) and my young puppy (Prince) Harry. As it turns out, Fishing Creek encourages hunters to bring their dogs—a refreshing attitude that other venues would do well to replicate.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Fishing Creek Farms has maintained its intimate history by striving to create a relaxing and enjoyable hunting environment for small groups of family and friends.





We'd planned a split-day hunt, which is typical for many hunters traveling from the nearby cities of Atlanta and Athens. Even the locals tend to stay over at Fishing Creek, it seems, to take advantage of the beautiful accommodations and fine dining.

Rob Taylor was on hand, together with his house staff, to greet me. Inside the great room of the lodge, Executive Chef John Lobser had prepared a sumptuous lunch. Suffice it to say that our meal, while representative of the fare on offer at Fishing Creek, was a far cry from the ubiquitous fried chicken and greens.

Following a brief interlude—to collect Austin and change into my field boots and brush pants—I was back at the lodge, where our guides were waiting to take us to the quail fields. Now, if the food and accommodations hadn't already piqued my interest in the hunt that was to follow, the guides and, more importantly, their dogs certainly had.

For several years, I'd known Scott Kuhn, the head wing-shooting guide, and his wife Tyla, who has also guided and worked as the booking and lodge manager at Fishing Creek. I first met them while duck hunting in Louisiana and later during a pheasant hunting trip to South Dakota.

One thing that was guaranteed, given that Scott and Tyla were in charge, was that the dogs and dog handling would be first-rate. The Kuhns are renowned for their line of German

shorthaired pointers. However, on this trip, it was their Orvis-Endorsed English cockers that I was intrigued by most of all. Having imported a string of high-quality cockers direct from the United Kingdom, from championship-caliber lines with which I was personally familiar, the Kuhns—and their kennel, SunSage Sporting Dogs—had catapulted themselves in a short space of time from interested novices to experienced cocker trainers with one of the finest lines of English cocker spaniels in the United States. Because I'm a keen cocker handler and breeder myself, this held a particular interest for me.

With hunters, dogs, guns, and shells loaded onto Fishing Creek's custom hunting rigs, we headed to the quail fields. Here, we saw how hard work and timely spring rains had combined to deliver quality habitat. It also reminded me that Fishing Creek does not look like your typical quail hunting plantation.

The land at Fishing Creek can only be described as gently rolling hills and valleys, imbued with a bright red soil—the result of a high concentration of iron minerals. This is the

FIRST-RATE GUIDES AND DOGS

With Scott Kuhn, head wingshooting guide, and his wife Tyla performing the guiding duties, dogwork, and handling, the overall hunting experience afield is phenomenal.

defining feature of the Piedmont region that separates the mountainous areas of north Georgia from the coastal plains of the south. Seemingly, the habitat has been designed to benefit quail, then dogs, and lastly hunters, in that order. Those looking for a leisurely stroll through bare, knee-high grass fields will be frowning at this point.

Hunting at Fishing Creek can be a good physical challenge, depending upon how much you want to walk. Fortunately, the guides at Fishing Creek shoot solely covey rises, rather than chasing singles. And you can always get a lift between points should you need it. And believe me when I tell you that, by the end of our afternoon hunt, we were grateful for the ride.

Our first hunt was guided by Tyla, who put a brace of shorthairs down. The dogs worked in tandem to cover the broomsage hills, checking in with Tyla every so often. Interestingly, both bird dogs were working to voice and whistle—rather than collar—commands.

As we trailed the dogs through broomsage and briers, shards of glorious sunlight pierced the pine canopy and illumi-

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nated the course. It was all too easy to admire the panorama of beauty that surrounded us and to neglect our canine companions as they performed a statuesque, double point only 50 yards ahead of us. It was game time.

The rise that followed was memorable for all the right reasons—a great find, staunch pointing, a thrilling cocker flush, and then, a starbursting covey of hard-flying bobwhites.

As the afternoon progressed, Tyla changed out dogs and gave us a taste of both the great birds and superb dogs at Fishing Creek. Of particular note were her outstanding cockers, which were a joy to hunt over. We were fortunate to shoot a large number of rises and to see some memorable points, flushes, and retrieves. I was also allowed to run my dog, Austin, who distinguished himself with a couple of solid retrieves.

What made the sport at Fishing Creek even more challenging was the way the contours disguised the lines of the quail once they took to wing. The quail themselves flew fast, using the ridges and gullies to good effect, while deploying their evasive maneuvers. Yes, there were fields suitable for new hunters. But it was the test presented to more experienced wingshooters that piqued my group's interest.

That afternoon hunt in the field lasted longer than it should have, but not because we needed to find more birds: Our game bag was plenty full. Put simply, the quality of the hunt and

the laughter we shared with Tyla and Rob meant that no one wanted to call time.

Still, we needn't have worried. The amusement continued both on our way back to the lodge and throughout cocktail hour held around the handcrafted and conveniently located firepit. After an evening that was notable for the good company, fine wine, and exceptional food, we all retired to our rooms to dream of dogs, doubles, and days afield.

Dawn of our second day heralded altogether different conditions. The golden sunshine of our first afternoon was replaced by a cold fog and intermittent drizzle—hunting conditions that felt all too familiar. Our guide for the morning was Scott, who ran a string of shorthairs together with his half of the SunSage cocker kennel.

Wet ground delivered excellent scenting conditions that allowed both the pointing dogs and the cockers to excel. Like Tyla, Scott was a consummate professional, who tailored the hunt to suit our group's ability. While our hunt proved eventful, with numerous covey finds during our three hours in the field,

it was clear that numbers were extraneous. Instead, the focus of our morning was to relax and enjoy an intimate wingshooting experience with friends.

Having had the opportunity to reflect on this and my previous hunts at Fishing Creek, the point that is clear to me is that you are welcomed to the farm as a guest of the Taylor family. This dedication to family values and authenticity extends to the field, where the best traditions of our sport are upheld. Critically, Rob and his Fishing Creek team care deeply about the details. To me, that matters.

The quality of this hunting facility has also been noted by The Orvis Company, who recently made Fishing Creek Farms Georgia's only hunting ground that is endorsed by Orvis. It seems inevitable that further accolades will follow.

While alternative hunting venues certainly exist, the combination of a convenient location, exceptional hunting, exquisite accommodations, and gourmet cuisine—all in a private setting—make Fishing Creek Farms a destination not to be missed. ✨

TRUE TIME-HONORED TRADITIONS

The atmosphere reflects the traditions of a fine meal, quality drink, and conversation in comfortable accommodations.

