



National  
Indigenous  
Diabetes  
Association

Association  
Nationale  
Autochtone  
du  
Diabète

# GIFTS FROM OUR RELATIONS

## INDIGENOUS ORIGINAL FOODS GUIDE



# NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DIABETES ASSOCIATION

**OUR VISION:** The National Indigenous Diabetes Association envisions diabetes-free healthy communities.

**OUR MISSION:** The National Indigenous Diabetes Association's mission is to lead the promotion of healthy environments to prevent and manage diabetes by working together with people, communities and organizations.

## CONTACT US:

103 - 90 GARRY STREET  
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA  
R3C 4H1

PH: 1-877-232-6232



Indigenous Services  
Canada

Services aux  
Autochtones Canada

Funding for this guide was provided in part by Indigenous Services Canada. Indigenous Services Canada and the Government of Canada are not responsible for the content and do not necessarily endorse the views expressed in this document.

Le financement de ce guide a été fourni en partie par Services aux Autochtones Canada. Services aux Autochtones Canada et le gouvernement du Canada ne sont pas responsables du contenu et ne souscrivent pas nécessairement aux opinions exprimées dans ce document.

Published by National Indigenous Diabetes Association.

©2020

# CONTENTS

2	Introduction
3	Wild Foods are Healthy Because...
4	Bison
6	Moose
8	Elk
10	White Tailed Deer
12	Caribou
14	Seal
16	Rabbit
18	Muskrat
20	Prairie Chicken
22	Goose And Duck
24	Fish
26	Seafood
28	Seaweed
30	Wild Rice
32	Corn
34	Nuts
36	Saskatoon Berries
38	Maple Syrup
38	References

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DIABETES ASSOCIATION

The National Indigenous Diabetes Association envisions diabetes-free healthy communities. As such, our mission is to lead the promotion of healthy environments to prevent and manage diabetes by working together with people, communities and organizations.

This resource takes inspiration from the Traditional Food Fact Sheets created by BC First Nations Health Authority ([http://www.fnha.ca/Documents/Traditional\\_Food\\_Fact\\_Sheets.pdf](http://www.fnha.ca/Documents/Traditional_Food_Fact_Sheets.pdf)) that are currently available.

# INTRODUCTION

The National Indigenous Diabetes Association (NIDA) presents this resource booklet entitled “Gifts from our Relations”, which consists of commonly consumed traditional foods (plants/animals) that are Indigenous to our lands.

Colonization, the reserve system, and residential schools have had significant negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples’ land bases, territories, and connections to the land. Regular harvesting and consumption of original foods has been largely replaced with a commercial supply of western, processed, non-nutritive foods. As noted by the Canada Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “...original foods were viewed by missionaries, educators and doctors as being diseased and inferior; in residential schools, teachers taught children to dislike their own foods and inculcated them with the poor eating habits of a non-Indigenous institution.”<sup>1</sup>

Original foods are plants or animals that are indigenous to the land, meaning they existed naturally on the land before settlers arrived. Food in the form of these plants, fruits, vegetables, or animals is a gift. We use the term “original” as shared with us from former NIDA Board Member Moneca Sinclair, whom uses the term “...instead of “traditional foods” because traditions can change from generation to generation”.

Through this resource, NIDA honours 18 foods that are important to various Indigenous Peoples throughout Turtle Island. Though our diets have changed significantly, the benefits of eating original foods remain the same. They are highly nutritious, which keeps us strong and healthy, and the hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering of original food keeps us physically active and

spiritually grounded. These are all parts of living a healthy life. Our personal health is something we have the power to change. It is the condition we keep our bodies in, and results directly from what we eat and how active we are.

The purpose is to create an easy-to-read, visual resource with practical information that anyone can use for nutritional information on these foods and plants. Overall, it will foster discussions around original food consumption as a means of reducing the incidence and prevalence of type 2 diabetes in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, as well as providing information for those living with diabetes and looking to self-manage through diet. This information can also be useful for Registered Dietitians to provide to clients. The goal is to promote consumption of original foods for improved diabetes management and to strengthen cultural identity among First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

The National Indigenous Diabetes Association (NIDA) would like to acknowledge that the work for this project took place in the traditional territories of the Nuu-chah-nulth, Dakota, Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Métis Nation.

This booklet was initiated by former NIDA Board Director and Registered Dietitian, Kerry Spence. Thank you Kerry to all the hard work you put into this booklet. Additional information and work was completed by Registered Dietitian Rachel Dickens. Many thanks to Rachel for her work on this booklet.

**“Eating our ancestral food helps to keep our culture alive. Foods that are outlined in this Guide are not only important for helping to prevent chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes but are also important for the balance of our ecosystem. Food is one of the most intimate ways in which we relate to the environment, and recognizing that our health is not separate from the environment is the path towards optimal spiritual, mental and physical health. This Guide can help us move through this journey and I thank all who have contributed their knowledge. Kleco Kleco (thank you).” - Rachel Dickens, Registered Dietitian**



# WILD FOOD IS HEALTHY BECAUSE

Foods from the land and sea once provided everything for our people. When wild foods are eaten more often there is an overall decrease in calories and saturated fat. Diets higher in wild foods often contain more lean meats and fish, and been shown to be higher in zinc, iron, vitamin A and calcium. Wild meat, fish and seafood don't contain any antibiotics, preservatives and additives, and wild plants are free of pesticides and herbicides and are often higher in antioxidants.

**VITAMIN A** helps maintain normal vision and keeps our skin and eyes and immune system healthy.

**ANTIOXIDANTS** keeps us healthy and prevents chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and age-related macular degeneration

**B VITAMINS** help our bodies use energy from food and are important for growth, healthy skin, hair, nerves and muscles.

**VITAMIN B12** helps to form DNA, make healthy blood cells and keep nerves working properly. This vitamin is only found in animal foods and foods that have been fortified.

**VITAMIN C** important for growth and repair of bones, teeth, skin and other tissues. It can also increase our body's absorption of iron from plant-based foods and protect us from infections by keeping our immune system healthy.

**CALCIUM** builds bones and teeth and helps keep them strong.

**CHOLINE** helps prevent fat and cholesterol buildup in our liver.

**VITAMIN D** helps our bodies absorb calcium and phosphorus for strong bones and teeth. It can also protect against infections by keeping our immune system healthy.

**FIBRE** helps to manage blood sugar and cholesterol levels and keeps our gut bacteria in good balance.

**FOLATE** helps make red blood cells, and is especially important for a healthy pregnancy.

**IODINE** important for thyroid health, which helps to regulate our metabolism. It is also important for brain development during pregnancy and infancy.

**IRON** helps make healthy blood that flows through our bodies, giving us energy to be active and to grow strong. Without enough iron we can become very tired and irritable.

**MAGNESIUM** important for muscle and nerve function and helps the heart beat properly. Associated with lowered risk for coronary heart disease. Helps our body build and maintain strong bones and teeth

**MANGANESE** plays an important role in energy production and antioxidant defenses, and is necessary for normal brain and nerve function helps our body build and maintain strong bones and teeth.

**OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS** important for preventing and treating heart disease, and is especially important for brain, nerve and eye development during pregnancy and infancy.

**POTASSIUM** helps maintain normal blood pressure

**PROTEIN** keeps our immune system healthy, and builds and repairs our muscles, skin and blood.

**ZINC** helps maintain a strong immune system and is important for healing wounds.



# BISON



**BISON IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:**

**B VITAMINS** **VITAMIN B12** **CHOLINE**

**IRON** **PROTEIN** **ZINC**

Bison is leaner than other red meats and lower in saturated fat, which is better for heart health.

Bison is the largest native land mammal on Turtle Island (North America). A bison can weigh up to a tonne and a half (about 2200 pounds). Bison are good swimmers and can also run at speeds of up to 62 km/hour. Bison was a major source of food, clothing, tools, weapons and shelter. The horns and hoofs could be made into utensils, the intestines used as containers, and the hair woven into ropes. All the parts of the animal were used and nothing went to waste. The bison was a significant resource for the Indigenous Peoples of the Plains for food and raw materials until near extinction in the late 19th century.



## HABITAT

Plains bison roamed the plains in large herds, dispersing into smaller groups in the winter when they would move south. In the summer they would migrate back, though because they had no set migration path plains cultures were said to move with bison herds. Wood bison was present in in smaller, scattered herds in boreal woodlands including the Yukon and Northwest Territories.



## PREPARATION

Bison meat was dried for storage by the sun, wind, shade, smoke, fire, hot air, sweat-house or heated coals. Dried meat was also pulverized and made into pemmican with melted tallow or fat and berries (such as chokeberries). The meat was also roasted on skewers or in small covered pits. Bison was most commonly roasted or boiled, but some tribes ate the meat raw, including the entrails.



## THE HUNT

Plains bison were hunted in large groups as the communal effort was more successful than solitary work. Once introduced, horses became important in helping to locate bison herds and in chasing the animals. Methods of hunting plains and boreal bison all had the aim of driving the bison into corrals, pounds, and canyons or over cliffs and bluffs – anywhere where the bison would have difficulty escaping – and they were killed with spears and bows and arrows.



## TEACHING

According to Upper Kutenai, the best place to shoot a bison is the back of its shoulders, going through the heart. A shot to the kidneys made the meat bitter. No more than two bison would be killed per hunt, as the women could not butcher and dry more than this, and it was considered a waste if the animal was not completely used.

# CRANBERRY BISON MEATBALLS

## INGREDIENTS FOR MEATBALLS:

- 1 large egg, fork-beaten
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp ground allspice
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper
- 1 lb ground bison

## INGREDIENTS FOR GLAZE:

- 1 cup canned whole cranberry sauce
- ¼ cup barbecue sauce
- 1 tsp vinegar
- ¼ tsp pepper

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine egg, cranberries, oil, allspice, salt, and first amount of pepper in large bowl. Add bison and mix well. Roll into ¾ inch balls. Arrange in single layer on greased baking sheet with sides. Cook in 375°F oven for about 15 minutes until no longer pink inside.
2. For the glaze, combine cranberry sauce, barbecue sauce, vinegar and remaining pepper in medium frying pan. Heat and stir on medium until boiling. Add meatballs. Heat and stir for about 1 minute until glazed.

Source: Gregory Lepine, First Nations Recipes, Eschia Books, 2014



# MOOSE

## MOOSE IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:

**B VITAMINS** **VITAMIN B12** **CHOLINE** **IRON** **PROTEIN** **ZINC**

Moose meat has the least amount of fat of other game meat (1%), compared to beef, pork or poultry (35-55%).

Moose are the largest member of the deer family and one of the largest land mammals on Turtle Island (North America). They have long legs that help them move through bogs and deep snow. They can run as fast as 55 km/hour, swim continuously for several hours, dive to depths of 6 meters and remain submerged for up to 1 minute. A single moose can give as much as 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of meat.



## HABITAT

Moose are found throughout North America. Moose generally live in forested areas where there is snow cover (up to 60-70 cm) in the winter. They tend to live where there are lakes, ponds, swamps, and marshy areas. They prefer colder climates because of their large bodies, the heat produced in their gut, and because they cannot sweat to cool down.



## PREPARATION

Moose is eaten fresh, dried/smoked, or half-dried/smoked. Meat cut from the legs is often made into dry meat or half-dry salted meat. If the meat is well-dried, it can be eaten as is. Otherwise, it is usually boiled for a short time. Moose meat is sweet and soft, and is considered very good meat, but if not well fed or if the animal suffers a violent struggle before dying, the meat is hardly edible.



## THE HUNT

Moose were traditionally hunted using antler, iron, and steel arrowheads until rifles became readily available. The main hunting season for the bull moose is in the late summer and early fall.



## TEACHING

It is believed, among some First Nations tribes, that you could travel three times as fast and three times as long after a meal of moose.



# MOOSE STEW

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb moose stew meat, cubed
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 12 cups beef broth
- ½ tbsp lemon juice
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- 1 tsp dried parsley
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- ½ ground black pepper
- 4 red potatoes, quartered
- 3 carrots, sliced
- 3 celery stalks, sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 tbsp cornstarch
- 2 tbsp cold water

## DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large pot, cook moose stew meat in olive oil until browned.
2. Add beef broth and stir in lemon juice, bay leaf, Worcestershire sauce, rosemary, parsley, garlic powder, and pepper.
3. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, then cover and simmer for 1 hour.
4. Stir potatoes, carrots, celery, and onions in the pot.
5. Dissolve cornstarch in 2 tbsp cold water and stir into moose stew.
6. Cover and simmer 1 hour or more.

Source: The Alaska Life <https://www.thealaskalife.com/blog/hearty-moose-stew/>

# ELK



**ELK IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:**

**B VITAMINS | VITAMIN B12 | CHOLINE**

**IRON | PROTEIN | ZINC**

Elk meat is lean and low in fat (22%) compared to store bought meats, such as beef, pork and chicken (35-55%).

Elk are also called wapiti, a Cree word that means “light-colored deer.” Elk are the second largest of the deer family, after the moose. A bull (male) elk’s antlers may reach 4 feet (1.2 meters) above its head, so that the animal stands at 9 feet (2.7 meters) tall. Elk prefer open woodlands and share similar environments and habits as the white-tailed deer. Elk are “browsers”, meaning they feed on grasses, sedges, and forbs in the summer and woody growth in the winter months.



Elk were once found across much of North America but extensive hunting and habitat destruction have limited elk to mainly western United States and Canada. Elk are now raised by private ranchers, which allow elk meat to be sold in some grocery stores.



## PREPARATION

Elk meat has a rich, slightly sweet flavor that is milder than other venison like caribou, deer or moose. Elk was often killed and butchered on site and the meat was immediately dried and smoked over fires. The meat was also boiled, roasted, steamed or preserved and stored for winter. The bone marrow was considered a delicacy.



## THE HUNT

Elk were traditionally hunted with the use of bows and arrows, snares, spears, calls, guns, nooses, blinds, decoys, traps on trails, spring-traps, dogs, and pitfalls. Today, guns are mainly used to hunt elk. Communal hunting drives took place to ambush elk and capture them in enclosures, nets, barricades, and between mountains, or send them off cliffs and into water. Generally, younger men and boys, or women and children would act as beaters and drive the elk towards the hunters who waited with arrows to shoot and kill the elk.



## TEACHING

The elk is an animal of great strength, power and stamina. Its main defense is its ability to outrun predators. Elk can sustain a strong pace for great lengths of time. The Anishinaabe believed in connections between themselves and their prey, therefore they asked permission from the spirits before hunting elk. This was done by participating in rituals, fasting, and prayer.

## ELK ROAST BAKED IN FOIL

### INGREDIENTS:

- 3 - 4 lb. Elk Roast
- ½ pkg. of dry onion soup

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Place roast on piece of heavy duty aluminum foil.
3. Sprinkle ½ pkg of dry onion soup over meat.
4. Bring edges of foil together and seal tightly.
5. Place in shallow roasting pan and bake for 2 to 2 ½ hours.

There will be ample juice collected inside foil which can be thickened for gravy.

Source: <https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2012-Diabetes-Traditional-Foods-and-Recipes.pdf>



# WHITE-TAILED DEER



## HABITAT

The white-tailed deer live in southern Canada and on the mainland United States. They are found in urban and suburban areas.



## PREPARATION

Deer meat is called venison. In the past, it was smoked so that it would keep for long periods of time. A small rack with shelves, about 1.5-2 meters tall, would be constructed. The walls of the rack were lined with fir boughs to keep the smoke in. The meat was cut into slabs about 2-3 cm thick and hung over the shelves on the rack. A fire was lit underneath the meat to roast and smoke it. Although smoked meat can be eaten in its dried form, it was often soaked in water over night and then boiled to make ready for eating.



## THE HUNT

Traditional methods of hunting included the use of bows and arrows, spears, clubs, knives, nets, and traps. The major hunts are in the fall time when deer are still fat.



## TEACHING

The Squamish would hunt deer in a way that showed respect for the animals, otherwise, it was believed that they would not be able to kill more animals. They were also obligated to share all the meat and not eat any until they returned to their family, otherwise the deer's spirit would think he was greedy and would not permit him to kill any more deer.

### DEER IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:

**B VITAMINS** **VITAMIN B12** **CHOLINE** **IRON** **PROTEIN** **ZINC**

Deer meat is very lean and has more protein than any other meat. It is also particularly high in iron.

The white-tailed deer is the most common type of deer found on Turtle Island (North America). They are the most nervous and shy of the deer family, running at speeds of up to 30 miles per hour through dense forest. They are good swimmers and can enter large streams and lakes to escape predators. They rely mostly on their sense of smell to escape any danger.

## WINTER VENISON STEW

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 lb stew meat
- 1 can tomatoes
- 1 jar salsa
- 1 bag frozen vegetables
- 1 diced onion or 1 packet onion soup mix

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Put the meat into the bottom of a crockpot and pour the frozen vegetables on top of the meat.
2. Pour over the can of tomatoes, followed by the jar of salsa and onion.
3. Cook on low for 6-7 hours.

Source: Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). Métis Cookbook and Guide to Healthy Living (2nd Edition). Recipe submitted by: Bonnie Turriff

## VENISON SUPREME

### INGREDIENTS:

- Steaks
- Butter
- Cayenne pepper
- Currant jelly

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Cube steaks, remove bone, fat, and membranes.
2. Cook in butter until pink inside.
3. Sprinkle with cayenne pepper.
4. Add currant jelly to taste.
5. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes.

Source: Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). Métis Cookbook and Guide to Healthy Living (2nd Edition). Recipe submitted by: Thomas A. Logan.z

**“Always trim off all the fat and membrane from deer and moose meat. This is where you get the wild or strong taste. Always cut out the tenderloin of a deer or moose before you hang the carcass to age. Otherwise they will turn black and hard. They are so tender they do not have to be aged. They fry up very nicely in butter.” – THOMAS A. LOGAN**



# CARIBOU



## HABITAT

Caribou live in northern Canada in the arctic tundra and subarctic forest regions. In some areas, caribou hunting is managed to help herds increase in size. For that reason, caribou may not be as available to all northerners as in the past.



## PREPARATION

Caribou can be eaten raw, frozen, aged, roasted, dried or made into jerky, sausages, roasts or steaks. Traditionally the flesh was boiled in water-filled wood vessels, in the stomach of a caribou, or in a pit lined with caribou skin. The Inuit ate caribou mostly raw, preferring it slightly fermented. Preserving caribou when it was abundant was important for survival during leaner times.



## THE HUNT

The most active caribou hunting period was late summer to fall, when weather conditions were favorable, the animal was fatter and the hide was considered to be of best quality. Hunting techniques included communal driving into enclosures and bodies of water, or individual or small group stalking, using bows and arrows, spears, lances, daggers and traps such as snares.



## TEACHING

Some cultures believed that caribou and sea mammals were natural enemies and therefore if they were to connect them in death (by preparing, cooking or eating them together) then their spirits would not allow the animals to be caught. Caribou meat could not even be cooked on a fire made with driftwood since it came from the sea.

### CARIBOU IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:

**B VITAMINS** **VITAMIN B12** **CHOLINE** **IRON** **PROTEIN** **ZINC**

Caribou stomach meat is low in fat (14%) compared to store-bought meats, such as beef, pork, chicken (35-55%). Since caribou ate mostly lichens, the meat was very lean. As herbivores, caribou have relatively low concentrations of contaminants compared to marine mammals.

The name caribou comes from the Mi'kmaq word "xalibu", meaning "the one who paws". Caribou is an important part of Northern diets and cultures and has been for generations. Meat, fur and antlers are used, and there is no waste of the caribou. Caribou provide food, clothes, tools, shelter, crafts, fuel, and light. Caribou travel greater distances than any other mammal on Turtle Island (North America), traveling more than 5000 km in a year at speeds of 80 km/hr. Caribou are the only species of deer in which both male and female have antlers.



# CARIBOU STIR FRY

## INGREDIENTS:

- 2 lbs caribou meat
- 4 celery stalks
- 4 carrots
- 1 onion
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 red bell pepper
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 tbsp low-sodium soy sauce
- ground pepper

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Cut meat into thin strips. On another cutting board, cut veggies into similarly sized pieces.
2. Add 2 tbsp oil to wok or large frying pan, turn heat to medium high.
3. Add meat and cook until slightly browned stirring constantly.
4. Add onion and garlic and cook for a couple of minutes, stirring constantly.
5. Add the carrots, celery, and green and red peppers. Cook, stirring constantly for about 10 minutes or until the vegetables are tender, but still slightly crunchy.
6. Add soy sauce and pepper.

# CARIBOU LENTIL SOUP

## INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 lb ground caribou
- 3 large celery stalks, chopped
- 2 large carrots, peeled, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, chopped or 2 tsp garlic powder
- 2  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup dry green lentil, rinsed (or 2 cans 19 oz lentils, drained)
- 4 beef bouillon cubes
- 7 cups water
- 1 28-oz canned tomatoes in juice
- 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground cumin

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat oil in large, heavy pot over medium-high heat. Add caribou, celery, carrots, onion, and garlic.
2. Cook, breaking up caribou with back of fork, until meat is cooked through and beginning to brown, about 15 minutes.
3. Add lentils and stir 1 minute. Add bouillon cubes, water, tomatoes with juice, and cumin. Bring soup to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Make sure bouillon cubes have dissolved. Cover and simmer until lentils are tender, about 35 minutes. (If using canned lentils, add during last 10 minutes of cooking). Season soup with salt and pepper.

Source: Department of Health, Government of Nunavut. (2013). Nutrition Fact Sheet Series: Inuit Traditional Foods.

# SEAL

A photograph of three seals on a rocky, seaweed-covered shore. In the foreground, a light-colored seal with dark spots is lying down, looking towards the camera. Behind it, two darker-colored seals are resting. The background is a blurred view of the ocean and distant land.

**SEAL IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:**

**VITAMIN B12** **VITAMIN D** **OMEGA-3**

**FATTY ACIDS** **IRON** **PROTEIN** **ZINC**

The total amount of fat in seal meat is low (2%) compared to beef, pork and chicken (35-55%).

Seal was the main source of food for many cultures, but particularly for Inuit, Inuvialuit, Yupik and Inupiat. The Nootka considered seal a prized food source. There are six species of seal in Canada: harp, hooded, grey, ringed, bearded and harbor. The seal meat was not only very nutritious, but the fat was also a good source of omega-3 fatty acids which are important for reducing inflammation and risk of heart disease, as well as vitamin D which has a role in immunity and bone health. Seal fat was also used for quilliq (oil lamps) as well as used on the skin for skin rashes.



The ringed seal (netsik) are the smallest and most common seal found in the Arctic. The bearded seal is also found in the Arctic. On the Pacific Coast, the harbor seal is the most common seal and was often found resting on the shore.



## PREPARATION

Seal is eaten raw-fresh, raw-frozen, boiled, broiled, roasted, dried or aged (fermented). Almost all parts of the seal are eaten, such as the meat, blubber, liver, heart, broth, brain, kidney and intestines. Some like to leave the flippers in a pan for about a week covered with fat to protect the meat and eat them this way. Seal fat can be used as a dip for seaweed, fish, or meats such as dried caribou.



## THE HUNT

Seal hunting takes place in the winter and spring (and less often in the summer and fall). Seal was hunted in open waters (usually from kayaks), on sandy or rocky shores, and from ice or floe edges depending on the species, region and season. In the fall, open water begins to freeze. Seals will move seaward keeping in open and ice free waters and create “breathing holes” for the winter. Dogs historically served as hunting animals to locate seal breathing holes in the sea ice. Seals were hunted using harpoons, spears, clubs, bows and arrows, and nets.



## TEACHING

Inuit Elders say that seal is a “special food”. Seal meat and organs keep Inuit healthy and warm. When you eat animals from the sea, this generates body warmth, and you start sweating, even if you’re not exerting yourself.

# SWEET AND SOUR SEAL STIRFRY

For a complete meal, serve with rice!

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tbsp oil
- 2 pounds boneless seal meat, sliced
- 2 large bell peppers, trimmed and sliced
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 small can (19 oz) diced tomatoes
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 tbsp mustard
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- 1 large orange, washed and sliced

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Turn heat to medium high. Heat oil in frying pan. Add seal slices and cook for 5 minutes on each side.
2. Add onion and bell peppers. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring often.
3. Add tomatoes, brown sugar, mustard, and chili powder. Stir until blended. Add orange slices.
4. Turn heat to high. Bring to a boil.
5. Turn heat to medium. Cover and cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

This recipe was adapted from the Arviat Wellness Centre's cooking program.



# RABBIT



## RABBIT IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:

**B VITAMINS** **VITAMIN B12** **IRON** **PROTEIN**

Rabbit is an important traditional food that can be hunted all year round. The two most common rabbits are the cottontail and the jackrabbit. The fur is used for clothing, trim for moccasins, mitts and for crafts. The hides were used for clothing and blankets.



## HABITAT

Rabbits live in grasslands, shrub lands, sagebrush, and a variety of habitats near shrubby cover. In Canada the eastern cottontail is found in southern Ontario, Québec and Manitoba and the Nuttall's cottontail is found in parts of BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Jackrabbit, also known as a Prairie hare, prefers the open dry fields of the Southern Prairies and Okanagan Valley.



## PREPARATION

Rabbit is usually baked, boiled, roasted, or cooked in stews. When there are plenty of rabbit available, rabbits are frozen for later use. Many cultures consumed rabbit lungs, head, eyes, brain, liver, kidneys, paws, and marrow. The meat was often taken off the bones, roasted and pounded, and the bones were also pounded and boiled. The grease that floated to the top was skimmed off to be eaten with the pounded meat.



## THE HUNT

Women and children were often responsible for hunting rabbits, by setting snares around the village and checking them. The Inuit waited for nightfall to catch rabbits while they were eating, using noose snares.



## TEACHING

The Naskapi believed that a child who easily caught rabbit would one day be a good hunter. The feet of the rabbit were often kept as good luck charms.

## BAKED RABBIT

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 rabbit, cut up
- ½ cup lemon juice
- ¾ cup butter
- 2 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. summer savory (or thyme)
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. dry mustard
- ¼ tsp. pepper

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Marinate rabbit in lemon juice for at least three hours in refrigerator.
2. Melt butter in saucepan and add remaining ingredients.
3. Grill rabbit 5 to 7 inches from coals, under medium to high flame.
4. Brush with butter mixture and grill 40-45 minutes, turning frequently until golden brown and tender.

Source: Native Womens Association of Canada: Diabetes Self-Management Toolkit for Aboriginal Women. Traditional Foods & Recipes on the Wild Side and Guide to Healthy Living (2nd Edition). Recipe submitted by: Shirley (Logan).

## RABBIT STEW

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 wild rabbit, cut up
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 can (16 oz.) stewed tomatoes
- 1 ½ cups sliced fresh mushrooms
- 2 tbsp. fresh, snipped parsley
- 1 tsp. dried rosemary leaves
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- ½ cup red wine
- 1 med. Carrots, sliced
- 1 tsp. dried oregano leaves
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper

### DIRECTIONS:

1. In a Dutch oven, heat oil over medium-high heat.
2. Add rabbit pieces, browning on all sides.
3. Remove rabbit pieces with a slotted spoon and set aside.
4. Add onion and shallots to oil, cooking and stirring over medium heat until tender.
5. Add browned rabbit pieces and remaining ingredients. Mix well. Cover.
6. Cook over medium heat until rabbit is tender for 50 minutes to 1 hour, turning rabbit pieces occasionally.

Source: [https://www.mnbc.ca/app/webroot/uploads/Education/Metis\\_Cookbook\\_SecondEdition.pdf](https://www.mnbc.ca/app/webroot/uploads/Education/Metis_Cookbook_SecondEdition.pdf)



# MUSKRAT



**MUSKRAT IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:**

**B VITAMINS VITAMIN B12**

**IRON PROTEIN**

The total amount of fat in muskrat meat is low (17%) compared to beef, pork, and chicken (35-55%).

The muskrat is basically a large field mouse that adapted to life in and around water. The muskrat restores the land after a flood and keeps the rivers and lakes flowing. It is more comfortable in water than on land and can stay underwater for 12-17 minutes. It has a laterally compressed tail that allows it to swim like a fish. Its presence in wetlands is easily spotted by the sighting of cone-shaped lodges made from cattails and other vegetation. Muskrat hide is used for clothing and the fur trim for slippers and mitts.





Musk rats are found in the wetlands and waterways of Canada, such as in lakes, marshes, ponds, rivers, reservoirs, dugouts, and canals.



## PREPARATION

Musk rat can be boiled, baked, roasted, fried or smoked. Musk rat tail is smoked to singe off the outer skin and the tender meat found inside is considered a delicacy. The tails are said to be extremely sweet and could also be fried in sheets of fat, which made them tender and moist. The eyes, brain and tongue were also considered delicacies, and the boiled skull was eaten by some tribes.



## THE HUNT

Musk rat was usually hunted in winter and/or spring. Traps, nets, spears, bows and arrows were used to hunt muskrat. Today, firearms are used often. Muskrats were lured using shellfish as bait, or by mimicking the whining noise of a young muskrat. When travelling on water, some hunters would lure muskrat with a teasing, 'kissing' sound.



## TEACHING

For the Iroquois it was taboo to place a muskrat carcass on the ground after it had been skinned. It was believed that doing so would cause the muskrat to be insulted, resulting in few or no muskrats allowing themselves to be captured.

# MUSKRAT IN THE OVEN

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 muskrat
- 3 small carrots, sliced
- 4 small potatoes, cubes
- 1 small onion, chopped
- ½ cup (125 ml) water

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Skin and clean 1 muskrat. Cut into pieces.
2. Put muskrat in a small roaster with a lid.
3. Add ½ cup (125 ml) water.
4. Cook in oven at 350°F (175°C) for 1 hour.
5. After 1 hour, add the vegetables and ½ cup (125 mL) of water.
6. Cook in oven until vegetables are soft and meat is thoroughly cooked.

Source: Yellowhead Tribal Council, Enoch, AB (2007). Traditional Methods of Canning and Preserving: Recipes and Tips from Alberta's First Nations People. Recipe submitted by: Florence Youngchief and Isabelle Smallface

# GROUSE AND PRAIRIE CHICKEN



**PRAIRIE CHICKEN IS AN EXCELLENT  
SOURCE OF:**

**B VITAMINS** **VITAMIN B12**

**IRON** **PROTEIN**

The prairie chicken is a member of the grouse family. There are two main types of grouse: the ruffed grouse and the sharp-tailed grouse. Hunters call both the ruffed grouse and sharp-tailed grouse a “prairie chicken” or “partridge.” The ruffed grouse is distinct because of its large size, rich colours, and the explosive burst when it takes flight. The ruffed grouse is heard in the bush by the “drumming” sound with its wings, which is meant to attract females and warn off other males. The male ruffed grouse perches itself on a fallen log and makes a low-pitched drumming sound by opening and closing their wings in rapid succession. The thumping starts slow but quickly gains speed, and the rapidly beating wings turn into a complete blur when the drumroll reaches its peak.



The Ruffed Grouse is common throughout most of Canada. They live in the prairies year-round, in forests and woodlands. They do not migrate and will live their lives in a small area, within a few hectares.



## PREPARATION

Prairie chicken was usually plucked and boiled, but sometimes roasted or dried. Prairie chicken can be prepared like regular chicken. It can be eaten baked, fried, slow-cooked, boiled, or in soups. Boiling was the preferred method of cooking Grouse meat, as this created a good broth to drink with the meal.



## THE HUNT

Grouse were hunted at different times of the year, depending on the culture and region. Grouse were trapped with snares and nets; shot with bows and arrows and rifles; or bolas, slingshots, and well-thrown rocks were used. Ruffed Grouse was common fare for the lean months, and was mostly hunted in the fall and winter.

Southern Okanagan and Plains Cree women were responsible for hunting the Sharp-tailed Grouse. Often a noose was hung in front of the bird, and once caught inside the loop, the bird's head was either crushed or cut off.



## TEACHING

Indigenous Peoples called the Ruffed Grouse “the carpenter bird” because they thought it drummed by beating its wings against a log. However, this sound is made by the male bird cupping its wings and rapidly beating them against the air.

# ROAST GROUSE

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 grouse, clean and prepared for roasting
- 2 tbsp finely grated carrot
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 slices bacon or salt pork
- 1 tsp French dressing

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Salt and pepper the inside and outside of the grouse.
2. Stuff the grouse with the grated carrots and 1 tsp of butter.
3. Close up cavity and rub bird with French dressing and lay bacon strips on top.
4. Roast at 350°F for one hour or until tender. Brush the bird with the remaining butter
5. Make gravy from the left over juices.

Source: Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). Métis Cookbook and Guide to Healthy Living (2nd Edition). Recipe submitted by: Elmer Ross



# GOOSE AND DUCK



## GOOSE AND DUCK ARE AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:

**B VITAMINS | VITAMIN B12 | IRON | PROTEIN**

Duck meat is lower in fat (23%) compared to store bought chicken (40%).

Northerners enjoy eating goose because it means the arrival of spring. In early May, geese arrive from the south with plenty of meat and fat. They can travel more than 1000 km in one day. Male geese are referred to as “ganders” and female geese are known as “geese.” The duck is a migratory bird found in the North from about May to September. Common Eiders are ducks that live year-round in some arctic locations but most ducks are only available from spring to fall.



## HABITAT

Geese prefer open, grassy areas, near bodies of water like ponds, marshes, rivers or coastlines. Ducks live in wetlands, sloughs, open marshes, rivers, and lakes.



## PREPARATION

After living on dried food over winter, barbecued duck was a welcomed treat. This marked the beginning of the fresh food cycle. In fall, when the ducks are fat, the oil was a desired condiment for berries or meat. Duck eggs were often consumed and enjoyed by many cultures from west to east and were gathered when available in spring to summer.



## THE HUNT

Geese are readily hunted in fall and spring when they are migrating southward and northward, respectively. Geese were hunted using bows and arrows or bird darts (three-pronged spears made with spruce with a head made of walrus ivory) or caught with nets. Ducks were typically hunted during spring and summer molting seasons, when the birds were unable to fly due to losing their feathers. Weapons that were used were bows and arrows, bird darts, spears, bolas, slings, and bare hands. Today, firearms are commonly used to hunt geese and duck.



## TEACHING

The Mallard duck was revered for its intelligence. Yukon cultures have said that this bird is as smart as a mountain sheep, and nearly as clever as a beaver. Goose hunters from the Upper Kutenai ventured out in the morning on an empty stomach. Spirits were said to have warned them not to eat breakfast and it was thought that a full stomach would make them less aware of danger.

# GOOSE SOUP

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Canada Goose, cut into parts
- 2 cups dry navy beans, rinsed (or another type)
- 1 onion, diced
- Any vegetables you have, diced (carrots, celery, roots, turnip, squash, etc.)
- Salt and pepper to taste

## DIRECTIONS:

1. If you are using a freshly hunted goose you will need to pluck, sing, gut, and remove the head, wings, and feet to prepare it for the pot. If you are using a frozen goose, make sure it is thawed enough to cut into parts.
2. Place the goose parts and the onion into a large pot of water so that the pot is nearly full. Put a lid on the pot and bring it to a boil.
3. Meanwhile rinse the navy beans with cold water and add to the pot once it has come to a rolling boil. Cover, reduce heat and simmer until the beans are soft (can almost poke a fork through one). This should take about 4 hours.
4. While the goose and beans are simmering prepare the vegetables by cutting them into pieces that are relatively the same size to allow for even cooking time. If you know a vegetable takes longer to cook than the rest you can add it earlier. Add the vegetables and boil until tender.
5. Feel free to add salt and pepper as needed or leave as is and people can add their own to their liking.
6. Let the soup rest for a while to cool down.

Source: <http://iffculture.ca/recipe/goose-soup/>

# DUCK SOUP

**NOTE:** Amounts of the ingredients will depend on how many people you need to feed

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 duck, cut into pieces
- 4 to 6 cups of chopped soup vegetables (carrots, onion, potato, celery, etc.)
- 3 tbsp of flour or cornstarch

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Wash all vegetables in clean water to remove microorganisms and dirt and cut up potatoes, diced carrots, onions or use frozen vegetables.
2. Cut up duck into chunks and place them in a large pot.
3. Add water. Cook duck in a pot for 25-30 minutes. (Younger ducks will take less time to cook.)
4. Add vegetables and boil until soft.
5. Skim fat off top.
6. In separate bowl, take  $\frac{1}{2}$  -  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (125-187 ml) of cold water and add 3 tbsp (45 ml) of flour. Mix well to make thin paste. (You can also add crushed rolled oats instead of flour.) Make sure there are no lumps. Add the mixture to the soup, stirring constantly. Cook until soup thickens. You can adjust the amount of flour and water you add, depending on how thick or thin you want the soup.

Source: Yellowhead Tribal Council, Enoch, AB (2007). Traditional Methods of Canning and Preserving: Recipes and Tips from Alberta's First Nations People. Recipe submitted by: Delphine Williams





# FISH

**FISH IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:**

**VITAMIN A** **B VITAMINS** **VITAMIN B12**

**CHOLINE** **VITAMIN D** **IODINE**

**OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS** **PROTEIN**

Fish are high in protein and low in saturated fat. Many types of fish are also good sources of omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin D.

It is recommended for people to eat fish about 2 to 3 times per week. People are encouraged to eat fish often mainly because it contains omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are an “essential” nutrient, meaning the body cannot make this nutrient on its own, and it must come from the diet. This nutrient is a healthy fat that reduces inflammation; helps the heart and blood work properly; promotes healthy growth. Many varieties of fish continue to be an important part of the diet in many Indigenous communities.



**Eastern Canada:** cod, haddock, Atlantic salmon, eel

**Central Canada:** lake trout, pickerel (walleye), pike, whitefish, smelts

**Northern Canada:** Arctic char, walleye (pickerel), cisco, tullibee, loche, burbot, pike, jackfish, whitefish, lake trout, inconnu, grayling, suckers, coni, cod, herring, sculpin

**Western Canada:** salmon, halibut, ooligan, cod, herring



## PREPARATION

Traditionally, no edible part of the fish was wasted, including the flesh, head, eyes, offal (edible internal organs), bones, and eggs. The flesh can be eaten raw, frozen, boiled, roasted, smoked, and dried. Fish eggs are enjoyed fresh and many say eating them is like they are “eating a million fish”. Fish eggs can be added to bannock.



## THE CATCH

If people were tired of dried fish during the winter, fishing under the ice was the only way they could catch fresh fish. Rocks heated in the fireplace were used for making the holes in the ice. They had the usual sites for these holes. A hook made of a dried willow fork, with bait attached to a length of willow bark was lowered, and held there with some jigging once in a while until there was a bite. Other ways that fish were caught through the ice were by lowering nets through the holes or by placing traps in the water at different depths, depending on what was being caught.

Various types of tools were used on the coast to catch fish – this includes traps made from baskets, or clubs, spears, fish hooks, nets. Harpoons with detachable barbed heads were also used, with the shaft made from cedar or fir, and the head from iron wood with points made from bone or antler. Night fishing was done in canoes, with a spear and torch.



## TEACHING

Coastal First Nations have their own stories around salmon, which help preserve their cultures and teach future generations to respect the Salmon People. Traditional legends warn people not to be greedy and over-fish the water for commercial purposes, but instead maintain their traditions and natural resources by appreciating and living in harmony with the Salmon People.

# SALMON CAKES

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup poached and shredded chinook salmon
- ¼ cup finely chopped celery leaves
- 1 large shallot, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp finely chopped parsley
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tbsp mayonnaise
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 2 tbsp hazelnuts, finely ground
- 2 tbsp olive oil or butter for frying

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Mix all ingredients except hazelnuts and oil in a bowl.
2. Shape about 2 tbsp of mixture into a patty
3. Roll patty in finely ground hazelnut
4. Fry the patties in olive oil or butter

Source: Salish Country Cookbook – Traditional Foods & Medicines from the Pacific Northwest

# SEAFOOD

## SEAFOOD IS A GOOD SOURCE OF:

**VITAMIN A** **VITAMIN B12** **CHOLINE** **IODINE** **IRON**

**OMEGA-3** **PROTEIN** **ZINC**

Seafood continues to be an important part of coastal Indigenous diets. Seafood is high in important nutrients including zinc, which is essential during growth, repair and wound healing, and omega-3 fatty acids which are important for heart health and inflammation. Some commonly eaten seafood includes clams, mussels, crab, cockles, oysters, scallops as well as sea urchins.



## HABITAT

Many different types of seafood can be harvested in the intertidal zone including chiton, clams scallops, mussels, oysters, squid, octopus, sea urchins and gooseneck barnacles.



## PREPARATION

Mussels and clams were consumed raw, boiled, steamed, roasted or dried. Roasted clams were made into clam cakes with berries. Cockles were eaten raw and oysters were eaten boiled or steamed. Crabs were roasted on a fire, steamed or boiled. Chitons were eaten raw, dried, soaked, steamed, with animal fat or roasted on a fire. Sea urchins were mostly eaten raw.



## THE CATCH

Clams and mussels were an important food when others were in short supply. Clams were collected from the intertidal zone during low or ebb tides, and were dug using sticks made of yew. Clams were normally carried back to camps in cedar baskets, similar to the ones used for crabs, with holes allowing water and sand to drain out. The Mi'kmaq collected squid by lighting bonfires at high tide, luring them to the beach where they would get stranded and be easily gathered when the tide went out.



## TEACHING

The Coast Salish myth which is meant to warn children from digging clams with the tide is too high tells that the maiden of the seas, who watched over the fishermen and warned them of danger, was once a young girl who was caught by the clam people. She became a clam-person when she got stuck digging for clams when the tide came in.

## HERRING ROE ON KELP WITH GARLIC

### INGREDIENTS:

- ½ lb herring roe on kelp, thawed (previously frozen)
- 2 tbsp butter or margarine
- 1 tbsp garlic powder

### DIRECTIONS:

1. In a frying pan, on high heat, melt butter and mix in garlic powder.
2. Add Roe on Kelp, and cook for about 15 to 30 seconds on each side.

Source: First Nations Health Authority Traditional Foods Fact Sheets: Adapted from Winnie Anderson (Winner of

## STEAMED CRAB

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 dozen crabs
- 1 large crab pot with a good lid
- Pinch of salt
- Water

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Add 1 inch of water to the crab pot. (Note: The crabs will add more liquid, and the crabs will cook in its own juice).
2. Add crabs, and a pinch of salt.
3. Bring to the water to a boil, and steam crabs for 15 to 20 minutes.

Source: First Nations Health Authority Traditional Foods Fact Sheets: Harry Hunchitt (Fort Rupert)



# SEAWEED



**SEAWEED IS HIGH IN:**

**FIBRE FOLATE IODINE IRON**

**MAGNESIUM PROTEIN**

Seaweeds are full of nutrients and all types contain a rich supply of minerals, such as magnesium, iodine and iron as well as some vitamins including B-vitamins. Seaweed is also low in calories and fat while being high in fibre.

Seaweed (also called algae) has been an important coastal food for thousands of years. There are many types of seaweed that look and taste different, and offer different nutrients. There are three main types of seaweed: red laver, giant kelp, and dulse. Seaweed has been used to help with indigestion. There are no poisonous seaweeds in the Pacific Northwest, however some have a rather terrible flavour. Red lavers were the most commonly eaten seaweeds along the West Coast of Canada and were used traditionally by almost all coastal Peoples.



Seaweeds are plants that have adapted to tolerate salt-water, and they are almost always found growing in shallow waters just off shore where land meets sea.



## PREPARATION

Seaweed can be dried for long-term use by laying in the full sun for 4-10 hours, being sure to bring the seaweed in at night so it does not absorb dew.

The large, textured fronds of Giant Kelp are often used by herring as a spawning surface in the Spring. About two days after spawning, the spawned eggs on kelp can be harvested at low tide from canoes. The fronds are usually eaten together with the spawn.

Red Laver seaweed was prepared in many different ways. This included making 'cakes' which were then boiled or used in soups and stews. It was also toasted in individual sheets on a rack over the fire.



## THE HARVEST

Collect seaweed from clean waters in early spring to early summer. Red lavers were harvested during their young growing stage in the Spring, usually around May. Older plants are too tough to be eaten.

It is helpful to get information about water quality from locals in the area or ecology and health departments. Always cut seaweed with scissors, this allows the plant to be able to grow again.



## TEACHING

Carrier and Tsilhqot'in peoples have reportedly used it as a medicine for when one has a swollen neck due to an enlarged thyroid gland. We now know that seaweed is helpful for thyroid health due to its iodine content.

# PICKLED BULL KELP

## INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups bull kelp stripes – fresh, with outer skin peeled off, cut into rings
- 1 tbsp mixed pickling spice
- 8 cloves garlic
- 1 japapeno pepper, thinly sliced (or use 1 tsp red pepper flakes)
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 cup sugar

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Peel and slicing the bull kelp stripe into ½ inch rings.
2. Soak the bull kelp rings in fresh water for 3 days, changing the water several times per day.
3. On the fourth day, put spices into a cheesecloth bag and simmer in white vinegar and sugar for 5 minutes. Remove, then bring to a boil.
4. Put kelp, garlic, and jalapeno into sterilized jars.
5. Pour boiling syrup over top.
6. Put the lids on loosely and then process jars in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes to sterilize.
7. The kelp is best if left to stand for a week.

Source: Barb Beasley Camus - West Coast Cooking nuu-chah-nulth style Cookbook

# WILD RICE

## WILD RICE IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF:

**ANTIOXIDANTS** **FIBRE** **FOLATE** **MAGNESIUM** **ZINC**

Wild rice is a healthy carbohydrate that is higher in protein (builds and repairs our muscles, skin and blood) and fibre (lowers blood sugar levels) than white rice and will help you feel full longer. Wild rice is also higher in antioxidants than regular white rice, which can help protect us from certain diseases and keep us healthy.

Wild rice is an important part of the history and tradition of the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) people in the prairies. In the Ojibwe language, the word “man-o-min” derives from Manitou (the Great Spirit) and meenun (delicacy). Wild rice is not a part of the rice family at all. It is a grass that grows in shallow, slow moving water near the shores of lakes, rivers and streams.



## HABITAT

True wild rice is indigenous to northwestern Ontario, southwestern Manitoba, northern Minnesota, and in the cold lakes of Saskatchewan. Wild rice is found mainly along the shores of rivers and streams in shallow water, where it often forms dense, continuous beds. It also occurs along lakeshores, though less abundant.



## PREPARATION

Wild rice was prepared and served in many ways. Often it was cooked in soups, or boiled with meat, fish, roe, or with blueberries or other fruits. The cooked grain was also eaten plain, boiled or steamed, and eaten with sweets such as maple sugar.



## THE HARVEST

The traditional method of harvesting rice was to paddle a canoe through the wild rice stands, and with sticks or paddles sweep the tall grass-like stalks inside the canoe so that the grain would separate and drop to the bottom. Then the green rice was brought to shore and roasted to a shiny brownish black over an open fire. (This step is called parching). The rice would be placed in blankets or baskets where someone would “dance” or “jig” on it to separate the rice from the husk. Finally, the rice would be tossed in the air so the wind could blow away the husk. This step is called winnowing.



## TEACHING

Manomin is traditionally used in many ceremonies and feasts. Every fall (late September to early October) during the wild rice moon, Ojibwe families would gather in their canoes and set out for the lakes to hand harvest the wild rice. During this harvest, a ceremony was done to give thanks to the Great Spirit for the gift of wild rice.



## WILD RICE CASSEROLE

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ¼ cups of uncooked wild rice
- 2 tsp of salt
- 1/2 tsp of thyme leaves
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 3 cups of water
- 2 tbsp of butter

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat oven to 350°F.
2. In a 2-quart casserole, combine all ingredients.
3. Bake covered at 350°F. for 1-1/4 to 1 -1/2 hours or until rice is tender, stirring occasionally during last half hour.
4. Option to add 1 cup of frozen vegetables.

Source: <https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2012-Diabetes-Traditional-Foods-and-Recipes.pdf>

## WILD RICE STUFFING

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup wild rice
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup diced celery
- ¼ cup instant minced onion
- ½ cup butter or margarine, melted
- 1 small can mushrooms or 1/3 lb. of fresh mushrooms
- ⅓ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp sage
- ¼ tsp thyme

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Prepare the wild rice by adding it to a medium-sized saucepan with the chicken broth and bringing it to a boil. Once it is boiling, turn down the heat to medium and leave the lid half on, allowing it to simmer for about 45 minutes or until rice is fully cooked.
2. Saute the celery, onions and mushrooms (if using fresh mushrooms) in butter for 2-3 minutes. Combine this with the rice and the seasonings.
3. This will stuff a 10-pound turkey

Source: <https://nativeharvest.com/blogs/news/native-harvest-wild-rice-recipes>



# CORN



## CORN IS HIGH IN:

**B-VITAMINS** **FIBRE** **PHOSPHOROUS**

The plains First Nations began the horticulture of corn between the years of 800 and 1200 CE (AD). Corn was an important staple that allowed for a stable and plentiful food source and allowed for trade. When corn was grown alongside beans and squash, these were known as the “Three Sisters”. This symbiotic triad was always be planted together – the corn is a heavy nitrogen feeder, while beans are nitrogen “fixers,” bringing atmospheric nitrogen into the soil with the help of symbiotic bacteria. Corn provides structure to the trailing bean plants, while squash plants reduce weeds and shade the soil.





Cultivated corn originated in Central America thousands of years ago. It occurs in Canada only under cultivation, although it sometimes escapes to roadsides, as in southern British Columbia, southern Ontario, and southwestern Quebec. Corn was an important source of carbohydrates and fibre in a protein heavy diet.



## PREPARATION

Corn was a staple to some Indigenous Peoples and was being prepared in as many as 40 different ways. It was mainly used in bread making, but also in soups, puddings, was roasted, parched for travelling, or eaten green, on the cob or in soup or bread. Roasted corn was also used to make a coffee-like beverage. The stalks were sometimes chewed as thirst quenchers.



## THE HARVEST

Before planting the corn, the grains were soaked in herbal solutions made from reed grass. The corn seeds were planted in rows using various types of hoes for digging. The ears of ripened corn were harvested into baskets, then shelled, leaving only a few husks for braiding the ears into long strings for drying.



## TEACHING

Corn, beans, and squash were known as the "Three Sisters" by the Iroquois and were planted each year with great ceremony by the women. The seeds of the beans and squash, and sometimes sunflower, were planted together with the corn and the beans would grow up the cornstalks. Prayers were offered and ceremonies performed throughout the growing season

# TWO INGREDIENT CORN PATTIES

## INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups water
- ¼-½ tsp salt
- 1 cup coarse cornmeal or polenta
- 1 tbsp olive oil

## DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large saucepan, bring water and salt to a boil. Once the water is boiling, slowly whisk in the cornmeal.
2. Continue to stir to make sure there are no lumps. Reduce the heat to a simmer, and stir regularly to prevent sticking to the bottom of the saucepan. Cook until the cornmeal is thick or about 30 minutes.
3. Let the cornmeal cool for about 15 minutes. Heat a frying pan over medium-high heat and add the oil.
4. Take an ice-cream scoop size of the cornmeal mixture into the palm of one hand, and toss it back and forth with the other hand until a slightly flattened patty shape is formed. Cook the patties for about 5 minutes on the first side, then flip over and cook for an additional 3-4 minutes.
5. Keep the patties warm in the oven until they are ready to serve.
6. Top with desired toppings such as smoked salmon, pesto, sliced avocado or a fried egg.

Source: [www.theconsciousdietitian.com/all-recipes/corn-patties/](http://www.theconsciousdietitian.com/all-recipes/corn-patties/)





# SASKATOON BERRIES

**LIKE OTHER BERRIES,  
THE SASKATOON IS A GOOD SOURCE OF:**

**ANTIOXIDANTS** **VITAMIN C** **CALCIUM**

**FIBRE**

The Canadian name for the Saskatoon comes from the Cree name for these berries, “misaskatomina”. In the United States, they are known as service berries. These sweet fruits are still very important to the diet of many Indigenous Peoples across Canada. Indigenous groups in the prairies used saskatoons as an important trade item with early explorers and fur traders. The sweeter types of fruits such as Saskatoon berries were the primary sources of sweetness in the diet, and were sometimes used to enhance the flavor of other foods.

Some other berries found across Canada include blackberries, blueberries, cranberries, currants, gooseberries, huckleberries, raspberries, salal berries, salmonberries, soapberries, strawberries and thimbleberries.



Saskatoons grow at low to middle elevations in prairies, thickets, hillsides, and dry, rocky shorelines, meadows, open woods throughout the prairie provinces. They are found in open areas where the plants have access to sunlight but can also be found in forests.



## PREPARATION

Saskatoon berries were eaten fresh, alone or with oil. Often they were mixed with other, less palatable berries as a sweetener, such as soapberry within in British Columbia. In the Interior, Carrier people ate highbush cranberries and Saskatoon berries mixed with bear grease. They were also added to pemmican, soups and stews.

Dehydration, by sun, wind, or heating over a fire, was a very common and widespread method for storing berries for later use. Berries were preserved without dehydration for considerable periods. They were stored in containers or buried in underground caches. Today, the berries are commonly used like blueberries in pies, pancakes, puddings, muffins, jams, jellies, sauces, and syrups.



## THE HARVEST

Saskatoons are in season in the summer, from July to August. They are harvested simply by pulling the fruit off the branches. The fruit is blue-purple when ripe and round. It's important to clean and share your harvest.



## TEACHING

Saskatoons were traditionally used as a medicine. The juice was taken to relieve stomach upset and was also boiled to make drops to treat earache; dried berries were used to make eye drops. The fruits were given to mothers after childbirth for afterpains and were also prescribed as a blood remedy.

# SASKATOON BERRY OAT CRUMBLE

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup Saskatoon Berries
- 1 cup apples, core removed and diced (or 2 apples)
- ¼ cup shredded unsweetened coconut (optional)
- ¼ cup oat flour\*
- ¼ cup sugar or honey
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 cup rolled oats
- Plain yogurt (optional), to serve

\*oat flour is made by blending oats in a blender, you can also purchase oat flour.

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. In a bowl toss the berries, apple, oat flour, oats, melted butter, cinnamon and sugar or honey.
3. Spread the mixture out evenly on the baking sheet pan.
4. Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes, tossing half way.
5. Remove and serve immediately on top of plain yogurt.

Source: [www.theconsciousdietitian.com](http://www.theconsciousdietitian.com)



# NUTS & SEEDS



**NUTS & SEEDS ARE A GOOD SOURCE OF:**

**ANTIOXIDANTS** **B-VITAMINS** **FIBRE**

**MAGNESIUM** **PROTEIN**

Studies have shown that eating just one serving of nuts per day (about ¼ cup) five times per week, is associated with about a 20% decrease in risk of heart disease and coronary artery disease.

Nuts and seeds are a delicious snack and are a good source of protein, heart healthy fats and fibre. Certain species of hazelnuts and walnuts are native to Canada and were widely eaten. Other nuts that are commonly consumed today include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts and pistachios. Some seeds include chia seeds, flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds and sunflower seeds.





Hazelnuts are found along the coast in moist, shaded woods, or inland in open areas. American hazelnut is found in southern Manitoba to southwest Quebec, and to the south. Beaked hazelnut is transcontinental in distribution, occurring from British Columbia to Newfoundland, and south.



## PREPARATION

Hazelnuts were eaten raw and fresh, they were also boiled in soups, or dried and stored for winter. The Iroquois cooked the meats of hazelnuts and other types of nuts with hominy and corn soup, ground them and mixed them in puddings and breads, and boiled them to obtain their oil, which was skimmed off and used with bread, potatoes, pumpkin, squash, corn, and other foods.



## THE HARVEST

Hazelnuts were usually harvested from late August to October, and stored until completely ripe. The prickly husks of beaked hazelnut were sometimes removed by burying the nuts in damp ground for up to ten days or placing a sack of them in a hole and pounding them with a pole. Caches of the nuts made by squirrels and other small mammals were also sought.



## TEACHING

Within the memory of contemporary Elders, the wild nuts were especially used around Christmas time, and were relished by children. One Pemberton Lillooet woman remembered picking “sacks and sacks full” when she was a girl (Turner et al. unpubl. notes, 1987). In addition to a food source, the young shoots of the hazelnut bush was also used for making arrows.

## HAZELNUT CAKES

Serves 4

### INGREDIENTS:

- ½ pound hazelnuts, finely ground
- 1 egg
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- ¼ tsp vanilla extract
- 1 cup fresh berries to top

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 400° F
2. Mix all ingredients in a bowl into a batter
3. Pour batter into a parchment covered shallow round pan.
4. Bake in preheated oven for 10-15 minutes.

NOTE: Add a little cool water if you want these thinner.  
Top with fresh strawberries, raspberries or black cherries.

Source: Salish Country Cookbook – Traditional Foods & Medicines from the Pacific Northwest

# MAPLE SYRUP



**MAPLE SYRUP IS A GOOD SOURCE OF:**

**CALCIUM** **MAGNESIUM** **MANGANESE**

**POTASSIUM** **ZINC**

**MAPLE SYRUP IS HEALTHIER THAN**

**TABLE SYRUP.** Table syrup is processed from high-fructose corn syrup and flavorings, such as butterscotch, caramel and vanilla, to make it taste more like maple syrup. Be sure to buy 100% Pure Maple Syrup.

Pure maple syrup has the same beneficial compounds found in berries, tomatoes, tea, whole wheat and flaxseed. Pure maple syrup does not cause the same spike in blood insulin levels as some other sugars, according to a recent study. Therefore, substituting sugar for maple syrup can be beneficial for people with diabetes.

Canada produces about 85% of the world's pure maple syrup, most of which is produced in Quebec. Maple syrup is a natural sweetener, free of any coloring or additives. It is rich in antioxidants, which can work to help reduce our risk of certain diseases. The nutrients in maple syrup are greater than other common sweeteners such as honey, sugar, and brown sugar.



## HABITAT

Canada's maple syrup is produced in the eastern provinces of Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. In Canada, the red maple and sugar maple are the two trees that maple syrup is made from. Sugar maple trees tend to grow at higher elevations (greater than 300m) while red maple trees tend to grow at lower elevations.



## PREPARATION

Pure Canadian maple syrup can be used in a variety of dishes from savory to sweet and breakfast to dinner. Haudenosaunee tradition tells of the piercing of the bark of a maple and the use of its "sweet water" to cook venison.



## THE HARVEST

The sap from maple trees is gathered over 12 to 20 days, usually between early March and late April, according to the region. The sap is then boiled down to get rid of some of the water and concentrate its flavor and sweetness. It takes 40 litres of sap to make one litre of syrup. Traditionally trees were tapped by cutting v-shaped patterns into the bark or by inserting basswood or willow tubes into the tree. Birch-bark bowls were placed beneath the tap to catch the watery sap.



## TEACHING

Canada's Indigenous Peoples taught early settlers how to harvest the sap and boil it to make maple syrup. Maple sugar was the first kind of sugar produced in eastern North America. The Anishinaabe called the "sugaring off" period when sap was collected the "maple moon" or "sugar month."

## MAPLE SYRUP IN COOKING

- Use pure maple syrup as a healthy sugar alternative in baked goods and desserts:
- For every 1 cup of granulated white sugar, substitute  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup of maple syrup
- Reduce the quantity of liquid ingredients in the recipe (water, milk, juice) by about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup
- Lower the baking temperature by 25°F
- Maple syrup can also serve as a one-to-one substitution for other liquid sweeteners, such as honey, molasses, and corn syrup.

### WAYS YOU CAN USE MAPLE SYRUP:

- Pancakes, waffles, french toast, crepes
- Whisk it into salad dressing
- Sweeten whipped cream
- Stir it into oatmeal or porridge
- Roast tomatoes
- Toss your favorite root vegetable with maple syrup before roasting for extra caramelization
- Drizzle it on yogurt
- Make maple butter
- Sweeten coffee or tea
- Flavor frosting
- Drizzle it over ice cream
- Add to mashed sweet potatoes or squash
- Make candied nuts
- Drizzle it over pork or chicken before roasting
- Make honey mustard
- Make granola
- Add to smoothies or milkshakes

More great recipes can be found at: [www.purecanadamaple.com/maple-syrup-recipes/](http://www.purecanadamaple.com/maple-syrup-recipes/)  
Source: [www.epicurious.com/ingredients/how-to-cook-with-maple-syrup-article](http://www.epicurious.com/ingredients/how-to-cook-with-maple-syrup-article)



# REFERENCES

Without the published works of traditional foods and plants that exist today, this resource would not be possible.

NIDA would like to acknowledge these resources.

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. (n.d.) Canadian Maple Syrup. Retrieved from <https://www5.agr.gc.ca/resources/prod/Internet-Internet/MISB-DGSIM/CB-MC/PDF/4689-eng.pdf>
- Andrews, T. (2012). Animal Speak: The Spiritual & Magical Powers of Creatures Great & Small.
- Animal Diversity Web. (2014). Retrieved from <http://animaldiversity.org/>
- Canadian Wildlife Federation. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.hww.ca/en/wildlife/mammals/muskrat.html?referrer=>
- Canadian Encyclopedia. (2015). Indigenous Peoples: Arctic. Retrieved from <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people-arctic/>
- Chambers & Karst. (2012). Wild Berries of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Lone Pine Publishers: Edmonton, Alberta
- Department of Health, Government of Nunavut. (2013). Nutrition Fact Sheet Series: Inuit Traditional Foods.
- Dietitians of Canada. (2016). Indigenous Recipes. Retrieved from <http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-A-Z/Cooking/Indigenous-Recipes.aspx>
- Dietitians of Canada. (2016). Eat Right Ontario. Retrieved from <https://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/default.aspx>
- Ecology North, Department of Health and Social Services. (2014). Traditional Food Fact Sheet Series.
- Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.purecanadamaple.com/>
- First Nations Health Authority. First Nations Traditional Food Fact Sheets retrieved from [http://www.fnha.ca/wellnessContent/Wellness/Traditional\\_Food\\_Facts\\_Sheets.pdf](http://www.fnha.ca/wellnessContent/Wellness/Traditional_Food_Facts_Sheets.pdf)
- Food Matters Manitoba. (2016). Northern Sun, Stories of Growing and Gathering
- Food Matters Manitoba. (2013). Manitoba Traditional Foods Initiative Planning and Resource Development Project. Retrieved from [https://www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/OFOHOC\\_Trad-Foods\\_report-2013-online.pdf](https://www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/OFOHOC_Trad-Foods_report-2013-online.pdf)
- Food Matters Manitoba. (2015). Standing Medicine: A Guide to Common Medicines Found in South Central Manitoba. Retrieved from [http://www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/SMPbooklet\\_readerspreads.pdf](http://www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/SMPbooklet_readerspreads.pdf)
- Food Safety Network. (2009). Safe Preparation and Storage of Aboriginal Traditional/Country Foods: A Review. Retrieved from [http://www.ncceh.ca/sites/default/files/Aboriginal\\_Foods\\_Mar\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ncceh.ca/sites/default/files/Aboriginal_Foods_Mar_2009.pdf)
- Health Canada. (1994). Native Foods and Nutrition: An illustrated reference manual.
- Indian Country Media Network. (2017). Five foods natives hunted before Europeans. Retrieved from <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/07/10/5-foods-natives-hunted-europeans-155752>
- Indigenous Food First. (2016). Retrieved from <http://iffculture.ca/recipes/>
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. (2016). Arctic Wildlife. Retrieved from <https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Arctic-Wildlife.pdf>
- Kagume, K. (2010). Saskatchewan and Manitoba Nature Guide. Lone Pine Publishers: Edmonton, Alberta
- Kuhnlein, Harriet & Turner, Nancy (1991). Traditional Plant Foods of Canadian Indigenous Peoples: Nutrition, Botany and Use. Gordon and Breach Science Publishers.
- Kuhnlein, Harriet & Humphries, M. (n.d.) Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment. Traditional Animal Foods of Indigenous Peoples of Northern North America: The Contributions of Wildlife Diversity to the Subsistence and Nutrition of Indigenous Cultures. Retrieved from: <http://traditionalanimalfoods.org/>
- Medical Services Branch Health and Welfare Canada. Indian Food. A Cookbook of Native Foods from British Columbia.
- Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). Métis Cookbook and Guide to Healthy Living (2nd Edition). Recipe submitted by: **Elmer Ross, Shirley (Logan), Bonnie Turriff**. Retrieved from [http://www.naho.ca/documents/Métiscentre/english/Cookbook\\_SecondEdition.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/documents/Métiscentre/english/Cookbook_SecondEdition.pdf)
- National Geographic.(n.d.) Elk. Retrieved from: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/elk/>
- Native Women's Association of Canada. (n.d.) Diabetes Self-Management Toolkit for Aboriginal Women: Traditional Foods & Recipes on the Wild Side. Retrieved from: <https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2012-Diabetes-Traditional-Foods-and-Recipes.pdf>
- Okkumaluk, Leonard. (2009). Perspective of an Inuit Hunter. Retrieved from <http://www.thesealfishery.com/articleView.php?id=60&page=0&sub=1&status=0>
- Yellowhead Tribal Council, Enoch, AB (2007). Traditional Methods of Canning and Preserving: Recipes and Tips from Alberta's First Nations People. Recipes submitted by: **Florence Youngchief, Isabelle Smallface, Delphine Williams**
- Wild Rice: <http://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org/sites/default/files/resources/Vol%2012%20The%20Name%20of%20the%20Grain.pdf>
- Nutritional Information: [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt\\_formats/pdf/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/nvscf-vnqau-eng.pdf](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt_formats/pdf/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/nvscf-vnqau-eng.pdf)

The National Indigenous Diabetes Association  
envisions diabetes-free healthy communities.



National  
Indigenous  
Diabetes  
Association

Association  
Nationale  
Autochtone  
<sup>du</sup>  
Diabète

[www.nada.ca](http://www.nada.ca)

