Ancestral Eating

12 Months of Cooking with Indigenous Foods

A Well For Culture + Bad River collaboration
**Introduction**

Learning how to cook with ancestral Indigenous foods is the first step toward reclaiming holistic health and wellness. Consistent healthy eating requires learning how to utilize the foods that are most beneficial to our health. Cooking with ancestral, Indigenous ingredients (such as wild rice, wild game and berries) improves our wellness in three ways: mentally, physically and spiritually.

Ancestral eating is a cultural activity. It is a way to connect with the lifestyle and traditions of our ancestors by bringing the spiritual connection of food to a contemporary setting. Ancestral eating is also a family activity. Cooking, eating, and preparing healthy, delicious foods is a fun and exciting activity for people of all ages. It is also a spiritual activity. Indigenous people have always revered their foods for their life-giving nourishment. Incorporating traditional foods into the modern lifestyle is the perfect way to rebuild this spiritual connection to our food and to the earth.

Whether you cook with ancestral foods frequently or have never tried them out, this recipe series will be a diverse new look into a re-Indigenized diet.

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**Recipe Book Summary**

This cooking class guide is separated monthly. Each month will include one recipe to and will be appropriate for the season. This cooking class guide should be used in accompaniment with the "Mino Wiisinidaa! Let's Eat Good! Traditional Foods for Healthy Living" cookbook and the "Recipe" section on wellforculture.com.

Each class will include a fun fact or healthy eating tip related to one or more of the foods or ingredients included.
Before You Begin: Tips for Holistic Wellness

Be sure to read and review the introductory pages of the “Mino Wiisinidaa! (Let’s Eat Good!) cookbook of traditional foods for healthy living. In these pages you will find comprehensive information about harvesting, foraging, food safety, storage tips, and defrosting. Do not overlook these critical steps to a healthy kitchen / cooking!

The purpose of this cooking class will be to learn how to eat and prepare healthy foods. Congratulate yourself for being on the path to a healthier lifestyle. You’re doing great! Seeking knowledge and actively pursuing better food practices is the first step, which you’ve already accomplished by being here and reading this.

Now, remember that healthy eating is one component of holistic wellness. Holistic wellness refers to overall wellness - mind, body, and spirit.

If approached holistically, healthy eating in and of itself can comprise all of the steps for holistic wellness: physical activity and spirituality are both involved in the preparation, harvesting, planting, gathering, cooking and serving of foods. Healthy foods and the processes involved also offer mental and emotional rewards.

In addition to all of the holistic wellness benefits that will come with a healthy food lifestyle, it is important to also approach physical, mental, and spiritual health in other ways. Staying in balance and putting energy toward all four components of health will be the key to a healthy and happy existence.

Approach physical wellness through exercise, sports, athletics, dancing, ceremonies, fishing, hunting, and any other outdoor activity.

Approach mental wellness through reading, visiting with elders, visiting with children and family, learning your Native language, spending less time with electronics / social media / TV and more time in real world conversation and activity.

Approach spiritual wellness in whatever way you deem appropriate for your beliefs and personal journey. Remember that spirituality is a part of everything that we do, and it is not reserved for ceremony or church. Do all things with spirituality in mind.

For more tips and tricks regarding all components of wellness, please visit wellforculture.com
INGREDIENTS: 1 C Manoomin; 3 C Water; 1 bison steak; dried berries; sea salt; pepper

INSTRUCTIONS: Rub steak with coconut oil and season to taste. Roast steaks in oven for about 20 minutes for medium-rare. Heat coconut oil in a skillet over high heat. Sear steak on each side for a crisp edge. Rinse manoomin add to boiling water. Turn down to medium heat and simmer until grains are tender and water is evaporated. Add a tablespoon of coconut oil.

FOOD FACT: Traditional, ancestral diets from most Native communities consisted of about 70% healthy animal fat, 20% protein and only 10% carbohydrates. Today, the American diet is the opposite of that, overloaded with fat from unnatural, unhealthy sources and predominately carbohydrate based from unnatural, sugar-inducing grains. A return to a healthy ancestral diet means incorporating more healthy fats from natural, unprocessed sources. Contrary to popular belief, animal fat does not make us “fat.” It is the carbs and sugars in our diet that contribute to weight gain and obesity. Lower the amount of carbohydrate intake in your diet and when you do eat carbs, get them from naturally gluten-free and unprocessed sources like wild rice, sweet potatoes and fruit.
Waatebagaa-Giizis - September
Leaves Changing Color Moon

RECIPE: Mino Wisinidaa: "Cream" of Wild Rice & Wild Mushroom Soup pg. 60

INGREDIENTS: 2 tbsp. coconut oil (instead of sunflower seed oil), 4 C Mushrooms, 1 medium onion; 1 tsp himalayan sea salt; 1/4 tsp black pepper; 1/4 C wild rice flour; 3 C mushroom stock; 3 c vegetable stock.

INSTRUCTIONS: Heat oil in medium stock pot over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms, onion, salt, pepper, and cook until nearly dry (about 15 mins). Add wild rice flour to vegetable mixture and cook until fragrant; about 3 minutes. Gradually add stocks and bring to a boil (about 10 mins.) Reduce to a simmer and cook until mushrooms are soft and soup is thickened (about 25 mins.)

FOOD FACT: Mushrooms are a superfood: high in protein, high in dietary fiber, and rich with nutrients like Vitamin B. REAL Wild Rice (Ojibwe manoomin) is also a superfood, high in amino acids/protein, dietary fiber and potassium. It is far more nutritional than other cereal grains like brown rice. You’ve probably heard that lactose intolerance is common amongst Native people: that's because dairy causes inflammation and is derived from animals that have only been available in our diet for the past 200 years or so. Just like in this recipe, be sure to skip the dairy and choose other ways to texturize your food instead.
Binaakwa-Giizis - October

Leaves Falling Moon

RECIPE: WELL FOR CULTURE - Breakfast Sweet Potato Hash

INGREDIENTS: 1 sweet potato; 2-3 large, free range eggs; lacinto kale or spinach; mushrooms; 1 tsp. dried basil, oregano, rosemary; virgin coconut oil; 1 tsp sea salt

INSTRUCTIONS: Wash and dice sweet potato into small cubes (2 cm). Cook sweet potato in 1 coconut oil on medium heat in a frying pan. When sweet potato cubes are softened, add mushrooms and dried herbs. Finally, add 2-3 free range eggs and lower heat. As eggs begin to solidify, add diced kale and sea salt.

FOOD FACT: Eggs are the perfect food, often referred to as nature’s multivitamin because of their well rounded nutritional qualities. One egg contains small amounts of almost every vitamin and mineral required by the human body. Eggs also contain high quality protein, with all the essential amino acids in the right ratios. Don’t skip the yolk! Never choose “egg white only” thinking that it’s healthier! The yolk contains almost all of the nutrients and healthy fats. Contrary to popular belief, eggs do not increase your risk of cardiovascular disease. In fact, they improve your cholesterol profile. Eggs raise the HDL (the “good” cholesterol) and lower the LDL (the “bad” cholesterol). Bottom line: eat eggs every day!
Gashkadino-Giizis - November

Freezing Over Moon

RECIPe: Mino Wisinidaa - Wild Rice Porridge Pg. 181

INGREDIENTS: 1 C Wild Rice; 2 C Water; 1 Tbsp maple syrup; 1/8 C dried blueberries. Optional addition: unflavored/unsweetened coconut milk; pumpkin seeds; slivered almonds; more berries, cinnamon.

INSTRUCTIONS: Cook wild rice according to your preferred method (see several options in Mino Wisinidaa cookbook). Add cooked rice to small saucepan and stir in maple syrup, blueberries, and any other healthy additions. Flavor with cinnamon; add coconut milk, nuts, seeds, other fruit, and cinnamon to taste. Serve hot.

FOOD FACT: Wild Rice has always been a staple food in the Anishinaabe diet and a return to incorporating rice into every meal will surely produce health benefits for all Ojibwe people. The versatility of wild rice cannot be overlooked: rather than viewing it as a side dish (as the Western diet has taught us), begin thinking of wild rice as the main ingredient to a plethora of dishes. This wild rice breakfast porridge packs in nutritional value and energy-producing protein that you won’t find in sugary breakfast cereals or even oatmeal. Tip: sweeten your porridge with all natural maple syrup (also a traditional food) and add coconut oil for a cream texture and yummy flavor. Berries, nuts and seeds are a great addition to this dish.
INGREDIENTS: 2 quarts hot water; 40 dried or fresh wintergreen leaves in 1/4" strips.

INSTRUCTIONS: Using a large sauce pan, bring water to a rolling boil over high heat. Once boiling, turn off heat. Stir leaves into the water and steep for 30-45 minutes or until reddish in color and flavor is as strong as desired. Stir occasionally. After steeping, place a strainer over a pitcher and pour tea through strainer to remove leaves. Sweeten tea with maple syrup if desired and serve immediately for hot tea. Chill and serve cold for iced tea.

FOOD FACT: Tea is an ancient drink in many parts of the world. Nearly every culture has their own special types of tea. Wintergreen is a flavor that has been synthetically duplicated everywhere in items like toothpaste and gum, but it is originally an Ojibwe plant. The health benefits of drinking tea are endless: wintergreen tea will boost immunity, aid in digestion, and is a healthier alternative to store-bought teas with artificial flavors.
INGREDIENTS: 1 C blue corn meal or wild rice meal (organic, non-gmo). 1/2 C gluten-free pancake mix (such as Bob’s red mill); 1-2 large, cage-free eggs; pumpkin seeds or pine nuts (or another Native nut to your area) to taste; Coconut oil; 1/2 C coconut milk; cinnamon; 1 tsp. sea salt.

INSTRUCTIONS: Preheat a griddle/pan on medium heat. Grease pan with coconut oil. In a medium bowl, mix the corn or wild rice meal, gluten free pancake mix, salt and coconut oil. Then, stir in coconut milk until all ingredients are wet. Cover and let stand for a few minutes. If the batter is too stiff, add more milk until it flows off the spoon. The batter should be thick yet smooth. When the pan is ready, pour on pancake batter (about 3 tbsp for each pancake). Heat until desired firmness, then flip. Careful while flipping: since there is no gluten in these pancakes, they fall apart more easily. Do not overcook - they will harden. To serve, sprinkle on seeds and pour a bit of natural maple syrup. Instead of using butter, use coconut oil. Sprinkle on some cinnamon if you like.

FOOD FACT: There is a healthier, more nutritious alternative to just about every unhealthy or unnatural food you have grown up enjoying and are having a hard time giving up. Replace white flour and unnatural mixes like “Bisquick” with blue corn flour or wild rice flour. These earth-based ancestral foods are much lower on the glycemic index (causing less of a sugar spike) and are naturally gluten free, which is much safer and more beneficial for gut and brain health. Be sure to eat any type of pancake (even these) in moderation, and only sweeten with all-natural Ojibwe maple syrup.
Namebini-Giizis - February

Sucker Fish Moon

Recipe: Mino Wisinidaa: Walleye or Sucker Fish Soup, Pg. 72

INGREDIENTS: 1 tbsp. coconut oil (instead of sunflower seed oil); 3 cloves minced garlic; 1 C diced celery; 3 medium carrots; 2 quarts stock (we recommend fresh beef or turkey stock); 1 tbsp dried sweet fern, ground; 1 tsp sea salt; 1/2 tsp. pepper; 1.5 lb. skinless, boneless walleye filet in 1/2” cubes; 1 quarter “cream” of celery soup (see earlier recipe).

INSTRUCTIONS: Heat oil over medium high heat in medium stock pot; add garlic and sauté for 2 minutes; add the remaining vegetables and sauté until vegetables soften (about 10 minutes). Pour in stock, sweet fern, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and continue to cook until vegetables are soft (about 25 mins.). Add fish and continue to simmer until fish is opaque and cooked through (about 10 mins.). Remove from heat and vigorously whisk in “cream” soup; a little at a time until combined. Serve hot.

FOOD FACT: Walleye is another Ojibwe superfood: high in heart-healthy Omega-3 fats and low in calories. Fresh caught walleye is safe to eat: unlike farmed fish that has been shipped from bodies of water far away, a fresh caught walleye is low in mercury and other contaminants often found in seafood. Walleye is also high in calcium: another excellent way to source calcium from healthy foods so that we can ditch the dairy from our diets.
Onaabani-Giizis - March

Crust on the Snow Moon

Recipe: Mino Wisinidaa - Wewaagagin Soup with Chicken and Spring Greens Pg. 74

INGREDIENTS: 1 tsp coconut oil; 1 medium onion diced; 1 tsp. sea salt; 1/8 tsp. black pepper; 5 C stock (vegetable or animal); 5 c water; 4 bay leaves; 2 skinless, boneless chicken breasts in 1” cubes; 2 C fiddlehead ferns cut into 1” pieces; 10 asparagus stalks cut into 1” pieces; 2 C watercress, torn into bite sized pieces.

INSTRUCTIONS: Heat oil in small stock pot over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook until soft (about 5 mins.). Season onion with salt and pepper. Add stock, water, bay leaves and chicken to pot and bring to a simmer (about 10 mins.). When chicken is partially cooked, add fiddleheads and cook until chicken is fully cooked (about 10 mins.). Add asparagus. Continue to simmer until asparagus is just tender (about 5 mins.). Turn off heat. Stir in watercress and serve hot.

FOOD FACT: Fiddlehead ferns are an excellent source of fiber and healthy fats, containing both omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. If you use chicken in this recipe, be sure to source the chicken from a local farm or source who does not use hormones or other chemicals or other unethical practices in raising the chickens. Because quality chicken is hard to come by, feel free to use another type of poultry or meat.
**INGREDIENTS:** 1 lb. brown lentils, dried; 5 C water; 1 bay leaf; 2 tsp. sea salt; 1 tbsp. organic soy sauce or liquid aminos; 1 tsp. ground mustard; 1/4 tsp. ground ginger; 1/2 yellow onion chopped; 1 C water; 1/3 C maple syrup.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** In a medium stock pot, combine lentils, water, bay leaf and salt. Bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat to a simmer and cover. Let simmer for 20-30 mins. or until most of the liquid has evaporated and lentils are soft but not mushy. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Remove stock pot from heat and add soy sauce, mustard, ginger, onion and water. Mix well. Pour into an oven safe dish and cover tightly. Place in oven for 30-45 minutes or until lentils are tender. Remove lentils from oven and stir in maple syrup. Serve over cooked wild rice.

**FOOD FACT:** The dangers of consuming artificial sweeteners and factory produced sugars are endless. This is one substance that you should eliminate *completely* from your diet. Artificial sugars and cane sugar cause cancer, obesity, diabetes, brain deterioration, and a slew of other illnesses. All-natural Ojibwe maple syrup, however, is safe to consume and culturally significant (especially when you gather it yourself), contributing to our overall wellbeing. Since maple syrup has been in the Ojibwe diet for centuries, Ojibwe people are more acclimated to this form of sugar than any other type. Be sure to follow the guidelines and lifestyle practices of the ancestors, though: maple syrup has always been consumed in moderation.
Zaagibagaa-Giizis - May

Flower Budding Moon

RECIPE: Spinach and Dandelion Salad pg. 70

INGREDIENTS: 3 C fresh spinach; 1 C fresh dandelion greens; 1 bunch thinly sliced radishes; 1/4 C maple mustard vinaigrette (see pg. 56 of mini wisinidaa).

INSTRUCTIONS: Thoroughly wash and dry the greens and tear into bite sized pieces. In a medium bowl, toss greens and radishes together. Drizzle the dressing over the greens and gently toss to coat. Serve immediately.

FOOD FACT: Dandelions are not just a weed - dandelion greens are a superfood! 1 serving of dandelion greens will provide 500% daily value of Vitamin K (strengthens bones, limits neuron damage in the brain), 112% dv of Vitamin A (good for the skin, mucus membranes and vision), not to mention they are super high in fiber, Vitamin C, Vitamin B6, and more. Experts are recommending dandelion greens as one of the most nutritional vegetable sources out there.
Ode’imini-Giizis - June

Strawberry Moon

RECIPE: Wild Rice Corn Pudding with Berries Pg. 166

INGREDIENTS: 1.5 quarts coconut milk or almond milk (instead of skim milk); 1/4 C coconut oil (instead of unsalted butter); 1 C maple syrup; 1.5 C yellow cornmeal (non-gmo); 1.5 C wild rice meal; 1/2 tsp. ground ginger; 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg; 1/2 tsp. sea salt; 2 C whole blueberries; 1/2 C coconut milk.

INSTRUCTIONS: Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Heat milk, coconut oil and syrup in large saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally (about 15 mins.). In a medium bowl, mix cornmeal, wild rice meal, ginger, nutmeg and salt. Once milk mixture has reached a simmer, sprinkle in cornmeal mixture a little at a time, whisking constantly. Whisk cornmeal until pudding begins to thicken, then switch to a wooden spoon and continue stirring. When pudding reaches a thick consistency (about 5 mins.), transfer the mixture to a large bowl and mix in berries and additional milk. Pour corn pudding into buttered 9x13 baking pan and bake pudding until set; about 30 mins. Serve warm with additional maple syrup or milk.

FOOD FACT: June is the month of the strawberry moon: a perfect time to try this dessert. Berries have both a spiritual and nutritional significance in Ojibwe culture. What are some of the lessons or teachings you have received from elders or others in your community regarding harvesting, consuming, and use of berries? Share your berry knowledge with those around you and see what others have to say as well!
Abitaa-Niiibini-Giizis - July

Summer Moon

RECIPE: WELL FOR CULTURE - Bison Tacos

INGREDIENTS: Bison steak; non-wheat, non-GMO corn tortillas; cabbage; fresh salsa (tomato + cilantro + garlic + onion + hot peppers to taste); avocado; lime; coconut oil; garlic sea salt.

INSTRUCTIONS: On medium-low heat, simmer bison steaks in coconut oil until cooked to your preference. Season to taste using organic, low-sodium options. Meanwhile, prepare the vegetables. Simply slice avocados and dice cabbage for garnish and texture. When the meat and veggies are prepared and you’re just about ready to eat, heat the corn tortillas on the stove on medium. It only takes a few seconds each side. If you overheat them, they will turn hard so be careful. Gluten free tortillas tend to be more crumbly and less squishy - it might not be what you’re used to, but try to embrace this more natural version. To serve, slice the meat thinly and place all ingredients in the center of the tortilla. Garnish with salsa, cabbage, avocado. Eggs make a great, healthy side dish.

FOOD FACT: Tacos are one of many foods that have been transformed and degraded over the years into fast food products that we think of as very unhealthy. But remember that (just like with the pancakes we tried earlier), tacos are originally a well-rounded nutritious item. Be sure to use gluten free corn tortillas, fresh veggies, and minimally processed meats. To indigenize your taco, use bison meat instead of ground beef. Yum!