



# Native American Heritage Month

## Did you Know...

Native American Heritage Month first evolved from "American Indian Week," which President Reagan proclaimed on the week of November 23-30, 1986. In 1990, President George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November 1990 as National American Indian Heritage Month. It was later changed to Native American Heritage month under President Barack Obama.

For centuries, indigenous people across Wisconsin have relied on traditional diets not only as food, but also as a source of medicine touting the healing properties of Native foods.

Often times the food that was most beneficial to the people of that area were the foods that were most readily available. Foods were rich in nutrients and vitamins because they came right from the earth like fish, wild game, foods from plants like berries, fiddle ferns, dandelions, and cattails. Foods such as these (many which we still have access to today) were the source of "good health" for the Native American people.

For example, wild rice is a long-standing food in the traditional Native American diet. Harvesting this grain goes back thousands of years in the tribal communities of Wisconsin. Wild rice provides a

good amount of magnesium when eaten. If you have low levels of magnesium, it can result in high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and other diseases. (Mayo Clinic)

Conversely, according to the CDC, in recent years heart disease is the leading cause of death in Native Americans nationwide and Diabetes is the fourth leading cause of death. It begs the question, "Would these statistics be different today if Native Americans were able to eat like they did in the past?" If they could ingest more foods that were from their traditional diet; rich in nutrients, minerals, and vitamins, Like wild rice?

When Native Americans speak of food is medicine, this in part is what they are describing. The foods most closely tied to their traditional diets are the foods the provide the most benefits to their health.

Traditional diets included a balance of carbohydrates, protein and essential vitamins and minerals. This balance was achieved by interplanting corn, bean and squash which are often referred to as The Three Sisters. The sturdy corn stalks provided support for the beans to climb while the vines of the squash provided shade to trap moisture in the soil.

## Did you Know...

According to the 2020 U.S. Census 2.5% of Wisconsin residents identified as being American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination. The counties with the highest populations include Menominee, Sawyer, Forest, Ashland, Bayfield, Vilas, Shawano and Jackson. Which makes sense because there are tribal communities or reservations located within those counties.

## Dandelion Greens

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Dandelion greens                      1 tsp salt  
1/4 cup butter                              1/2 tsp pepper  
1 Tbsp vinegar

Gather greens before they blossom.

Clean good and rinse with water.

It takes a small about of water to cook. Cook until tender.  
Add butter, vinegar, salt, and pepper to taste.

It takes a pail of greens. Tastes somewhat like spinach.

Ardetta Williams, Lac du Flambeau



## Wild Rice Casserole

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1 cup wild rice                              2 cans mushroom soup  
2 lbs ground beef                              2 small cans mushrooms  
2 cups chopped celery                              6 tbsp soy sauce  
3/4 cup chopped onion

Wash rice, bring to a boil and turn the heat down and simmer for 1-2 hours.

Brown the meat, celery, and onions, add the remaining ingredients.

Place in casserole. Bake uncovered 45 minutes at 350 degrees.

Gladys Bearheart, St. Croix

