



CORDOVA EDIBLE

Wild Foods
Through the Year

Recipes and Stories by Meadow Scott

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About this Booklet

I am a wild foods lover and kitchen junkie. I've been hard at both occupations for nearly 20 years. This collection of recipes is from my own stained binder, and represents hundreds of hours of joyful experimentation in the kitchen, learning to adapt wild ingredients to the modern table.

Please bear in mind that this is a recipe book. I have also included harvest lists by season as a reminder of what to look for and when. However, this is not a guide to identifying edible wild plants. Always approach new species of plants with caution *and* a reliable, well illustrated plant guide. Here are my two favorites:

Discovering Wild Plants ...by Janice Schofield

Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast ...by Jim Pojar and Andy MacKinnon

Special thanks to Janice Schofield for pioneering the field of Alaskan edibles, and inspiring my own education to an incredible degree.

Thanks also to Matt Goff-- naturalist, photographer and writer. Many of the photos here are his work, and certainly lift this booklet a notch higher. For more about Matt, see his website at sitkanature.org

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SPRING



The natural world wakes up slowly as the days lengthen in late winter. Between the snowstorms of March, after so many months of austere cold, there will be a day when the sun breaks through and suddenly it feels just a little bit *warm* on your skin.

I like to think that is the beginning of spring, the first surprising delight of warm sun, even if there is still two months of snowy weather left.

The willows, alders and blueberry bushes certainly notice, their winter-swollen buds plump and prepare to burst. I like to nibble those late winter buds as I slog around through the punchy snow-- they taste intense and green. Dinner they do not make, but it's a nice way to start the harvest season.

SPRING HARVEST LIST

Winter Kings

Halibut

Razor Clams

Hooligan

Dulse

Leaf Buds

Catkins

Devil's Club Buds

Salmonberry Shoots

Fiddleheads

Fireweed Shoots

Twisted Stalk

Dandelion Leaves

Black Bear

SMOKED HOOLIGAN

The warm weather breaks up the river ice, making way for the first run of hooligan (also known as eulachon). The timing of these little silver beauties is mysterious and unpredictable. Just keep your eyes out for the long handled nets in the back of pick-up trucks, and you'll know they're in.

When the hooligan are really running, fishing for them is pure joy. Even grown men squeal with the thrill of a shimmering net full. If the run is thick and you are in the right spot, you can even catch them with your hands.

I used to live in Haines, where the hooligan run is serious business. They like to smoke them dry, like jerky. This turns the slightly mushy texture of the fresh fish into a delightfully chewy, salty treat. Warmed a little in a skillet and served with cold beer, nothing beats 'em.



- **A bucket of fresh hooligan**
- **Salt**
- **A smokehouse set up for cold smoking**

Gut each fish, and cut as if to take off the tiny fillet, but stop about an inch from the tail, so that there are essentially two fillets attached by a tail. The spine and rib bones will be attached to the one, but don't worry-- they peel off easily once the fish have been smoked; and in the meantime they hold everything together.

While your fish is opened out, salt each side generously. Now run a string through the mouth and out one gill- the fish will flop open when you hang it. Put a dozen or so fish onto each string, then just tie the whole thing up in your smokehouse.

Keep the smoke cool and very light. If after two days of smoke the fish are not dry, finish them off over the woodstove or in a dehydrator or they will become inedibly smoky.

If you get your hooligan bone-dry, they will last a few months or more in the cupboard. But Haines folks liked to leave just a *bit* of moisture in them, so that they are chewy like dried fruit, rather than hard and leathery like real jerky. In that case you need to store them in the freezer, and then they last all winter-- if you don't have too many beer and hooligan parties.

BUSY SEASON SOUP

*Spring is a manic time of year in Alaska. Winter seems like it will last forever, and then *BAM!* it's over. There is so much to do and it all needs to be done right now. If you manage to make the time for foraging wild edibles, there often isn't any time left to cook them.*

This soup is my favorite thing to make after a spring hike, when I have a pocketful of green leaves and shoots and I'm too hungry for real cooking.

Most wild edibles are at their best in the early spring, just as they unfold into the world; in fact many are bitter, tough or even spiny once they mature. These plants often look very different in the early spring, during their peak edibility, than they look in the plant guides. Keep your book with you while you harvest and take the time to identify each individual plant with certainty until you get more familiar with them.



Per Person:

- **One packet of Ramen noodle soup**
- **One egg**
- **A handful of whatever wild greens you find – fiddleheads, fireweed shoots, dandelion leaves, twisted stalk, salmonberry shoots, etc.**
- **Sesame seeds to garnish**

Heat about 2 cups of water per person, along with the broth powder. When the broth reaches a boil, add the noodles and the wild greens. When it comes back to a boil, crack the eggs one at a time and carefully slide them into the broth as whole as possible. When the eggs have poached to your liking, ladle the soup into bowls and top with sesame seeds.

There you are, a relatively wholesome meal in five minutes. Now, get back to work!

BLACK BEAR SAUSAGE

Bear meat has a bad name. Now I understand that coastal bear taste fishy in the fall, and brown bear taste musky all year, but spring black bear is delicious and a very clean flavored meat.

I know a couple of big game guides who bring me unwanted black bear carcasses every spring (clients only want the hide and head). I divvy them up among friends and we often have a butchering party at my house.

The only problem with black bear is that it needs to be processed immediately- aging gives it too much bear flavor. Plus, you can't cook it rare because of potential trichinosis. Consequently, it's too tough for steaks. I usually cut a bunch of roasts and then ask our local butcher to grind the rest into burger, much of which I use in this ultra simple recipe.

This sausage flies in the face of "real" sausage. I don't bother with casings and stuffing – this is a loose breakfast style sausage, Jimmy Dean style. Even more irreverent, I don't add any fat to the extraordinarily lean meat. This so-called sausage must be fried in plenty of oil or butter!



Of course, this recipe is just as good with moose or deer, even better if there's some fat included.

- 10 pounds meat
- 1 onion, minced
- 6-10 cloves of garlic
- 3 Tablespoons salt
- 2 Tablespoons paprika
- 2 Tablespoons sage
- 1 Tablespoon thyme
- 1 Tablespoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg

Gather all your ingredients. Scrub your countertop obsessively with soap and warm water, and then spread the meat out onto it. Sprinkle the onions, garlic and spices evenly over the top, and then work them in with your fingers. Roll the whole thing up as best you can, and then working in batches knead thoroughly. Don't forget to scrub your countertop obsessively again after you finish!

Package the sausage but don't put into the freezer yet. The spices need to infuse for at least 24 hours (in the refrigerator) before loading into the freezer.

This sausage can be formed into little breakfast patties, or fried up like very flavorful burger and added to all kinds of casseroles. Do make sure and add plenty of fat when you fry. Fat = flavor!

TWISTED STALK PICKLES

Twisted stalk, also known as wild cucumber and watermelon berry, is the first wild plant I ever identified, so it holds a special place in my heart. It grows plentifully around Cordova and is one of our best edibles. If you harvest it when the shoots first emerge in spring, before the leaves unfurl too much, the stalk is crisp and juicy. Its texture is something like asparagus, but with a definite cucumber flavor.

Wonderful in stir fries and just the thing for pickling.

This recipe is for “quick pickles” which are not shelf stable, but must be stored in the refrigerator. They stay good for months there, even up to a year. The technique works beautifully for fiddleheads too, which make the most adorable pickle ever!



Brine:

- 3 cups water
- 1 cup vinegar
- ¼ cup salt
- ¼ cup whole pickling spice mix

Everything else you'll need:

- several cloves of garlic
- a basketful of twisted stalk
- several narrow mouth jars

First prepare the brine. You may need to double the recipe depending on how big your basket of twisted stalk is. Combine all the brine ingredients in a pot, cover with a lid and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Allow to simmer for about 10 minutes, then leave covered to brew while you cut and prepare the shoots.

Cut each stalk about 1 inch shorter than your jars; if the butt ends seem stringy, cut them off. Pack the stalks snugly into the jars and put one or two cloves of garlic in each.

When you have packed all your shoots up, return the brine to a boil. Pour the boiling brine over the shoots, filling each jar nearly to the top and distributing the spices among them. Put the lids on and allow to cool. They might actually seal, but don't count on that seal to preserve them—like I said **these must be stored in the fridge!** The recipe does not have enough acidity for canning.

Allow the pickles to cure for at least a week, but I think they are best after 3 or 4 weeks.

This recipe also works beautifully with fiddleheads! They are just about the most adorable little pickle you can imagine.

SUMMER



Summer in Alaska is a precious time. The natural world is verdant, ripe, extravagant with life. It's the time of plenty, and we have to squirrel it away into our pantries and our hearts to nourish us over the long cold winter.

Of course here in Cordova, summer is heralded in by the first opener, and salmon dominate the scene for much of the season. But don't let the silver gold blind your eyes to our land-based abundance.

My favorite edible to share with people new to wild plants is flowers. They brighten up any meal—tossed into salad, layered onto sandwiches, decorating a cake, or cooked ever so lightly in a stir-fry. Flowers are pure summer, distilled.

SUMMER HARVEST LIST

Salmon! Reds and Kings

Spruce Tips

Stinging Nettle

Spring Beauty

Lovage

Beach Greens

Goosetongue

Mountain Sorrel

Salmonberry Flowers

Columbine Flowers

Fireweed Flowers

Violets

Bolettes

Chicken of the Woods

Wild Strawberries

SPRUCE TIP SALSA

The soft new growth at the end of every spruce branch in early summer is called its “tip.” Spruce tips are an incredibly plentiful and under-appreciated food. Although they aren’t the sort of thing you would sit down to a plateful of, their tart spicey flavor is a fantastic addition to so many other foods. Think of them as Alaskan lemons and get creative.

I don’t remember when or how I got the idea to put them into salsa, honestly I might have been channeling some energies greater than my own. But thank goodness I did, this recipe has become a staple and I am pleased to be able to share it.

Spruce tips bud out quite a bit later than the other plants, usually not till early or mid June. I like to harvest them when they have grown plump enough to push off the papery brown husk, but before the needles open out and start to stiffen.



- **4 c. red tomatoes** (canned tomatoes work fine)
- **1 small onion**
- **4-8 cloves garlic**
- **2 c. spruce tips**
- **1/2 c. lemon juice**
- **1/3 c. lime juice**
- **6 oz tomato paste**
- **1 T + 1 t salt**
- **2-4 Tablespoons sugar**
- **2 T hot sauce** (Tabasco type) *this makes a mild salsa, add more to taste as desired

Chop tomatoes and onions as small as possible and put into a large pot. Smash garlic into a paste and add. Chop spruce tips roughly (I like to chop each one in half, so you can still see “tips”). Mix all the remaining ingredients in, except tomato paste. Heat salsa over medium, stirring frequently.

Cook until onions are tender, then add tomato paste, if using. Serve at room temperature with tortilla chips or black bear tacos!

Although it preserves nicely using standard canning methods, this salsa is even better fresh (uncooked). Fresh or cooked, it keeps well in the fridge for at least a few weeks and in the freezer indefinitely.

Green Salsa Variation: To make a lovely all green salsa, simply substitute tomatillos for the tomatoes and canned green chiles for the tomato paste.

THE BEST SALMON BURGERS EVER

There were a few years in my 20s when I nearly lived on very humble canned salmon patties— a jar of salmon with just enough flour to hold things together, shaped and fried. Very spare, very thrifty with both time and money, and surprisingly tasty-- a good belly filling mainstay.

These are not they. For a little extra effort, and a few more ingredients, you can have these-- the queen of all salmon patties, and the best fish burger you've ever eaten.

The original recipe uses a whole salmon fillet, and chops it into bits. But I discovered it via Kate Morse, who explained that she scrapes down her filleted salmon carcasses with a spoon and uses all that residual goodness to make fish cakes.

I have incorporated Kate's brilliant technique into my yearly routine, and usually get several pounds of scraps off of our 20 or so salmon. I make a giant batch of these and pop them into the freezer. You can cook them straight from frozen on a busy summer night, and you will really feel like a rockstar.



- **1 1/4 pounds salmon scraps** (a pint sized mason jar packed full and heaped high)
- **1 slice old bread**, ground into crumbs
- **2 Tablespoons mayonnaise**
- **2 Tablespoons grated onion**
- **3/4 teaspoon salt**
- **1 Tablespoon lemon juice**
- **a bit of fresh parsley if you have it, minced**
- **2 eggs**
- **1/2 cup flour**
- **3/4 cup Panko or regular breadcrumbs**

Use a sharp knife to slice/chop/shred the flesh-- you want it to look like ground meat.

Mix in the bread crumbs, mayonnaise, onion, salt, herbs and lemon. It will be very sticky and hard to work with. Form patties as best you can and lay onto a baking sheet dusted heavily with flour. Put the sheet into the freezer for 15-30 minutes (don't forget!) to firm up.

Whisk the egg in a small bowl and put the flour and Panko each in a separate bowl as well. When the patties have firmed up, dip one at a time into the flour first, then the egg, then the Panko. Set onto a wire rack.

Fry the patties in a half inch of oil, till nicely browned on each side. Serve hot, on buns with all the trimmings.

WILD GREEN PESTO

Pesto is not just for basil. Any green leaf that tastes good in a salad will taste good in pesto. My favorite wild edible to use is mountain sorrel, I have a secret patch that I'm not going to share. (Hint: It grows well in avalanche shoots, alongside mountain creeks.)

You can also make pesto from lovage, beach greens, goosetongue, shooting star and even stinging nettles. Just pick whatever you find, and give it a try. If you use nettles, you will want to steam them lightly first so that your pesto doesn't bite you back!

In addition to tasting delicious, pesto is a brilliant preservation technique. Once mixed with the oil, garlic and salt, greens will stay vibrant and flavorful in the freezer for more than a year.



- **1 cup olive oil**
- **1 ¼ teaspoon salt**
- **6 cloves garlic, minced**
- **a half gallon of wild greens**
- **1 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese, optional**
- **½ cup chopped walnuts, optional**

Put the oil, salt and garlic into the blender. Add the walnuts, if using, and a big handful of greens and start the engines. With the blender running, add a handful of leaves at a time, waiting for each to get sucked down in before adding the next. When the pesto gets too thick and the blender chokes up, scrape down the sides with a spatula and try again. When it truly won't accept any more greens, you're done! Mix in the cheese, if using, and pack into jars. Depending on which greens you use, the top layer might turn brown. If it does, don't be alarmed, it won't hurt you.

Serve with pasta, on pizza, or layered into lasagna instead of tomato sauce. Try it on salmon, halibut or chicken; mix it into mashed potatoes, soup or bread dough. The possibilities are endless. My favorite is sorrel pesto on toast topped with a fried egg. Yum!

CORDOVA SUMMER ROLLS

Vietnamese summer rolls are also sometimes called fresh spring rolls, or salad rolls. They are delightful with wild greens, and a lovely celebration of the season. Use greens that are either tender or crisp, nothing tough in these rolls. I think violet leaves and flowers make them especially festive.

Although it's not traditional, I like to serve summer rolls with peanut sauce-- its richness complements the fresh, wild flavor of the greens. If you don't have time for the peanut sauce, you can also serve these with sweet chili sauce. Just be sure not to forgo sauce altogether. It's all about the dipping!



Rolls:

- **8 Round rice wrappers**
- **8 shoots of twisted stalk**
- **1/2 cup fresh basil**
- **1/2 cup cilantro and/or mint**
- **4 cups violet leaves and flowers, or any combination of crisp leafy wild greens**

Peanut Sauce:

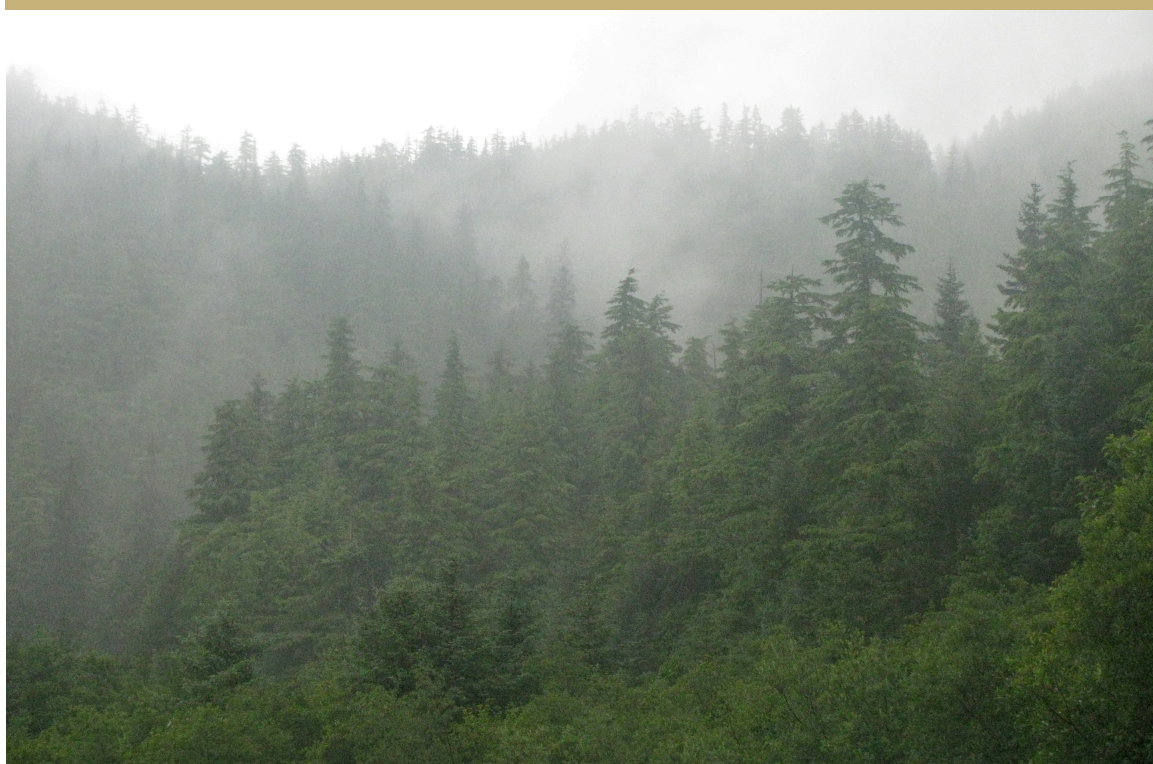
- **½ cup coconut milk**
- **1 T red curry paste**
- **1 teaspoon grated ginger**
- **1 clove garlic, minced**
- **6 Tablespoon peanut butter**
- **1 cup chicken broth**
- **2 Tablespoons brown sugar**
- **1 ½ Tablespoon lime juice**
- **2 teaspoons fish sauce (optional)**

To make the sauce, combine all the ingredients except the lime and fish sauce in a small pot and bring to a simmer. Whisk until smooth, then remove from the stove and stir in the lime and fish sauce. Cool.

To make the rolls, fill a large pie pan halfway with warm water. Working one at a time, dip the wrappers into the warm water until just pliable. Lift to drain, then set onto a clean, dry tea towel. Arrange a line of the ingredients on top. Fold one edge over the fillings, then fold in the two ends and roll up like a burrito.

Set the finished rolls on a tray with the bowl of dipping sauce, be careful not to let their edges touch or they'll stick together. Serve outside in the sunshine!

AUTUMN



I think autumn in Cordova should have an entirely different name-- one that does not bring to mind dry, crunchy leaves and long, glowing afternoons. Something along the lines of 'the deluge' would be considerably more appropriate.

The intense and unrelenting rains of autumn do at least bring forth a bountiful harvest. The fruits of fall ripen—wild mushrooms and luscious berries—and we run out to harvest them in between storms.

As fall turns toward winter the hunting season begins. Anyone lucky enough to have won a moose ticket partners up for the hunt, and the rest of us comb the islands for deer. Nothing makes you feel quite so safe as facing winter with a freezer full of wild meat.

AUTUMN WILD HARVEST LIST

Salmonberries

Nagoonberries

Blueberries

Highbush Cranberries

Lowbush Cranberries

Hedgehog Mushrooms

Angel Wings

Chantrelles

Duck

Deer

Moose

OLD FASHIONED BLUEBERRY JAM

If you are just starting out making jam, I recommend using Pomona's Pectin, which is more forgiving than the regular stuff. This recipe however forgoes commercial pectin altogether for experienced jammers who really want to get back to basics.

All fruits contain some pectin. Wild blueberries are in the 'medium' category, and tart apples are 'high.' Combining the two makes a delicious and well set jam. Make your jam at the beginning of the season, when the berries are still a bit firm-- they lose some pectin as they ripen.



- **3 tart-sweet apples, such as Fujis**
- **4 cups wild blueberries****
- **4 cups sugar**

****Cultivated varieties of blueberries don't have as much pectin and might not work in this recipe.****

Chop the apples whole- do not peel or core (that's where most of the pectin is). Put into a pot with ½ cup water and a tight fitting lid, set over low heat. Cook apples for an hour, until completely soft. Remove from heat, cool, and leave in the fridge overnight for the pectin to develop.

The next day, put a few small plates into the freezer (you'll use these for testing later).

Press apples through a fine mesh strainer or food mill to remove seeds and peels, leaving a pectin-rich applesauce. Stir in the blueberries and bring to a simmer over medium-low heat. Cook until berries are tender, add the sugar, and stir until it's completely dissolved. Turn heat up to medium, and bring fruit to a boil. Remove the lid and cook for ten, adjusting heat as needed to keep a vigorous boil and stirring frequently.

To test for pectin set, remove a plate from the freezer and spoon out a small drop of jam onto it. If you like a firm set, cook your jam until the test drop develops a skin on top which wrinkles when you push it. If you like a soft set, just cook until the test drop looks like *jam* – like it would hold up on a piece of toast.

You might need to cook it for awhile, and test it several times before you achieve the set you want, or it might set right away. Pectin is mysterious. But given enough boiling, you will get jam. And you will be proud.

Process jam in a boiling water bath, following your usual method or canning manual.

WILD MUSHROOM CARBONNADE

Cordova's relentless fall rains, though hard on human psyches, create a fantasyland for wild mushrooms. We have too many to mention here, but my favorites are the ones most plentiful – hedgehogs and winter chanterelles.

This recipe substitutes mushrooms for the beef in Flemish carbonnade, a stew made with beer. Although the traditional beer of choice is a Belgian ale, I think the deep, earthy flavor of the wild mushrooms goes beautifully with the dark richness of porter or creamy stout. If you buy a bottle of Sheaf Stout, you can drink half and use the other half in this recipe. A win all around.

- **2 Tablespoons oil**
- **4 Tablespoons butter**
- **1 onion**, chopped fine
- **2 qts wild mushrooms**, cleaned and cut small
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **1 cup beer** (see headnote)
- **1/4 cup flour**
- **1 1/2 cups beef or chicken broth**
- **1 Tablespoon brown sugar**
- **1 Tablespoon apple cider or red wine vinegar**



Start by cleaning your mushrooms with a dry brush (never wash with water!) chanterelles especially seem to be magnets for fallen spruce and hemlock needles.

Fry the onions with one tablespoon of the butter over low heat until golden brown. Remove to a bowl and add the mushrooms to the hot pan. Salt, and cook on medium. The mushrooms will release an unbelievable amount of water and begin to boil vigorously.

Cook for a few minutes and then pour the extra mushroom water off into the bowl with the onions. Return the mushrooms to the heat, and add the oil and 1 tablespoon of butter. Allow to cook without stirring for a few minutes, until the bottoms are golden brown. Stir thoroughly and let cook undisturbed for another few minutes.

Scoop the mushrooms out into the bowl with the onions. Pour the beer into the hot pan and boil vigorously for 3-5 minutes to cook off the alcohol, then pour over the onions and mushrooms.

Add the last 2 tablespoons of butter to a large saucepan, melt, and stir in the flour. Continue to stir over medium heat until the roux is light brown, don't let it burn! Remove from the heat and whisk in the broth. Return to the heat and cook, whisking constantly, until thick.

Stir in the mushroom mixture and brown sugar. Simmer for ten minutes. If the sauce is too thick, loosen with a bit more broth. Stir in the vinegar and pour over hot, buttered noodles.

MAKING STOCK FROM BONES

Every year, hundreds of pounds of bones get dumped around Cordova. Our precious salmon bones we tip down the trough at the fish cleaning station, out for the gulls. Moose and deer carcasses litter the side of many roads, attracting bears.

Bones are mineral powerhouses and I believe when you throw them out, you lose half the nutritional value of the animal. Making those bones instead into rich stock for soup is a simple affair, and a cause I encourage you to join.

A chicken carcass is the classic, and a good starting point. Once you have the confidence in hand, you can move on to larger game – such as deer or even moose bones. These bones will need to be cut down to fit into the pot – a hacksaw can do the job, but a Sawzall makes much quicker work of it.

Salmon bones make beautiful orange tinged stock, the basis for a fantastic chowder. Fish bones must not be boiled for longer than half an hour though, or the flavor plummets.



- **A pile of bones-- from any animal, cooked or raw**
- **The biggest pot you can lay hands on**
- **Onions, carrots and celery – if you have them**
- **A splash of vinegar**

Fill the pot about 2/3 full of bones, puzzling in as many as you can. Fill the empty spots with whole onions (no need to even peel them), carrots and celery, if you have some on hand. Proportions here are very flexible since good stock can be made from either the bones or the vegetables alone.

Cover the bones with water and add the splash of vinegar (a tablespoon or two in a large soup pot, up to ½ cup in my truly enormous 5 gallon stock pot)

Now bring the lot to a boil slowly, over medium heat. Skim off foam as it rises. Once the broth is simmering, lower the heat to maintain the barest whisper of a simmer. Cook for as long as you can-- at least two or three hours for small bones like chicken, and up to *two days* for monster moose bones. I use the woodstove for overnight cooking, but a crock-pot also works great.

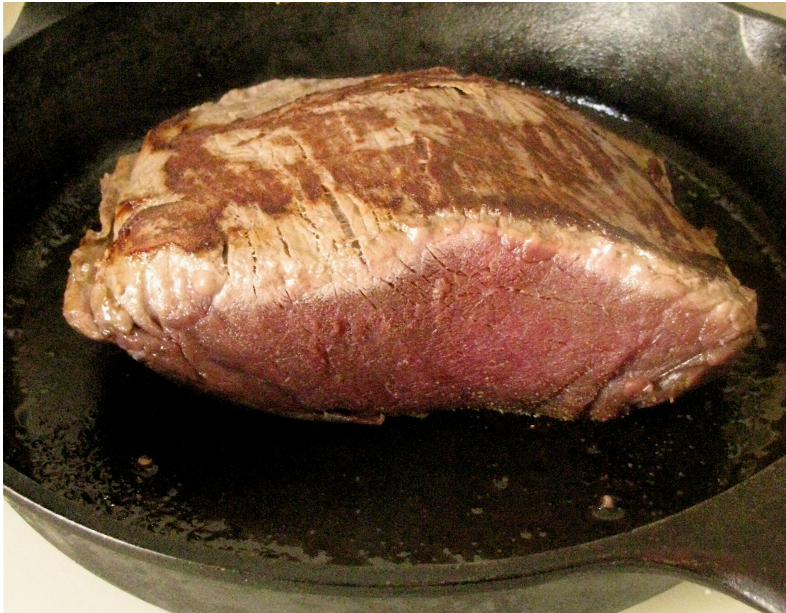
When the joints loosen, and the bones start falling apart, it's done. Drain the stock off of the bones, straining it to keep the sediment out.

Stock keeps beautifully in the freezer. It also cans well if you have a pressure canner. Consult your manual for pressure and timing.

WILD GAME POT ROAST

Most folks around here know how to fry a good deer steak (which is to say-- rare), but pot roast sometimes has an unexplainable mystique surrounding it. As if it's difficult, or time consuming. Let me tell you, it is not.

A traditional pot roast is actually about as simple as dinner gets. The only catch is you have to start early, pretty much right after lunch, which can be a hard leap to make. But once you have a pot roast in the oven you can feel secure knowing that dinner is practically done.



- **3-4 lb roast**
- **1 large onion**, chopped small
- **2-3 sticks of celery**, preferably with leaves, chopped
- **4 carrots**, cut into 2 inch pieces
- **4-6 large potatoes**, quartered
- **1 cup broth or stock**

- **1 Tablespoon oil**
- **4 Tablespoons butter**
- **salt and pepper**
- **garlic powder**, if you have it

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

Heat your biggest cast iron skillet till it's almost smoking. Add a splash of oil and put the meat in. Cook over medium-high heat for a few minutes on each side, to give the roast a nice brown crust.

Add the butter, onions, celery and stock. Season the meat, and cover tightly with aluminum foil. Put into the oven and forget about it for awhile. After two hours or so, remove from the oven and turn the meat over. Scoop the onions and celery on top of the meat, and add the potatoes and carrots around the edges.

Re-cover the pan, return to the oven and forget about it for another hour or two. I find the cooking time harder to estimate with wild game than factory farmed beef. Start early in the day, you can always keep it warm in the oven (at 200 degrees) till dinnertime.

Pot roast is done when the meat can be cut, as my dad says, "with a stern glance." Don't even try to eat it until it is falling apart tender, or you *will* be disappointed.

Allow the roast to set at room temperature, covered, for ten minutes before serving.

WINTER



After all the hard work and harvests of summer, winter is our time to rest. Although it never seems to be quite as relaxed as I imagine it from the depths of summer's mania, winter at least affords me the time for more experimentation in the kitchen, crafty projects, pot-lucks with friends, and certainly many a slushy day spent reading by the fire.

It's important to take a little of that time to reflect back on the harvest season. Keep track of the foods in your larder. Preserving wild foods is fun, it's easy to get carried away. Keeping count of what your family uses will help combat the hoarder mentality, and conserve all those beautiful wild foods for future generations.

WINTER FOOD LARDER

Canned:

Juice

Jam

Syrups

Salsa

Chutney

Pickles

Frozen:

Meat

Fish

Whole berries

Blanched greens

Pesto

Sautéed mushrooms

Pressure canned:

Fish

Meat

Stock

Soup

Quick meals

Dried:

Seaweed

Mushrooms

Tea herbs

Fruit leather

Jerky

Soup powder

GRAVLAX

Gravlax is Scandinavian “cured” salmon, meaning you salt it heavily and let it sit (in the fridge) for a few days-- then eat it uncooked, sliced thin on crackers. Sounds fairly unpromising, right? I was skeptical the first time I had it. But my skepticism vanished at first bite, I was in love!

Gravlax tastes like a fresh ocean breeze, briny but clean. Sliced thin and served at room temperature, the texture is divine-- eating gravlax is like eating velvet.

You can use any species of salmon, I am surprised to find that I actually prefer silvers. The important thing is that the fish is perfectly processed, and then frozen for at least a week to kill any potential parasites.

Although you can serve gravlax on it's own, I recommend the full spread – crackers, cream cheese, red onion and lemon. It makes it into a very special occasion.



For the gravlax:

- **2 lb fillet perfect quality salmon, previously frozen at least a week**
- **2 teaspoons salt**
- **1 1/2 teaspoons sugar**
- **2 teaspoons dill**

For serving:

- **1 box buttery crackers like Ritz or Waverly**
- **4 oz. cream cheese**
- **1/4 red onion, sliced paper thin**
- **1 lemon, cut into small wedges**

Lay the fillet into a glass baking dish and cover evenly with the spices. Wrap in plastic and allow to cure in the refrigerator for 2-3 days.

Now this is the hardest part, but absolutely essential; put the gravlax in the freezer for 15-30 minutes to firm up (don't forget about it!) then slice the cold Gravlox *paper thin*. A long sharp blade will make the job easier.

Layer the paper-thin slices on a serving platter. Arrange the crackers, cream cheese, finely sliced red onion and lemon wedges around it. It's a show stopper.

**I assume you will do this for a special occasion, but don't pre-assemble these as an appetizer, or the crackers get soggy. Let folks make up their own, squeezing just a few drips of lemon onto each bite.

MOOSELOAF

With Lowbush Cranberry Sauce

When our first born was learning to talk, we had a freezer full of moose meat. We must have eaten a lot of it, because she called any kind of meat she was served "moose" -- as far as she was concerned, that's all there was in the world.

Meatloaf is another long lost and forgotten food, one that is just pure genius and must be brought back! People who process their own game tend to have a lot of burger in the freezer. I have not found a more satisfying, simple and thrifty way to turn it into a meal.



- **1 onion**, chopped fine
- **2 cloves garlic**, minced
- **1/4 - 1/2 cup butter** (depending on how lean your burger is)
- **2 eggs**, beaten lightly
- **1/2 teaspoon thyme**

- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **½ teaspoon black pepper**
- **1 Tablespoon + ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce**
- **2-2 ½ lbs ground moose or other wild meat**
- **½ cup oatmeal**
- **½ cup breadcrumbs**
- **1 cup lowbush cranberry sauce**
- **¼ cup brown sugar**

Preheat the oven to 350. Melt the butter over medium heat, add the onion and sauté 10 minutes until soft and browned. Add the garlic for the last minute of cooking.

Meanwhile put the burger into a large bowl and measure the spices out on top of it. Add the tablespoon of Worcestershire sauce, eggs, oatmeal and breadcrumbs. When the onions are cooked, pour them and the butter out over the meat. Using clean hands, mix everything together very thoroughly, kneading the meat until it becomes cohesive. Shape into a loaf and place in a baking dish.

Whisk the cranberry sauce with the ¼ cup of Worcestershire sauce and brown sugar. Spoon the sauce over the meatloaf, coating the entire surface.

Bake for 45 minutes to an hour, basting again with sauce halfway through.

Serve with the remaining sauce, and a big pile of mashed potatoes!

LAUREN'S HOLY TRINITY PIE

Lauren is a good friend and a dedicated epicurean. She won first place at our local Wild Berry Festival several years ago with this brilliant pie, which combines blueberries, lowbush cranberries and raspberries into a truly 'holy' trinity of pieberry flavor!

This is the perfect dessert to brighten up a winter potluck. Lauren recommends the pie dough recipe from Deborah Madison's book Local Flavors.

Thank you Lauren for sharing your wonderful pie!



- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1 Tablespoon quick-cooking granulated tapioca
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

- **1 ¾ lb (about 5 cups) combined wild blueberries, lingonberries (lowbush cranberry) and raspberries (I try to source them local!)**
- **1 Tablespoon fresh lemon juice**
- **one recipe pie dough (for double crust)**

Combine 1 cup of the granulated sugar, the brown sugar, tapioca, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a large bowl. Break up any lumps with your fingertips and mix well. Fold in the berries and lemon juice and let the mixture stand for 15 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.

Divide the dough into 2 pieces, one slightly larger than the other. Roll out the larger piece of dough first and drape it into your pie plate. Add the filling, mounding it slightly in the center.

Roll out the second piece of dough into a 12-inch circle. Cut into strips and then criss-cross over filling to make a lattice crust.

Place the pie on a baking sheet on the lower rack of the oven and bake for 15 minutes at 450 degrees. Transfer the baking sheet with the pie to the middle rack, reduce the temperature to 350 degrees, and bake until the juices are thickened and bubbly and the crust is a rich brown color, about 45 minutes more.

You must cool this pie *completely* to room temperature before cutting, to give the filling time to set up.

WILD HERBAL BALM

Balm, salve, and ointment are all more or less the same thing – and so easy to make! Simply infuse oil with any therapeutic herb, and thicken with beeswax.

You can make balm any time of year, but I find winter the perfect season for getting crafty. Plus, balm makes a lovely holiday gift. You do have to have dried herbs on hand, so a bit of thinking ahead is necessary.

This simple recipe uses plantain, which is a traditional favorite for healing the skin, and a plentiful local weed. You can apply plantain balm to dry, cracked skin, as well as bruises, scrapes and bug bites. (Don't use balms or salves on fresh, bloody cuts though, as the oil prevents the cut from breathing properly.)



Ingredients:

- **1/2 cup dried, crushed plantain leaves**
- **1/2 cup olive oil**
- **1 oz beeswax**
- **2-3 drops essential oil** (theoretically optional, but without it the oil will go off within a month or two. If you are using aromatic plants such as cottonwood buds, devil's club bark or wormwood you don't need to add essential oils, they provide their own!)

Materials:

- Pint jar
- Cheesecloth or old tea towel
- Pretty glass jar or metal tin to store your balm, this recipe makes about 4 oz

Measure the dry leaves into a glass jar. Pour 1/2 cup of olive oil over the leaves, stirring gently until every single leaf is coated with oil. If you need more oil, add just a tablespoon at a time. When all the leaves are thoroughly moistened, press them down tightly with the back of a spoon. Add more oil if necessary to completely cover the plant material.

To infuse the plant constituents into the oil, heat very gently and keep the oil between 100-130 degrees for 12-24 hours (the longer time for the lower temperature). If you heat your home with a woodstove, setting the jar near it will probably

be perfect. If your oven has a pilot light, it should be warm enough inside with the door closed, but make a big note and stick it the stove so that no one preheats the oven to 350!!!! A last resort is to set the jar into a pot (the larger the better, as it will retain heat longer), surround it with very hot water, and cover the whole thing with towels. You will need to reheat the water whenever it gets cool, once every two hours or so.

Heating helps to fully extract the plant constituents, and is considered the best way to make a medicinal oil. However, a very good oil can be made by simply leaving the jar at room temperature for 3-4 weeks, shaking occasionally. I have made many a batch of fragrant cottonwood oil this way.

When the oil is fully infused, line a strainer with a large cheesecloth or tea towel (it will become permanently oil stained, so use an old one) and set the strainer over a bowl. Pour the oil mixture in and let it drain as much as it can, and then gather up the corners of the cloth, twist to close, and wring the rest of the oil out with your clean hands. Press hard, the oil that's stuck in the leaves themselves is the most medicinal part.

Now measure the strained oil, you should have about ½ cup. Pour it into a double boiler (or microwave safe bowl) and add 1 oz of beeswax. Heat very gently, stirring constantly, just until the beeswax melts. It will happen all at once, so be watchful. Remove from the heat at once. If you want to add any essential oils stir in a few drops now. Then pour the oil directly into the glass jar or metal tin you intend to keep it in. Allow to cool, and apply with abandon!

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