

# WAMPANOAG COOKERY



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*Contributors: Helen Attaquin, Cynthia Akins, Amelia Bingham, Rachel Jeffers, Lorenzo Jeffers, Virginia Moran, Red Wing, Gladys Widdiss*

*In all cultures, recipes are a form of oral tradition. The proper ways to prepare food are passed on from generation to generation. Ingredients may become "modernized," but the basic recipe is deeply rooted in cultural tradition.*

*We are greatly indebted to the Wampanoag contributors to this cookbook for offering to share this aspect of their cultural heritage with all of us.*

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# The Wampanoag Calendar

## Sequan/ Spring

March, April  
Late April, early May  
May, June

Namassack Keeswush, the time of catching fish  
Sequanankeeswush, when they set corn  
Mooonesquanimock, when the women weed the corn

## Quaquusquan/Summer

June, July  
July to late August  
August, September

Towwakeeswosh, when they hill the corn  
Matterllawawkeeswush, squash ripe, beans edible  
Neepunna Keeswosh, corn is edible; or  
Micheennee Keeswosh, everlasting flies

## Taquonk/Fall

September, October  
  
October, November

Pohquitaunk Keeswush, the "middle between"; or  
Taquontikeeswush, the harvest moon  
Pepewarr, white frost

## Papone/Winter

November, December  
December, January  
  
January, February  
February, March

Quinne Keeswush, the long moon  
Papsaquoho, to about Jan. 6;  
Lowatanassick, midwinter; Paponakeeswush, winter month  
Squocheekeswush, when the sun has the strength to thaw  
Wapicummilcum, when ice in the river is gone

### **Baked Eels**

Take large eels and clean them, split them and remove the bone; then cut them into about four inch pieces and lay them in a large pan; sprinkle with salt and pepper and a slice of onion and salt pork. Bake until brown.

*Rachel Jeffers*

### **Eel Stifle**

After eels are cleaned, cut them in pieces, about 1 1/2 inches, slice potatoes and onions as you would for scalloped potatoes.

If you bake it, use a roasting pan, or it can be cooked on top of the stove in a kettle.

I make about three layers.

Use about 1/4 lb. salt pork diced and fried and add some to each layer; add liquid almost to cover, cook until potatoes are brown on top.

*Rachel Jeffers*

### **Skunk Cabbage**

If I had a sore throat, a toothache, or anything like that, my mother would make a warm poultice of skunk cabbage and apply it wherever necessary to sooth and oftimes cure the complaint.

*Lorenzo Jeffers*

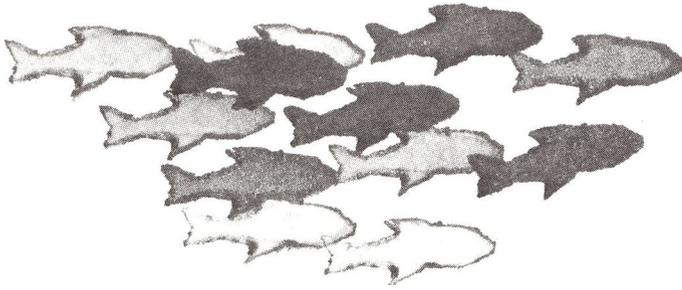
### **Baked Herring**

A quick way to bake herring and to impart a delicate salty flavor is to line a roasting pan with salt and add whole roe herring; and cover with more salt until the herring are well buried under a covering of salt.

Bake an hour in hot oven. I find by turning off the heat and leaving the herring all night they are about right as to the salt absorbed.

"Coarse-fine salt" is the best to use which is usually found in grain stores these days.

*Rachel Jeffers*



### **Salted Dried Herring**

My father-in-law showed me how to salt herring when I was first married.

We used a small wooden keg and sprinkled each layer of herring with "coarse-fine" salt, then left the herring until the eyes turned a little red, then removed the herring and ran a stick about 1/4 inch in diameter through the eyes, about twelve herring to a stick.

Hang them outside to dry.

When ready, bake on brown paper and serve with Indian meal dumplings.

*Rachel Jeffers*

### **Egg Chowder**

Did you ever eat egg chowder?

My mother used to make that.

She had a lot of hens and they laid a lot of eggs. She cooked the chowder in a big kettle because there were ten of us in the family.

She'd make a chowder base of salt pork, onions, potatoes and milk.

Then I was allowed to stand close to the kettle and break the eggs in, one at a time.

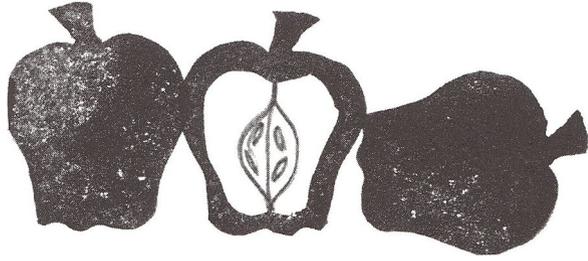
The hot broth would poach the eggs. It was very good.

*Lorenzo Jeffers*

### **Herring Roe**

The herring roe is delicious. You cut it out and cook it. You can fry it in butter, broil it or bake it with bacon strips. It's delicious. I like it better than any other roe.

*Lorenzo Jeffers*



*Susan Riecken*

## **Apples**

What I meant to tell you before.

When we were youngsters growing up, we ate anything and everything that grew, from the time it sprouted until the time it became food, whatever it was.

We ate swamp apples ... it's a fruit that comes on the wild honeysuckle plant before the flower comes. We'd rummage through the woods to find these.

We'd eat green apples from the time they were as big as the tip on my finger until they were the size they should be, if there were any left.

*Gladys Widdiss*

## **Sassafras Tea**

You steep the bark from the roots of the sassafras to make tea. It's a good drink.

*Gladys Widdiss*

## **Spring Sandwiches**

We ate grape leaves from the time they were little sprouts until they became grape leaves, and we used to make sandwiches out of them. We used to eat bull briar. . the big, green briar that you can't get rid of. We would take them ... when they're very small and tender. .. and put them between grape leaves and make sandwiches.

*Gladys Widdiss*

## **Dock**

You cook dock just like you cook spinach. Dock is coarser than spinach, but it's quite good. You can only pick the dock for so long. After a certain point, it tastes too bitter.

*Gladys Widdiss*



### Steamed Greens

Throw the greens in a kettle with some salt and a little water and steam them.

Or eat them green, fresh from the ground.

*Gladys Widdiss*

### Onions

Onions are good for you, even raw, because they kill a lot of germs.

For sore throats and colds, we cut up onions and cook them until they're almost brown.

Then we add molasses. It makes a thick, pasty substance.

We eat it by the teaspoonful. And it works.

One winter, I got a sore throat. I imagine it was a strep throat. There was no such thing as calling a doctor in those days, so my mother mixed up a batch of onions. That's the only thing that cured my throat.

*Gladys Widdiss*

### Cherry Root

In the spring, as soon as the cherry trees sprouted, my grandfather always chewed the new, young sprouts. Whenever you saw him, he had one in his mouth. That was his spring tonic. The cherry root is the basis for a lot of medicines today.

*Gladys Widdiss*

## **Johnny Cake**

I like to use the white Rhode Island corn meal to make Johnny cakes, but you can use any kind of corn meal.

You have to scald your meal well with boiling water, or it tastes uncooked.

Add some salt and a little bit of sugar.

I add a little bit of milk, too, to help brown them.

Mix these ingredients together until they form a mixture that will just about drop off the end of a spoon.

Don't make them too thick, but not too runny either.

Then fry the cakes in Crisco or bacon fat or even butter if you want to.

Fry them for about five minutes, until they're brown on both sides.

One of our favorite meals is Johnny cakes, smoked herring and dandelion greens.

*Rachel Jeffers*

## **Johnny Cake**

Scald an amount of meal as you need it for your batch of Johnny cakes.

Put into the meal some salt and sugar (teaspoon).

When completely scalded, mix and mix until nice and soft, not runny soft. Thin it down a little more with milk.

Make little cakes about 'is inch thick.

Fry slowly until golden brown on one side and turn on the other side.

Not too hot a fry pan or griddle or grill.

*Red Wing*

## **Fresh Cod Livers**

My grandfather boiled them in salt water.

After they were cooked, he'd eat them, with a little salt, with the rest of his meal. He said it kept him healthy.

*Lorenzo Jeffers*

## Quahog Chowder

When I was a child, my parents both worked and I spent most of my days with Aunt Mabel Peters and her husband Nathan, a Mashpee fisherman.

Most of our days were spent on the water, no matter what the weather was. While he was out fishing, my aunt would make quahog chowder.

You could smell the odor of the chowder drifting out across the bay, and it was just fantastic. It's a memory I just haven't lost, no matter how many years have passed. **It** makes me hungry just thinking about it.

*Amelia Bingham*

## Quahog Chowder

We used to go down there every year and have picnics on the beach. We'd go out there and dig the quahogs out of the mud and make the chowder right there. We used an old-fashioned iron kettle, built a fire, cooked the chowder and sat on the sand. It was really beautiful.

To make chowder, you need fried pork and onions.

Cut the pork into little chunks and fry it. Then put some onions in and cook them, and then, when they're sauteed and soft, cut potatoes into small pieces and put them in. Add some water and cook until done.

While the chowder is cooking, open up the quahogs, put them in a chopping bowl and chop until quite fine. When the potatoes are cooked, or just before you're ready to serve them, dump the clams in and stir it all together. Nowadays, people put milk in the chowder and that makes it white. We never used to put milk in it, just some flour and water thickening, to give it more body.

A big pot like ours would probably have to cook for three quarters of an hour before the potatoes were done. Of course, before we started, we had to decide how much we were going to make for the number of people we were going to serve. **If** there were a lot of people, we'd probably peel five or even ten pounds of potatoes.

*Virginia Moran*

## Quahog Chowder

1/4 lb. salt pork  
2 medium onions  
5 or 6 potatoes  
1 pint ground-up quahogs  
1 pint milk (approx.)  
salt and pepper to taste  
water and quahog juice to cover

Dice up salt pork and onions and fry them until they are nearly brown.

Dice up the potatoes.

Add the potatoes, water and a little quahog juice to the onions.

Boil this until the potatoes are almost done.

Add some ground-up quahogs and some milk, and heat.

Some people thicken the chowder with flour and water.

*Cynthia Akins*

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### **Strawberry Bread**

The strawberry is the wonder of all the fruits growing in these parts.

The Indians bruise them in a mortar and mix them with meal, and make strawberry bread.

*Roger Williams, 1643*

### **Witch Hazel**

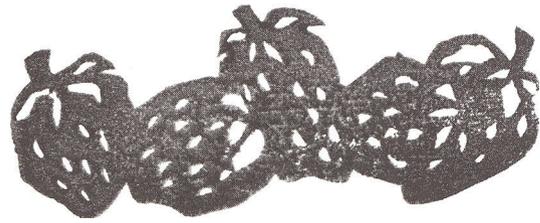
We used witch hazel for headaches, burns and itches.

*Gladys Widdiss*

### **Blueberry Slump**

Stew down a pot of fresh blueberries and sugar. While it is boiling, drop dumplings into it.

*Amelia Bingham*



### **Clam Fritters**

1 pint chopped, shucked quahogs

2 cups flour

3 teaspoons baking powder

1 egg

1/8 teaspoon salt

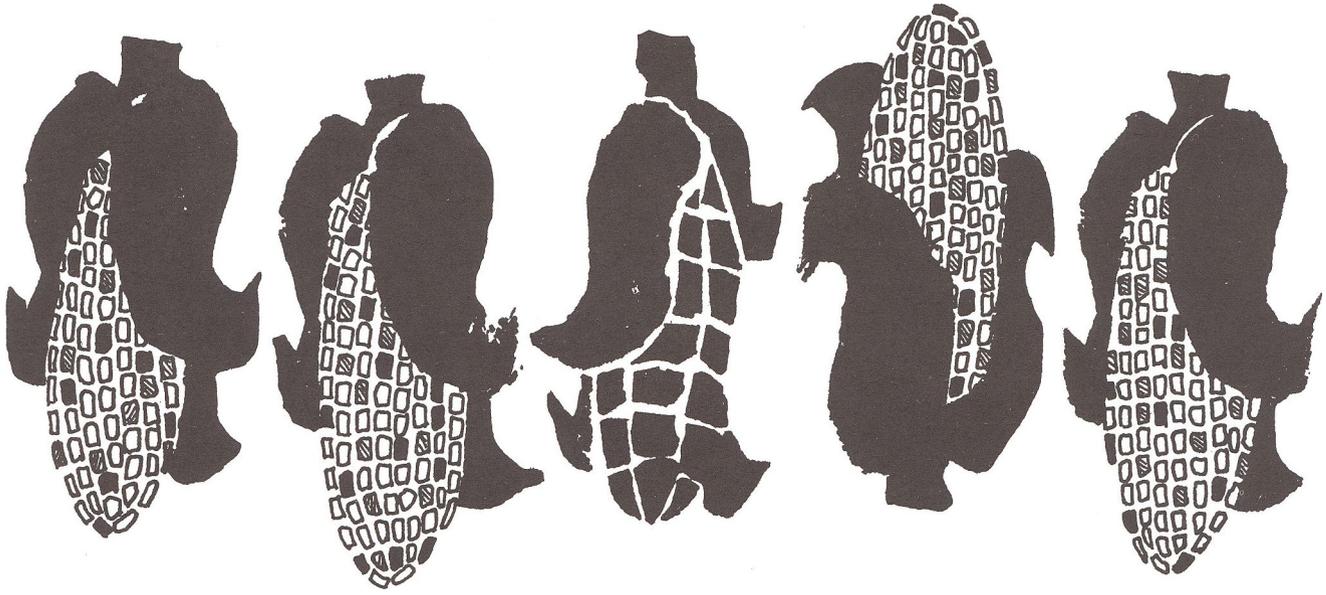
1/8 teaspoon pepper

1/2 cup quahogs' liquor

Mix flour, baking powder, salt and pepper; add liquids and beaten egg.

Fry in deep fat for fritters; for pancakes make batter thinner and fry on a greased griddle or frying pan.

*Rachel Jeffers*



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## **Nokake**

They make also a certain sort of meal of parched maize. This meal they call nokake. **It** is so sweet, toothsome, and hearty, that an Indian will travel many days with no other food but this meal, which he eateth as he needs, and after it drinketh water. And for this end, when they travel a journey, or go a hunting, they carry this/nokake in a basket, or bag, for their use. /

*Daniel Gookin, 1640*

## **Nokake**

If occasions cause them to travel, the best of their victuals for their journey is Nocake, (as they call it) which is nothing but Indian Corne parched in the hot ashes; the ashes being sifted from it, it is afterward beaten to powder, and put into a long leatherne bag, trussed at their backe like a

knapsacke; out of which they take thrice three spoonefulls a day, dividing it into three meales.

*William Wood, 1630*

## **Nokake**

Take corn kernels that are fried and off the cob, and parch them in a pan. They can be eaten that way or ground up and eaten like a cereal, with sugar and milk.

*Cynthia Akins*

## **Nocake**

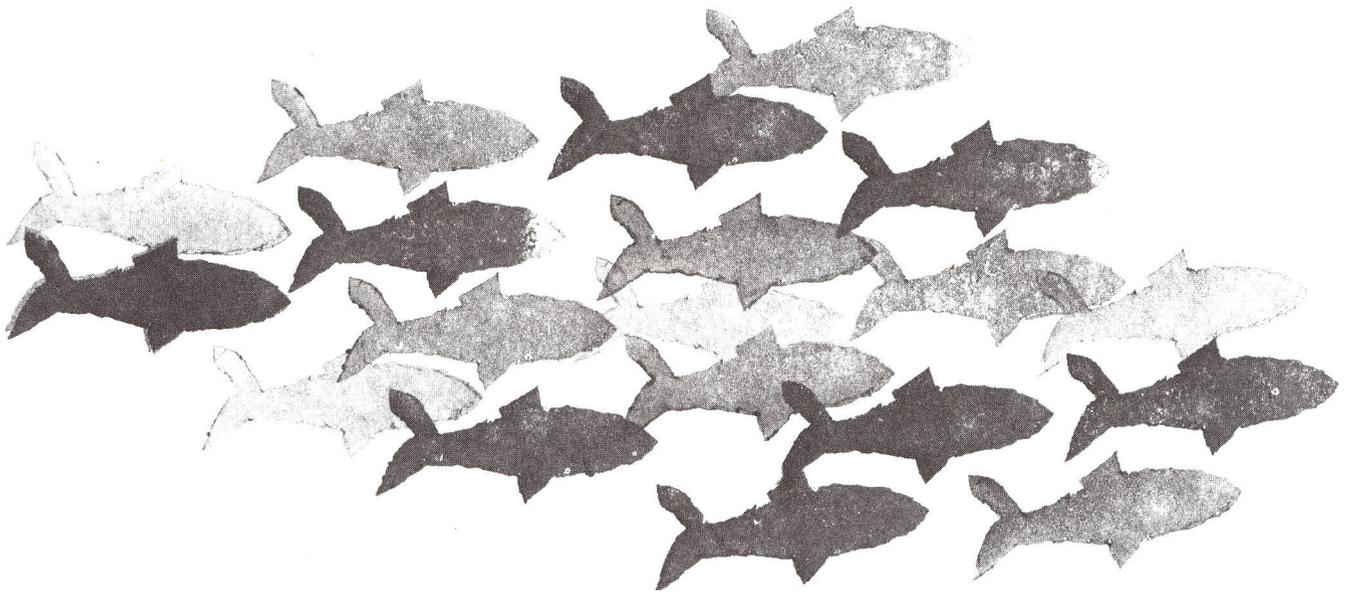
The Indian name "nokehick" for a meal of parched corn was pronounced "no-cake" by the English.

We always enjoyed parching corn on Gay Head. During the winter, the children always had their pockets full of it, to munch on.

We ground **it** up to eat with salt and sugar during the long winter evenings.

*Rachel Jeffers*

**!**



## **Hints About Preparing Wild Game for Cooking**

An animal should be cleaned right away.

Remove the entrails as soon as possible or they will spoil the meat. The meat will absorb a bad flavor as a result of the food the animal ate just before it was shot.

Hang the animal in a cool place. In hot weather, you need to be very careful about attracting flies. A cheesecloth bag works very well. Small animals should be allowed to hang for 48 hours before cooking, to get rid of their animal body heat.

To get rid of stray bits of fur that are clinging to the carcass, dip a cloth in scalding water and wipe the carcass with it.

If there is lots of buckshot in the carcass, be sure to soak the carcass in salt water for several hours to remove the taste and poisons from the shot.

*Helen A taquin*



## **Rabbit Pie**

One of the best things my mother cooked was rabbit pie.

I used to have to skin and clean the rabbit, then cut it up.

She would line a big pan with rich biscuit crust, put the rabbit stew in and cover it with a top crust. I'd like to have some of it on the table right now.

*Lorenzo Jeffers*

## Raccoon Pie

Be sure to remove every bit of fat inside and outside. All layers of fat must be removed.

Under the armpits of the front legs, on either side of the spine and also in the small of the back, you'll find several small round kernels. These are the scent glands. They *must* be removed before cooking. Be sure you get them from all those places.

Raccoons and muskrats are dark meat, but when properly prepared they are flavorful and excellent dishes.

One raccoon

1 quart water

1 pint vinegar

1 tbs. salt

1 tsp. pepper

1 tbs. brown sugar

1/4 ounce of pickling spices

1 onion diced

4 small potatoes

4 small carrots

1 recipe of baking powder biscuits.

Cut prepared raccoon into serving pieces.

Mix water, vinegar, seasonings, sugar and spices

together. Put raccoon pieces in this brine for at least eight hours. Then drain, put in a stewing kettle and cover with water.

Cook until raccoon meat is tender.

Then add onions, potatoes, and carrots. When all the ingredients are tender, remove them from the broth.

Thicken the liquid with browned flour and butter and season to taste.

Place the meat and vegetables in a dish and cover with the gravy.

Cover the top with your own recipe for baking powder biscuits, with a little extra shortening added, to make them more tender. Cut a vent in the dough.

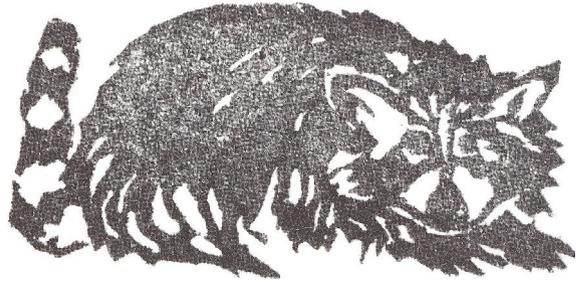
Bake in 450° oven until brown - about 12-15 minutes.

*Helen Attaquin*

Have you heard that the Indians brought five deer to the first Thanksgiving feast?

If a deer weighs about 125 pounds (60 pounds dressed), and one pound of venison feeds one person, how many people will five deer feed?

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*Mary Eisenberg*

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## Deer Stew

Brown two to three pounds of deer meat cut into pieces in bacon fat. Add two large sliced onions and continue browning.

When nicely browned, stir in 3 tbs. flour and place in a baking dish. Add 2 tbs. vinegar, 3 tbs. ketchup, 1 tbs. sugar, and salt and pepper to taste.

Cover the meat with water and bake at 375 degrees for two to three hours, until the meat is tender, adding water as needed to keep the meat covered.

When done, thicken the gravy and serve. Serves 4-6 people.

*Helen Attaquin*

## Wild Duck with Pecan Stuffing

2 2 1/2 pound ducks  
4 cups soft bread crumbs  
1 cup finely chopped celery  
1 cup finely chopped onions  
1 cup seedless raisins

1 cup pecan meats, chopped  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1/2 cup scalded milk  
2 eggs, beaten  
6 slices bacon or salt pork  
1 cup tomato ketchup  
1/4 cup Worcestershire sauce  
1/4 cup A-I sauce  
1/2 cup chili sauce

Mix bread crumbs, celery, onions, raisins, nuts and salt together.

Add hot milk to beaten eggs and add to bread crumb mixture. Fill ducks with stuffing and sew up cavity. Place in a roasting pan.

Cover each duck with three strips of bacon and roast uncovered in a 350° oven, allowing 15-20 minutes per pound.

20 minutes before serving, mix together the ketchup, chili sauce, A-I sauce and the Worcestershire sauce and use to baste the ducks.

Garnish with parsley and slices of oranges with a few candied cranberries in the center of each slice.

Skim the fat from the sauce. Serve the sauce with the duck.

*Helen Attaquin*

### **Beaver Tail Roast**

Marinate the beaver tail for 24 hours in a mix of 1 cup red wine, one cup water and one large onion, chopped. Dry the tail and scrape it carefully. Parboil the tail till nearly tender in water to cover, to which has been added 1/2 cup vinegar and 1 tsp. salt.

Dry the tail again.

Dust it with flour.

Dip it into beaten egg.

Then into cracker crumbs.

Pour 3 tbs. melted butter over it.

Roast on a rack in a 350° oven until the tail is browned and tender.

Serve hot with lemon slices. Serves two.

There's a lot of good meat on a beaver, but for the best eating, be sure to choose a younger, smaller animal so the meat will be more tender.

Beaver meat is dark, rich and delicious.

*Helen A ttaquin*

### **Potato Bargain**

Fry slices of mixed salt pork (lean and fat) until browned with sliced onions. Then add sliced potatoes and cover with water, add seasoning to taste, pepper and such.

Cook until potatoes are tender and add a little bit of thickening if desired.

I often add a bouillion cube to give the broth more flavor.

*Rachel Jeffers*

### **Plum Porridge**

Plum porridge is a Gay Head special dish.

First parboil raisins and pour off the water. Then add fresh water and boil until tender. Heat milk and add sugar to taste, also butter and nutmeg. Then add a bit of flour thickening. Add raisins last.

*Rachel Jeffers*

**!**

### **Cranberry Dumplings**

Get a dumpling recipe out of any cookbook, and just add the cranberries then steam them and serve with a sauce.

*Gladys Widdiss*

### **Cranberry Relish**

Today we make cranberry relish. We grind up oranges and cranberries, add some sugar and mix it all together.

*Cynthia Akins*

### **Thoroughwart Tea**

I can still remember my grandfather getting thorough wart plants in the fall. He'd steep it and make tea, for colds and sore throats.

*Gladys Widdiss*

### **Thoroughwart Tea**

My grandmother always kept a pot of thorough-wart tea going on the stove. If I had a cold, I wouldn't go in there and cough, because she'd make me drink it.

*Lorenzo Jeffers*

### **Cranberry Shortcake**

4 lbs. fresh cranberries  
3 lbs. sugar  
3 cups fresh orange juice  
1 quart oranges, diced  
1 quart heavy cream  
1/2 cup confectioner's sugar  
1 tbs. vanilla extract  
50 shortcake biscuits

Wash the cranberries. Combine the cranberries, sugar and orange juice and bring to a boil. Add the diced oranges and bring to a boil again.

Remove from the stove and cool. Whip the heavy cream, adding confectioner's sugar and vanilla.

Spoon cranberry mixture between the layers and over the top of the biscuits, and top with whipped cream. This serves 50 people.

Of course, this is just one of many, many recipes for cranberries. You can use cranberries in salads, in ham roll, in beverages of all types; it makes excellent breads, cakes and cookies, and of course all kinds of desserts - cranberry raisin pie, cranberry cheese pie, cranberry whip - you can even make cranberry mousse.

*Helen Attaquin*

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## **Indian Potatoes**

When I was a child, there were a lot of Wampanaog people who ate Indian potatoes. They used to put them in their stews or cook them with their game. They were very hot - just like horseradish.

*Amelia Bingham*

## **Bannock**

2 cups flour

2 tsp. baking powder

1/2 tsp. salt

Enough water to make a medium-soft batter.

Indian bread is called bannock.

It is flour, water, baking powder and salt made into a dough. The dough is shaped and fried in a little bit of grease in a frying pan.

It tastes like a biscuit.

*Cynthia Akins*

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Winter is the time when the land rests. When Wampanoag people lived in the old way, they lived mostly on the dried foods they had collected and put away in their storage pits. The women dug pits near and inside their wigwams. They lined the pits with mats, carefully put in their dried vegetables, meats, nuts and berries, covered the pit with another mat and heaped earth on top of all of it. When people needed food in the winter, they could get it from these pits. With the exception of a fish caught through the ice or animals taken in traps, what people ate in winter was largely dependant on what had been stored away in Spring, Summer and Fall. Winter recipes were the same as those used in other seasons, as long as dried foods from those seasons had been saved for winter use.

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