

# First Nations Traditional Foods FACT SHEETS



# Fish

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

From the beginning, over 50 kinds of fish from the ocean, lakes, ponds and rivers have nourished us, providing us with the strength and ability to survive and prosper in our traditional territories. Eating fish has always been an important part of our culture and nutrition. Fish meat and eggs are excellent sources of protein and B vitamins. Traditionally, fish heads and the soft bones have been a source of calcium to keep our bones strong.

## INFORMATION ON VARIETY OF SPECIES IN BC

Fish are delicious, nutritious and culturally important to us. The varieties of fish that are caught depend on where we live, our nation or family history of use and availability of adequate stocks. Across B.C. some of the freshwater and saltwater fish that are enjoyed include:

**Salmon:** Sockeye, Chinook, Chum, Pink, Coho

**Groundfish:** Pacific Cod, Black cod, Ling cod, Rockfish

**Flatfish:** Sole, Flounder, Halibut

**Small fish:** Eulachon, Herring, Herring Roe

**Trout:** Dolly Varden, Lake, Rainbow, Steelhead, Cutthroat, Kokanee

**Whitefish:** Northern Pike, Walleye, Burbot, Arctic Grayling Bass, Chub



## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

If the people tired of dried fish during the winter, fishing under the ice was the only way they could catch fresh fish. Rocks heated in the fire place 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 jiggling 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.



## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

Traditionally, no edible part of the fish was wasted, including the head, eyes, offal (edible internal organs) and eggs. Today, fish heads are still a delicacy in many areas. For the Gitksan people in north central British Columbia, they are considered Really good for a sick person... because that's where the [real]...strength is.... The cheek meat itself is considered particularly tasty and for that reason is occasionally set aside for some favoured person.

## NUTRITION MESSAGES

Fish meat, heads and eggs are excellent sources of **protein** and **B vitamins**. Our bodies need **protein rich foods** daily to build and repair our muscles, skin and blood. Protein also helps us fight sickness. B vitamins help our bodies to use the energy we get from the food we eat and to keep our nervous systems working properly.

Cold water, oily fish, such as herring, eulachon, salmon, trout, halibut and cod, are rich in **Omega-3 Fatty Acids**. Omega-3 fatty acids help protect against strokes, heart disease and may help protect against diabetes and cancer.

Many fish, such as salmon are also an excellent source of **vitamin D** and **vitamin A**.

Fish head and bones are good sources of calcium. We need calcium for strong bones and teeth.

Smoking or drying may increase the amount of some nutrients due to moisture loss during the drying process. Smoked or dried fish is great for travelling or snacks.

## HARVESTING FOOD FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:

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# Salmon

NUTRIENT CONTENT	BODY PARTS OF SALMON		
	MEAT	HEAD	EGGS
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)	Protein Niacin Vitamin D	Protein B Vitamins (various)	Vitamin A Vitamin C Riboflavin
Good source (provides 15-24% of daily need)	Omega 3 fatty acids Riboflavin	Calcium	Fat Protein Thiamin
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)	Fat Calcium Vitamin A Iron Thiamin	Fat Vitamin A Iron	Iron Niacin

This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75g)

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

Salmon are a favourite food of our people and an important source of nutrients that have always kept us strong.

Coho, Chinook, Chum, Steelhead and Sockeye live and migrate in our ocean waters and in our major rivers and streams. With their exceptional contributions of protein, vitamins, minerals and healthy fats, they have helped us keep our bodies healthy and free from hunger through the years. Salmon continue to be very popular and are a staple food of many coastal and interior nations.



Tara Jacobs, Squamish, Dust Dancer Productions



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## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

For those who fish, a large part of the summer is spent by the river. Families gather when the salmon run and work together to provide and preserve enough to feed everyone. Salmon are cut and cleaned in a prescribed manner that demonstrates reverence and facilitates preservation be it by wind drying on racks, smoke curing, canning or freezing.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

From the beginning, salmon have nourished us, providing us with the strength and ability to survive and prosper in our traditional territories. In many communities, oil from sockeye used to be extracted and used in cooking.

## NUTRITION MESSAGES

Salmon is a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, which help protect against diabetes and strokes.

Salmon meat, skin, head and eggs are good sources of protein and B vitamins. Salmon heads and soft bones are a good source of calcium. We need calcium for strong bones and teeth.

Dried salmon is a fair source of iron. Our bodies need iron to carry oxygen in our blood so that our minds, heart and body grow and stay strong.

Salmon eggs are an excellent source of Vitamins A and C. We need these nutrients to fight infection and keep our gums, skin and eyes healthy.

Salmon is an excellent source of vitamin D, which our bodies need to keep our bones strong and to help protect us from arthritis, cancer, and other diseases.

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# Eulachon

**EULACHON;  
OOLICAN, OOLICHAN,  
OOLIGAN, HOOLIGAN,  
ULICHAN, OULACHEN  
AND HOLLIKAN.**

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

For thousands of years, eulachon have been prized for their oil and are one of the most valuable trade items. There were numerous grease trails connecting coastal and interior communities with the largest trading centre on the Nass River. Many of the old wooden bowls and spoons collected for museums in the early 19th century still have a shiny patina from eulachon grease. Also known as candle fish, eulachon have historically spawned in rivers all the way from Bristol Bay, Alaska down to Klamath River in Northern California. Areas of the Nass, Kingcome Inlet, Knights Inlet and Bella Coola are well-known for their eulachon runs.

NUTRIENT CONTENT	PREPERATION			
	FRESH	COOKED	SMOKED, DRIED	GREASE
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)		Protein B Vitamins (various)	Fat, Protein Iron Riboflavin	Vitamin A
Good source (provides 15-24% of daily need)	Protein	Calcium		Fat
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)	Fat Iron Niacin	Fat Protein Iron Riboflavin		

This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75 g) of fresh, cooked or smoked/dried eulachon and 1 tablespoon (15 mL or 13 g) of eulachon grease.



## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

Harvested in spring, eulachon were caught with wooden rakes or dip nets or conical traps made of cedar wood, branches, spruce roots or conical nets made of nettle twine. It often took all day for the fisherman to empty the overnight catch, from these huge nets, into their dugout spoon canoes and bring the fish to shore. Today, dip nets and conical nets are still used but seine nets are more common. A Nuxalk tradition was to give the first canoe load or two away to the whole community before keeping your own catch to make grease.



## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

Eulachon have always been enjoyed fresh, smoke/dried, and as grease. Some Nuxalk elders recall that in the past, when the runs were healthy, only the fattier female fish were taken for grease and the males were taken for drying. Eulachon grease remains one of the most valuable foods to our Coastal communities. The taste of the grease varies depending on where the fish is from and how it is made. The longer the fish is left to ferment, the stronger the taste.

## NUTRITION MESSAGES

Smoked, dried eulachons are an excellent source of protein and iron. Our bodies need protein to build and repair our muscles, skin and blood and to fight illness. Our bodies need iron to carry oxygen in our blood so that our minds, heart and body grow and stay strong. Healthy blood keeps us from getting tired and prevents illness.

Eulachon and eulachon grease are an excellent source of vitamin A. Vitamin A helps our bodies fight infection and helps to keep our skin and eyes healthy.

Cooked eulachon is a good source of calcium. We need calcium for strong bones and teeth.

Eulachon meat and grease is a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, which help protect against diabetes and strokes.

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# Herring

**HERRING ROE:**  
 GYOOS (SMÁLGYAX,  
 TSIMSHIAN),  
 TS'UM'USH (ISLAND  
 HUL'Q'UMI'NUM,  
 SALISHAN)

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

Herring and herring roe have always been an important part of the Coastal Fishery. On the coast, herring are harvested from late winter into spring. Herring roe are gathered using hemlock branches, seaweed or on kelp. Herring roe are nutritious and delicious and are part of an important fishery for many coastal communities. On Northern Vancouver Island, herring roe is a feature at feasts and in a herring roe and kelp chef challenge.



Penny White, Tsimshian

NUTRIENT CONTENT	HERRING ROE	
	REMOVE FROM HEMLOCK BRANCHES	ON KELP, DRIED
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)		Protein Iron
Good source (provides 15-24% of daily need)	Protien	Fat Niacin
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)	Iron Thiamin Riboflavin	Thiamin Riboflavin

This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75g)



Penny White, Tsimshian



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## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

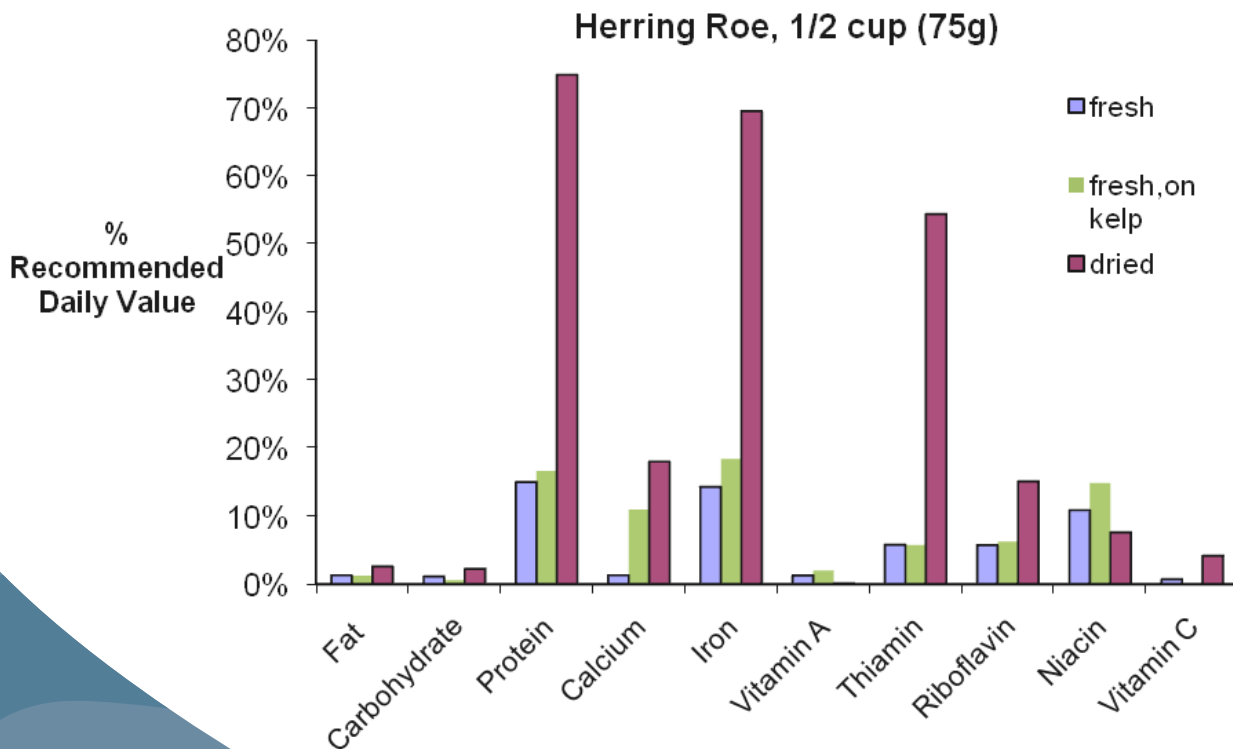
Herring roe are often harvested using kelp or hemlock branches or trees which are towed to the spawning area and anchored. After the herring spawn on the kelp or the branches, they are brought home and hung up to dry. When the herring roe on branches are considered dry enough, the herring roe is removed from the branches and left to dry some more before being stored away. Herring roe on kelp are dried and the kelp are laid flat on top of each other, tied and stored in a box.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

Herring roe on kelp are a favourite food and staple for many communities. In Kwakwaka'wakw communities, herring roe was gathered on cedar branches and was eaten fresh, dried or rehydrated. Dried herring roe was dipped in oil with or without salmon berry shoots. Rehydrated herring roe was made either into herring roe balls after soaking and eaten by itself or the soaked herring roe was brought to a boil in a steam-box and then poured into a serving dish and covered with oil which was then eaten using a spoon. Today, herring roe on kelp is often stored frozen.

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This chart illustrates how a ½ cup (75 grams) serving of herring roe helps adults meet most of the recommended daily intake of several key nutrients. ½ cup of herring roe contains more than 50% of the Recommended Daily Value for thiamin, iron and protein (based on a 2000 kcal diet).

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# Seafood General

*Crab, Scallops, Shrimp, Abalone, Sea cucumber, Octopus, Clams, Prawns*

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

A wide variety of seafood has long been used for food by coastal people of British Columbia, and to a lesser extent by people in the interior. These foods are excellent sources of protein, iron and B vitamins.

Over 30 kinds of seafoods are harvested from the oceans. In the chart below are nutrient ratings for some of these foods based on a ½ cup (90 gram serving).

<b>NUTRIENT CONTENT</b>	<b>KING CRAB, COMMON OCTOPUS, MIXED SPECIES OF SHRIMP, SEA CUCUMBER, MIXED SPECIES OF ABALONE BLACK SEA PRUNE</b>
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)	Protein (crab, octopus, shrimp, abalone and black sea prunes) Iron (octopus) Riboflavin (sea cucumber) Niacin (octopus and shrimp)
Good source (provides 15-24% of daily need)	Protein (sea cucumber) Iron (shrimp, abalone and black sea prune) Niacin (sea cucumber, abalone and black sea prune)
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)	Calcium (crab and octopus) Vitamin A (octopus, shrimp and sea cucumber) Thiamin and riboflavin (abalone) Niacin (crab) Vitamin C (crab and octopus)

This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75g)

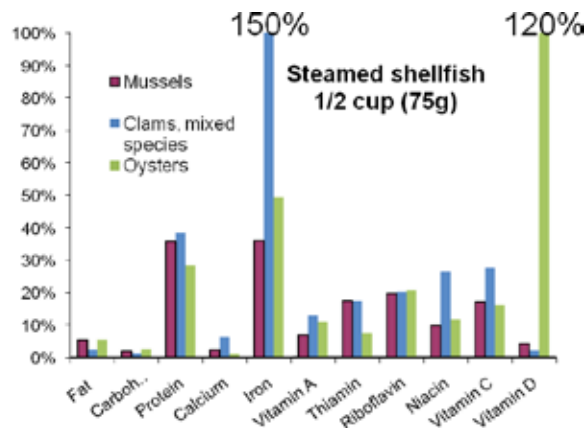


## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

Women would travel to areas where there were many barnacles on stones. Before gathering barnacles, a beach fire would be prepared and covered with stones that would become red-hot from the fire. Stones with great amounts of barnacles would be placed on top of the red-hot stones. A bucket of sea water would be poured over the barnacle stones and red hot stones and then cedarbark mats were placed to cover all of the barnacle stones that were being steamed. After half an hour or so, the mats would be removed. After the barnacles had dried and the stones had cooled, the barnacles were removed from the stones and placed gently into the barnacle basket.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

Sea Cucumbers were a traditional food of the Heiltsuk people. Some liked to eat the whole cucumbers, while others preferred only the white noodle-like tissue running lengthwise inside the body. These strands were fried before serving. Traditionally, sea cucumbers were roasted over the fire or baked in the hot ashes of the fire. After they were sufficiently cooked, the ashes were washed off and the sea cucumbers were eaten.



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# Bivalves

*Clams, Mussels, Oysters*

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

Mussels, clams and oysters have been an important part of the diet for many First Nations communities for thousands of years. Mussels, clams and oysters are excellent sources of protein and iron. Steamed or boiled, clams are also excellent sources of vitamin C and oysters are excellent sources of vitamin D

NUTRIENT CONTENT	SPECIES / PREPERATION					
	MUSSELS, BLUE RAW	MUSSELS, BLUE STEAMED OR BOILED	CLAMS, MIXED SPECIES RAW	CLAMS, MIXED SPECIES STEAMED OR BOILED	OYSTERS, PACIFIC RAW	OYSTERS, PACIFIC STEAMED OR BOILED
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)	Iron	Protein Iron	Iron	Protein Iron Niacin Vitamin C	Iron	Protein Iron Riboflavin Vitamin D
Good source (provides 15-24% of daily need)	Protein Niacin	Thiamin Riboflavin Vitamin C	Protein Niacin Vitamin C	Vitamin A Thiamin Riboflavin	Protein	Vitamin C
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)	Thiamin Riboflavin Vitamin C	Fat Vitamin A Niacin	Vitamin A Thiamin Riboflavin	Calcium	Vitamin A Thiamin Riboflavin Niacin Vitamin C	Fat Vitamin A Thiamin Niacin

This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75g)



## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

Clams were formerly harvested whenever there was a need for food. A long time ago, when the only pollution in the water was 'red tide' during the warmer months, people would first observe whether the animals, especially the seagulls and otters, were eating the clams before heading down to dig.

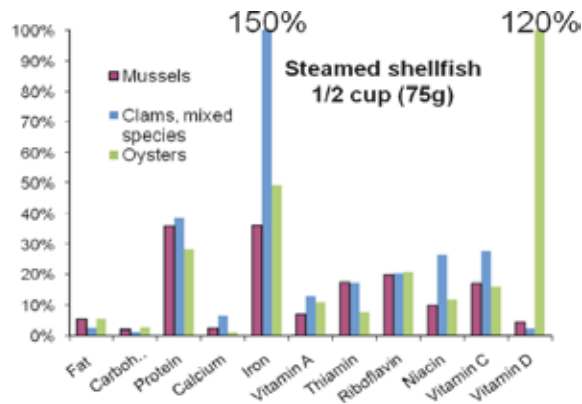
## NUTRITION MESSAGES

Whether they are eaten raw, steamed or boiled, mussels, clams and oysters are excellent sources of iron. In fact, the contribution of 90 grams of these wonderful foods to our overall daily dietary need for iron ranges from 26% for raw blue mussels to 180% for steamed or boiled clams. Our bodies need iron to carry oxygen in our blood so that our minds, heart and body grow and stay strong. Healthy blood keeps us from getting tired and prevents illness.

Mussels, clams and oysters are excellent sources of low-fat protein. Our bodies need protein to build and repair our muscles, skin and blood and to fight illness.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

On the Northwest Coast, clams were often dried in large quantities for use. Clams were first steamed open in an earth oven and then strung on sticks and roasted over a bed of coals. Later they were placed between mats and trampled to tenderize. Finally, they were strung on long ropes which could be worn around the neck and snacked upon



Clams are an excellent source of vitamin C. We need Vitamin C to keep our teeth and gums healthy and our blood vessels strong.

Oysters are an excellent source of vitamin D, which our bodies need to keep our bones strong and help protect us from arthritis, cancer, and other diseases. We get almost one and a half times our overall daily dietary need for vitamin D when we eat just 90 grams (1/2 cup).

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# Moose

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

Moose meat today is a staple food for many interior and coastal communities, although it has only been found in many of our territories for less than 100 years. It is thought that climate change and the opening of the west facilitated the migration of the moose. Moose meat is eaten fresh, dried/smoked or half-dried/smoked. Moose supplies us with many nutrients. These nutrients help build and repair body tissues and keep us healthy.

NUTRIENT CONTENT	MOOSE MEAT
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)	Protien Niacin
Good source (provides 15-24% of daily need)	Iron Riboflavin
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)	Vitamin C  This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75g)



## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

Moose were formerly 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. To draw the bull moose out, hunters will often make moose calls, either the lowing “moo-ah” call of the female moose or the sound of a bull moose grunting. The bull moose has sharp hearing and will head directly for the sound of a female cow or a suspected rival. Hunters need to be quite alert and ready with their rifles as an enraged bull moose can be quite dangerous.

## NUTRITION MESSAGES

Moose is an excellent source of protein and B vitamins (riboflavin and niacin) and a good source of iron

Compared to modern domestic animals such as beef, pork and chicken, or products made from these meats (bologna, luncheon meats, wieners), most wild game, including moose, is higher in nutrients that we need more of, such as protein and iron, and lower in nutrients that we need less of, such as saturated fat.

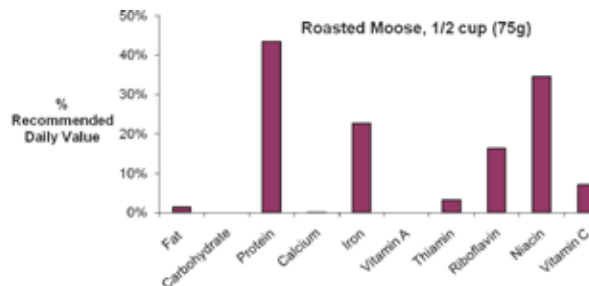
The following chart illustrates that ½ cup (75 grams) of roasted moose is low in fat and an excellent source of protein, iron, and niacin.

The Recommended Daily Values were created to help people understand how well a specific serving of food helps meet the recommended daily intake of vitamins and minerals for adults.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

Meat cut from the legs is often made into dry meat or half-dry salted meat. To make dry meat, the meat from the legs is sliced using a razor sharp knife until the meat is in paper-thin strips. This meat is then hung on meat racks and left to dry from 4 to 5 days to several weeks. A low fire is often kept going to keep the flies away. If the meat is well dried, it can be eaten as is, otherwise, it is usually boiled for a short time.

There are three parts of the digestive system of a moose which have traditionally been eaten. One of the four stomachs, the one which has a pattern that looks like a beehive, is called grandmother’s tooth marks. A second part is the tripe, the small intestine – the part which, when split open, looks like rough pages in a book. This is commonly called the Bible. The third part is the large intestine, the last few feet of the intestine. This is referred to as the bum gut.



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# Deer

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

Hunting of various game animals were conducted at all times of the year. Deer have always been an important food for our communities. Available throughout BC, deer was one of the principle game hunted. Traditional methods of hunting included the use of bows, arrows, spears, clubs, knives, nets and traps.



NUTRIENT CONTENT	DEER	
	MEAT, ROASTED	LIVER, COOKED
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)	Protein Riboflavin Niacin Iron	Protein, Iron Vitamin A Riboflavin Niacin, Vitamin C
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)	Thaimin	Fat

This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75g)





## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

Deer was the principle game animal of the Okanagan people and the major hunts were in the fall time when deer are still fat. Hunting camps were traditionally organized in various areas by the men who are knowledgeable, skilled and considered good hunters. A powerful hunter would have prepared himself spiritually before heading out to hunt. Women would work at the camps to prepare the meat for smoking and drying. Everyone helped out at the camp and the rewards were shared equally.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE STORY

Deer meat was usually smoked so that it would keep for long periods of time. When on a hunting expedition away from the village, the deer was usually smoked right where it was caught. A small rack with shelves, about 1.5 to 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 two to three centimetres thick and hung over the shelves on the rack. A fire was lit underneath the meat to roast and smoke it. This smoked meat made it much easier to take more meat back to the community. 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.

## NUTRITION MESSAGES

Deer meat is an excellent source of protein and iron. Deer liver is an excellent source of protein, iron, Vitamins A and C. While we all need some Vitamin A, an excessive amount can be toxic. For example, 90g of cooked deer liver contains enough Vitamin A to meet an adult male's requirement for approximately 16 days! Enjoy deer liver but limit consumption to less than weekly.

Compared to modern domestic animals, such as, beef, pork and chicken, or products made from these meats (bologna, luncheon meats, wieners), most wild game, including deer, is higher in nutrients that we need more of, such as protein and iron, and lower in nutrients that we need less of, such as saturated fat.

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Victoria Baptiste, Okanagan, Dust Dancer Productions



# Small Mammals

*Rabbit/Hare, Ground Squirrel, Beaver*

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

Though small animals such as rabbit/hare, ground squirrel and beaver were of greater importance to interior groups, the beaver bones that have been found in shell-heaps offer evidence that some coastal people have also enjoyed them for many years. In fact it has been said that for the Gitksan people, beaver was so highly valued that it was forbidden to feed it to the dogs. Beaver, ground squirrel and rabbit are excellent sources of protein, iron and the B vitamin niacin.



Victoria Baptiste, Okanagan, Dust Dancer Productions

NUTRIENT CONTENT	SMALL MAMMALS		
	RABBIT / HARE COOKED	GROUND SQUIRREL ROASTED	BEAVER COOKED
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)	Protein Iron Niacin	Protein Iron Niacin	Protein Iron
Good source (provides 15-24% of daily need)		Riboflavin	Niacin
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)			Riboflavin

This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75g)





Robert George, Okanagan, Director of Productions

### **TRADITIONAL HARVESTING**

Although taken in all seasons, small game animals were not sought for great distances like the larger game. Usually boys would practice their hunting skills on small mammals like rabbits and squirrels using snares and traps. However, women also hunted, usually when something was needed for the next meal, as small game was usually eaten immediately.

### **TRADITIONAL FOOD USE STORY**

No matter how small the animal, hunting was always done with reverence for the animal. Very little of what was taken was not used in some way.

### **NUTRITION MESSAGES**

Beaver, Ground Squirrel and Rabbit meat are excellent sources of protein. Our bodies need protein to build and repair our muscles, skin and blood and to fight illness.

Beaver, Ground Squirrel and Rabbit meat are excellent sources of iron. Our bodies need iron to carry oxygen in our blood so that our minds, heart and body grow and stay strong. Healthy blood keeps us from getting tired and prevents illness.

Beaver, Ground Squirrel and Rabbit meat are good to excellent sources of niacin (a B vitamin). Our bodies need niacin to grow and develop normally and to keep our nervous systems and digestive tracts working properly.

### **HARVESTING FOOD FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:**

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# Birds

*Grouse, Ptarmigan, Ducks*

## **HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC**

Throughout our province there are a variety of birds that traditionally have been hunted and used for food and other purposes. Ducks, ptarmigan and quail are excellent sources of protein, iron and B vitamins.

Common kinds of birds and eggs harvested in our territories include:

**Ducks** -Goldeneye, Stellar's Elder Duck/Old Duck, Canvas back, Ruddy, Wood, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Teal  
Grebe, Murre

**Grouse, Ptarmigan, Quail**

**Eggs:** Seagull, Oystercatcher, Goose



Photo of Grouse, by Victoria Baptiste, Okanagan, Dust Dancer Productions



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

Various kinds of birds were traditionally hunted using arrows and nets. Many bird arrows had retrieving lines or were painted or burned so that they could be identified. On the Southern Coast, to harvest ducks at dawn or dusk, duck nets were placed high between two tall poles near feeding grounds. The ducks were frightened and many would fly up and strike the net, either becoming tangled or dropping back to the ground stunned.



## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

Birds were usually eaten immediately. One tradition among the Gitksan for baking grouse on the trail was to coat the bird with mud, a thick coat...covering his feathers and all – and leaving the guts in. The mud-covered bird was then put in the hot coals. When the mud was baked hard, the bird was baked too, and they'd take it out of the fire and crack open the mud. The feathers would stay in the mud and there would be the bird, plucked, cooked and ready to feast on. When they were smoked and dried, the whole animal was boned and opened out like a blanket, the intestines were removed, and the carcass was hung in the smokehouse.

## NUTRITION MESSAGES

Wild ducks, ptarmigan and geese are a rich source of protein and B vitamins. Our bodies need protein to build and repair our muscles, skin and blood and to fight illness. B vitamins help our bodies to use the energy we get from the food we eat and to grow properly. They also help to keep our nervous systems working properly.

Wild ducks, ptarmigan and geese are a rich source of iron. Our bodies need iron to carry oxygen in our blood so that our minds, heart and body grow and stay strong. Healthy blood keeps us from getting tired and prevents illness.

## HARVESTING FOOD FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:

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# Seaweed

sgiw (Masset dialect, Haida), sgyuu (Skidegate dialect, Haida), Iha'ask (Sm'algyax; Tsimshianic), Ihaq'askw, hla'asq (Nisga'a; Tsimshianic), Ihaq'asxw (Gitksan; Tsimshianic), Ihakits (Bulkley R. dialect, Wit'suwet'en; Athabaskan), Ihake'is (Babine dialect, Wit'suwet'en; Athabaskan), Ihaga'as (Saik'uz, Nadleh/Stellako, Lheidli; Dakelh/Carrier), Ihak'us (Cheslatta; Dakelh/Carrier), Htslaks (Ulkatcho; Dakelh/Carrier), Ihq'st (Heiltsuk/Wuikinuxv; Wakashan), Ihaq'sg, Ihaq's (Haisla; Wakashan), Ihae7ə xsk (Kitasoo; Wakashan), Ihaq's (Nuxalk; Salishan), Iha q'ə stə 'n, Ihaq'asd, Ihaq'ast (Kwak'wala; Wakashan), Cumumits (Nuu-chah-nulth; Wakashan), ts'aaypish (Ditidaht; Wakashan), Iheq'stə n, Iheq'stn (Comox; Salishan), Iheq'es (Squamish; Salishan), Ihuq'us (Island Hul'q'umi'num'; Salishan), Iha 'q'ə s (Sencot'en; Salishan)

Source: Written language names taken from Turner, Nancy (Personal Communication)

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

Seaweed (*Porphyra abbottiae* Krishnamurthy – red laver, and related spp.; *Rhodophyta*) has always been important for many of our peoples. Along the coast, families travel out to seaweed beds that have provided a highly nutritious food for thousands of years. Rich in protein, calcium, iron, B vitamins and vitamins A and C, a bag of seaweed brought out for sharing is greeted with huge smiles. Added to soups, cooked with salmon eggs, dried and toasted, dipped into eulachon grease, mixed with rice, the ways of serving seaweed are endless and the results are always delicious. Seaweed also has been used to alleviate indigestion.

Red laver is very nutritious and our most important type of edible seaweed. The % recommended daily value informs you of how well a food provides the amount recommended for each nutrient for good health. 1/2 cup of fresh seaweed contains over half of your daily nutrient needs for vitamin A and C and is a good source of iron and protein. Dried laver which has about 80% of the moisture removed is a good source of protein and iron.

NUTRIENT CONTENT	SEAWEED			
	RED LAVER DRIED	RED LAVER RAW	GIANT KELP	DULSE BLANCHED
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)	Protein Iron Vitamin A Riboflavin Niacin Vitamin C	Vitamin A Riboflavin Vitamin C	Protein Calcium Iron Thiamin Riboflavin Niacin	
Good source (provides 15-24% of daily need)			Carbohydrate	
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)	Carbohydrate Calcium Thiamin	Protein Calcium Iron Thiamin Niacin	Fat Vitamin C	Calcium Iron

This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75g)



### TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

Laver is usually gathered in great amounts in spring. Women used to be the primary seaweed harvesters while men were out fishing. Working from their canoes, women would pull seaweed from the rocks until their canoes were full. At the beach it would be piled up, covered with mats and left for days before further drying on cedarwood frames.

### TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

With its high salt content, seaweed has traditionally been enjoyed by the Wit'suwet'en as a seasoning for various foods, such as soups and stews. After seaweed was gathered from the ocean, it was hung on open air racks for 2-3 days to dry. Sometimes it was hung out for only 1 day and then moved to the smokehouse for the remaining time. Lightly smoked, it was found to take on a unique flavor.

### HARVESTING FOOD FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:

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# Roots

Springbank clover roots: naa7a (Skidegate, Haida), T'xwsus (Nuxalk, Salishan), Silverweed roots: ts'iaal (Skidegate, Haida), Northern Ricerooroot: stla k'iist'aa (Masset, Haida), miyuubmgyet (Sm'algyax, Tsimshian), Ilk (Nuxalk, Salishan); Silverweed roots: Uq'al (Nuxalk, Salishan), Camas, Wapato, Bracken fern, Nodding Onion, Indian sweet potato Qw'eqw'ila (Stl'atl'imx, Salishan), Yellow Avalanche Lily, Spiny Wood fern (sk'yaaw, Haida)

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

Formerly, root vegetables held a very high status in our traditional food systems. Root vegetables were important for food, ceremonial and economic reasons. During the spring, summer and fall we gardened on our lands, clearing away unwanted plants, gathering the larger roots for eating and putting back into the ground the small bulblets and rootlets to ensure future harvests. Along the coast, many of our camps and villages were located in estuaries, where there was an abundance of the types of foods we wanted. Some nations held a First Roots ceremony to show respect for the roots before the community went digging for their needs. Roots were dried in large quantities, traded from one place to another and were kept as a "back-up" in times of food shortage.

Throughout British Columbia communities harvested a variety of root vegetables. Below are listed some of the root vegetables that were available and harvested in northern and southern coastal and interior parts of British Columbia:

**Springbank clover, 'wild sweet potatoes', northern ricerooroot, edible camas, 'wild carrot', spiny wood fern, wapato, bitterroot, nodding onion, desert parsley, eel-grass, yellow glacier lily, spring beauty or mountain potato, and balsamroot chocolate lily, bear root, and sweet vetch.**



Nancy & Robert Turner



Victoria Baptiste, Okanagan, Dust Dancer Productions



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness



## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

During the summer months, Stl'atl'imx, Nlaka'pmx and Secwepemc women would dig the corms of Yellow Glacier Lily. Families would gather upwards of 2000 lbs. The corms were cleaned then steamed or pit-cooked. Large quantities of yellow glacier lily roots would be dried for later use or for trade.



## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

Camas used to be an important staple across southern BC. Access and use of camas by Interior communities was made possible through trade from the peoples of northern Washington. Large camas beds on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands were kept free of invading plants through regular clearing and burning. Formerly, for the Kwakwaka'wakw village of Haada, trade in root vegetables (springbank clover, silverweed and northern riceroot) with the Nuxalk and Heiltsuk was an important part of their regional economy.

### WARNING:

Not all roots are edible. Some, such as death camas (*Zigadenus venenosus*) and water hemlock (*Cicuta douglasii*) are deadly. Never taste or sample roots from the wild unless you are sure of their identity, and you know how to prepare them. Bracken fern rhizomes (*Pteridium aquilinum*), which people ate in the past, are no longer recommended because they have potentially harmful compounds in them.

## NUTRITION MESSAGES

Wild roots and tended root vegetables were an important staple in our communities. In terms of nutrition, they were a good source of carbohydrate, protein and iron.

## HARVESTING FOOD FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:

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# Berries

maay (Sm'algyax; Tsimshianic), mih' (Bulkley R. dialect, Wit'suwet'en; Athabaskan) Soapberries: 'as (Sm'algyax; Tsimshianic), xagultliid (Yaahl-Masset dialect; Haida), 7as (Xuya-Skidegate dialect; Haida), Niwis (Bulkley R. dialect, Wit'suwet'en; Athabaskan), nuxwsk'i (Nuxalk; Salishan), nə xwə skə n (Kwak'wala, Wakashan), muxwwáskn (Nuu-chah-nulth; Wakashan), sxuusim (Ditidaht; Wakashan), sxhwosum (Island Hul'qumí'num; Salishan), sxwésə m (Saanich; Salishan), xhwosum (Halkomelem; Salishan), sxusem (Shuswap; Salishan), Huckleberries: wúleexs (Sm'algyax; Tsimshianic), Digí (Bulkley R. dialect, Wit'su 'en; Athabaskan)

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

For thousands of years, over 30 types of berries have been harvested in our traditional territories from early summer (soapberries, salmonberries, thimbleberries), to late fall (cranberries, crabapples and hazelnuts), depending on the berry type and location.

Berries are important sources of vitamin C, fibre, carbohydrates and have many medicinal properties: blueberries and cranberries have anti-bacterial properties which help prevent urinary infections; cranberries, rosehips and blackberries are also high in antioxidants which help boost the immune system.

## INFORMATION ON VARIETY OF SPECIES THROUGHOUT PROVINCE

Some of the many traditional harvested berries in the 4 corners of our province.

**North Coast:** bunchberries, blueberries, cloudberry, cranberries, crowberries (mossberries), currant, gooseberry, blue elderberry, red huckleberries, salmonberries, thimbleberries, black hawthorn (jam/jelly), crabapple (jam/jelly), Oregon grape (jam/jelly), soapberries, strawberry

**South Coast:** cranberries, red huckleberries, salmonberries, thimbleberries, strawberry, Oregon grape (jam/jelly), cherries, currants, blackberries, trailing black raspberry, red currant, gooseberries, soapberries, strawberries

**Southern Interior:** blueberries, cranberries, currants, blue huckleberries, blue elderberry, soapberries, bilberry, black raspberry, strawberries

**Northern Interior:** blueberries, cranberries, blue huckleberries, crowberries (mossberry), currants, bunchberries, cloudberry

NUTRIENT CONTENT	BERRIES
Excellent Source (provides 25% or more of daily need)	Vitamin C (cloudberry/bakeapplies, thimbleberries, strawberries, rosehips, black currants)
Good source (provides 15-24% of daily need)	Folate (blackberry) Vitamin C (raspberry, gooseberry) Vitamin A (gooseberry)
Fair source (provides 5-14% of daily need)	Vitamin A (salmonberries) Iron (blackcaps, black currants, elderberries, saskatoons) Calcium (rosehips, saskatoons) Folate (raspberry, salmonberry)

This chart shows the nutrient ratings for ½ cup (75g)



## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

Berries, an important part of our traditional knowledge. We were shown when the berries were ripe by listening and observing the changes in the animals and plants. The wild rose blooming announced the readiness of sxusem (soapberries) for Nlaka'pamux . The song of Swainson's thrush heralded the ripening of salmonberries for Tlingit, Tsimshian, Haida, Haisla, Oweekeno, Squamish, Nuu-chah-nulth, Ditidaht, and Straits Salish people.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

Soapberries holds a high place and have a lasting taste memory. Saponins in the soapberries allow them to be whipped up into a frothy 'ice cream'. Small spoonfuls are taken as the taste is bitter and a little bit of soapberries goes a long way in cleansing the mouth and helping digestion. Indian ice cream has often been mixed in with dried meat or served by themselves. More recently, soapberries have been mixed with sugar and added to carbonated water as an alternative to pop.

## HARVESTING FOOD FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:

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*During the summer, when I was a child, my mom would take us on berry picking outings. We went to the Quatse River, and this was a real hot spot. The berries hung like grapes on a vine. When we returned home, my mom would make a salmon berry preserve. This dessert is very tasty with oolichan greese. I really like eating it after we zupa with bar-bequed salmon and potatoes.*

**Marion Hunt, Fort Rupert**

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# Plants

## HISTORY OF USE-GENERAL TO BC

Plants have been important to our culture and health for thousands of years. Plants are harvested for food, medicine, arts, ceremonies, baskets, and clothing. Some specific examples of plants used for : food (the inner bark of hemlock, the shoots of fireweed, the flowers of violets); medicines (Devil's Club, Stinging nettles, yarrow); ceremonies (sage, tobacco); twine (outer stems of stinging nettle, fireweed); carving/ baskets (cedars) and many other uses. Medicinal plants have been made into teas, salves, poultices and tinctures.

Plants have been respected and harvested with care to prevent exploitation and to ensure safe ingestion.

Communities throughout BC have a special relationship with the plants in their areas and the importance they play in our culture and health. Plants are harvested for a variety of reasons and are found throughout BC. Some examples of plants that are used in BC are:

**Red cedar, yellow cedar, grand fir, spruce, stinging nettle, Devil's Club, Labrador tea ('Haida tea' or Hudson's Bay tea), yarrow, ferns (many varieties), horsetails, tobacco, sage, fireweed, plantain, Pacific crabapple, Springbank clover, Juniper, Lily Family, violet, thimbleberry/salmonberry shoots, cottonwoods, wild rose, big leaf maple, eel grass, swamp lantern, Indian consumption seed, oceanspray, cattail and many more.**

**Stinging Nettle** is high in iron. It is harvested when the snow melts, throughout spring and summer. The new leaves can be eaten fresh (when the plant is 4-8 inches tall), and once the leaves become too tough and undesirable to eat fresh they can be dried and used to make tea. The stems are used for twine for fishnets and snares. Nettle leaves should not be eaten fresh once the plant has flowered, as the leaves of the flowering plant contain a compound that may irritate the kidneys. The leaves on a flowering plant can be consumed safely if dried and used as a tea or powder.

**Plantain or Frog's Leaf** is harvested all year round and can be used as a 'bandaid' ie a poultice for small wounds or bug bites. Lightly chew or bruise the leaf to release the juice and lay over wound.

**Douglas fir tips** – in the spring the young fir tips can be an energizing snack.

**Violet** – The heart shaped leaves and 5 pointed pedalled flower are common in shady woodlands. Just 2 leaves fulfill your daily Vitamin C needs.

**Cottonwood or Willow** – the bark tea from these trees can be used to treat inflammation. It has been called Nature's aspirin.



## TRADITIONAL HARVESTING

Plants are harvested at different times of the season depending on what it is used for or when they will have the strongest medicinal energy. It is encouraged to always make an offering of thanks to the plant. Labrador tea (Haida tea or Hudson's Bay tea) is harvested in spring or summer when the leaves are young and tender and are growing upright. When the plant has blossoms it is used medicinally, without blossoms it is used for a tea. Pacific Crabapples are harvested in late summer and fall. They are lightly cooked then stored in water in cedarwood boxes over the winter. Using modern technology they can be canned or made into a jelly.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD USE

Cedar, Tobacco, Sage, and Sweetgrass are some of the most common plants used as traditional medicines. Fresh Cedar boughs are used for brushing off a person and purifying/cleansing. Cedar leaves are boiled for medicine and ground for smudging. Traditional tobacco is a sacred herb that comes from different parts of the wild tobacco plant including leaves, stems, and bark. Tobacco is used as an offering for ceremonies, healing, gathering medicines or an offering to a healer for consultation. Sage and sweetgrass is used in healing, ceremonies and as gifts.

## HARVESTING FOOD FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:

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*"All plants should be respected. Keeping your body and soul together means using the medicines and the foods we eat – our daily medicines that keep our whole being well – it's like the veins in our bodies are like the rivers that flow through the Earth – we need to take care of both the earth and our bodies."*

N. Rose Point, Musqueam

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# Recipes

Old and New ways to prepare traditional foods highlighted in the traditional foods fact sheets.

## SALMON SOUP

- 4 cups (1 L) water
- ¼ lb. (125 g) salmon roe
- 1 lb. (500 g) fresh salmon, cubed
- ½ lb. (250 g) potato, diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pinch curry powder
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- Dry seaweed for garnish

In a large soup pot, sauté onion, celery and potato in oil. Add water and bring to a simmer. Heat salmon roe in a small saucepan and add to soup stock. Add salmon, salt, pepper, curry powder and bay leaf. Bring to a boil. Simmer over low heat until potatoes are just tender. Discard bay leaf. Ladle into soup bowls and sprinkle with dry seaweed.

## ROAST DEER \*

The hind quarter of a young deer is often oven roasted. The method is as follows:

1. Season the meat with salt.
2. Rub the top of the roast with shortening or oil and place in a tightly covered roaster. Cook the meat twenty to twenty-five minutes per pound, in a 350°F oven.
3. Potatoes, onions and carrots may be added one hour before the end of the cooking time.
4. Pour the juices over the meat (no thickening added) and serve with the cooked vegetables.

## BAKED FISH HEADS \*

The heads of spring, sockeye and coho salmon are used. Chum salmon are considered too tough for baking. The eyes or scales need not be removed, but some people like to remove the gills and lower parts of the head before baking. Split the heads lengthwise, and open them like a book with the inner surface facing up. Season with salt and pepper and cover the pan. Bake in a 350° oven for half an hour or until brown. The cheeks and nose are the parts eaten.

## SMOKED EULACHONS \*

Preparation for Smoking

1. Wash the eulachons well under running water.
2. Place the fish in a barrel of fresh water to which has been added enough coarse salt to float a potato (about 2 cups [500 ml] coarse salt in 3 gallons [12 Litres])
3. Soak for about ½ hour to 1 hour or until their eyes turn white.
4. Hang the eulachons for smoking by threading on cedar sticks. Push the strip of red cedar in through the gills and out through the mouth. Usually 12-25 eulachon are put on each stick.
5. Hang the eulachon heavy sticks from the rafters in the in the smokehouse, making sure the fish are not touching each other. There needs to be enough space between each rack and the fish so that the smoke is even.
6. Start the fire after the eulachon finish dripping. Use alder wood for smoking.
7. Smoke the eulachon for 2-6 days. Smoke longer for drier fish.

Half smoked eulachons (i.e., left one to two days in the smokehouse) may be canned.



### STEAMED TSAKIS CRABS RECIPE

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

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). Add crabs, and a pinch of salt. Bring to the water to a boil, and steam crabs for 15 to 20 minutes.

**Harry Humchitt (Fort Rupert)**

### TOASTED DRIED SEAWEED \*

Spread dried seaweed in a shallow pan and toast in a 400°F oven for ten to fifteen minutes or until very crisp. Be careful it doesn't burn. Crush the seaweed into small pieces before storing in an airtight container.

### USING DRIED MEAT

Dried meat was used later in the winter and was prepared for eating by roasting or boiling. A travelling food could also be prepared from dried meat by pounding it to a fine powder and mixing with rendered fat and marrow to produce a cake (pemmican).

### OSSO BUCO (MOOSE MEAT RECIPE)

4 1 ½ inch thick Moose shanks  
Flour to cover moose shanks  
1 Onion, chopped fine  
1 Celery stick, chopped fine  
1 Carrot, chopped fine  
90 ml Olive Oil  
100 ml Red grape juice  
50 ml Broth or water  
6 cloves Garlic, crushed  
30 ml Italian seasoning or combination of Italian herbs  
50 ml Red wine vinegar  
750 ml Tomatoes, crushed

1. Cover meat in flour.
2. Heat frying pan on medium heat. Add olive oil. Brown meat and put aside.
3. Fry garlic and onion in 15 ml (1 Tbsp) olive oil for 5 minutes until translucent.
4. Add celery, carrot and red grape juice, broth and red wine vinegar.
5. Add meat back in and cover with crushed tomatoes.
6. Add Italian seasoning.
7. Cook 2 hours at 325 C, test and enjoy.

**Source: Watts, M. 2007. George Watts...Creating Greatness George Watts recipe.**

### HERRING ROE ON KELP WITH GARLIC

Ingredients

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

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

**Winnie Anderson (Winner of the Pot of Gold—Herring Roe & Kelp Chef Challenge, Fort Rupert)**

\* Source: Medical Services Branch Health and Welfare Canada. Indian Food. A Cookbook of Native Foods from British Columbia

