

PROVISIONS -- FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

Traveling light was the rule when go-betweens like Conrad Weiser carried messages to and from Indian country. Traveling through woods and across rivers, creeks and mountains, the trail and weather conditions could be dangerous, and it was important to carry these messages quickly. The party of travelers would pack provisions to last only part of the journey, leaving room to carry trade goods as well. Other meals would be found along the trail, by hunting, trading or perhaps enjoying the hospitality of villagers encountered along the way.

Some of the common foods which could be easily carried and prepared when camping along the trail included cornmeal, dried beans, and beef jerky. Corn and beans could be easily prepared, using water and perhaps a little grease. In his journals, Conrad Weiser also describes foods served to him by his Indian hosts. These included dried and parched corn in many forms, including hominy and soup, as well as squash and dried eels, and, occasionally, venison.

The following dried corn recipes are traditional Native American dishes, introduced to the first European colonists centuries ago. Have students (and/or teacher) prepare the recipes at home under the close supervision of a family member. If a microwave oven, or other means of reheating is available, have students bring the finished product in to school for taste testing. Have students write a "review" of the dish, and discuss together camp food then and now.

DRIED CORN

Ingredients: 3 ears sweet corn

Instructions:

1. Cut kernels from the cobs.
2. Spread corn kernels in a single layer on cookie sheets.
3. Dry in oven at 175 degrees for several hours, until kernels are dried.

Makes approximately 3 cups.

PARCHED CORN

Ingredients: 3 Tablespoons butter or margarine
3 cups dried corn (see recipe above)
salt to taste

Instructions:

1. Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat.
2. Put one layer of corn kernels into skillet.
3. Heat kernels over medium high heat, stirring constantly.
4. Kernels are done when they turn brown and puff up, about 4 minutes.
5. Add salt.
6. Repeat until all kernels are cooked.

You can find these and other fun Native American and colonial recipe ideas in Suzanne I. Barchers and Patricia C. Marshall, *Cooking Up U.S. History* (Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press, 1991).