

Northern SUN

Stories of growing & gathering

Spring 2015



Caribou crossing the winter road to Lac Brochet.

"It is a lot of work," says Marie, "but with the right people the job is easily done!"



Community of Lac Brochet.

Stocking the Freezer in Lac Brochet

Marie Tsesssaze, the ADI worker in Lac Brochet, is proud to say that in her community the programs to teach and promote access and education around cultural knowledge and food are strong. For four years, Lac Brochet has had community freezers stocked with berries, fish, geese, ducks and caribou. The freezers make it possible for people to stay connected to their traditional diet. The food is used to support all kinds of programming in Lac Brochet, from cooking classes for kids and adults to traditional community cook outs and culture camps. It is also given out to community members in need such as health clients, elders and young mothers.

Harvesting for their freezers goes on year round, but Marie says the spring season is an especially important time for stocking up for the summer and fall. That's why every winter Marie applies for funding to hire hunters and processors to harvest the caribou and prepare it for the freezer. Her advice for another community wanting to put on a community hunt would be to get organized ahead of time, keep receipts, and make sure to take pictures to help with telling your story. "It is a lot of work," says Marie, "but with the right people the job is easily done!"



Community freezer stocked with meat.

This year is the 1st with a series of art

Step by step instructions:

1) Put down a weed blocking layer:



Use overlapping layers of newspapers (6 to 20 pages thick) or cardboard (non-dyed cardboard is best). Soak them so they form to the ground.

2) Put down a layer of peat or soil:



This isn't essential, but it will help weigh down your weed blocking layer. It doesn't have to be thick either. See the next page for ideas on where to find soil.

3) Put down a layer of greens:



Greens are materials that are rich in nitrogen. See the list on the next page for examples.

4) Put down a layer of browns:



Browns are materials that are rich in carbon. You need thicker layers of browns than greens. See the list on the next page for examples.

5) Keep alternating between layers of greens and browns. You can use all different types of greens and browns in your layers.

Making Soil for Your Northern Garden

By Michelle Biden (La Ronge, SK)

The biggest gardening challenge for many northerners is a lack of good soil. Shipping in soil is expensive and not always possible or sustainable. Luckily, there are lots of great northern resources that can be used to make rich soil for your garden.

Lasagna gardening (or sheet composting) is a great way to enrich your soil. This can be done by piling up multiple layers of alternating 'greens' and 'browns.' Try this in a raised bed or directly on the area you would like to start your garden. You can put your lasagna bed together all at once or add layers as you collect them over time.

International Year of Soil! We will be celebrating articles on how to take care of and improve your soil.

Your lasagna garden will take some time to turn fully into soil. If you want to plant in your lasagna garden the same year you are making it, you should add several layers of soil throughout your bed, as well as a layer on top to plant in. You may also choose to put extra soil in the holes where you put your plants or seeds.

Greens:

- egg shells, tea bags, vegetable and fruit seeds, cores, peels, tops including any rotten bits from the kitchen (also consider asking local restaurants or school nutrition programs if they can save you scraps)
- coffee grounds and filters (put an empty can by the coffee machine at work to save more)
- grass clippings
- cow or sheep manure or poo and shavings from a pet rabbit. Definitely NO cat, dog or human feces!
- finished compost
- large green lake weeds
- organic beach debris (looks like small burnt charcoal particles, black leaves, small twig particles, some sand in piles that have been rolled onto beach by waves)
- fish guts. This is best buried in your garden. Use your judgement with the presence of animals.

Browns:

- dried leaves
- wild rice hulls
- shredded newspaper
- small twigs and branches (these take longer to break down, use them if you don't mind the extra time)
- paper towels, Kleenex, small pieces of cardboard and egg carton (consider ripping what you have into smaller pieces). Do not use if they have oil, grease or cleaning products on them.
- peat moss
- old 100% cotton material like old dish rags, 100% cotton jeans (cannot be stretch denim), best if cut into smaller pieces
- straw from doghouses or bales. You can even plant straight into a bale with a tiny bit of soil.



Where to find soil:

- borrow from another garden
- use finished compost from your pile
- look around poplar stands – you will often find rich soil from composted leaves at the base of the trees. If using soil gathered from around poplar trees you may want to use a screen with wide openings such as a metal lath to remove poplar roots as chopped roots will grow and suck nutrients from your garden.

Things to NEVER add to your garden:

- dog, cat or human feces (can spread disease)
- oil or oily food (can attract animals)
- dairy (also greasy)
- meat or bones (can stink and attract animals)
- avoid materials with weed seeds or you will have a lot of work weeding your garden.

Happy Gardening!



Baked Stuffed Whitefish

Ingredients:

- 4 Slices Bacon, diced
- 1 Large Yellow Onion, diced
- 1 Clove Garlic, minced
- 2 Cups Mushrooms, diced
- 2 Tbsp Butter
- 4 Cups Brown Bread, cubed
- 1 Tsp Dried Thyme
- 1/2 Cup Chicken Stock
- 3 Tbsp Lemon Juice
- 1 Two or Three Pound Whitefish, gutted and scaled (Other oily fish, such as lake trout and mackerel, also work well with this recipe.)



Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Sauté bacon, onion, garlic and mushrooms in butter in a skillet over medium heat until vegetables soften. Allow to cool.
2. Place sautéed mixture in a bowl and add bread cubes, thyme, stock, and lemon juice. Combine well.
3. Pack mixture into whitefish cavity. Place stuffed fish (and any remaining filling) in a greased roasting pan.
4. Bake in oven for about 10 minutes per inch of thickness of the fish, or until flesh is opaque.
5. Serve fish on a large platter with stuffing arranged around it. Baked sweet potatoes and steamed broccoli make excellent sides.

Recipe adapted from Outdoor Canada, www.outdoorcanada.ca

Apitaye Massou! Wiisinin! Bon Appetit!



Teacher Kerry Muswagon demonstrates proper technique for removing fish from the net.

Cultural Awareness Class Feeds their Community

At Mikisew School in Cross Lake, students from grades four to eight get cultural teachings as a part of their everyday school experience. Teacher Kerry Muswagon, with help from assistant Burton Ross, gives lessons on everything from traditional arts and crafts to skidoo driving to harvesting food from the land.

This year, Mikisew School became a part of the Cross Lake domestic fishing program. The program, funded by Manitoba Hydro and Cross Lake First Nation, hires and pays local fisherman to catch fish to be shared with the community. By participating in the program, students not only learned new skills but got to put them to work raising funds for their cultural awareness class.

Over the winter, the students were divided into groups and took turns travelling out to the lake three times a week. Under the guidance of Kerry and his uncle Edwin Muswagon, an experienced fisherman and Elder of the community, the students learned how to set the nets, pull them in and carefully remove the fish without damaging them or the nets. Beyond learning these useful harvesting skills, students also experienced how gratifying it can feel to give back, as the fish they harvested were shared with the whole community.

Submit a story

Please send along your northern food stories and photos to share with your neighbours in the north.

Send your story ideas to:

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Funding provided by:



Manitoba

Designed by: [simplelifedesigns](http://simplelifedesigns.com)

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Printed by:



www.allnationsprint.com