

Northern SUN

Stories of growing & gathering



Participants, chaperones and Food Matters Manitoba staff at the beautiful Wekusko Falls park.



Donwin, from Winnipeg, MB, and Boyd, from La Ronge, SK, show off their catch.

Youth Bond Over the Power of Food

For a few days in early October 2015 an inspiring group of youth from four different communities gathered together at Wekusko Falls Lodge just outside Snow Lake, Manitoba.

The gathering, organized by Food Matters Manitoba, brought together 15 youth from La Ronge, Saskatchewan; Fox Lake, Manitoba; Cross Lake, Manitoba and Winnipeg's North End. The youth taught each other and participated in sessions about food skills, cultural activities and land-based practices like cooking, setting traps, crafting leather and catching and filleting pickerel.

It was remarkable to see the pride and openness with which the youth each shared their skills, stories and knowledge with each other. "This experience was wonderful" said Andrea MacIvor, a teacher chaperone from Cross Lake. "There was so much value – the kids from all over showcasing and sharing their skills, the sharing of communities, cultures and experiences – an opportunity to actually build relationships with people from all walks of life." ●



Meechim Inc. Gets Fresh in Garden Hill

Contributed by Rodney Contois

All around the North, communities are continually exploring different ways to improve their healthy and affordable food options, and that's exactly what the community of Garden Hill First Nation is working towards with the Meechim project.

The project, operated in conjunction with Aki Energy, includes a community market, canteen and farm. The market, which typically runs about three times a month, sells fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as some meats, eggs and cheese. As the farm component of the project grows, much of the vegetables, chicken and eggs will then be produced locally.

The food for the market is shipped into Garden Hill by air before market days. The cost of shipping the food is subsidized by the Nutrition North Canada program, allowing for more affordable prices. Shipping the food up for market days has its challenges though. If the weather doesn't cooperate, then the market can't be held as planned and the fresh food can spoil while it waits for the next flight out.

Another challenge has been getting community members interested in purchasing the fresh and unprocessed foods that the market is selling. Many people are used to purchasing processed, convenient foods that are quick and easy to prepare, but not very healthy. The goal of the Meechim project is to direct the local food economy towards healthier alternatives, making a positive long term impact.



Fresh produce for sale in the Garden Hill TV station - one of the market's temporary locations.



A Garden Hill resident shows off her market purchases.

Still, little by little, the Meechim project seems to be having an impact. One of the biggest successes of the market so far is that kids in the community are starting to spend money on healthy options like apples and bananas, instead of choosing chocolate and candies. It makes us feel proud and inspires us to keep working and improving the market. ●



Market produce arrives in Garden Hill.

Indigenous Food Sovereignty Summit

Contributed by Tabitha Martens

As the Food Security Coordinator at Four Arrows Regional Health Authority Inc. for the past seven years, Byron Beardy has seen first-hand the interest and need for Indigenous communities to reconnect with their food systems. Hearing stories of time spent on the land - growing, gathering, hunting, fishing, and trapping - led to Byron's vision of the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Summit.

In planning for the summit, Byron asked himself: "What is food? What does it mean to Indigenous people? How can we move away from thinking of food as merely sustenance?"



Byron travelling during freeze up.

To answer these questions requires moving away from a food system that is outside of Indigenous peoples, and broadening the scope of what an Indigenous food system could be. We need to bring together our Elders, knowledge keepers, mothers, grandmothers and youth to learn about our cultural food practices and the ceremonies, stories and languages that honour food. We need to look at the Indigenous nations of Manitoba and learn from their food cultures and relationships. These are our teachers.

Sessions will feature the stories of Manitoba's five First Nations, and

provide a space for Indigenous people to have a voice about the work they do. Together we will eat, share, learn, and talk about moving forward. We hope you will join us! ●

The summit is taking place March 1-3, 2016 at the Canad Inns Destination Centre Club Regent Casino Hotel in Winnipeg. Contact Kelly Janz at kjanz@fourarrowsrha.ca for more information or call 204-947-2397 ext.61 to register.



Sweet and Sour Rabbit

Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- 1 whole rabbit, cleaned and cut into pieces
- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 cup pineapple juice *
- ¼ cup white vinegar
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 cup chopped pineapple *
- 1 green pepper, thinly sliced
- 1 ½ Tbsp cornstarch
- ½ cup water



* To save a little time and money, use pineapple chunks canned in juice: strain out the juice from the can to use in the recipe, and no need to chop up the pineapple!

Directions

1. Place flour in a bowl and roll meat pieces in it to coat.
2. In a large skillet over medium, heat oil and add rabbit pieces. Cook until browned.
3. Add pineapple juice, vinegar and salt to the skillet. Simmer, covered, on low for 40 minutes.
4. Add pineapple pieces and green pepper, cook for an additional 5 minutes.
5. Combine cornstarch and water; mix well.
6. Pour cornstarch mixture into skillet gradually; stir well and continue to heat until sauce has thickened, about 5 minutes.
7. Serve immediately, over rice or noodles.

Recipe adapted from 'Canadian Wild Game Cookbook.'

Apitaye Massou! | Wiisini! | Bon appetit!

From the Medicine Cabinet: Poplar Bud Salve

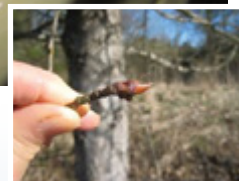
Contributed by Carol Sanoffsky



A picture of the finished salve.



A stand of poplars in the early spring.



A close up of a poplar bud.

Warmer weather will be here before you know it! Poplar buds will be in abundance in early spring, but only last about two weeks, so harvesting has to be done soon after you see them. Gather the buds by pinching them where they meet the base of the branch. Harvest only a small amount on each tree, being careful to not clean a whole branch or tree of its leaves for the summer.

Gather at least a quart jar of buds, then divide them into two jars. Fill each of the jars 3/4 of the way with extra virgin oil, and cover the top of the jar with a piece of cheesecloth secured with an elastic band. Place the jars on your windowsill and let them sit for at least 2 weeks.

To make the salve, strain oil into a small saucepan or frypan. Warm it slowly, then add some melted bear grease or beeswax. For lip balm, use a little less wax or grease than you would for a salve. To test what the consistency will be like when it cools, dip a spoon into the warm mixture and put it in the fridge for a few minutes.

Salve can be used for burns, rashes, scraps or cuts. ●

Submit a story

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



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