

Chokecherries, also called Noⁿpa-zhinga in the Ponca language, are a fruit that has been highly esteemed by many tribes for food as well as used in ceremonies and rituals. Traditionally, the fruit was eaten fresh or was dried for winter use. Chokecherries were more abundant along the streams and many people would travel from miles away to gather these berries. The pits were too small to be removed, therefore the cherries were pounded to a pulp, pits and all, and were then shaped into small cakes and laid out in the sun to dry. A food often prepared was a sort of pemmican or mincemeat, where the dried fruit was combined with dried meat and animal fat from the kidneys. This was a great snack that traveled well with them as it did not require heating and had a long shelf life.

For the following recipe any traditional berries such as wild strawberries, gooseberries, juneberries, chokecherries or buffalo berries would work. Or if those aren't available to you, raisins or Craisins from your local supermarket should work just as well. The berries can be blended in a food processor or blender and formed into patties. Lay them in the sun to dry on a window screen covered with cheesecloth, occasionally turning the patties. This process takes about two days. The patties may be stored in a tightly covered container for future use and can be used to make berry sauce or wojapi.

Pemmican



Ingredients:

- Dried meat (deer, buffalo or beef), with no added salt or seasoning
- Dried berries such as chokecherries, or raisins
- Vegetable oil

*There should be about 1/3 cup of fruit for each 4 to 5 ounces of meat.

Directions:

1. Break dried meat into 1-inch pieces. Grind dried meat in food processor, blender, or meat grinder.
2. Add dried berries or raisins to the ground meat. Grind the fruit with the meat. The consistency should be dry and loose with the fruit broken up.
3. Add the oil slowly while mixing. Two tablespoons of fat are used for each 4 to 5 ounces of meat plus 1/3 cup of fruit, but less can be used. Serve loose in a bowl or press into balls. Store in cloth or paper bag.