

tama•lwit

The Nez Perce people lived in the Wallowa Valley for thousands of years before the settlers who built the towns that we live in now. They took care of this land, and in return, the land gave them everything they needed to survive and grow strong.

This spiritual relationship to the land is called tama•lwit and it guides the way Nez Perce people live. *“As people we must take responsibility for the water, the land, the plants and animals that sacrifice themselves in order for us to live”.*

This relationship to the land is maintained through hunting, fishing, and gathering of foods. The Wallowa Valley remains home to many of these foods. Can you think of what some of them might be and where to look for them?



This Seasonal Round portrays the Nez Perce calendar.



Biscuitroot



Salmon



Elk



Huckleberries

The seasons of the Nez Perce calendar are tied to what foods are available (or unavailable) at that part of the year. Just like the Seasonal Round above shows, Nez Perce life revolves around what the Earth provides. Right now, we are in qaq'it'aaal (April). Here in the Wallowa area qa•ws (biscuitroot) is blooming. Before white settlement, this was the time of year when Nez Perce families would gather in the Wallowa Valley to dig this root and celebrate it with a feast. This tradition continues today as Nez Perce people return to digging spots to harvest biscuitroot and celebrate at longhouse ceremonies. Traditional foods such as biscuitroot, salmon, elk, and berries are essential to the preservation of Nez Perce culture. It is the earth that provides these important foods, and so we must take care of the earth.



Gathering roots with a digging tool called a tú•kes

Nez Perce Calendar:

wilá pap (January): time of cold storms when the temperature is low and there are lots of icy places

ʔalatamáʔl (February): time of severe cold weather and blizzard storms when it is difficult to build fires and fuel is scarce

latí ʔal (March): time when new plants surface and the flowers blossom

qaqí ʔal (April): time for the first harvest of roots, the time when the harvest of new food has arrived

Apál (May): the season for baking loaves of ground qa•ws to store for winter

tastamastaʔáʔl (June): time for migrating to higher elevations to dig roots and male deer are fit to hunt in the mountains

táyáʔl (July): the season of mid-summer hot weather when people harvest and prepare food for storage

wawamaʔayqá•l (August): time when the chinook salmon reach the canyon streams and fisherman move to the upper rivers

pikúnmaʔaʔl (September): the season when the fall salmon run upstream and when the fingerlings journey down river

hóplal (October): the season when the tamarack shed their needles and the trees turn color

sexli wál (November): the season of shedding leaves when cold weather and snow arrive

Haʔóqoy (December): the season of the fetus in the womb of deer and elk

You can eat and celebrate traditional foods too! Try these traditional recipes.



Chokecherries

Serviceberries

Buffalo berries

The Nez Perce and other tribes gather many kinds of wild berries - strawberries, blueberries, wild grapes, huckleberries, serviceberries, currants, cranberries, and many more.

Fruit Leather:

1. You will need 2 cups of ripe fruit (berries, cherries, plums, apricots, peaches, apples, or a mixture of these).
2. Wash the fruit and let it drain on a clean towel. Wash your hands well, then carefully cut the fruit into small chunks. Leave the peels on -- they are chewy and nutritious.
3. Put the fruit into a blender or food processor and blend on high for 15 seconds. Cover a large flat cookie sheet with plastic wrap or wax paper, then pour the fruit mixture onto it. Let it dry in a warm place for a day or so.

To eat the fruit leather, peel the fruit off the plastic wrap. You can also roll it up in the plastic wrap and keep it in a covered container (like a cookie jar or refrigerator box) if you want to store it.

The dried leaves of snowberry, wintergreen, and spruce and twigs of raspberry, chokecherry, and wild cherry are dropped into boiling water to make teas. Many kinds of flowers are also dried and used to make teas. Wild mint leaves are used for flavor and maple syrup or honey is used to sweeten teas and medicines made from bitter plants.

You can make a tea like Nez Perce people enjoy:

1. Put a couple tablespoons of fruit or berries in a cup
2. Add a mint leaf or two and a spoonful of honey
3. Pour in hot water till the cup is not quite full.
4. Let it rest a minute or two, then stir very gently and sip your tea!

**Happy Earth Day
from Nez Perce
Wallowa
Homeland!**