

OSAGE FOODS



Photo courtesy Osage News

Osage Culture Traveling Trunk & Web Project



OSAGE FOODS

Before Europeans came to the Americas, Osages obtained food by hunting, gathering, and farming.

Osages hunted wild game such as bison, elk and deer. There were two bison hunts a year, one in the summer and one in the fall. The goal of the summer hunt was to obtain meat and fat. The purpose of the fall hunt was to obtain food, but also to get the thick winter coats of the bison for making robes, moccasins, leggings, breechcloths, and dresses.



Photo courtesy Missouri State Parks

Latin Name: Bison bison

Osages gathered wild foods such as paw paws, acorns, walnuts, prickly pear cactus, onions, berries, prairie turnips, persimmons, and yonkapins. Many of these foods were gathered in large amounts. Some gathered food was cooked and eaten immediately, and some was dried and stored for winter use.



Wild Grape

Latin Name: Vitis cinerea

Wild Lotus Root *or* Yonkapin

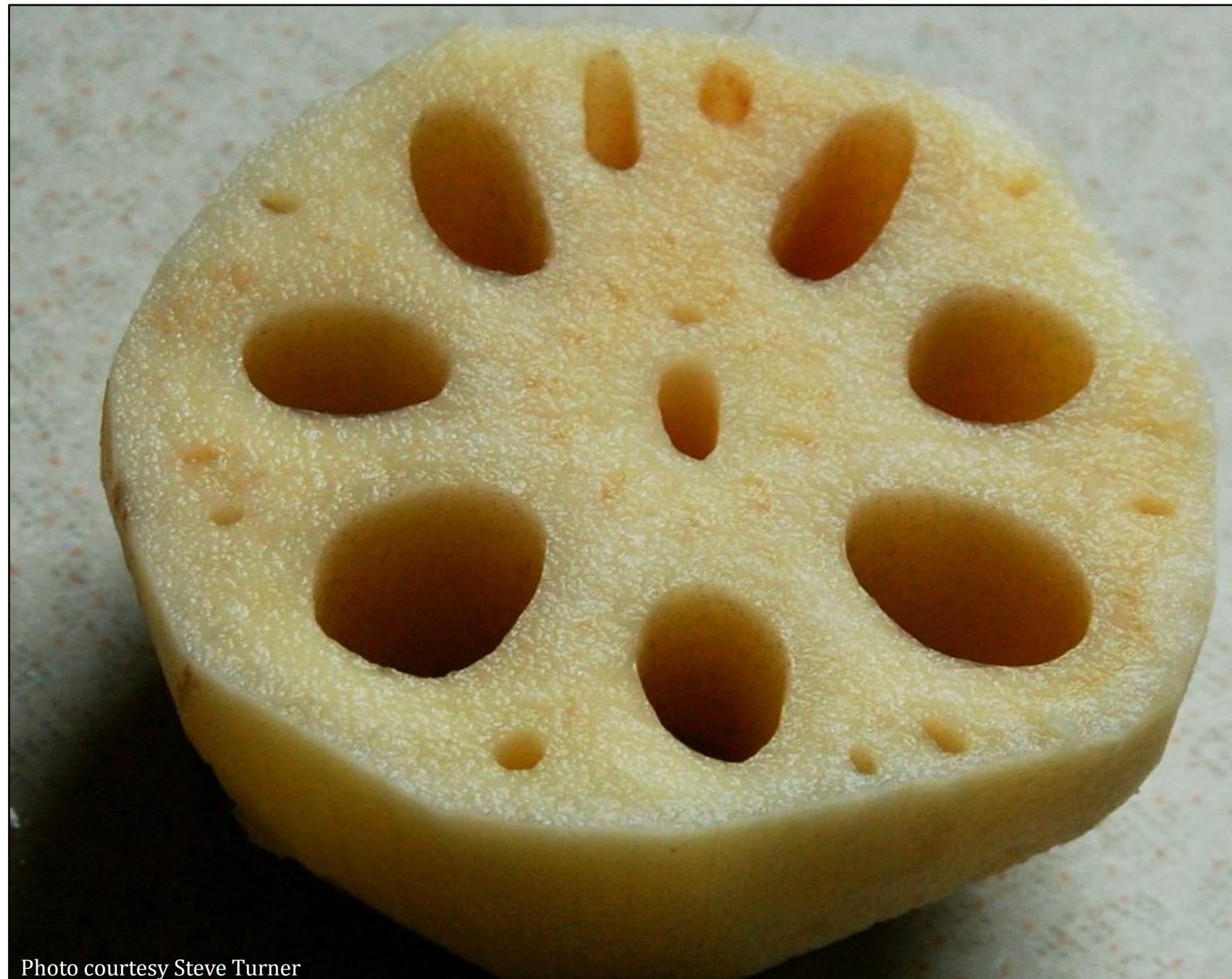


Photo courtesy Steve Turner

The wild lotus root or *yonkapin* grows in shallow ponds and along the edges of streams. The root is sweet and delicious when raw or cooked.

Latin Name: Nelumbo lutea

Wild Strawberry



Photo courtesy Steve Turner

The wild strawberry is edible and tasty. It grows low to the ground in open fields, woods, and even backyards. Wild strawberries are smaller than the farmed strawberries found in grocery stores.

Latin Name: Fragaria virginiana

Prickly Pear Cactus



Photo courtesy Jay Barber

Both the fruit and leaves of the Prickly Pear Cactus are edible. The fruit and leaves can be eaten raw or cooked. The leaves are best when young and tender. Today, many people make the sweet fruit into jelly.

Latin Name: Opuntia humifusa

Persimmon



Photo courtesy George Van Brunt.

The persimmon is a sweet fruit that grows on trees. When ripe, the fruit is orange in color, as shown below. The entire fruit is edible and can be eaten fresh, dried, raw or cooked.



Latin Name: Diospyros virginiana

Paw Paw



Photo courtesy George Van Brunt

The paw paw is a sweet, juicy fruit that grows on trees. The entire fruit is edible. It is delicious raw, cooked, and dried.

Latin Name: Asimina triloba

Wild Onion



Photo courtesy Richard Abbott

The wild onion is a strong flavored bulb. It is smaller than the farmed onions you see in stores. People eat all parts - the underground bulbs, the long, thin leaves, and the blossoms. Wild onions can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried.

Latin Name: Allium canadense

The Osage people grew crops including corn, beans, squash, and gourds. In the spring, men cleared fields and women planted crops. In the fall, these plant foods were harvested. Some of the crop was eaten at harvest time, but most of the crop was dried, because dried foods preserve for a long time. The Osages stored the dried foods and then ate them during the winter when fresh plant foods were not available.



Corn (Maize) *Latin Name: Zea mays*

Beans



The common bean grows on a vine. Both the pod and seeds are edible. The Osages harvested and dried beans in the fall. They cooked and ate the dried beans during the winter.

Latin Name: Phaseolus vulgaris

Gourd



Photo courtesy J. Richard Abbott

The gourd is a vegetable that grows on a large vine. The flesh and seeds are edible. The seeds are tasty when roasted, boiled, or ground into meal.

The Osages used dried gourds to make rattles used in ceremonies.



J. Richard Abbott



Photo courtesy Brooklyn Museum

Latin Name: Cucurbita foetidissima



Photo courtesy Osage News

Cooking fry bread

Today, Osages still enjoy foods such as bison meat, corn, persimmons, and yonkapins. They also enjoy prepared dishes that combine traditional Osage ingredients combined with ingredients introduced by Europeans over the last 300 years. These dishes include fry bread, grape dumplings, meat pies, and meat gravy. These foods are served at special occasions such as funeral feasts, birthdays, In-Lon-Schka dances and other celebrations.

Preparing a feast for a community celebration in the town of Grayhorse, on the Osage Reservation



Photo courtesy Osage News

Squash



Photo courtesy Osage News

Meat Gravy



Photo courtesy Osage News

Corn Soup



Photo courtesy Osage News

Grape Dumplings



Photo courtesy Osage News

Dish with Yonkapin



Photo courtesy Osage News

Table set with traditional Osage foods



Photo courtesy Osage News