

Hazelnut

When the hazelnuts are ripe, trees are bustling with the sound of busy squirrels and birds. Their sweet meat is filling, flavorful and loaded with nutrients that give us lasting energy and strength.

Other names: Filberts, *Corylus cornuta*

Whulshootseed: ᠵᠠᠫᠫᠤᠰᠢᠲᠦᠰᠡᠳᠦ



Identifying Hazelnut: Hazelnut trees grow 10 to 15 feet tall with multiple branches that radiate out from the same root. The appearance of male catkins and tiny ruby-colored female flowers are a sign of spring. Once the female flowers are pollinated they grow into nuts, which are made up of a hard-shelled pod containing the fruit and seed. A long protruding husk wraps around each nut and looks like a long-beaked bird, giving this plant the name “beaked hazelnut.” The nuts can grow alone, but are usually found in clusters of two toward the end of the branches. European hazelnuts have also been naturalized in the Pacific Northwest and are commonly called filberts. The nuts are slightly larger and can be readily found in supermarkets. The Pacific Northwest is one of the few places that they are grown commercially in the world.

Where it grows: Hazelnuts grow in shady forests and forest edges. They are most productive when they are in partial to full sun.

Season: The nuts are harvested in mid to late summer, usually July through September depending on the season and elevation.

How to harvest: Hazelnuts are delicious but they require some effort to get to it. The nuts are wrapped in a hairy sheaf that can be difficult to take off. Make sure to harvest with gloves to avoid the irritating hairs. You can place the nuts in gunnysacks and let the husks rot off, or you can use heavy gloves to remove them manually. Cure hazelnuts by drying in a warm place right after harvest, and then store them in a cool dry place.

Eating Hazelnut: Hazelnuts are a delicacy of late summer. The outer nut is cracked to reveal roundish sweet meat, which is high in protein and good quality fats. Hazelnuts most nutritious when eaten raw and studies show that people who eat a few nuts a day significantly reduce their risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and dementia. Just a small handful of nuts is rich in balanced calories will satiate hunger. They are a healthy and satisfying replacement for processed snack foods like chips or cookies.

Roasting hazelnuts brings out their distinct flavor. After the nuts are cracked, place them on a cookie sheet and bake them in the oven, on about 300 degrees until they are aromatic and just turning light brown, usually about 10 minutes. You can also dry roast them in a pan on medium heat until they begin to turn brown. Hazelnuts are delicious when added to oatmeal, salads, baked goods, meatloaf and pesto. Hazelnut butter is expensive but is a delicious spread

for sandwiches and toast. You can also find hazelnut flour in many markets. Hazelnut oil has a nutty flavor and is a healthy choice for salad dressing and baked goods.

Hazelnuts were an important late winter food for Northwest Coastal Native People. They were stored in bags buried in the mud or under water, then were dug up in the harshest months of winter when the spring greens are not yet up and the spring salmon have not yet returned. The protein and good quality fats in hazelnuts helped people survive.

In one Salish story, Raccoon could not stop eating the winter store of delicious hazelnuts his grandmother had carefully set aside in a pit near the plank house, and he used every trick he knew to steal those nuts. When Grandma finally caught him, she gave him the black stripes he wears to this day by beating him with a fire-charred stick.

Traditional technologies: Arrows and fish sticks were made from hazel sticks because they are straight and strong.

Ecological relationships: Hazelnuts are an important food for squirrels and birds. They also provide nesting habitat for birds.

Additional Resources:

Nature's Garden by Samuel Thayer

References:

Krohn, E. and Segrest, V. (2010) *Feeding the People, Feeding the Spirit*. Northwest Indian College

Thayer, S. (2010). *Nature's Garden*. Forager's Harvest

Turner, N. (1995). *Food Plants of Coastal Northwest Peoples*. UBC Press.

Photo credits: Hazelnut in sheaf and nuts (Heidi Bohan), hazelnut flower (Andrew McKee).

Art by Joe Seymore



Hazelnut, Huckleberry, Salmon Soup

This Skokomish soup was traditionally made in winter with dried berry cakes and smoked, dried salmon. The first step to this recipe is to find acorns. Crack the nuts and cut them in smaller pieces, then soak them in water for three days to remove the strong tannins. The water should be changed three to four times a day. If you do not have acorns, you can replace them with extra hazelnuts.

2 cups traditionally smoked salmon, pulled apart into small pieces
6 cups water
½ cup acorns, ground
½ cup hazelnuts, ground
2 cups evergreen huckleberries
Salt and pepper to taste

In a crock-pot add salmon, water, acorns and hazelnuts. Cook on low overnight or for several hours. When the salmon is soft and the broth is flavorful, add the huckleberries and cook for an additional half an hour. Season to taste.

Cook time: 4-8 hours. Serves 6.

Recipe by Kimberly Miller, Skokomish

Salish Snack Mix

In order to stay strong and keep our energy high, we need foods that are rich in diverse nutrients including vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates and good quality fats. This snack mix is similar to pemmican, a food that is eaten during physically demanding times including traveling, hunting or gathering. You don't need to eat much to feel satiated - about ¼ cup is a nice portion size. Many of these ingredients can be purchased in bulk, and you can cater the recipe to your own flavor preferences. Nuts are healthier when they are eaten raw, but their unique flavor comes out when they are roasted.



Dried Fruit: blueberries, cranberries, salal, currants, plums, raisins

Nuts: hazelnuts, walnuts, almonds

Seeds: pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds

If you choose to roast your nuts, place them on a cookie sheet in the oven at 300 degrees. Watch them carefully and remove them once they start to brown and smell roasted. Blend all ingredients together. Store in a cool dry place. You can also sprinkle this mix on salad or add it to hot cereal.

Recipe by Vanessa Cooper, Lummi