Duck

Many varieties of birds are traditionally eaten in the Pacific Northwest including the meat of upland birds like grouse, ptarmigan, and quail, the meat of shorebirds, the meat and eggs of gulls, and especially the meat and eggs of waterfowl such as swans, geese, and ducks. Our regions mountainous and coastal terrain not only affords a huge diversity of edible birdlife, but it is also located in the middle of the Pacific Flyway, one of North America's largest pathways for migratory birds.

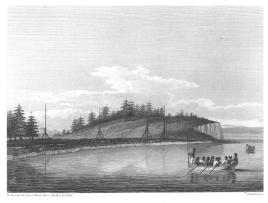


Other name: whulshootseed: sqwalaš

Where Ducks Live: Most of our ducks are seasonal visitors that spend summers further north and winters in our coastal and inland waters. Dabbling ducks such as Mallards, Widgeons, Pintail, and Teals inhabit ponds, marshes, and other shallow waters where they browse on shoreline vegetation, feed off the water's surface, or dip their heads underwater to reach for roots, fish, and invertebrates. Diving ducks such as Scaup, Canvasback, Goldeneye, Scoters, and Mergansers inhabit deeper areas such as lakes, channels, and bays where they frequently submerge themselves completely in pursuit of fish.

Hunting Duck: All ducks have excellent vision and require careful preparation, cunning, and skill to hunt. Specialized duck hunting equipment includes nets, traps, spears, clubs, arrows, and more recently, shotguns. The most efficient means of capturing these tasty waterfowl is a duck net, but such a net depends on the collaborative work of an entire family to manufacture and use.

Duck nets are traditionally woven from the bark of willow (*Salix* spp.) or stinging net that is collected in the spring or fall and woven throughout the winter (much like reef nets). The mesh is sized so that only the larger duck species are captured and songbirds and small duck species can fly through. When completed, the entire net is died brown with hemlock tree bark so that it is camouflaged by the twilight sky. Duck nets are suspended between trees across narrow flyways such as rivers, or hung from poles that are erected in salt marshes. Just after sunset, duck hunters raise their net, sneak



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upstream, and then scare ducks towards the net. When the ducks strike the net, attendants quickly lower the net and club the ducks that they want to eat. In this manner, a family can efficiently kill dozens of ducks in one evening.

Ducks were also trapped in smaller numbers using snares and baited hooks. Small leg loop nooses were hidden amongst the exposed soil of the salt marsh where ducks were likely to ensnare their feet while foraging for roots. Lower in the estuary, two pointed hooks called throat gorges were baited with herring, tied in long lines and anchored to the mud flats while the tide was low. When the tide rose, ducks would dive for the herring, swallow the hook and drown.

Individual ducks were also taken by bow and arrow, spear, club, and hand net. Ducks have excellent vision and under most circumstances, it is difficult for hunters to get within range before they flush. However, a cunning technique called "pit lamping" blinds the ducks and allows the hunters to get very close. After dark, when depth perception is challenging, a team of two hunters would light a fire or torch at the front of their canoe. They could then paddle right up to a duck and kill it with an arrow, spear, club, or net. After European contact, mining lamps (pit lamps), and flashlights replaced torches and shotguns replaced projectiles. Duck blinds are another traditional technique that enables the hunter to get close to a duck. Blinds are constructed near duck feeding areas from sticks and limbs. The hunter then waits behind the screen of vegetation for a flock to land within shooting distance. This method is still used today.



Eating Duck: Roasted or stewed ducks are a fatty and flavorful meal. Clean the duck by removing the head, guts, and feet and hanging the body upside-down for a day or two to allow the blood to drain. The feathers are removed by hand and any down or small feathers that remain are seared off over a fire, which adds a smoky flavor. Ducks are skewered and roasted horizontally over a bed of hot coals, or hung from a rope and slowly spun vertically beside a hot fire until a leg can be easily torn from the body. The meat can also be boiled with vegetables to make stew.

Flocks of Widgeons and Scoters historically numbered in the tens of thousands and provided a significant source of food to Aboriginal communities. Some groups, such as the *Kanasisi* of the lower Columbia River valley were even named for their reliance on waterfowl. *Kanasisi* means "People of the Scoter."



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Photo credits: Duck in water (Abe Lloyd), duck in flight (istock) duck soup (Elise Krohn) **Artwork** of duck and cattail by Joe Seymour

Duck Soup

This fragrant and comforting soup is sure to warm your chilly bones in wintertime. Duck imparts a fatty savory medicine that speaks directly to our taste buds- ensuring satisfaction with every bite. Soups are a great way to get nourishment in to your body. The simmering of wholesome ingredients like carrots, celery and good quality waterfowl protein make it easy for your body to obtain the medicine.

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 onion

1 pound red potatoes

2 carrots

3 celery stalks

2 cups diced duck meat

Pinch of sea salt

Pinch of fresh ground black pepper

2 quarts duck stock

*optional – 1 teaspoon juniper berries



In a large soup pot warm up the oil over medium heat. Add onion, potatoes, carrots, celery and meat. Add salt and pepper and sauté veggies until they turn translucent. Add stock and duck meat, then bring to a simmer, allowing to cook for 30 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste and serve with bannock bread.



Leftovers

by Inez Bill, Tulalip Tribes

When I was a young girl, we did not refer to the foods that we ate as traditional foods. It was simply food that we were grateful to have, be it breakfast, lunch, or dinner. My family lived and continues to live a ceremonial way of life. Helping people and feeding people was something we did as needed without question. When we had a gathering, people would bring whatever they had or could for the table. When that particular occasion was over, we would send leftovers home



with elders and visitors. This is what I remember the food at that time was: ducks, shellfish, fish, deer, elk, octopus, teas. Some families would share their home-canned berries and fruit, such as peaches, pears, cherries and plums. As a young person, I would help in the kitchen. We would feed the visitors, elders and locals. It was not until we fed everyone that we were able to eat. It was a real treat to have some home canned fruit or even fruit juice.

At the times when we would serve duck soup, if there were any leftovers, sometimes we felt lucky and excited to be able to take some home. Therefore, the next day my breakfast would be leftover duck soup before I went to school. We all know that it tastes better the next day. For the most part, our breakfast was not cheerios or corn flakes with milk, toast and orange juice. Our breakfast was whatever was available or leftover from the evening meals. That was a time when hunters hunted, fisherman fished, and families put food away. It really was a simpler, slower, natural way of life.

For a variety of reasons, in the past 40 plus years, we as a people have unfortunately drifted away from that way of life. We still gather, we still feed, we still pray and dance but the food has changed due to societal development, which has drastically changed our hunting and gathering sites. Today areas are polluted and toxic. Our current situation has changed our cultural continuity in regards to our health and spiritual wellbeing. We have always believed that to have a healthy people you must have a healthy environment.

Within the past few years, we are collectively, as a people, working towards stabilizing the natural resources by sharing our concerns with other tribes and state agencies. It is only now that we are referring to our natural foods as traditional foods, by remembering how to gather them, prepare them, cook them, and bring these memories to our tables.