

# Food Drying

## Objectives

To learn how Native Americans preserved food for winter use; to appreciate that many foods dried and stored by native peoples are still being used today.

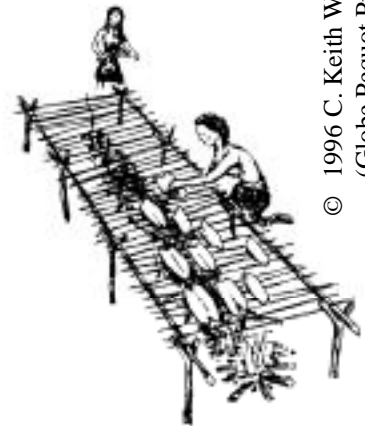
## Materials

Any of the following native foods for drying: cranberries, grapes, blueberries, apples, pumpkins, squash, Jerusalem artichokes, and other roots; fish for smoke-drying optional. Baskets, simple drying racks.

## Procedure

Some of the listed foods may need to be obtained in season and frozen until needed. A dry storage place should be prepared. This activity can be done over time and in conjunction with other food gathering and preparing activities.

- **Fruits**  
Begin drying fruits on trays, in baskets, or on racks. Students can make regular (e.g., daily) observations of changes. Apples dry faster than cranberries, grapes, and blueberries. To speed their process, students can puncture the skins to let in more air. Apples should be cored and peeled. Grapes should be cut and de-seeded.
- **Meat or Fish**  
When large game was killed on hunting trips, or when quantities of fish were caught at one time, they were usually cleaned and smoke-dried to preserve before carrying back to the campsite. It is difficult to smoke fish or dry meat in the classroom, but samples of the finished product are available at food stores to show as examples. If an outdoor program takes place where fires are allowed, students can assemble a drying rack (as shown), and the meat or fish can be dried and smoked.
- **Vegetables**  
Pumpkins, squash, and roots sliced thin were also air-dried like fruits.



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## Follow-Up

- Research native foods that were air-dried or smoke-dried. Roots like cattail, Jerusalem artichoke, groundnuts, and water lily were very beneficial to native peoples for flour and also as vegetables. How do we use them today? Find out about current field testing of groundnuts and cattail as potential food sources.
- Look into how foods were stored by Native Americans. From where did the term root cellar come?