

Knowledge of Native Elders
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How is the Indian ice cream made?

It is made in lots of different ways. It depends on where you are, who you are, and what you have to work with. The first type of ice cream is made with small fish eggs, (kk'oondzaah). It can be made from the eggs of white fish, sheefish, or pike. Effie, prefers to use fresh whitefish eggs, but frozen eggs can be used instead. The first step, is to beat the eggs well and get rid of all the fibers, when it becomes creamy, you add a handful of cranberries and a little sugar. The results is a dessert that is not rich and delicious even though it sounds "yucky".

Another type of ice cream is made without fish eggs (nonaaldloda). When she was younger, Effie saw people making this type, it wasn't very popular. The basis for this ice cream is grease. Effie uses tallow as the grease because it becomes hard, but you can use Crisco or bear grease which stays soft. Tallow is good after it becomes hard because you can break it into pieces and carry it with you without making a mess. The first step is to whip the grease until it's creamy, then crush some soft crackers (Jersey Cream or Crown Crackers) and add them to the cream. Whip the mixture until it is foamy and then add rasins or berries and sugar, to your taste. Set it aside until it gets hard. Variations of this recipe include replacing the crackers with dry meat or baked fish that has had the skin and bones removed.

There are a lot of different ways to make ice cream, it all depends on what you have and what your taste is. Today, young girls in Tanana are making the ice cream, but they add too much sugar to kill the berry taste. Effie says thats alright because that is the way they like it.

Can you talk about the traditional cooking and eating utensils?

There is so much people can do with what little they have to work with. Long ago, people did not have knives and forks like today. They used shaped bone and aged wood. To make a utensil, you take some spruce wood, shape it, oil it down (Crisco or bacon fat), then put it where its warm, every week or so oil it down again and let it age, eventually it will become hard.

Effie can remember the first time she used a newly made

wooden spoon. She was checking muskrat traps near Horseshoe Lake when she found an abandoned muskrat house filled with black fish. Effie used her wooden spoon to scrape the black fish into a bucket. She later boiled the black fish and fed them to her dogs. There wasn't too much involved in traditional cooking. Campfires were the only way to cook. A long skinny stick that was sharpened on one end was used to cook meat over the fire. Fish was usually wrapped in birch bark, placed in hot coals under the ashes, and allowed to steam cook, bread was sometimes cooked in the similar way. After pots and pans were introduced, people started to boil their food which was healthier.

A lot of the food eaten was rich and oily. Effie mentioned a story that concerned rich food. There was a group of men that went up into the mountains to hunt. While up there, they killed a porcupine to eat, while the porcupine was cooking over the fire, the men collected the drippings in a birch bark container. One man took the drippings and mixed in his berries. His friends warned the man that it would be too rich, but the man said he'd be alright. Later that night, the man did not get much sleep, he was up and down all night.

Porcupine is very rich and oily, when Effie eats something like that, she uses mustard to kill the grease.

There was a question about using rocks for boiling. Rocks were used when they were available. The Tanana River doesn't have any rocks, but the Yukon River does. In fact, the Yukon has many rock formations. In a story about Chititaalkaane, every time he stepped along the Yukon a different formation emerged. There is a separate story about every formation. One rock formation along the Yukon is called Donih Ts'ooniyh Din, this place is known for the rocks that break and split. It is a favorite spot for people to get scrapers for tanning.

Wood Products

Wood products were very important because wood was used for just about everything. Birch bark was used to make plates, covers for ground storage, and baskets. The baskets are made out of flexible birch bark. Strips of willow are used to secure the ends and make the rim of the basket. Holes are punched in the bark and the willow thread through. For larger baskets, two layers of bark with the grains going in opposite directions are used. Birch bark is also used to wrap the frame when making a canoe, it is also good for getting fires started quickly.

Wood is important in the making of fishnets and dip nets, with fishnets rotton wood is used as floaters and more wood is used as sinkers. Dipnets are made out of three different pieces of wood. The anchor piece (cross piece) is

made out of alder that is already bent. The size of the anchor piece depends on the size you want the dipnet to be. The handle (whatever length you want) is made of spruce. It is connected to the center of the anchor piece. Willow is then bent around the "T" formed by the handle and anchor piece.

Snowshoes and sleds are also important tools made of wood. The first step in making a snowshoe is to find a snowshoe bender that is already in the shape you want. You then tie a long straight grain birch to the bender to shape the wood. A piece of wood is stuck in between to make the nose. The nose can be shaped anyway you want. The wood is then allowed to dry. After drying holes are drilled along the birch. Stripped caribou skin is then used as the filling. The skin is threaded through the drilled holes and across, and the shoe is filled. Heavy moose hide is used for the footing and scrap moose hide for the foot strap. The men made the frames, while the women did the filling. Trailer snowshoes were made in the same way. Trailer snowshoes are like regular snowshoes, but pointed in front and used on trails already made.

Illness and Epidemics

The biggest problem Indians experimented with was tuberculosis (T.B.), mostly of the lungs. Some of the reasons for this was the lack of comfortable houses, breathing of mass quantities of smoke due to open fires, and cold weather. Victims weakened quickly because they did not eat the proper food. T.B. was very common in villages because patients weren't isolated until the whiteman told them to. After isolation became a common practice many infected people were sent to places that had treatment centers. Many people found themselves separated from their families. After a while it was found that T.B. came in many forms such as meningitis and T.B. of the bones which might have been cancer, but they couldn't tell back then, (Effie's first child died of spinal meningitis).

Back in 1927 or 28 a big epidemic hit the Nome area, serum had to be rushed from Nenana to Nome by dog team. The run of serum was done continuously with the serum being passed on to fresh teams. Effie's father, John Folger took the serum from Manley Hot Springs to Tanana. The serum arrived in time to help the sick.

In the winter of 1928, the flu epidemic ran through Tanana, Effie remembers her whole family being affected. They all slept around the stove for warmth at her grandmother's house. This type of flu hit the overweight people the hardest. A lot of people died because they couldn't fight the sickness.

In June of 1942 an epidemic of German Measles hit (Effie was one of the first to get it, she caught it from an

older man who was sick, she went up to Stevens Village to talk with him, because she felt sorry for him). Effie and her family were living on a raft coming back from spring camp. When they got to Tanana Effie wasn't feeling well. Effie was two months pregnant at the time. The doctor told her she had german measles and to stay away from people, but she had to take care of her kids. Her husband tried to find someone to babysit the kids because he was leaving to work in CCC camp. He couldn't find anyone in the village to help and Effie had to make do on her own. By the time she started getting well the rest of the village caught the measles. Effie went around helping everyone she could. After a while the measles turned into diarrhea, then dehydration, then death. Effie lost her three-year-old to this disease. Effie wore herself down by helping everyone without resting herself. She was very lucky she didn't miscarry, most of the other pregnant women did. One woman had a premature baby with complications. People said to let the baby die and save the mother. Effie took care of the baby for tens days and the baby grew stronger. Both the mother and child survived, but over 40 people died back then because they could not recover. There were no I.V.s or money to eat right to gain the strength they needed.

Ater the out break of the epidemics the villagers did not trust doctors as much as they did before the epidemics, this was because the doctors were not willing to get involved. Effie found herself taking care of three children infected with impetigo. The children had no relatives in town and all the doctor could do is prescribe medication. About a week after Effie started helping the children, they started to recover. To finish Effie stated "Life was tough, but it made a strong women out of me".