

Natural History	Cultural History
	-1795 Treaty of Greenville (Native Americans land rights)
	-1817 Treaty of Maumee Rapids (land rights to settlers)
	-1827 Completion of the Maumee and Western Reserve Road (began in 1823)
	-1830 Indian Removal Act
	-1839 Swamp drained via deep side ditches and culverts emptying out into Lake Erie.
	-1840s Canals open along the Maumee and Auglaize Rivers.
1860s- Garlic mustard (invasive species) introduced.	-1859 The Ohio Ditch Law
1869- Over 350 deer removed by a single hunting group.	-1860-1886 Development of railroads, sawmills, clay tile factories, and farming.
1889- The last deer in the region killed.	Oak forests cut down
1900- Wild turkey, passenger pigeons, ruffed grouse, and prairie chickens hunted to extinction. Deer reintroduced.	-1910 Extensively agriculture
1902- Ring-necked pheasants introduced.	
1980s- Zebra mussels (invasive species) enter Lake Erie.	

Foodways Traditions of Northwest Ohio: Foods from Nature

Nature provides sustenance for us in many ways. One of the most significant is supplying us with food (and the resources for gathering or cultivating it). The North American continent has a wide range of climates, soil types, flora, fauna, and water sources. That diversity created in the past an abundance of foods that could be collected from the wild. Plants provided fruit, nuts, berries, leaves, roots, bark, stems, and flowers. Animals, birds, fish, even reptiles, and some insects were gathered and turned into food.

Native American food cultures developed skills for identifying, harvesting, and processing edible foods from nature. Some of these were passed along to European explorers and settlers. The Woodland Indians in northwest Ohio were skillful at hunting, fishing, and gathering wild foods as well as cultivating the “three sisters” (corn, beans, and squash). Like many Native cultures, they tended to work with nature in their farming, so that rather than cut down trees and plow large fields, they planted in open spaces and let nature work for them. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced most Native peoples from the area, but they left behind a legacy of food knowledge.

The first Europeans in northwest Ohio came as explorers, trappers, and hunters. Early pioneers (late 1700s/early 1800s) found rich soil and good water access, but the Great Black Swamp dominated the region and made living there unhealthy and frequently not possible. Partly because of these circumstances, pioneers felt that they had to tame nature and control it. The European American colonists, in general, distrusted nature and felt that they needed to cultivate the land as part of being civilized. Although they frequently gathered foods from the wild, they did not want to depend on those foods.

Settlers in northwest Ohio began draining the swamp in the 1830s and turned the region into farmland. It later became largely industrialized farming, but residents still hunted, fished, and gathered some foods from the wild. Today, family traditions surround many of these foods and families use them in cooking: venison for chili; walleye and bass from the Maumee River and Lake Erie for fish fries; and mulberries, blackberries, and service berries for pies. Locations for finding morels (a native mushroom) are highly guarded secrets, and some cooks still know when to pick wild greens. Generally, though, people living in northwest Ohio, like most Americans, depend on cultivated crops and domesticated animals for their sustenance. Fishing and hunting are oftentimes recreational (as well as necessary to protect crops or to find food), and wild plants are eaten only by a few—those who remember the older ways or those who want to get back to a



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Something to chew on...

Have you and/or your family members ever gathered food from nature? If so, what were they and where did you find them? What are some of the reasons people gather food from nature today?

How much of a part of your diet are foods from nature? If you could no longer find those foods in the wild, would you be able to find them somewhere else? What would you miss about them if you couldn't find them?

Gathering food from nature oftentimes means looking after the habitats for those foods. What can you do to preserve that habitat?

When considering food from nature think about the following: economics, pleasure, relaxation, health benefits, good nutrition, protection to the garden from wild animals, elimination of weeds and maintenance of plant growth, tradition, return to pioneer lifestyle and values, discipline, survival skills, connection with heritage, connection with nature.

Go on-line to find groups that work to preserve flora and fauna (plants and animals) habitat. What resources for finding food in nature are in your community? Your library? Organizations? Parks? Schools? Restaurants?

Compare the approaches to nature taken by Native Americans and pioneers. Do you see these different approaches today? What are the advantages/disadvantages of these approaches?

Garlic Mustard Pesto

3 cups garlic mustard leaves washed and packed (young leaves are the best)
2 garlic cloves
1 cup olive oil
1 cup grated parmesan cheese
1 – 1 ½ cups walnuts
¼ teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper (optional)

1. Pack three cups garlic mustard leaves washed and dried. (For best flavor, use young garlic mustard leaves before the plant flowers.)
2. Combine remaining ingredients in a food processor.
3. Blend until pesto is smooth.
4. Slowly add garlic mustard leaves to the pesto blend until all leaves are added and the pesto is smooth.



***Warning: Foods from the wild always need to be checked with experienced gatherers. Books and websites can be used as guides. If wild animals don't eat the plants, they are usually not safe for humans either.**

Activities

Take a walk through a local park or wildlife preserve. Identify plants that are safe to eat. Are there potential foods other than plants, (squirrels, rabbits, or ducks)?

Prepare foods from nature; compare the taste, appearance, and availability with those that have been cultivated.

Are there places in your area that are good for foraging for foods from nature? What makes these places better than others for the edible species to grow or live?

Contact organizations that are dedicated to protecting, preserving, and raising awareness for these foods from nature.