

GARDENING, PREPARATION OF CORN:

(Interviewer had gone to keep an appointment with Joseph Wheeler. On arrival, Ethel Wheeler was in her garden, hoeing weeds. Interviewer went out to greet her and Ethel began suddenly to reminisce about gardening and food preparation in the "old days". Interviewer began to tape the conversation after it had begun, hence the first part of Side A of tape T-288 begins literally in the middle of a sentence.)

It's hard and tedious (the preparation of corn), but that's the way we do it. Cause they leave the tails on, you know, where you could get them (the ears of corn) and turn them over. And it's tedious. And you have to watch out that you don't bur them. They say that shucks. Then after you take them out, why, she (Ethel's grandmother) cover them with a big canvas. They're hot, and when you cover them, they cook inside of that shuck. And then over this big canvas. Then pretty soon, why we'll take it off and take the shucks off and lay it to one side and let it dry. Got to dry up. Then, they take the--take the--you know, scrape it off. She never did--some people take it and boil it and then take that out and dry it. But my grandmother used to say that when you boil this ear, it takes the sweetness out. So she never boil her corn. She just let it cook in that shuck. And all the sweetness, everything is there. That's the way the Whicitas do. We don't boil it. We just cook it on the coals, you know. Very little twigs, we just put twigs in there. It's tedious. All the Whichitas used to do like that. You could look down in the bottom, people's smoke going up. Roasting corn. And oh, it's a hot job.

(What do you do with it after you take it off the ear?)

You take it, and you have to take it, oh, somewhere where the chickens ain't around, and you spread it. Like I can get a big canvas, and spread it, and put it on there. And in the hot sun, and you come and every night you kind of stir it around, and stir it around and leave it. Pretty soon, the sun will dry it till its just as hard as a rock. Then when you cook it, why, the sweetness and everything is in there.

(But it's already cooked?)

It's already cooked, yea. It's already cooked. Yea, that's the way the Whicitas do it. I don't know what the other tribes do. I know the Caddoes do,