

BERRY HILL, JEFFERSON

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INDIAN CUSTOMS  
(Squirrel Hide Bow String)

Many years before the white man came, the Indians used bows and arrows to kill game and many times in war. The bows were made strong enough to kill deer, yet a strong bow had to have a string. There being no string or cord in those days, a way to make bow strings was invented by an old Indian. This bow string was made of squirrel hide, and old mole squirrel hide was used or a female squirrel hide was the same if old. The squirrel was, of course, killed and skinned the same as any other small game. It was hung or stretched over a piece of board and hung up out in the sun to dry. About four days after being out in the sun, it was considered dried; then a handful of ashes was put on the skin and a little water is poured on and mixed; then a knife or mostly a corn cob was used to scratch or rub the fur or hairs off, leaving only the hide; then a knife was used (but now a scissors is used) to cut the hide in a circular form about a quarter of an inch wide. The back part was cut in the circular form till all of it has been cut into strips of string; then it was put in a bowl of water enough to

cover the string of hide, and was then put up for four or five days to soften it; when it was then taken out of the water and cut up in three pieces of the same length. Then it was plaited fine and smooth, and again hung up to dry out in the sun. It was strung up tight and when dry, it was ready for the bow. This squirrel hide bow string is strong and has the resistance of a one inch rope or more when it is made right.

#### The Bow or Ectv-Kotahse.

The younger generation of Indians are becoming so much like the white people they do not know what a bow is and what it's for or do not know how to use it. It was a custom in the old Indians days to have a bow to kill the game. They depended on the bow as they didn't have any guns and they made bows so good they would last many years. They used bois d' arc or Eto-Lane. Eto-Lane is the Indian name for bois d' arc. This bois d' arc that grows about the size of a medium size tree or about fifteen inches in diameter was the best to make bows, as it could stand the pull or the strength of a strong man. It was split in small pieces and put up to dry out; after so long, about six months or more, the split posts were made into bows by trimming down with a hatchet. After

being trimmed to the form of a bow, then it was scraped on the inside as the outside of a bow could not be scraped as the inside could as it would break when scraped. So the slow work was started by scraping the inside of the bow, It was scraped according to the grain, and when it was about half an inch thick, it was then started to follow the grain, some times four or five grains were left in a bow, the thick part being in the middle, and the ends being thinner than the middle, by following the grain and the same width and length on end or both ends. It was made level and of a right balance so it would shoot straight. If one end was not strong or was weak, it would not shoot straight as it would drop the arrow, or the arrow would not go straight by curving.

#### Apóshe or Parched Meal.

I have asked many different Indians as to how the Apóshe is made. It was and still is a very important drink yet only very few know how to make it. The Apóshe or parched meal is made from yellow corn, (Vcē-Lanē) is the name for yellow corn in Indian. The yellow corn is used when it has ripened and at the stage of turning hard, yet it must be soft, just soft enough so it will

not tear up when shelling, when the corn has been sorted out for the purpose, it is then shelled by using a case-knife. It is a very slow work, taking many hours of slow, back-breaking work. When that work of shelling the corn is done, a big pot is washed and cleaned from impurities and set on a big fire and clean ashes from the cook stove are taken and sifted to separate from the burnt coals or anything that's not wanted, About a gallon and a half or two gallons of clean sifted ashes, are put in the pot. The pot of ashes is given time till it gets good and hot; then the shelled yellow corn is put in. A piece of board about two and a half or three feet long, made into the shape of a spoon, is used to stir the mixture. As soon as the corn is put in the pot with the ashes it must be stirred without ceasing or it will burn. This is a sweating job as a person must sit by the fire to stir the mixture, and this is kept up till the corn is parched. It is then parched corn. Then another pan full (being about two gallons) is put in the pot to parch and that is kept on till all the shelled corn is parched.

The now parched corn is put in the mortar, about a quart or more at a time, and it is cracked up by using

a pounder. After it is cracked up by pounding to a smaller size, it is taken out and the hard corn and the worthless flakes are separated by a sieve or Solahwv; the Solahwv is the same as sieve, it is an Indian name. After this separation of cracked corn and flakes, the hard corn is then put in the mortar (Ke'co) and pounded into a powder from until it is very fine, as fine as snuff and the same color as snuff. Then it is ready to serve, when it is all pounded by mixing the powder like substance with water.

About two tablespoons full is required for an ordinary table glass or tumbler, and sweetened as in coffee with two teaspoons full of sugar.

It is a very good drink when served in ice as iced tea.

Some of the hard corn is saved and that is boiled in water and served as the other, only it is called Aposhe Osafkē.

The flakes are thrown away as they are worthless.

The Aposhe is very expensive. It is sold by the gallon, and costs from three to five dollars a gallon. It is made during the big church meetings, or during

the green corn dance or a stomp dance. It is usually kept by old Indians, as they will always drink the Aposha as in the days of their of their forefathers.

#### Hominy or A'fhē-rakko.

The Creek Indians made hominy or A'fhē-rakko (is the Indian name for hominy), from the white corn. In the Indian language the white corn is called Vce Hvthe.

This corn is used after it has ripened and dried. The ears of corn are taken up by hand and shelled by using a burnt corn cob. It is not very hard to shell - not as hard as the flint corn - for it is rather a soft corn, being very white. After it's shelled, a fire is built and a big pot of water is set on the fire to boil. When the water has become very hot, almost to boiling condition, the now shelled corn is put in the hot water and clean sifted ashes from the cooking stove are put in the pot and the mixture is stirred for about two hours. It is boiled till the corn is soft and the skin of the corn has become cracked or peel; then it is taken out of the pot and put in a smaller pot and set on a cooking stove to cook, more by boiling. While it is boiling this time

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a handful of burned bean pods or hulls are put in to give the right color, (the bean pods are burned by putting them in a pan and setting over a fire). After it has boiled and cooked, it is then ready to serve. When being served, it is mixed while hot with just a small amount of lard, and is salted, also pepper is used, then it is ready to eat.

When made right, a person cannot tell the difference between home-made and store bought hominy.