

ROSS, ELIZABETH

CANUCHI

#12226

53

ROSS, ELIZABETH.

CANUCHI.

12226.

Elizabeth Ross,  
Investigator,  
Nov. 22, 1937.

CANUCHI.

Canuchi is yet made (1937) by some of the Cherokees, fullblood Cherokees in particular. Hickory nuts, (shells and kernels) are pounded into a mass and rolled into balls about the size of a medium-sized apple, and is then ready for use. The Canuchi imparts a pleasing flavor to hominy and has long been in use in the homes of native Cherokees. After Indian corn has been subjected to a bath in lye, made from wood ashes in an old-fashioned hopper, the corn is washed until all husks are removed from the grains and dried and thereafter pounded in a wooden mortar, (usually made from a portion of a tree trunk, one end of which is hollowed out to form a bowl), a pestle (a small wooden maul) being used.

The resultant grits are used in the making of hominy. The hominy is quite palatable without the addition of a quantity of Canuchi, but its palatability is increased when the Canuchi has been added.

In olden times, as those who have been familiar with the customs of the natives have related, the hominy pot or stone jar was usually filled with hominy. The neighbor who dropped in, or the chance caller, must be shown hospitality

FOSS, ELIZABETH.

CANUCHI.

12226.

-2-

and was usually invited to partake of hominy and Canuchi.

The young children upon becoming hungry between regular meals, likewise received portions of the favorite substance. Consequently the pot or jar was often replenished.

There is nothing to indicate who originated Canuchi, but that its use was begun in a remote period is probable. Its use in the former Cherokee Nation, was begun more than a century ago. Since then makers and users of Canuchi have been numerous, though within somewhat recent years not as much attention is devoted to the making of the product.

When the Cherokee National Council was in session at Tahlequah, usually convening the first of November and continuing for thirty days, and in instances for a longer period when special sessions were sometimes called, the majority of the councilmen boarded in Tahlequah. Only those who lived in outlying sections of the Tahlequah District rode to and from Tahlequah when council was convened. While some of the legislators boarded at the hotels there were others who boarded in homes scattered about the town. Included among the latter were a number of the fullblood members of the council, they occupying quarters in the home of full blood residents. These residents usually served Indian dishes,

ROSS, ELIZABETH.

CANUCHI.

12226.

-3-

hominy and Canuchi being included. Being especially fond of the latter dish or drink, some of the boarders, besides partaking of other articles of food, disposed of two or more large cupfuls, or glasses full of the hominy, and Canuchi. They could not find the substance at hotels or at the usual boarding place, and consequently sought the homes of countrymen who clung to the long favorite articles of food.

There is a difference in hickory nuts. Those which grow along rugged ridges become dry and well-seasoned more readily than the nuts which are produced by trees in the lowlands. The flavor of the upland nuts is better than that of the others. Consequently the greater portion of the output of Canuchi has been from nuts gathered along the slopes of the ridges in the hill country. Although many black hickory trees have been cut down during some years of the past, there are yet numerous trees in various sections.

Cherokees traveling to distant sections in the Fall and Winter seasons sometimes carried portions of Canuchi with them, to be partaken of along the route or to be presented to friends with whom the travelers expected to visit for awhile. (Among the fullblood Cherokees no invitation

ROSS, ELIZABETH.

CANUCHI.

12226.

-4-

is expected if one wishes to make a visit to a friend. Open house, as it were, is kept and friends may remain for a period of days or weeks). The product has been offered for sale during many years by those who have prepared the balls into which the crushed nuts have been rolled. Some of those who have sold Canuchi have also offered hominy grits for sale or trade. While some persons like the Canuchi alone others prefer hominy and Canuchi mixed, sweetened or not.