

ROSS, ELIZABETH. INDIAN COOKING

1666
20

INDEX CARD

Food--Cherokee

By Elizabeth Ross
Indian-pioneer history
S-149
May 24, 1937:
No. 4251-4390

"INDIAN COOKING"

Bean Bread.

The native Cherokee women often baked bean bread, not composed of bean meal, but corn meal in which were beans well-cooked, a brown variety which was raised in good sized quantities. During many years the meal used in the making of bread was procured from corn which had been pounded in mortars.

The mortars were of hardwood, with a bowl like receptacle chiseled or otherwise scooped out in the top. A small round hole bored to a depth of several inches at the bottom of the bowl, then made larger, corn poured in and a heavy pestle, a length of wood somewhat larger than a hoe handle with a thick and heavy end, was plied.

Gradually the corn, which had been scalded in home-made lye from wood ashes, in a hopper, was reduced to a fine meal.

This meal constituted the principal food product for unknown years. It was not always cooked with beans.

The method of cooking varied but usually old-fashioned hearth ovens were used, though in later years the bread was baked in stoves.

Before the advent of either ovens or stoves among the Cherokees, bread was cooked upon flat stones beneath which fires had been kindled, and at a yet earlier period the bean bread, as well as plain bread, was cooked in the hot ashes and embers.

Within relatively recent years bean bread has been made from meal ground from corn at grist or steam mills, but the old people of the Cherokee hills say that the old-fashioned method of making the meal was best and that the mill-made meal lacks the flavor characteristic of the meal which resulted from the pounding of corn in the mortar.

The method used for making up the bread was to scald a portion of meal by pouring over it the cooked beans and the boiling liquid in which they were boiled. Salt was not used in making this bread in early days, but later some was added.

PARCHED MEAL

Parched meal was made by roasting corn in hot ashes

3

and embers until a dark brown color resulted. Pounding in the mortar until very fine meal was obtained. It was used as a drink by mixing a large spoonful or two in a cup of water.

Sometimes sugar was added. It is said that the Cherokee Indians carried parched meal with them when on long marches and used it as nourishment with great benefit.