



Foraging Foodways in the Arkansas Ozarks

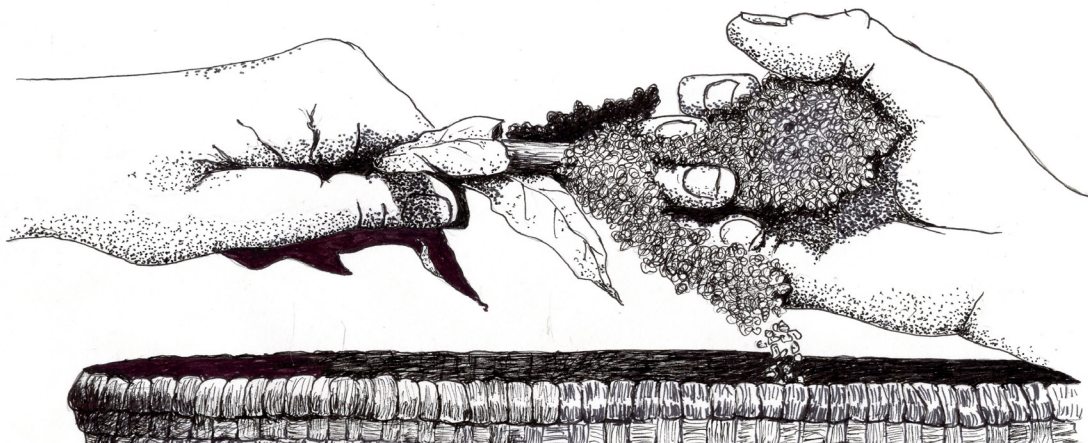
For this activity, you are going to do some Archaic Indian role play. You are the Archaic Arkansans described in the following essay. Read the essay and respond to the questions that follow.

Foraging Foodways

You belong to a group of Archaic Indians living in Arkansas about 5,000 years ago. Your group, or band, of about 50 related people includes everyone from babies to elders. You make a living by hunting and fishing wild animals and gathering wild plants. You hunt deer and elk when the herds are nearby. You also get small animals, fish, turtles, shellfish, turkeys, pigeons, and geese with spears, nets, and traps. You walk a long way from your home (your base camp) and stay at special purpose sites, like Rockhouse Cave, to collect nuts and acorns from hickory and oak trees, fruits, berries, and greens in season.

You have to make choices about which plant foods are the most nutritious and how much work it takes to gather each one. Some foods provide many calories. Calories are a measure of how much energy the food gives. Some foods give lots of protein, fat, and vitamins. Others provide less. Some foods are difficult to get (so you spend more energy, or effort), while others are easy (costing you less energy). What mix of foods gives you the most nutrition for the best cost? You need to take into account the daily requirements for men (2,500 – 3,000 calories) and for women (2,000 – 2,500 calories). Everyone needs protein and vitamins, and people (like you) who hunt and gather also need fat in their diet because it is also a source of energy.

For example, you can gather 100 grams of hickory nuts in 15 minutes, but you have to walk a half-mile from your home to reach the forest. You can collect 100 grams of sunflower seeds just outside your home, so you don't have to walk far but it takes an hour to gather that much. Roasted deer meat is delicious, but you might spend all day tracking the deer over two or three miles. If you kill a deer, you have to drag it all the way back to camp. And if you miss, you've done all that work for nothing. You can collect 100 grams of goosefoot leaves right outside your base camp in about a half-hour. It gives you far less calories and protein, but lots of vitamins.



Harvesting wild edible seeds was an important fall activity for people during the Archaic Period. Tightly woven baskets, like this one, were important tools for harvesting these small seeds. Drawing by Larry Porter.



Your band moves from one place to another during different seasons of the year, so you are close to the forests, fields, and streams where food and other things you need are available. Your base camp is located in the river bottom. River bottoms are flat areas along rivers. At your base camp, you live in a circular house with pole frameworks, bark-covered or mud plastered walls, and a grass or bark-covered roof. You do a lot of work, like preparing food and making tools, in work areas just outside your house.

You travel to the uplands and the forest edge to gather wild plant foods. Uplands are mountain areas in forests with some small creeks. Oaks, hickory, pecan, and walnut trees grow in the uplands. Fruit trees like persimmon and paw paw trees also grow in upland forests. The forest edge is located between the uplands and the river bottoms. Animals like deer and rabbits live in the forest edge.

You eat many different foods that change with the seasons. You eat deer meat, nuts (especially hickory nuts and acorns), and fish often. You roast meat in hot ashes or over open fires. You also pound meat, nuts, and seeds into powder and use them to thicken liquids and add flavor to the meal. Sometimes you make cakes, like persimmon cakes, by pounding dried meat, dried seeds, and the persimmon fruit into meal. You mix the meal with grease to shape the cakes and bake the cakes in hot ashes. You harvest the gourds and use them as containers to store foods through the winter. Within your band, youngsters, women with children, and older people usually do the gathering and tending plants and capture smaller animals, like rabbits and fish, close to home. Some men and women travel farther away to hunt larger animals or look for other food. In the fall, you gather and store the most nutritious plant foods, so that you will not go hungry in the winter when foods are hard to find.

1. What is the name of your band?

2. Look at the season and location information in the Seasonal Foodways table (on page 40). Where will your band travel to get food in the spring, summer, and fall? Think about the food resources you want to eat and the nutrients they give.

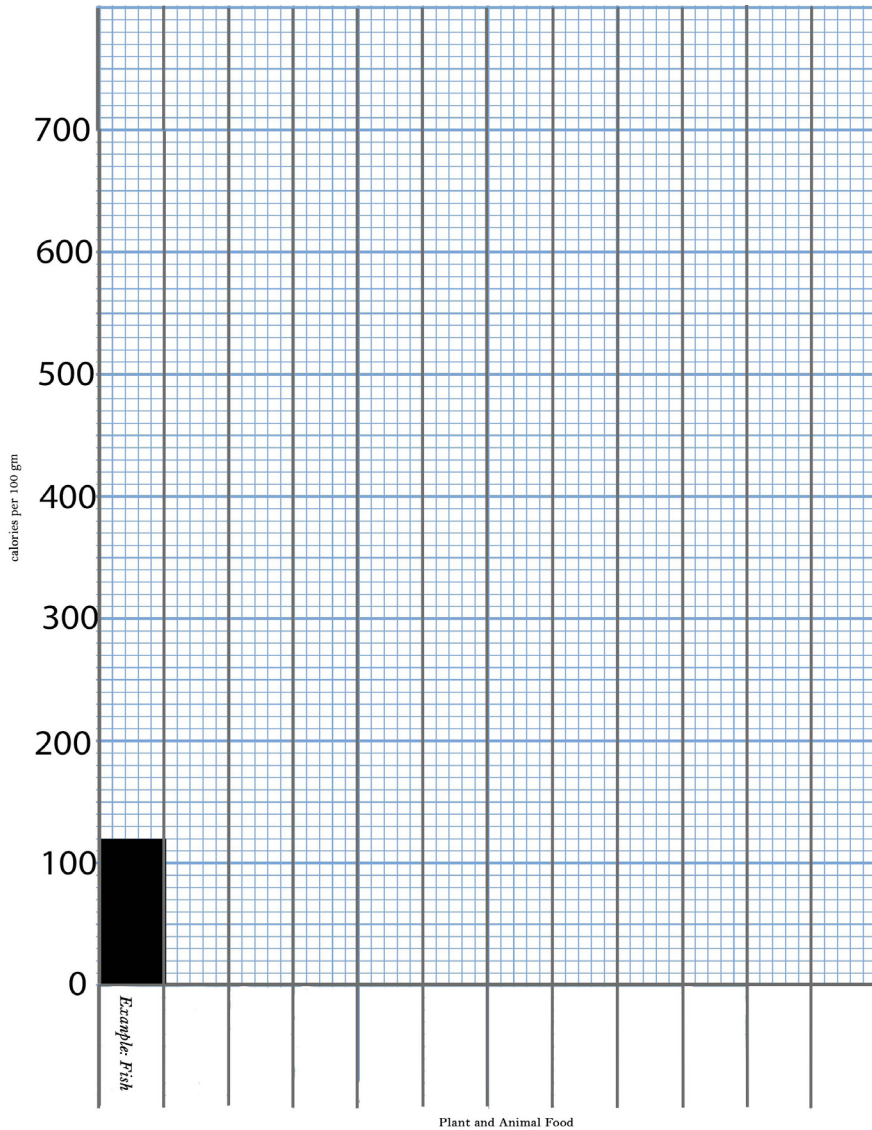
3. Look at your bullseye (on page 41). In the middle ring of the bullseye labeled "Seasons", write down which season you will be in each environment (spring, summer, fall). In the winter, you will eat food your band stores throughout the year.

4. Cut out the plants and animals. Glue the plants and animals in the environments that you will visit during each season. For example, if you are hunting and gathering plants along the Forest Edge in the summer, you would glue the sunflower seeds, raspberry fruit, and deer in the Forest Edge section of the outer ring of the bullseye.

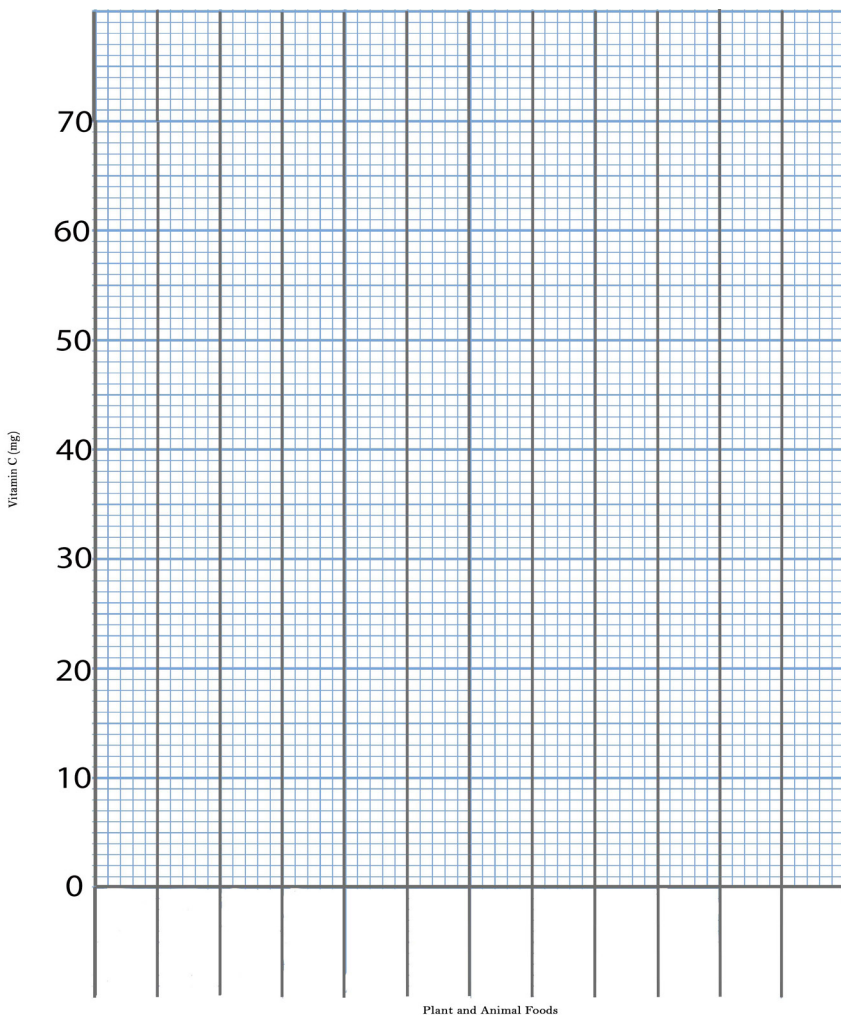
5. Describe your seasonal route. Where will you go each season and what will you eat?



6. Look at the Seasonal Foodways table on page 40. Select plant and animal foods that your band eats regularly. Record each food item across the top of the bar graph. Create a bar to show the number of calories per 100 grams for each plant and animal food. Each small increment equals ten units. In the example, fish contains 120 calories per 100 grams.



8. Record the plant foods from Question 5 on the top row of the bar graph. Complete the bar graph to show the milligrams (mg) of Vitamin C per 100 grams for each food. Each small increment equals one unit (mg of Vitamin C).



9. Based on your bar graphs, which food offers the most calories?

10. Which food provides the most Vitamin C?

11. Which foods would you most want to include in your diet?

12. Think back to the Foraging Foodways in the Arkansas Ozarks essay you just read. You and your band gather plants, hunt, and fish. What foods do you get from each method? List those foods in the Plant and Animal Foods column in the table on the next page.

13. What activities do you and your band have to do in order to eat those foods? List the things you do and the actions you have to take in order to eat the corresponding food in the Activities column of the table on the next page.



Foodways	Plant or animal food	Activities
Gathering		
Hunting		
Fishing		

15. Based on the amount of work you will have to do to get the foods you eat, is your answer to question 12 still the same? Why or why not?

16. In your band everyone does the same kinds of work to get food. Think back to the Rock-house Cave case study, what do you call this type of community organization?



Seasonal Foodways: Plant and Animal Foods

 Acorn	 Blackberries	 Fiddlehead ferns	 Goosefoot leaves	 Goosefoot seeds
 Persimmons	 Walnut	 Sunflower seeds	 Hickory nut	
 Deer	 Turtle	 Fish	 Rabbit	 Goose

Seasonal Foodways Chart

Food	Calories	Protein (gm)	Fat (gm)	Vitamin C (mg)	Season	Locations
Hickory Nut	660	13	64	2	Fall	Uplands
Walnuts	620	24	59	2	Fall	Uplands
Acorns	510	8	31	0	Fall	Uplands
Sunflower seeds	580	21	51	43	Summer	Forest Edge
Goosefoot Leaves	40	18	5	80	Spring	River Bottom
Goosefoot Seeds	400	16	7	0	Fall	River Bottom
Fiddlehead Ferns	30	23	0	27	Spring	Uplands
Persimmon	130	0	0	66	Fall	Uplands
Raspberry	50	0	1	26	Summer	Forest Edge
Deer	720	139	11	0	Fall best, all year	Forest Edge
Rabbit	110	22	2	0	Summer	Forest Edge
Fish	120	19	4	1	All year	River Bottom
Turtle	90	20	0	0	Summer	River Bottom
Goose	371	16	34	4	Fall	River Bottom



