

Dinner at AD 700: The Plum Bayou Casserole

Even though some of the foods that the Woodland Indians ate, like the domesticated forms of sumpweed, goosefoot, and erect knotweed are “lost crops,” it is possible to cook and enjoy a meal that is very close to what a family may have eaten for dinner over a thousand years ago. This recipe uses a domesticated cousin of the Arkansas native goosefoot (*Chenopodium berlandierie*), known as Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*). Quinoa is a staple crop in Peru and Bolivia where it was domesticated around the same time that Indians in the southeastern United States domesticated goosefoot. Quinoa has become increasingly popular and can be found in most major groceries stores. Woodland Indians did not have access to dairy products, but may have cooked with other animal fat. Here we use butter. They likely had access to salt, as archeologists have evidence that later Mississippian Indians were processing, trading, and using salt. People evaporated saline rich waters, like that found in parts of what are known today as Saline County and along the Saline River, to create salt.

Ingredients:

1 small white onion	2 acorn squash
1 cup of quinoa	½ cup roasted and chopped pecans
Salt to taste	

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Peel and slice the acorn squash and white onion in relatively thin slices. Be careful acorn squash is hard raw and can be difficult to slice! Cook 1 cup of quinoa following directions on package. Put a thin layer of butter on the bottom and sides of a casserole dish, and layer in the quinoa, acorn squash, and onions. Add a little salt to taste. Sprinkle pecans over the top of the final layer.

Cover in tinfoil. Bake about 30 minutes or until squash is fork tender.

This dish makes a good vegetarian meal or a tasty side serve with baked, roasted, or sautéed turkey.

