

MY ACORN PROCESS:

Dry the acorns. Drying is only necessary if you are going to store them, otherwise they can be eaten right away. If you store without drying, they can mold. I believe First Nations people would use fresh ones to make soup at the acorn gathering festivals, which would have been preferred.

I dry them in the oven, by the pilot. If there is no pilot, use the oven light. Baking pans suspended over floor registers also work. The idea is to not let the acorns get too hot, or it may bake the tannins in, and make tannins harder to remove in the leaching process. I was drying in pans in the sun, until my local squirrel came around and started chattering about all the acorns: that he was going to take some. I got out there in a hurry and put them inside, barely beating him.

Crack the acorns. Something to do in the evening by the fire. I compost the shells. One reason to dry the acorns is it makes cracking easier. Cut out any black spots and stripes.

Soak the whole acorn meats overnight. I do this because my blender won't grind them dry. Acorns are very hard. Also, soaking for more than 24 hrs makes it easier to remove skins, which have more tannins.

Grind the soaked whole acorns very coarse, about 1/8" pieces. I do this in a blender or cuisinart. I call this coarse mush. I put the coarse mush into a paint strainer, inside a big enamel pot. The mush needs to be coarse, or it will not stay inside the strainer. The paint strainer could also be cheesecloth in a colander, a muslin bag, or a pillowcase that you don't mind turning brown. These options would require more squeezing or pressing during the water changing process to get out all the tannins with every change of water.

Soak the mush and change the water at least once a day. Soaking removes the tannins. You can change the water twice a day or more to go faster. This part seems to take me about 5-7 days, more or less, using dried acorns. Hilla Futterman said in her acorn class that with fresh acorns it took her about 3 days. I test the mush by chewing on the largest piece in the batch, because the tannins soak out faster from the smaller pieces. When the mush longer has a bitter or astringent taste, I go to the drying step. Also, at this stage, the water should be clear.

Pouring the rinse water into a porcelain sink will dye it brown. Stainless steel doesn't dye. The rinse water can go in the garden, or to a dyer-tannins fix dye, and also tan leather. Removing all the tannins is crucial, as tannins are toxic to the liver.

When the largest pieces taste bland and are not astringent, and/or the water runs clear, they are done soaking and ready to dry. Dry the coarse mush in the oven on the pilot light. If grinding in a blender, regrind when it is not fully dry, so it is softer. If using a traditional flour grinder, the mush must fully dry to get fine flour.

I sift it, and use the finest flour in pancakes & cornbread. The stuff that is more grits consistency, I use in fritters.

Pancakes:

1/3 c wheat or buckwheat
1/3 c cornmeal
1/3 c acorn meal
pinch baking powder
salt
egg
milk or water to thin

Fritters for Two:

1/2 to 2/3 c acorn grits
1 to 2 eggs
1/3 c buttermilk
1 tsp miso paste
1/2 onion
handful chopped parsley
1 heaping tb parmesan cheese
salt & pepper

Cornbread: Cornbread recipes usually call for half cornmeal & half wheat flour. Replace wheat flour in your favorite recipe with half to all acorn flour.

This material was inspired by Hilla Futterman's acorn class and is written in memoriam. Please use this information with care, and at your own risk. No part of any wild plant should ever be eaten without positive identification.

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