

Pamphlet # 25

Aboriginal Contribution to Foods and Herbs in North America

1. Foods and Herbs

Many of the foods and herbs we use today were originally developed by Aboriginal peoples of the Americas. Three out of four of all the food crops grown worldwide were originally grown by Aboriginal peoples of the Americas.

The following is a partial list of Aboriginal foods that the world enjoys today. For further information and more foods developed by the Aboriginal peoples of the Americas, please refer to the list of sources provided.

Corn: Includes all types, including hominy. First domesticated by the peoples of Mesoamerica (Mexico/Central America), corn spread to the south and eastern parts of North America and as far north as southern Ontario.

Beans: Includes almost all kinds of beans such as pinto, lima, kidney, navy, and all green beans in the North American southwest, Mesoamerica, and South America.

Squash: Aboriginal peoples used all types of squash such as zucchini, pumpkin, acorn, butternut and spaghetti in North America, Mesoamerica and South America.

Manioc/Cassava: This root is used to make tapioca pudding and was used in Mesoamerica, South America and the Caribbean.

Tomatoes: The people made use of all types of tomatoes including red, yellow and orange ranging in size from cherry to melon size in South America and Mesoamerica. The word "tomato" comes from the Aztec word "tomatl."

Potatoes: There are 250 varieties of potatoes grown today, of which about 20 different varieties make up 75% of the world harvest. The Inca had developed 3,000 varieties of potatoes.

Cacao: The cacao bean is what cocoa and chocolate are derived from. First domesticated by the peoples of Mesoamerica Mexico and Central America.

Peppers: All types of peppers were used by the Original peoples including green, red, chilies and banana peppers. First

domesticated by the peoples of Mesoamerica.

Sunflowers: This plant was domesticated by Aboriginal peoples along the northeastern coast of North America.

Sassafras: This herb was used in teas and for flavouring root beer, mostly in North America.

Avocado: Used in Mesoamerica, South America and Caribbean.

Vanilla: Originally found in Mesoamerica.

Cashews: This nut was first used in Mesoamerica, South America and the Caribbean.

Hickory Nuts: First eaten in North American on the east coast.

Peanuts: This popular food was first used in South America, the Caribbean, and the North American southeast.

Passion Fruit: This fruit comes from South America.

Wild Rice: This popular and tasty grass

seed comes from the North American northeast.

Sweet Potatoes: This root was originally found in Mesoamerica, South America and the Caribbean.

Blueberries: A tasty fruit found in North America, Canada and the Northern USA.

Strawberries: Another tasty fruit that comes from North America, Canada and the Northern USA.

Cranberries: A Christmas and Thanksgiving necessity which originally came from North America.

Maple Syrup: A North American tree sap that came from the Northeast.

Paprika: A food flavouring that comes from Mesoamerica and South America.

Allspice: This useful spice comes from Mesoamerica, South America and the Caribbean.

Pecans: A nut that was found in the North American Southeast.

Black Walnuts: A tasty treat originally from North America.

Arrowroot: A plant that first grew in Mesoamerica, South America and the Caribbean.

2 Sources

Information compiled and edited by Karen Froman and Kali Storm

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