

What did the Cherokee Indians Eat?

Originally, before European contact, the Cherokee people lived throughout the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains. The tribal diet commonly consisted of foods that were either gathered, grown, or hunted. The three sisters – corn, beans, and squash – were grown. Wild greens, mushrooms, ramps, nuts, and berries were collected. Deer, bears, birds, native fish, squirrels, groundhogs, and rabbits were all hunted. In the pre-contact era, many meals were one-pot stews made over an open fire. After contact, the tribe also began to grow fruit like watermelons and peaches and to eat farm animals like chicken, pigs, and cows. Cherokee food traditions not only teach you how to gather, hunt, and grow, but also how to store and preserve certain foods. Prior to the introduction of metal, cooking vessels were made of clay. Food was also sometimes buried in hot coals to cook.

Fry bread is a modern tradition found in many tribes in North America, and, in Cherokee, there is a wide variety of recipes. Each person typically has their own recipe and preparation tricks. To make fry bread, sections of the dough must be pressed flat and made into 4” circles. The dough is then placed in hot oil and fried on each side until it is a golden brown. Fry bread can be eaten plain or with toppings like cheese, chili, hot sauce, hot peppers, lettuce, tomato, onion, sour cream, salsa, and more. It can also be used to create delicious sweet treats when powdered sugar, honey, apple butter, or fresh berries are added. Check out the recipe below to make your own fry bread!

For more information, visit <https://visitchokeenc.com/chokeee-food/>

Fry Bread

3 cups all-purpose flour	1 1/3 cups warm water
1 ½ tsp baking powder	vegetable oil for frying
Pinch of salt	

Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt. Add the water and knead the dough until soft. Roll the dough out on a lightly floured board until ¼” thick. Cut out 4” rounds. Heat 1-2” of oil in a saucepan. Fry the bread until puffed. Turn bread when edges are brown and remove when bread is brown on both sides. Serve in any of the ways mentioned above.