

Pimîhkân (Pemmican)

History:

Pemmican is supposedly “the ultimate survival food” (although for prolonged periods of eating *only* pemmican, you’d be missing some key vitamins) first introduced by American Indians. (The word comes from the Cree Algonkian language.) From the 1700s fur traders, to early Arctic and Antarctic explorers, pemmican was the survival food of choice, so crucial a foodstuff in the food-scarce Red River Colony in 1814, that the governor passed the (disastrous and short-lived) Pemmican Proclamation forbidding the export of pemmican from the colony, and nearly starting a war with the Métis—Natives who traveled onto the prairie, killed and butchered buffalo to convert to pemmican, and sold it to fur trading posts. It is something like an energy bar, ridiculously high in protein, that can easily last up to 50 years if packaged well. This recipe is not actually recommended for a book club but for a tiny taste or novelty, as pemmican is heavy and dense, and just one bite makes you feel like you need to go chop logs or dig a ditch.



Ingredients:

- 4 c dried, lean meat (only deer, moose, elk, caribou, bison, or beef)
- 3 c dried fruit (currants, dates, apricots, apples, chokecherries, or cranberries)
- 2 c rendered fat (only beef fat)
- 1 c unsalted nuts (optional, but recommended for taste, especially pistachios)
- 1 Tbsp of honey (optional, but recommended for taste)

Directions:

There are a million ways to make pemmican, and every survival nut hiding in his bunker has a recipe for you. This is an easy one: First, dry the meat by spreading it thinly on a cookie sheet or hanging it over the racks in your oven. Dry at 180° F overnight, or until crispy and sinewy. With a mortar and pestle, grind the dried meat into a powder. Add the dried fruit and grind accordingly, leaving some larger fruit chunks to help bind the mixture. Cut the beef fat into chunks. Heat the stove to medium, and cook the beef fat until it turns to tallow (rendered fat). Lard or bacon grease also work well for this. Stir the fat into the powdered meat and fruit mixture. Add the optional honey and nuts to improve the taste (unless you like the more fatty taste, which can be ... overwhelming). Shape the pemmican into balls or bars for easy and quick consumption. Wrap individual servings in wax paper or storage bags.

Adapted from University of Minnesota, and modified by Leah Angstman.