

FISH AS FOOD

Much of the food supply of the early Wisconsin aborigines consisted of fish. In fact, when a tribe had had a particularly poor hunting season and was unable to lay up but a meager supply of animal food for the winter, fish, which could always be obtained, were relied upon to replenish the emptied larder.

Dr. Morse, who visited the Menomini at Green Bay in 1820, related the following as to their food: "In the spring they subsist on fish and sugar; in the summer, on fish and game; in fall, on wild rice and corn, and in winter on fish and game."

Scaling Fish

To scale their fish, the aborigines used stone and native copper knives. Even mussel shells, very practicable for this purpose because of their sharp edges, were made use of by the Indians of Wisconsin for the scaling of their catch.

Nicholas Perrot, who visited the large village of the Outagamie at Green Bay, 1665-1666, found the Outagamie scaling their fish with mussel shells. (Wis. Archeol., v. 20, no. 1).

Undoubtedly sharp stone scrapers were used at times by the Indians for scaling fish. Referring to stone scrapers, Gerard Fowke asserts that they "would also serve excellently for removing scales from fish, and as they are usually abundant in the vicinity of good fishing places, they were no doubt employed for this purpose. (The Mound Builder and Later Indians, p. 667).

Indian Methods of Preparing and Serving Fish

Fish to the Wisconsin Indians were rarely taboo as food, as was the case with the Apache, Navajo and Zuni. However an exception existed among the Winnebago of Wisconsin to whom the dogfish and the eel were taboo.

When caught, fish were usually boiled, or roasted on spits, and eaten. Fish were boiled in earthen pots and these, among most tribes in Wisconsin, were made with rounded bottoms to stand upright, but nearly if not all of the tribes