

DRY MEAT

The Indians would usually travel in family units of three and would sometimes travel two to three days to their chosen hunting area. Here they would generally stay for approximately two to three weeks, sometimes up to a month. The women were responsible for setting up camp while the men scouted the area for potential game.

When the men would bring back the kill, the women cut up the entire animal. The bones were boiled for the gelatin and dried on rocks. The sinew from the backstrips and legs was used for string and ropes. The brains were removed for tanning. The horns and teeth were used for scrapers, needles and decoration. The hides were also stretched, scraped and prepared for tanning. The paunch, or fat, from the stomach, was pounded, dried and later mixed in when the meat was eaten.

The women would then hang the pieces of meat over smoldering coals on either a three or four legged structure built out of poles. The heat assisted the meat in drying more quickly and the smoke added flavor plus kept the insects and animals away from the meat while it was drying. Backstrips and tenderloins were dried and kept separate because they were more tender for elders and children to eat. It generally took two to three days for the meat to completely dry.

The type of wood used affected the flavor and texture; therefore, wood containing pitch was not used. The children were responsible for keeping the fire going. Every family member had responsibilities and everyone did them without having to be told.

A typical family unit needed at least seven deer for survival to last them throughout the winter months.