

What is a Foodway?

Foodways are the traditions, knowledge, and practices that shape how people grow, gather, prepare, preserve, share, and eat food.

In Maine, the Wabanaki lived in close relationship with the land and waters, relying on the natural resources around them throughout the seasons. Wild blueberries were an important part of Wabanaki foodways. They were gathered by hand, eaten fresh, dried for use during the winter, used in a variety of foods, and shared with family and community.

Recipes and eating food are only small parts of a foodway. Before someone can harvest, prepare, and/or eat a blueberry, they must first learn many skills, practices, and traditions. Every bite of food represents knowledge passed from one generation to the next.

What Knowledge Do You Need Before You Can Eat a Wild Blueberry?

Imagine you are living in Maine hundreds of years ago as part of a Wabanaki community. Remember, there are no grocery stores, frozen foods, canned foods, or refrigeration. You must gather, harvest, preserve, prepare, and share the foods you eat in order to survive. Before you could eat a handful of wild blueberries, what would you need to be taught?

List as many ideas as you can by thinking about the process from beginning to end.

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How does knowing how much skill and knowledge it takes to gather and prepare wild blueberries change the way you think about them? Explain your answer.