

Bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig (Wild leeks/ramps)

Maajii-Ojibwemowag (They Begin to Speak Ojibwe) – ANA Language Project
Teacher/Caregiver Supplemental Document



The Ojibwe and wild leeks/ramps

The wild leek or Bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig (pronounced buh/gwuh/ji-/zhi/gahg/a/gwon/zheeg) is also known as “Wenabozho’s onion” or “the one he pointed out for food”, and is commonly referred to as a ramp (*allium tricoccum*).

Bagwaji is understood to mean “wild,” while zhigaag refers to our strong-smelling four-legged relative, the skunk. Those who gather bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig often mention that their strong zhigaag-like smell is strongest during the time of harvest. A few

bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig related stories are known by the Ojibwe, each with several versions. One refers to a man who had a fight with his wife. She left, and he followed her footsteps, which stopped in a large march filled with bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig. This area is currently known as Chicago, Illinois. Many Ojibwe, along with others, believe the name for Chicago came from the word zhigaag because of the strong skunk-smelling plants of the once-present marches.

Bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig is found across the ceded territories. These early plants are commonly referred to as “spring ephemerals” and are the first to arrive yet last for only a short time. The whole plant can be used for medicinal or culinary purposes.



Ramps

Zhaawanong Set: Bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig Book Ojibwe Language Word List

- **Bagwaj** - In the wilderness
- **Zhigaag** - Skunk
- **Zhigaagawaanzh** - Onion
- **Mitig** - Tree
- **Mitigoog** - Trees (Plural)
- **Mitigoonsag** - Bushes
- **Asemaa** - Tobacco
- **Awegonen** - What
- **Ishpi** - High, advanced into a time
- **Zaaga'igan** - Lake
- **Miikanens** - A little trail
- **Naboob** - Soup

Harvesting Bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig

Bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig prefer rich, mesic soils in hardwood forests. It is often found in forest depressions, along streamside bluffs, or in moist, marshy, forested areas.

Before harvesting anything, asemaa is always offered, to thank

the plant or animal for sustaining the harvester.

There are various methods to harvest bagwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig. However, it is most important to harvest sustainably as these plants are very slow

growing, taking 2-3 years to mature for harvesting.

There are dangerous look-alikes so be sure you know how to correctly identify the plants you pick. If you're unsure, seek out a knowledgeable

forager or elder.

Along with various sustainable harvest methods, there are different methods for storing and preparing. However, the most flavorful is to enjoy bajwaji-zhigaagawaanzhiig soon after harvest.

Ramp Recipes



Ramp Salt:

Ingredients:

- Ramps
- Sea salt
- Pink peppercorns

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 250 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Cover a baking sheet with aluminum foil. (The dried ramps tend to stick to the surface on which they're baked).
3. Take a handful of washed ramps and ramp leaves. Pat them dry with a paper towel. Spread the ramps and leaves on the baking sheet so they are flat and not touching each other.
4. Bake until the thickest ramp on the baking sheet is completely dehydrated, about an hour. Remove from the oven and cool.
5. Put the dried ramps in a blender or food processor. Pulse until they are ground into a powder.
6. Grind sea salt and mix into the ramp powder in a 50/50 mixture.
7. Grind 1 tablespoon pink peppercorns for every ½ cup of ramp/salt mixture and add to the mixture. Store in a covered container in a cool, dry place.

Recipe found here:

<https://www.startribune.com/foraging-for-ramps-the-wild-onions-of-the-woodlands/374770911/>

Extra Resources:

Wild Leek/Vulnerability Assessment, Page 8,19:

<https://data.glifwc.org/archive.maz/Summer%202020.pdf>

For more ramp recipes, check out GLIFWC's *Mino Wiisnidaa! Let's Eat Good* cookbook:

<http://glifwc.org/publications/#Cookbook>

Ramp Compound Butter:

Ingredients:

- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- ¼ cup finely chopped ramps, leaves only
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon finely ground pepper

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, stir together butter, ramps, lemon zest, salt, and pepper until evenly mixed.
2. Place mixture in a large piece of cling film and roll into a log shape, twisting and securing the ends of the plastic.
3. Chill until firm. Slice as needed.

Note: butter will keep for 2 weeks in the refrigerator, or up to 1 year wrapped well in the freezer.

Recipe found here: <https://www.dartagnan.com/ramps-butter-recipe.html>

Quiche with Wild Onions by Cleo White – White Earth/LCO

Ingredients:

- 8 eggs, organic
- ¼ cup milk

Beat the eggs with the milk, then add:

- ¼ cup finely chopped ramps (bulb and leaves)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- A dash of pepper (to taste)
- ½ cup chopped red pepper
- ¼ cup shredded cheese
- Optional: frozen 9 inch pie crust

1. Mix all ingredients together, as listed above.
2. Pour the mixture into a frozen pie crust or directly into a pie dish prepared with cooking spray.
3. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 35 minutes.
4. Quiche is done when no liquid is left showing.
5. Top with ¼ c shredded cheese and bake until cheese is melted. Enjoy!



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