

# HEALTHY TRADITIONAL ALASKAN FOODS in **FOOD SERVICE PROGRAMS**

## Resources

### Alaska Food Code:

<https://dec.alaska.gov/commish/regulations/pdfs/18%20AAC%2031.pdf>

### Department of Fish and Game Transfer of Possession Form:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/wildliferegulations/pdfs/transfer.pdf>

### Department of Conservation Request for Variance:

<https://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/forms/food/VarianceRequest.pdf>

### Fiddlehead Fern Food Safety:

[https://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/Food/Docs/Fact\\_Fiddlehead\\_Food\\_Safety.pdf](https://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/Food/Docs/Fact_Fiddlehead_Food_Safety.pdf)

### Additional information can be found at:

[http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/food/traditional\\_foods.html](http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/food/traditional_foods.html)

<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/elders/traditionalfoods>

This project was supported in part by grant number, 90010004/03 from the U.S. ACL/Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201.



## Donating Alaskan Foods to Food Service Programs

The short answer to the question “Can we serve traditional foods in food service programs?” is “Yes!” However, there are still guidelines that must be followed in order to comply with regulations.

There has been much confusion about the ability to serve traditional Alaskan foods in food service programs. For the purpose of this guide, a food service program is defined as an institution or nonprofit program that provides meals. Examples include licensed residential child care facilities, food banks and pantries, school lunch programs, and senior meal programs. Meals served at hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities also fall within the definition of food service programs.

Foods that are prepared and served by these programs are subject to local, state, and federal guidelines. These guidelines can be very confusing. This document will lead you through the regulations that govern Alaska’s traditional foods and offer you a condensed, easily understood version of the regulations. Once you understand the regulations you will be able to serve the needs of your clients and safely provide local, healthy foods.

If you find that you still have questions after reading the document, please don’t hesitate to call the *State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Food Safety*, by phone at 1(87) SAFEFOOD.



## Community Building

Food is a way to bring communities together. Donating food to food service providers can create bonds between community members, generations, and families. Hunting and foraging for local foods is a way to engage youth and Elders and pass on valuable knowledge about the world around us.



## Meal Ideas

### Breakfast and Brunch:

- Local berries with oatmeal, yogurt, or cereal
- Omelets with local eggs and seasonal greens
- Salmon in omelets or on breakfast breads, such as bagels or English muffins
- Tundra tea, or other gathered teas

### Lunch and Dinner:

- Substitute moose or caribou in place of beef or chicken in recipes, such as moose stew or caribou spaghetti
- Fillet salmon and make a salmon lasagna or salmon with rice and greens
- Incorporate local greens into salads or main dishes
- Serve roasts with potatoes and greens

### Desserts and Snacks:

- Fresh berries
- Berry spritzer
- Fireweed jelly (with a variance or canned on site)

## Plants, Mushrooms and Berries

Plants, berries, and other foraged foods are welcomed as donations. Plants and aquatic plants should be donated in their gathered form, either fresh or frozen. This means that they shouldn't be mashed, jarred, or made into jam or jelly. Commonly donated plants include sourdock, beach greens, berries, fireweed, rose petals, and spruce tips. Berries are another healthy and abundant wild food in Alaska and sharing them with food providers is appreciated and easy to do!



Mushrooms are also allowed if identified when served with the common and usual name of the mushroom either in the menu, a placard, or notice. The statement "Wild mushrooms; not an inspected product" must also be visible to clients.

Fiddlehead ferns may be donated, but the facility must comply with fiddlehead cooking regulations, found on the DEC website.

## Food Safety

To prevent cross-contamination conduct any further preparation or processing of the traditional foods at a different time or in a different space at the food service site from the preparation or processing of other food.

Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils after processing the food, just as you would with poultry.

Label donated seafood and game meat with the name of the food and date of donation. When possible, include the name of the person who donated and share a "Thank You" during meal time.

Store donated foods separately from other food using a separate compartment, container, or shelf in the freezer or refrigerator.

## Traditional Foods Are Important

Food embodies comfort, heritage, traditions, and concepts of home. Food can feed the spirit, provide a social time, and bring communities together. Traditional foods can help people be healthier, both in body and in spirit. No matter where you are or what your living situation traditional foods can bring you home.

## Traditional Foods in Food Service Programs

According to the Farm Bill Section 4033, and the Alaska Food Code 13 AAC 31, Alaskan traditional foods are allowed to be served in food service programs.

Traditional Alaskan foods include wild game meats, fish, seafood, marine mammals, plants, and berries. There are some exceptions, which will be discussed in the next section.

If you are wondering about a specific food that is not in this document, you can contact your DEC Environmental Health Officer. Alaskan traditional foods are recognized as important for nutritional and cultural reasons and food service providers are encouraged to serve these foods. The goal of this document is to make it easier to serve traditional foods while complying with the regulations.



## Meats, Mammals, Fish and Eggs

The following wild game meats and fish are allowed. Remember that meat must be free of disease, butchered and dressed safely, and not pose a health hazard to humans.

Below are some permissible animal products. If you have any questions about additional foods, contact the DEC.

- Reindeer\Caribou
- Moose
- Whale
- Beaver
- Goat
- Muskrat
- Hare
- Sheep
- Squirrel
- Ducks
- Geese
- Seal meat
- Fish
- Raw, intact eggs



## Accepting Donated Game or Fish

Hunters must fill out a Transfer of Possession form from the Department of Fish and Game, when donating any wild meats (Resources, back cover). When accepting donated game, talk to the hunter about how the meat or fish was handled and make your best determination of food safety. Make sure that you can check off each of the following:



- ✓ Ensure fish is received whole or headed, gutted and gilled; wild game roasts or larger, such as quarters.
- ✓ The animal was not diseased.
- ✓ The food was butchered, dressed, transported, and stored to prevent contamination, undesirable microbial growth, or deterioration.

## Prohibited Foods

Some foods are not allowed because they pose a greater risk to human health, especially among older adults, pregnant women, and children. Risks include rabies, trichinosis, botulism, and paralytic shellfish poisoning. Below is a list of prohibited donated foods.



- Molluscan shellfish
- Fox, polar bear, bear meat
- Walrus meat
- Seal or whale oil
- Fermented meat (beaver tail, whale or seal flipper, maktak)
- Fermented seafood (salmon eggs, fish, fish heads)

Some preservation methods are not allowed due to the high risks mentioned above, unless from a certified food processing establishment. These include:

- Hermetically sealed low-acid food (home canned fish)
- Reduced-oxygen packaged food (home vacuum sealed)
- Smoked or dried meat or seafood

Variance applications for foods such as seal oil or canning are available online from DEC for allowances of prohibited foods or processing methods (**Resources, back cover**).



## Processing Foods

Facilities may further process food after receiving it. For example, the facility can cut a roast into stew meat; grind it into hamburger; use it immediately; or freeze it for use at a later date. Fish can be filleted or cut into smaller pieces to be used immediately or frozen at the food service facility. Canning is allowed only with an approved variance request. Meal providers can use their own kitchens and tools for processing and storing donated foods (See **Food Safety** on page 5).