

Highlights from the 2011 Wild Foods Potluck



Over 100 community members shared food that they'd caught, picked, or grew themselves at the Sitka Conservation Society's 2011 Wild Foods Potluck. Here are the stories of some of that local food.

SOUPS

Baranof Bouillabaisse

Living in the harbor has its pluses and minuses. One plus for Brendan Jones is the abundance of seafood. Brendan got the halibut for his bouillabaisse, or seafood soup, in a trade with a harbor neighbor. He and a friend caught the other seafood ingredients – greenling, lingcod, yellow eye and king salmon for the broth.

The vegetable ingredients were all local, many even coming from a small garden on the deck of Brendan's boat. They included ball turnips, pearl onions, bills blood beet leaves, Russian banana fingerling potatoes, golden bill turnips and leaves, and daikon radish and leaves.

Moose Jambalaya



When Roland Wuerth and a friend butchered the moose they shot not far from the Yukon River deep in the Alaskan interior, they came out with 330 servings of meat in the form of brats, Italian sausage and roasts.

A few servings of that sausage went into Roland's jambalaya, along with tomatoes, rice, green peppers, onions, cyan and local garlic from Roland's garden. As good as the jambalaya may have been, it had a better story. Roland traveled 130 miles up the Yukon and spent a week in the backcountry on his moose hunt.

SALADS

Pumpkin Mashed Potatoes

Dan Dunn and his family planted four pounds of seed potatoes in front of their house in the spring and yielded about 50 pounds of potatoes by early fall. Making pumpkin mashed potatoes is just one of many ways Dan has experimented with potatoes. He said he did what he does for regular mashed potatoes but also mashed up some pumpkin, regrettably grown in the Lower 48, to make a mostly local, seasonal potato dish.

Herbed Kale Salad with Venison Sausage and Nasturtium Dressing

Linda Behnken's salad won the award for most local ingredients. She mixed kale, oregano, sage and garlic from her garden, with basil grown in her house. The dressing was made with yellow and red nasturtium flowers soaked in organic white vinegar for a week. The vinegar was her only non-local ingredient.

Linda also added local low bush cranberries from a muskeg near town and venison sausage originating on south Baranof Island.



ENTREES

Smoked Black Cod Tip Pasta

Other than eating it as a dish by itself, Tachi Sopow said his favorite way to prepare smoked black cod tips is with pasta.

Although the black cod was the only local ingredient in the pasta dish, a lot of local work went into preparing it, including cutting out the delicious oily tips and smoking them. Other ingredients were the noodles, roasted peppers, onions, parmesan, olive oil and mushrooms.



Venison Backstrap with Local Apples and Garden Vegetables

Judd Kirkness won the award for the wild food potluck's best overall dish with a recipe that was not terribly complex but included an excellent mix of local ingredients.

Judd started with the tender backstrap of a deer he shot above Blue Lake. The backstrap was rolled in olive oil, pepper and local salt, and then grilled before being topped with local apples from a friend's yard. The final ingredients were an assortment of garden vegetables that had been steamed in a homemade beer, which Judd admitted had been brewed with out-of-town hops and barley.

Carrot Casserole

It was a bumper year for carrots, so Patty Harris hardly put a dent in her carrot supply when she used two pounds of garden carrots in a carrot casserole. She also used a touch of dill from her garden and eggs from her chickens. The onions, mushrooms and cheese in the casserole were not local. Patty's husband Scott said carrot casserole is a great dish for garden carrots, but carrot muffins may be the most popular in his family.

DESSERTS

Muhallabia with Sitka Rose Syrup



When Kari Sagel's rose jelly came out a little runny, she began looking for desserts that needed syrup and found a good muhallabia, or rice pudding.

To make 12 jars of rose jelly, Kari collected two big zip lock baggies of rose petals. She then soaked the petals in water until rose color and scent bled out, at which time she removed the petals and added sugar, pectin and lemon.

Kari served the rose syrup over the muhallabia, along with local huckleberries and herring eggs. She said she planned to use the leftover syrup in baklava.

Tundra Blueberry Cobbler

Blueberries from the tundra are smaller than those in rainy Southeast Alaska, but, at least among people from the arctic, they have a reputation for being considerably more flavorful. Jed DeLong made his cobbler out of berries he brought back from his last trip to Kotzebue, giving Sitkans an opportunity to decide for themselves if the smaller berries really are better. Some apple and pear got mixed in as well.

