

dish was composed of wild rice, corn, and fish boiled together.¹⁶ It is also served with maple syrup and with cranberries. It swells greatly when put into the water. A small handful is enough for the meal of a large family.¹⁷

In addition to being an important article of food for himself and his family, wild rice served the Indian of former days in another way. It attracted vast numbers of wild fowl of every sort, and thus brought to him another great food-supply. The fondness which these birds evince for wild rice is well known, and to this day in northern Wisconsin they can be found in considerable numbers only on waters where it abounds. The accounts of early travelers fairly teem with descriptions of the vast quantities of birds to be seen hovering around the *Zizania* and the ease with which they might be killed. The birds were in the finest condition after feed'ag on the rice, "inexpressibly fat and delicious." The rice not only served as a decoy, but also as a blind the Indian easily concealing himself in its thick masses and sometimes being able to kill the birds with a club.

Although gathered somewhat in the milk, wild rice is harvested mainly in September. The harvest lasts but a few days, as, when fully ripe, the seed is detached at the slightest touch. Even a strong wind for a day or two will sometimes shake all the grain into the water. The binding into sheaves above described to some extent lessens the risk of loss from this cause. It was formerly customary to gather enough to last through the winter, the amount being about five bushels for each family. Some of the more industrious women gathered as much as twenty-five bushels, using the surplus in trade. The Ojibwas of today gather about one hundred pounds for an average family.

Peltries, maple sugar, and rice were the commodities offered for sale by the Ojibwa of seventy years ago. In 1820 a bushel sack of rice was valued at two skins, the price of a large, prime beaver pelt.¹⁸ At the present day this grain may be bought at stores in some of the cities of northern Wisconsin.

¹⁶ J. W. Biddle, in Wis. Hist. Coll., vol. 1, p. 63.

¹⁷ An intelligent half-blood of the Odanah reservation writes me in relation to the nutritive qualities of rice: "Fill the stomach real full and then lay down. It keeps from hunger. Not strongly nutritious, it produces great rest and sleep to men, while women work."

¹⁸ J. D. Doty, op. cit.