

Mission Food



Many new foods from Europe were added to the Native American's diets. New foods and tools meant Native American women learned new cooking and food preparation techniques.



Without a refrigerator, drying meat and produce were important. Spanish taught the Native Americans within the mission complex the Spanish method for drying and preserving meat. Meat was cut into long strips, dipped in salt, and hung on racks for drying. This method draws out moisture that causes decay. Also, most bacteria, fungi, and other disease-causing organisms cannot survive in such a salty environment. Salted meat was often smoked as well, by exposing it to smoke from a wood fire. The practice of preserving meat with salt was so common during the mission period; that in thriving years fresh or salted meat was available at each meal.



Produce also needed to be preserved. Drying food such as fruit, corn, peas, spices, and herbs was a necessity. In order to prevent decay, the fruit, vegetables, herbs, and other produce hung out to dry by the sun, or near an open fire. Dried fruits and vegetables could be stored and saved for times of a poor harvest, or used year round within a normal meal preparation.

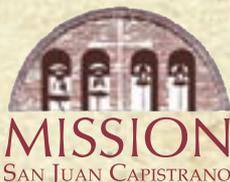


According to Padres reports, we know the types of meals and foods served at typical daily meals. In good times, three meals a day were served to the Mission residents.

Father Jose Senan from Mission Santa Buenaventura, and Father Luis Antonia Martinez of San Luis Obispo, both describe Native Americans receiving a ration of atole (a corn or barley gruel) for breakfast and dinner, as well as a ration of pozole (a thick soup of wheat, maize, peas, beans, and meat) at lunch. Depending on the season and agricultural and ranching production of that given year, Native Americans also received additional food items with the staple rations of atole and pozole, such as beef (fresh or salted), bread, cheese, milk, and fruit.



Franciscan padres, usually ate their meals in separate quarters, and often had a special cook reserved for their service. Padres; soldiers; and special Native Americans like cooks, or mission leaders, called *alcaldes*, accessed special reserved foods such as chocolate and teas, and were more likely to receive additional food items like bread and cheese.



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