

United States

Anishinaabeg Tribal Lands, Minnesota

Producers

200 gatherers and 3 processors
from the reservation
White Earth Land Recovery Project



At the table

Mannomin wild rice has a very long (approximately 1.5 cm) and narrow grain that is dark in color, almost black, it tastes richly complex with notes of forest undergrowth, and wood smoke. It is boiled in a large amount of salted water, drained and served plain or as an accompaniment to sauces. Cooks in 18 minutes.



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The **Slow Food international organization** involving more than 100,000 people from 153 countries on five continents-promotes taste education, fights for the preservation of agricultural biodiversity, organizes events and publishes books and magazines.

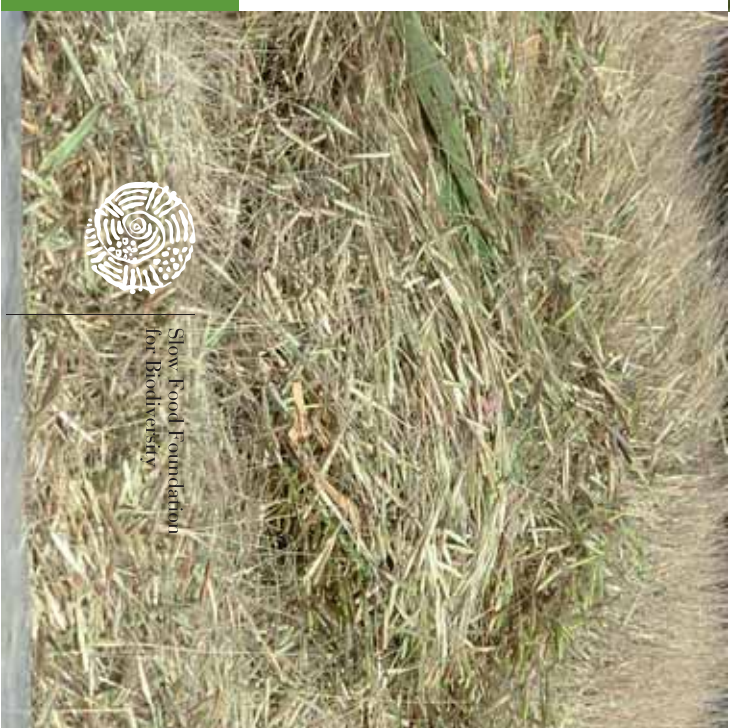
Slow Food Presidia are local projects that work to protect small-scale producers and to safeguard quality artisan products. Their objective is to guarantee a viable future for local communities by organizing producers, searching out new economic outlets and raising the profiles of tastes and regions.

The **Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity** promotes and coordinates over 300 Presidia in the world.

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**Anishinaabeg
Mannomin**



Slow Food Foundation
for Biodiversity

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The Good Grain

In the month of September, the indigenous North American Anishinaabeg people (also known as Ojibwe) begin the rice harvest. During each of the thirty days of Manoominike-Giizis ("Wild Rice Moon"), harvesters head out in canoes to harvest wild rice from the smooth surface of lakes with names like Blackbird, Big, Pigeon, and, naturally, Rice Lake. They harvest the rice in a team of two people, with the 'poler' sitting towards the front pushing the boat through the stands of rice, and the 'knocker' sitting towards the rear, hitting the rice stalks with a pole and knocking the grains into the canoe - a pair of good 'ricers' can harvest two hundred and fifty kilos on a good day.

The Anishinaabeg call wild rice Manoomin, which means 'the good grain'. The existence of wild rice in the Americas predates Minnesota's first indigenous population by at least a millennium, and given that it has never been selected for specific traits, the wild rice growing in the state today has probably changed little from that of prehistory.



The Presidium

The wild rice promoted by the presidium is harvested by generations of Anishinaabeg in the remote lakes of northern Minnesota's White Earth Reservation. Unfortunately, the existence of wild rice is threatened in three major ways: scientifically-genetic manipulation of the wild rice genome can destroy the diversity needed to sustain the crop; economically-almost 95% of the "wild" rice sold in the US today is grown in California paddies-and is distorting consumer understanding; environmentally-destruction of the natural ecosystems of the Minnesota lakes through recreational zoning of the lakes, damming, and agricultural runoff is threatening to wipe out the only place in the world where this species of wild rice actually grows wild. The presidium works with existing conservation and policy initiatives developed by the White Earth Land Recovery Project to promote consumption of traditionally harvested and prepared wild rice.



In Anishinaabeg oral history, wild rice was a gift: Nanaboozho, a cultural hero and hunter, discovered the grain when he came home one night with no game to eat. As he came towards his fire, there was a duck sitting on the edge of his kettle of boiling water. After the duck flew away, Nanaboozho, looked into the kettle and found wild rice floating on the water, but he did not know what it was. He ate his supper from the kettle, and it was the best soup he had ever tasted. Later, he followed in the direction that the duck had taken, and came to a lake full of manoomin. After that, he knew where to find food. Earlier teachings of Anishinaabeg history explain that wild rice was the reason for their migration west.

Wild rice is an aquatic grass that is quite distinct from regular cultivated rices, though both belong to the Poaceae or Grass Family. Japonica and Indica rice are part of the Oryza genus, while Manoomin's genus is Zizania-genetically, it is more similar to corn than rice. Unlike regular rice, it cannot be simply dried and eaten. The fresh grains of rice-all colors of green, tan, and brown-are husked and then parched in a wide shallow drum. The parching highlights wild rice's naturally toasted flavor.