HARVESTING CONSCIOUSLY

Since the earliest days, the Ojibwe (Anishinaabe people) have gathered and harvested a wide variety of plants throughout the seasons, carefully harvesting to ensure that these resources could be utilized in the future.

To this day, tribal elders encourage harvesters to be conscious about the amount of plants they are harvesting as some plants need more time to regenerate or to reproduce to create more plants.

Harvest responsibility to ensure you can enjoy all of your favorite plants into the future!

Strawberry Photo Credit—Purdue University

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TIPS TO LOWER RISK:

BEFORE HARVESTING

Know Your Produce. Edible plants and fungi can be hard to distinguish from inedible look-a-likes. Additionally, some plants need to be harvested or prepared in a specific way in order to make them safe to eat. Only harvest what you can 100% safely identify.

Select Safe Harvest Areas. Some studies suggest that berries picked in previous mining areas contain elevated amounts of zinc, copper, and other metals. Check with tribal or state natural resource departments to find out if your harvest site was previously mined or otherwise contaminated.

WHILE HARVESTING

Inspect as You Go. Produce with signs of animal droppings (i.e. feces, urine, etc.) should be avoided. Animal droppings are a source of bacteria and parasites which can make people sick. Additionally, discard produce with visible damaged as it can harbor bacteria and unseen molds that cannot be easily removed during washing.

Avoid Areas of Likely Contamination. Roadsides can be unsafe places to harvest produce which are subjected to run-off from the road or pesticide applications. Additionally, flood waters are high in bacteria and carry viruses as well. Avoid harvesting produce which may have come into contact with contaminated water.

Keep it Cool. Cooling your produce down during and after harvest will help to slow the growth of bacteria and help the produce remain fresh longer.

AFTER HARVESTING

Clean, Separate, and Cool. Soon after harvest, remove extra debris you may have picked up (i.e. twigs) and if appropriate, clean your harvest. Some produce will rot quicker if cleaned too far in advance of eating (i.e. berries). Keep uncleaned produce separated from cleaned produce. As always, keep produce cool.