



# EATING WITH THE SEASONS



**How do the seasons affect the way that you live today?** Are there activities, such as skiing or swimming, that you enjoy more at certain times of the year? For thousands of years the seasons have affected the ways that people live and interact with the world around them. Native Americans that lived in the Eastern Woodlands developed resourceful ways of thriving in each of the seasons that Southern New England has to offer. Imagine that you lived in Connecticut 500 years ago – without paved roads, cars, electricity, or grocery stores. Would you know how to find food and make meals? The food available to you would have been similar to what you could find if you were to take a walk in the woods today. In other words, your food resources would come from the world around you. As a result, the food you ate would depend highly upon what season it is. During the winter, rivers and lakes will freeze; there will be fewer shrubs bearing berries; and many animals will be hibernating. Six months later, in summer, plants will be in full bloom and animals will be more active, but other resources may be less available. Therefore, in order to be able to survive in the Connecticut environment, you need to know what resources are available, in which locations, and during which seasons.

Many animals awake from a deep sleep during this season and plants are starting to grow. In fact, many of the plants you see in your surroundings today are edible: plants like cattails, fiddlehead ferns, dandelions, milkweed, wild strawberries, wild onions, and leeks. Rabbits, ducks, and raccoons provide plentiful sources of food and resources for clothing and tools. Is there anything that surprises you? Perhaps one of the most important resources during spring are the fish runs: Salt water fish like salmon and shad would migrate up the freshwater rivers in order to lay their eggs. Plus, with thawing bodies of water, freshwater fish would be easier to catch. Now is the season to plant the Three Sisters – corn, beans, and squash.

## SPRING

During the hottest days of the year, your food resources will be the most bountiful. All different sorts of berries would be in bloom: cranberries, blueberries, elderberries, blackberries, and even bayberries. Various types of trees produce nuts, which will begin to fall late in the season. Even acorns are edible, if you soak them in water long enough to remove all of the bitter tannins. Connecticut is full of wild turkeys, and this would be the time of year to start hunting them. With the hotter weather and abundant resources, however, comes a new challenge. How do you preserve food without refrigeration?

## SUMMER

This is the hardest time of the year to gather from the environment, but the Native inhabitants of Connecticut knew how. Even in the middle of winter, you can still find cattail roots and certain other plants. Beginning in February or early March, this would also be the season to tap into maple trees for the sweet gift of sap needed to make maple syrup and maple sugar. While deer may be sparse during this season, in general, they can be found as they gather in specific locations. Hibernating bears are also a viable hunting target. If you planned ahead, you and your village would have cached food in underground pits lined with antibacterial grasses during plentiful times so that you could eat it throughout the winter. You could also preserve meat and fish by smoking it, or corn, by drying it out and grinding it into flour.

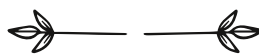
## WINTER

## AUTUMN

As the trees begin to turn vibrant colors and many lose their leaves, the nights grow longer and the weather begins to cool. Certain animals prepare to go into a deep sleep for winter, or move to warmer locations. People, also, must plan for the long winter months. This is the last time to gather certain wild plants before they die for the year, such as wild rice. Additionally, now it is time to harvest the Three Sisters, which you have been carefully tending since the Spring.

*To take full advantage of the wide variety of resources in Connecticut, you might even need to move to different areas in different seasons. During the warmer seasons, people gathered along the shore of Long Island Sound, where there is more food available and the weather is more mild. In the winter, people would break into smaller groups and travel up the waterways to inland Connecticut, where the woods and swamps would provide them with what they needed to survive.*

**Now that you have learned about what each of the seasons has to offer, do you think you could thrive in the Eastern Woodlands as Native Americans were able to do for thousands of years?**

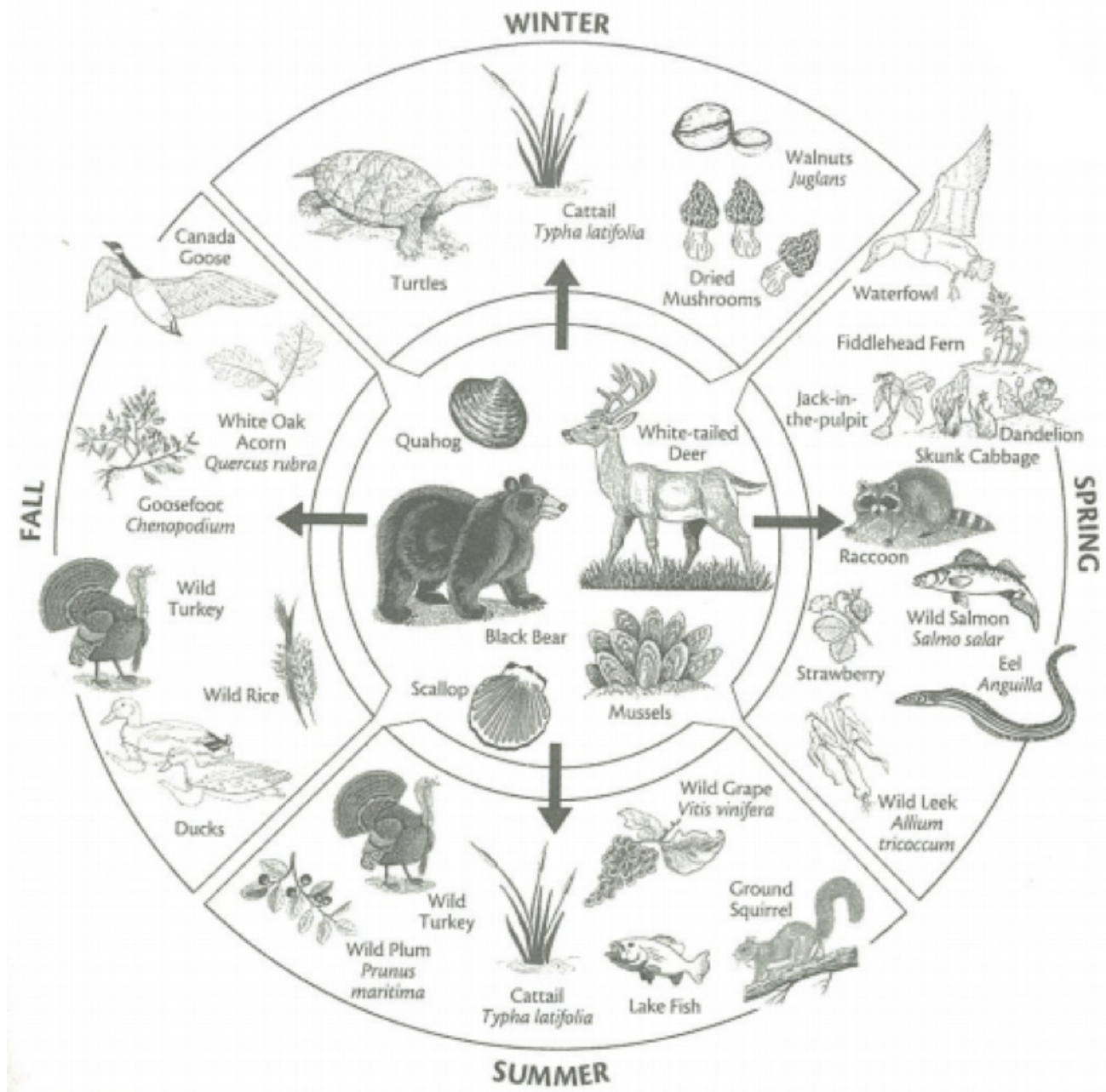


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## Study the illustration below.

What types of resources would you be able to find in each season?  
Is there anything that surprises you?



Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, science and technology: Grades 5

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

