

Kóox Wild Rice Chocolate Lily



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in cooperation with Goldbelt Heritage Foundation



Kóox ax éet yaan uwaháa.

The kernels were sometimes included when stewing berries. The rice would give the juice a thicker consistency. Now we use ingredients such as bananas.

(Information provided by Helen Watkins).



The Tlingit people are very knowledgeable about the place they live and are able to utilize the land and resources in a healthy and respectful way.

One of the plant foods enjoyed is the Chocolate Lily, also referred to as Wild Rice or in Tlingit it is called **Kóox**. In the scientific community it is referred to as *Fritillaria camschatcensis*.

The bulbs are edible and resemble rice. The segments vary in size but tend to be

similar to the size of corn. The stems grow 1-2 feet. They can be identified by the purple, almost black, flower. In May they have contrasting yellow anthers. They have a distinctive smell that some would describe as unpleasant. I've even heard that it's been called "outhouse lily".

There seems to be disagreement about the best time to harvest the kernels. Some say that it is in late fall when the petals are falling off the flowers. Some will tell you

it is in May. The time of year that it is picked will directly influence its taste. Like cooking, it is likely that they have different opinions because people and their taste preferences tend to differ.



Preparation and Cooking Ideas

We are lucky to have this plant growing naturally in our area. Some people in other regions grow it in their own gardens which can be hard work.

From the lily family, it is found in sandy or soft earth with very little shade. It grows in damp areas close to lakes and streams. You can find them in meadows and marshes, and forest floors. The plant is pulled from the base where the kernels are located. They vary in size and

are white in appearance. Sometimes they may break apart so you may have to dig for the lost pieces. Since the kernels are found in the soil, they need to be rinsed. The kernels are either steamed or boiled. If they are boiled, the water is then poured off after some time. Sometimes it is

bitter so some may soak it before further cooking. It can also be eaten raw or dried.

Like rice that is purchased at the grocery store, it is usually used with other foods. They go well with soups and stews or as a side dish.