

Indigenous Food Hubs

2026 Harvest of the Month



FEBRUARY: RABBIT

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Tribes, including the Shoshone, Sioux, Eastern tribes, and many others, relied on rabbits as a vital, widely available source of protein. Rabbits were important to many Indigenous cultures as a staple food item, a supplemental provision in a varied diet, a substitute when large game were scarce, and as emergency food. The meat could be sun-dried and stored for winter, while the skins and pelts were used to make clothing, personal items, and shelter materials, which were essential for surviving harsh winters. Beyond being a food source, the rabbit symbolizes abundance and fertility to many tribes and is known for the characteristics of speed and cleverness.

SHOSHONE LEGEND

Cottontail (the rabbit) grows angry after being mocked for his small size and decides to prove his strength by shooting down the Sun. He travels east for many days until he reaches the ocean, where the Sun rises. Climbing a tall tree, he waits and then fires an arrow, striking the Sun and causing it to fall, which sets the earth ablaze. To survive the intense heat, Cottontail hides in a deep, twisting hole until the fires die down, kicking dirt behind him to keep out the flames. However, just enough fire reached him to burn his neck, wrists, and ankles, turning those areas white or lighter in color, creating the distinctive white markings that cottontails have today.

STORIES AND CLANS

- In Cherokee stories, rabbits are trickster figures whose tales are often origin myths explaining how things came to be, such as why the rabbit looks as it does or why there is an abundance of flint in a given area.
- Some tribes use rabbits as clan animals, including the Hopi (named Tapngyam or Taf-wungwa) and the Shawnee (Pä täke e no the').

NUTRITION AND FUN FACTS

- Rabbit is extremely high in protein at 22 grams per 100-gram serving - higher than beef or chicken!
- Rabbits have the highest percentage of digestible proteins compared to other meats and the lowest amount of fat.
- Rabbit is lower in fat and cholesterol than beef, which has almost double.
- Rich in vitamin B12 (essential for red blood cell production and energy metabolism), selenium (which supports immune and thyroid function), and iron (for preventing anemia).
- Higher concentrations of phosphorus and calcium than other meats to build healthy bones.
- Only 133 calories per 100 grams/3.5 ounces, making it a high-quality protein with moderate calories, ideal for muscle building and weight management.
- Pair it with healthy fats (like olive oil, nuts, or avocado) and plenty of vegetables for a balanced meal.



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RECIPE FOR RABBIT STEW



COOK TIME

2-2.5 Hours Total



SERVINGS

4 to 6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole rabbit, cut into serving pieces (or 4-6 rabbit legs)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 carrots and 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 2 potatoes, cubed
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup flour (for coating)



DIFFICULTY:

EASY MEDIUM HARD

DIRECTIONS

1. Coat rabbit pieces lightly in flour seasoned with salt and pepper.
2. Heat olive oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat.
3. Brown rabbit pieces on all sides (about 3 minutes per side). Remove and set aside.
4. In the same pot, add onion, carrots, and celery. Cook for 5 minutes until softened.
5. Add garlic and cook for 1 more minute.
6. Return rabbit to the pot and add broth, potatoes, rosemary, and thyme.
7. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for 1.5 to 2 hours until rabbit is very tender.
8. Season with additional salt and pepper to taste.
9. Serve hot with crusty bread!

NOTES

- Because it's low in fat, rabbit is best cooked slowly with moist heat (like braising or stewing) to keep it tender and juicy.
- If using a whole rabbit, ask your butcher to cut it into serving pieces, or use rabbit legs for convenience.



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