

**A French manuscript of the eighteenth century gives the best early account of
Choctaw food preparation.**

Quote as appears in the Bureau of American Ethnology:

They have by way of furniture only an earthen pot in which to cook their food, some earthen pans for the same purpose, and some fanners or sieves and hampers for the preparation of their corn, which is their regular nourishment. They pound it in a wooden crusher or mortar, which they make out of the trunk of a tree, hollowed by means of burning embers. The pestle belonging to it is sometimes ten feet long and as small round as the arm. The upper end is an unshaped mass which serves to weight it down and to give force to this pestle in falling back so that the corn may be crushed more easily. After it is thus crushed they sift it in order to separate the finer part. They boil the coarser in a great skin which holds about three or four buckets of water, and mix it sometimes with pumpkins, or beans, or bean leaves. When this stew is almost done they throw into it the finest of the corn which they had reserved for thickening, and by way of seasoning they have a pot hung aloft in which are the ashes of corn silk, bean pods, or finally oak ashes, and having thrown water upon this they take the lye collected in a vessel underneath, and with it season their stew, which is called "*sagamite*". This serves as their principal food, and as well that of the French in the colony who have not the means of living otherwise.

They sometimes make bread without lye, but rarely, because that consumes too much corn, and it is difficult to make, since they reduce it to flour only with the strength of their arms; after which it is kneaded, or they boil it in water, or wrap it in leaves and cook it in the ashes, or finally, having flattened the paste to the thickness of two crowns (*ecus*), and the diameter of the two hands, they cook it on a piece of a pot on the embers. They also eat it with acorns. Having reduced the acorns to flour they put them in a cane sleeve placed near the bank of a stream, and from time to time throw water upon them. By means of this lye they cause it to lose its bitterness, after which they put the paste around a piece of wood which they cook in the fire. When they have meat they boil it in water, without washing it, however dirty it is, saying that (washing) would make it lose its flavor. When it is cooked they sometimes put some of the acorn flour into the broth. They also cook un-pounded corn with their meat, and when it is dry they reduce it to bits by pounding. This they boil along with the corn. It has no taste and one must be a savage to eat it.

While the corn is green is the time when they hold the most feasts and they prepare it in different ways. First they roast it in the fire and eat it so; many Frenchmen call it thus. When it is very tender they pound it and make porridge of it, but the [dish] most esteemed among them is the cold meal. It is corn, considerably mature, which they boil, then roast in order to dry it, and then pound; and this flour has the same effect in cold water as wheat flour put into hot water over the fire and has a fairly agreeable taste; the French eat it with milk. They also have a species of corn which is smaller than the other and comes to maturity in three months that they dry and then without pounding it, boil it with meat. This "little corn." boiled with a turkey or some pieces of fat meat, is a favorite dish with them.