



Manoomin (Wild Rice)

Chippewa Traditional Food Regulatory System Project

Manoomin and the Ojibwe People

Manoomin, the Ojibwe word for wild rice, directly translates into “the good berry.” This word reflects the importance of this healthy staple food to the Ojibwe diet. An aquatic grass rich in protein and low in fat, Manoomin has been an important part of feasts and ceremonies since the Ojibwe arrived to the Great Lakes from the East Coast. Manoomin was a key trade good of the Ojibwe valued by both other Native peoples and early European explorers.

Manoomin is also important to many lake and stream ecologies as a valuable food and source of cover for waterfowl. Unfortunately, environmental changes caused by European settlement have destroyed many historic wild rice beds. Since 1984, however, Ojibwe tribes, GLIFWC and other natural resource interest groups have worked to restore historic wild rice beds.

The Purpose of the Model Food Code

The Model Food Code aims to provide a general regulatory framework under which the 11 GLIFWC member tribes can develop food regulatory systems consistent with food science and traditional Ojibwe knowledge. The integration of Model Food Code chapters into existing tribal community food structures will enable tribal members to safely engage in commercial activities based around traditional hunting, fishing and gathering practices (Sec. 1.01).

Model Food Code provisions apply to treaty-harvested food products intended for sale by vendors to tribal members, organizations and institutions for which a majority of the consumers served are tribal members, and a general consumer base which includes non-tribal members and retail institutions (Sec. 2.01). The Model Food Code does not apply to informal commercial sales within reservation boundaries, home use of treaty-harvested food products, community feasts or the sale of whole deer and elk carcasses pursuant to tribes’ applicable off-reservation conservation codes (Sec. 1.02).

Manoomin in the Model Food Code

The Model Food Code does not restrict traditional Ojibwe methods of harvesting and processing Manoomin. Harvesting and processing wild rice can occur outdoors or in a semi-enclosed space such as a garage. The model food provisions on manoomin are intended to establish a framework under which tribal members can sell their wild rice to a wider customer base.

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Chapter 2 [Definitions]:

- (Sec. 2.01) - Manoomin, meaning the ripened seeds of manominagaawanzh (northern wild rice or *Zizania palustris*), is classified as a low-risk food. This signifies that it does not require time and temperature control to remain safe for human consumption, and has not been shown to support the growth of any foodborne pathogens.

Chapter 3 [General Provisions]:

- (Sec. 3.02) - Manoomin may only be labeled “natural” or “hand-harvested” if the contents of the package consist entirely of hand-harvested wild rice and contains no mechanically-harvested wild rice or wild rice grown with the use of chemical fertilizers or herbicides.
- (Sec. 3.02) - Manoomin is exempt from labeling requirements related to home use facilities.
- (Sec. 3.12) - Vendors may sell manoomin to any individuals without a retail food establishment license.

Chapter 8 [Low-Risk Foods]:

- (Sec. 8.01) - No annual inspection is required for facilities used to prepare and process manoomin.
- (Sec. 8.03) - Processing must be done in a manner that is consistent with the cultural traditions of your community, which may include the use of machines for parching, threshing and separating hulls from the finished product.
- (Sec. 8.03) - The food contact surfaces of processing equipment that are not stainless steel or comprised of food grade materials may qualify for a variance, provided that the food contact surfaces are nontoxic.
- (Sec. 8.03) - Prior to packaging manoomin for donation or sale, the manoomin must be examined for hard, inedible materials (i.e. pebbles, mud or metal shavings) greater than seven millimeters in length, with reasonable efforts made to remove all inedible materials.

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