



YAC Activity Template

Branch Name: Norwich

Leader Name: Sophie Cabot

Brief Activity Description: Hawthorn Leather Making/ Mesolithic Sweets

Materials Needed:

A large quantity of haws, washed and wet (about 2kg). They should be plump fresh ones, not dried up from later in the autumn because they won't work.

Several big bowls, clean small washing up bowls are ideal.

A big tables, covered with plastic sheet

A shallow non-stick container with sides, like a baking tin or Tupperware.

Step by step guide to the activity:

- Taken from the Ray Mears programme about wild food in the Mesolithic. You could show the video alongside the activity to make it into a whole session.
- Discuss how wild foods are seasonal and hard to store- especially fruit. But that they are important to hunter-gatherers as they are high in calories and vitamins
- Try to lead the discussion to conclude that pottery is heavy and unsuitable for storage and carrying in hunter-gatherer groups. So you need to make the fresh fruit into something light, dry, and safe from mould and rotting. Remind them that they can't use sugar.
- Haws have a remarkable ability to 'gel' without sugar, so they can be used to make 'Mesolithic sweets'
- Divide the washed wet fruit into bowls that two or three YACs can stand around- put a reasonable bulk in each bowl
- Get the YACs to squidge the fruit in the bowl with their hands until it is pulpy and runny. If the fruit is very dry you may need to add some water- but not too much.
- Then ask to YACs to squeeze out the pips and tough bits in their hands, throwing this away, leaving an orange pulpy liquid
- Pour the liquid into a shallow container and put it in a warm breeze to set (this takes about half an hour, so might be a good time to watch the video)
- When the 'gel' is set you can turn it out, and cut it into slices, then lay them out to dry more
- You can finish the session by eating some of the commercial fruit leather like FruitStix, to show how it turns out.
- At the next meeting you can try to eat the Mesolithic sweets you have made!

Safety Points:

- Cover any cuts and grazes with plasters and then gloves- the pulp is quite acidic and can sting
- Check for allergies- haws probably wont be listed but other citrus fruits may indicate that the child should be careful as haws have high levels of vitamin C
- Follow YAC food guidelines