

## **Igunaq-Aged meat**

Igunaq is fermented ( aged ) walrus or seal meat that has been cached away for future use. Meat is usually cached beneath stones or pebbles. Aged walrus meat is extremely high in protein, iron and vitamins. Igunaq has been traditional medicine to keep the digestive system clean, as it flushes away anything in its way. It is also great eating for those who have acquired the taste and can go beyond the smell.

Too fermented, igunaq can be poisonous and can kill people. People have died from eating over- aged meat from walrus and polar bear. These two mammals are very rich in vitamins. The fat is often light green colored when the meat is aged properly. The fat will be darker green if the meat is over-aged or even brownish. Among Inuit it is a delicacy usually eaten with apples. To prepare the meat for eating people find that washing in cold water is better than washing with hot water. Cold water takes away the smell more. Igloolik and Hall Beach are known to have the best igunaq in Baffin Island. These two communities are blessed with walrus and proper gravel. Meat ages better when it is fermented in loose gravel. It takes time to make good igunaq. One has to store away the meat at the right season when it is not too hot or too cold. Temperature plays a big role.

Cached meat is usually saved for the winter for people to eat but polar bears are known to steal the cache before people can claim them. Regardless the weight of the stones for caching, the polar bear will easily get at it. Polar bears are extremely strong animals. Common phrase...“ I wonder how many polar bears I have fed to date?”  
Meaning...Hoping that the cache is not eaten by polar bears yet.

As noted igunaq is good for the digestive system as it cleans it completely of any foreign objects such as viruses and sickness a person may have. A person may experience a natural “high” if they have not eaten aged meat for a while. Men who grew up with igunaq are usually more physically muscular than those who have not. Igloolik, Hall Beach and Cape Dorset have muscular looking men compared to other communities on Baffin Island. It is believed that igunaq contributes to the physical appearance of the people who eat it.

Igunaq is such a delicacy that people that have no access to it will fly it in from communities that do have good igunaq. Igunaq is often brought in at special occasions such as Christmas for community feasts. Some communities look forward to Inuit organizations having meetings in their communities...igunaq is surely to be part of the feast. Igunaq when on sale, will sell better than fresh meat. Interestingly due to its odor some airlines in the north will not carry igunaq. People often have to disguise it to get the aged meat on a plane to take them home. It is said that if you can get beyond the smell, you'll enjoy the food as it is very nutritious and gives you energy and warmth....and you will be physically ready for your next outing. On a final note a full stomach will also make you concentrate better. Try it! It's a true Northern experience!

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