

Eating Together

Background information...

Inuit have gone through hunger, hard times and even starvation in the past. Inuit have survived due to “Inuqatigiittiarniq”, the concept of respecting others, relationships and caring for people and “Pijitsirniq”, the concept of serving and providing for family and/or community. GN guiding principles.

Like everywhere in the world, eating together is extremely important in the Inuit culture. A person does not like to eat alone. A meal is so much better when you share. It is common knowledge that food gets people together. Besides that, it's fun and great to see other relatives when they come over for dinner. Food keeps families together. Hungry relatives may come in to eat only, but in the process they are seeing and being with each other. Spending time with relatives builds better relationships.

Inuit believe that food does not belong to anyone. Animals do not belong to any individual, they belong to everyone. Inuit do not believe in caging animals as they are born to roam.

Unlike on a farm or in a store, people have to hunt and harvest wildlife from the land. People often choose the animal they wish to get. Some animals may be mating, bearing young, or the season may be a wrong time for certain animals. People have to be careful. Some people may hunt large or mature animals but they are often not so good for eating. Younger animals are more tender and easier to digest. When Inuit hunt, they make sure that they get something edible or they will not hunt or shoot them at all. Some animals may be out of season but should be alright for eating later on in the season. What may be “Bull Tasting” could be edible as the season progresses. Bull tasting animals are not ideal for eating as the meat tastes awful, especially when they are mating. People are very careful not to waste animals unnecessarily so there are animals to harvest in the future. People do not kill animals for fun. People hunt for food and clothing only. Children are brought up knowing not to waste animals. This is passed on from generation to generation. Inuit are great environmentalists and great conservationists regarding wildlife. Inuit have done this for thousands of years. It continues today.

Inuit often eat raw meat. When they do, they use one hand to hold the meat and the other hand to cut the meat, using a knife or an ulu. Some people may find eating with their hands disgusting but Inuit are unique and will continue to do so. Many people around the world eat with their hands. Knives and forks came around much later than the hands!

In the North, like anywhere else, people invite others for meals. Some people in the North are not financially able to keep up with high inflation. They may rely on country food as it is cheaper and more nutritious than store bought food, to supplement their daily nutrition. People are known to give their last bit of food to others who are less fortunate than they are. When people drop by, they are most welcome to join in a meal even if the food is limited. People know that food will come around in abundance when it is possible. People do not starve like they used to, everybody helps. Nobody starves in the Arctic anymore! Thank GOD!

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