

ECONOMICS It takes about two hours to leisurely pick, clean, dry, store, and grind five gallons of whole pods into one gallon (or five lbs) of mesquite flour. You can sell flour for \$10 to \$15 per pound, assuming you sell directly to customers. Depending on how fast you work, \$20 to \$30/hour for the combined tasks of picking, drying, storing, milling, and packaging, especially if you do it all within or near your neighborhood!



ATTEND the annual Desert Harvesters Mesquite Milling and Pancake Breakfast Fiesta at the Dunbar/Spring Community Garden (University Blvd & 11th Ave) in Tucson. At this event, thousands of mesquite/whole-wheat pancakes made with all organic, local ingredients are served topped with prickly-pear syrup, backyard honey, mesquite syrup, agave nectar, home-made jams, and sometimes saguaro fruit syrup. Listen to live music and purchase locally-harvested native foods!

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DESERT HARVESTERS is a volunteer-run, grassroots effort in Tucson, AZ. We strive to promote, celebrate, and enhance, local food security and production by encouraging the planting of indigenous, food-bearing shade trees in water-harvesting earthworks, and then educating the public on how to harvest and process the bounty.

For more information about harvesting wild, cultivated, and native foods from the Sonoran Desert visit: www.DesertHarvesters.org.

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THE DESERT CAN FEED YOU



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www.DesertHarvesters.org
Now go eat some desert.

EAT MESQUITE!

FREE

ABUNDANT

NATIVE



MESQUITE

There are three species of mesquite native to the sonoran desert: Velvet Mesquite (*Prosopis Velutina*), Screwbean Mesquite (*Prosopis pubescens*), and Honey Mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*). All have pods that are edible. The Velvet Mesquite is the most common native mesquite tree in the Tucson/Phoenix area. It is the true, local native mesquite of Southern Arizona and the one we recommend most for urban landscaping. It is drought tolerant, provides great wildlife habitat and can grow up to 30 feet tall. Although every tree tastes different, the velvet mesquite pods are often plentiful and sweet.

WHEN TO HARVEST

Mesquite pods ripen in the summer. The Tucson season typically begins in late June and stretches into late September (and even later in cooler areas). Native trees are adapted to our two rainy seasons (winter and summer), and typically go through two flowering phases, one in the spring (April/May) and the other after the monsoon (August). Both may result in pods. Ripe pods range in color from yellowish tan to reddish or purple (not green), and are dry and brittle. They come off the tree easily.

WHERE TO HARVEST

Harvesting pods in the city is safe and convenient if you can find an area that hasn't been cleared of all its vegetation or contaminated by pollutants. You can find quality pods in washes, small drainages, city parks, backyards, and along low-traffic

neighborhood streets. Often, city trees are the most abundant producers because they receive supplemental water or runoff from nearby rooftops, patios, and streets.

HOW TO HARVEST

Pick ripe pods from the tree. Taste one first to judge its sweetness. Flavor varies from tree to tree. The sweeter the better! Pull gently, and the pods should come right off. If you have to pull hard, they're not ready yet! Pick only clean, good-tasting, and nice-looking pods.

WHERE **NOT** TO HARVEST

Do not harvest from areas that are polluted or contaminated, such as the ground (where animal poop and mold can be a problem); highway corridors; areas where pesticides have been sprayed; near telephone poles (which are treated with toxic wood preservatives); areas with polluted runoff (auto oils and fluid and/or pesticides). Do not gather any pods that have black mold! It can be toxic.

CLEAN

Rinse pods by dunking them in a pail of water, swishing them around and then drying them. To dry, lay them out on a cloth, metal roofing, or the hood of your car in the sun for two to three days. When dry, they should snap easily in two when you bend them.

STORE

Store dry pods in clean garbage cans, buckets, or paper or cloth bags. Keep in a dry, rodent-free place until milling day.

NOTE: Bruchid beetles may hatch out of the pods during storage (making small holes in pods). They are harmless! Let the bruchid beetles escape, and most will leave on their own accord. To avoid beetles, store pods in paper bags and let them "sunbathe" regularly. Or freeze them. (Be sure to dry them out until they snap when bent in two before milling.)

MILLING

Take your mesquite pods to any Desert Harvesters event in the fall. Staff operate a Meadows Mills #5 hammermill, which grinds five gallons of pods into one gallon of flour in about ten minutes. Be sure the pods you bring for milling are clean and free of gravel, dirt, or any other debris that could damage the mill or contaminate the flour. Only clean pods will be ground! For up-to-date milling fees, visit www.DesertHarvesters.org.

