

FREQUENTLY ASKED MESQUESTIONS:

How to identify, plant, harvest, store and use native mesquite pods for food, beverages and MORE



What is the best way to identify native mesquite trees with edible pods?

look at/compare bark, leaves, flowers, pods, tree size and form, thorns, etc; read, research, visit native plant nurseries etc to expand your knowledge; compare urban (pruned) and wild specimens and note differences

What is the difference between native and non-native mesquite species?

native mesquite trees evolved with the climate so are resilient to heat, drought and thrive with two rainy seasons. non-native mesquite species, usually from south america, are used in landscaping because they tend to grow faster than native species; however, the root systems of these non-native trees are not as deep as native species, so in windy, wet monsoon season conditions, or dry-hot-drought conditions, non-native trees are prone to uproot/falling and other problems more than native trees. non-native trees can also hybridize with native species, which may affect native tree pod flavor, growth traits, etc. non-native mesquite pods often have undesirable flavor characteristics like bitterness and chalkiness, although sometimes non-native pods may be sweet or have other desirable flavors. always taste-test before harvesting.

When are best times to plant native mesquite seeds, small trees, and how?

preceding or during summer rains, plant (scarified) seeds or healthy young trees (1-5 gallon pots) in or around deep, rock-lined, mulch-filled rainwater-harvesting basins and other earthworks. in extreme heat or drought, make sure seedlings and newly-planted trees get supplemental waterings

What pollinators rely on mesquite pollen and nectar?

native honey bees, moths, butterflies, flies.

What things are important to select for?

native species: velvet, screwbean, honey/western honey

pod flavor: taste-test for sweetness or other desirable flavors before harvesting

ethical harvests: take only a fraction of pods offered (5-10%), have reverence for sonoran desert food plants, honor indigenous cultures whose food traditions inspire and guide us, plant native food “forests” in home, neighborhood, and community spaces, create reciprocal relationships

abundance: allow animals to eat their fill preceding your harvest, leave some pods for seeds to germinate with rains, skip harvests during low-yield years, plant future food forests

food safety: harvest before or between summer rains in low-risk conditions, harvest off trees when fully ripe, not off ground, store properly

nutrition, health benefits: pods and flour are gluten-free, high in calcium and magnesium, soluble and non-soluble fiber, low-glycemic natural sugars, ground up seeds add protein, vibrant local economy

What is the best way to store mesquite pods?

in food-grade containers, screened to allow air circulation, secure and placed in a location to prevent pests from entering containers, moisture-free conditions

How can I use whole pods?

toast whole pods in solar or low oven to enhance flavor; add to coffee beans and grind for mesqcafe*, simmer in water to make a rich broth base for soup, beverages, sauces; simmer and reduce to syrup or molasses

What is the best way to test mesquite flour for aflatoxin?

see current Desert Harvesters [Resources](#) and other pages

Are there tips on using mesquite flour in baking and other recipes? [LINKTOEMC2](#)

Mesquite flour is gluten-free, so must be mixed with gluten flours or substitutes that add stickiness and cohesion to batters or doughs

How do I make mesquite syrup?

simmer whole pods in water until they begin to break down, use a potato masher or hands to further break up pods, then strain out pods and continue to reduce liquid by slowly simmering until liquid thickens to a syrup or molasses consistency. Also refer to dozens of recipes in [Eat Mesquite and More](#) cookbook

How much flour does ~5 gallons of whole pods grind into?

around 5 gallons of loosely packed whole mesquite pods yield about 3 gallons of flour

What is chaff from pod milling and what can it be used for? [LINKTOVISIAL](#)

use for brewing beer; simmer in water to make a broth base for sauces, soups, and beverages; feed to chickens; use in mulch mix; add to compost toilet cover material; revegetate denuded areas by distributing seeds during summer monsoons

Can mesquite trees be tapped for syrup?

not to our knowledge- let us know if you try!

What is mesquite sap used for?

the sticky gum that exudes from bark damage is used medicinally, as chewing gum and as a glue/adhesive

Is any part of mesquite medicinal?

yes. The bark from new growth branches can be brewed into a tea; sap is a helpful eye problem remedy; honey may help those with mesquite allergies; the pods are gluten-free, contain natural low-glycemic sugars which may benefit those with diabetic conditions

Are mesquite flowers edible?

yes

What sonoran desert animals are associated with native mesquite trees?

birds, reptiles, mammals; also insects, fungi and other microorganisms

How do I toast mesquite pods?

use a solar oven or regular oven on low heat to toast pods, stir or shake pan during toasting to redistribute pods to toast evenly. crack open oven door slightly to allow moisture to escape, and so you can smell the pods toasting and prevent them from burning due to high sugar content

How do I use mesquite wood and pods to flavor foods?

enhance flavors of grilled foods by adding mesquite pods or wood to fire/coals; marinate foods in mesquite syrup-based sauces/marinades before cooking; use a mesquite flour-based rub on foods before grilling or baking; use mesquite wood chips and pods in a smoker to flavor salts, herbs, foods

Are mesquite sprouts edible?

other bean tree sprouts like ironwood and palo verde are edible, so its likely mesquite sprouts are too. however, we don't have as much direct experience with mesquite as the other bean tree sprouts. mesquite seeds are encased in a tough endocarp covering which the pulpy pod surrounds (diagram). seeds encased by hard endocarp are often left by animals and even separated from flour by the hammermill due to this. seeds are smaller than ironwood and palo verde too, so they are more labor-intensive to collect, remove from endocarp and sprout. if seeds from fallen pods naturally sprout under trees during summer monsoon rains, and ground is contaminant-free, sprouts may be carefully harvested, thoroughly washed, and used fresh or cooked. see cookbook for other sprout recipes

See Additional Resources [HERE](#) and have a happy, safe and delicious harvest!

