

## Chumash Food Summary

### **Hunters & Gatherers**

The Chumash did not cultivate or raise any of their food. A major part of their diet was shellfish and other sea life. These Indians were also good hunters who tracked deer and other wild game. All of the villagers collected acorns and berries which grew in the region.

### **The Mighty Acorn**

Speaking of acorns, the mighty acorn was the main food source for these people. The process of turning acorns into meal starts by going out into the oak groves in the fall and harvesting the acorns. Turning the acorns into meal isn't easy. Once the Chumash find a sufficient amount of acorns, they crack them one at a time to check for worms using a hammer stone. This same tool is used to grind the acorns once they have been removed from their shell. Then, when it is fine enough, they sift it through a basket and remove any unrefined pieces. They then lay leaves down on hot sand and spread the acorn meal all over the leaves. Boiled water is then poured on top of the acorn meal. They do this to get rid of the tannic acid which can cause stomach problems. A bitter taste to the acorn meal indicates that there is still some tannic acid left, and that it must be removed. The Chumash allow the meal to dry in the sun for a while and the process ends by placing the acorn meal into tightly woven baskets and storing it in huts for the winter.

### **Special Treats**

We might value candy or ice-cream as a special treat, but the Chumash version of a tasty treat was quite different. A whale stranded on the beach was an occasion for feasting. Remember, when you're living off the land and what it provides, a beached whale is like a giant free buffet.