

Walnut and Watercress Pesto

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ½ tsp. apple cider vinegar
- ¼ c. olive oil
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- ½ c. of watercress (or substitute parsley or cilantro)
- ½ c. cooked pinto or similar beans
- ½ c. roasted black walnuts
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 2 tbsp. water

I look forward to experimenting with long-established recipes with substitutions of some of the ingredients. Pesto is essentially a ground mixture of herbal greens, olive oil, some hard cheese, and nuts. Here is an Indigenous version of this recipe that uses black walnuts, beans, and watercress. The vinegar can be omitted if desired, but it does add a tanginess to the recipe. Be sure to toast the walnuts before incorporating into the mix in order to bring out more of the unique flavors. Also, if you wildcraft the watercress, be sure to thoroughly rinse the spicy greens in order to eliminate possible giardia contamination that may have been present in the water where the plant was growing.

Blend all the ingredients exept the water in a food processor until smooth. Add water in small amounts until the desired consitency for the pesto is achieved. Serve over pasta, wild rice, or as a dip.

Makes approximately 1 cup.



Black Walnut

BLACK WALNUT, ARIZONA WALNUT, *NOGAL* *JUGLANS* SP., *J. NIGRA*, *J. MAJOR*

PLANT FAMILY: *Juglandaceae*
PARTS USED: *Nuts, wood, leaves, bark*
SEASON: *Spring to fall*

Whenever I think of walnut trees, my mind immediately makes a temporal-dimensional journey to when I was a little boy. My family was having a gathering in a sunlit corner of a wide canyon area. At one edge of the area ran a stream that I and my brother and cousins were drawn to. At the other side of the area, next to a canyon wall, stood a huge black walnut tree. Many of my fam-ily members escaped the sun under the tree and we set up our tables and food there. I recall one of



*Black walnuts (*Juglans nigra*) are coated in a yellow-green husk.*

my aunts pointing out the large ripe walnuts and encouraging us boys to climb the thick limbs of the tree in order to collect some of the nuts. Later, we enjoyed each other's company while cracking open and eating the sweet nut meats. It is not only my family who think so highly of walnut trees; American Indians across the continent value walnut trees for the durable and beautiful wood they offer as well as for medicinal and utilitarian uses. We also just like having picnics in their shade.

The Apache of the American Southwest valued the black walnut tree so much that they named a clan after it. The White Mountain Apache, whose territory includes the region of east-central Arizona and into western New Mexico, have a clan named *Chilimeyadnaye*, walnut. The Pinal Coyotero Apaches also named a clan, *Chisnedinadinave*, after the tree. Black walnut trees also play a role in Apache cultural narrative. They have a story about how Coyote used a walnut tree to trick a group of soldiers. One day, Coyote was resting in the shade of a black walnut tree. He had just stolen a horse from a man. The saddlebags on the horse were filled with money. Coyote heard the soldiers chasing after him and devised an idea. He placed a few coins in the branches of the tree. When the soldiers arrived to arrest him, Coyote convinced the soldiers to wait and hear him out. He told them that if they let him go that he would tell them how to make a lot of money. The soldiers did not believe Coyote until he told them to shake the branches of the walnut tree. When they did this, the coins that Coyote had hidden in the tree fell down. Coyote then suggested that if the soldiers were to give him their pack mules as well as the packs on the mules that he would trade them the "money-growing" tree. The soldiers agreed, and Coyote made off with the pack mules while the soldiers were stuck with a plain old walnut tree.

IDENTIFICATION

Black walnut, *Juglans nigra*, is a medium-sized deciduous tree that can grow up to ninety feet tall. The central trunks of black walnut can be as wide as three feet in diameter. In some cases, black walnut can grow up to one hundred and fifty feet with eight-foot-diameter trunks. The branches are normally widely spread, forming a large crown. The thick brown and gray-black bark is deeply furrowed often in a diamond pattern. Black walnut leaves grow between two and three feet long. They are pinnate with up to twenty leaflets. The leaflets are normally rounded at the base, with pointed tips. The leaves are dark green in color and hairy below. Between May and

June the elongated panicle-like flowers appear. The flowers contain between seventeen and fifty stamens. The fruits are spherical, and often appear in groups of two or three. Most parts of black walnut trees emit a pungent and spicy odor.

Arizona walnut, *J. major*, is similar to black walnut. The main difference is that the Arizona walnut tree grows up to fifty feet tall with a trunk diameter of about two feet and sometimes up to four feet. The branches are also more widely spaced than black walnut. In additon, Arizona walnut sometimes grows as a shrub. The bark is also furrowed, but is not as thick as black walnut. The new growth of Arizona walnut is reddish-brown. The pinnate leaves of Arizona walnut grow up to about one foot. The are serrated at the edges and overt to lanceolate in shape.



*The Arizona walnut (*Juglans major*) has slightly smaller nuts than the black walnut; it occurs in Texas, Oklahoma, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, and Mexico as far south as Guerrero.*

CULINARY AND MEDICINAL USE

Walnut trees are used for more than tricking soldiers. In the Southwest the Apache, Yavapai, and other tribes collect and store the nuts of Arizona walnut, *Juglans major*, for winter food. The nut meats are often mixed with mesquite flour and made into a sauce that other foods are cooked in. The Yavapai also mix the pounded nut meats with the sweet syrup of mezcal agave and use it as a nutritious beverage. The bark of Arizona walnut can be made into an infusion and taken to treat rheumatism and arthritis as well as a wash for aches and pains. The nuts of black walnut, *J. nigra*, is eaten by many eastern tribes. The Iroquois, for example, boil the nut meats and use the resulting brew as a refreshing beverage. The nut meats of black walnut are also an important ingredient in corn soups and several other traditional native dishes. In order to bring the complex flavors of a black walnut to the surface of a dish, the meats are often roasted before being added to recipes.

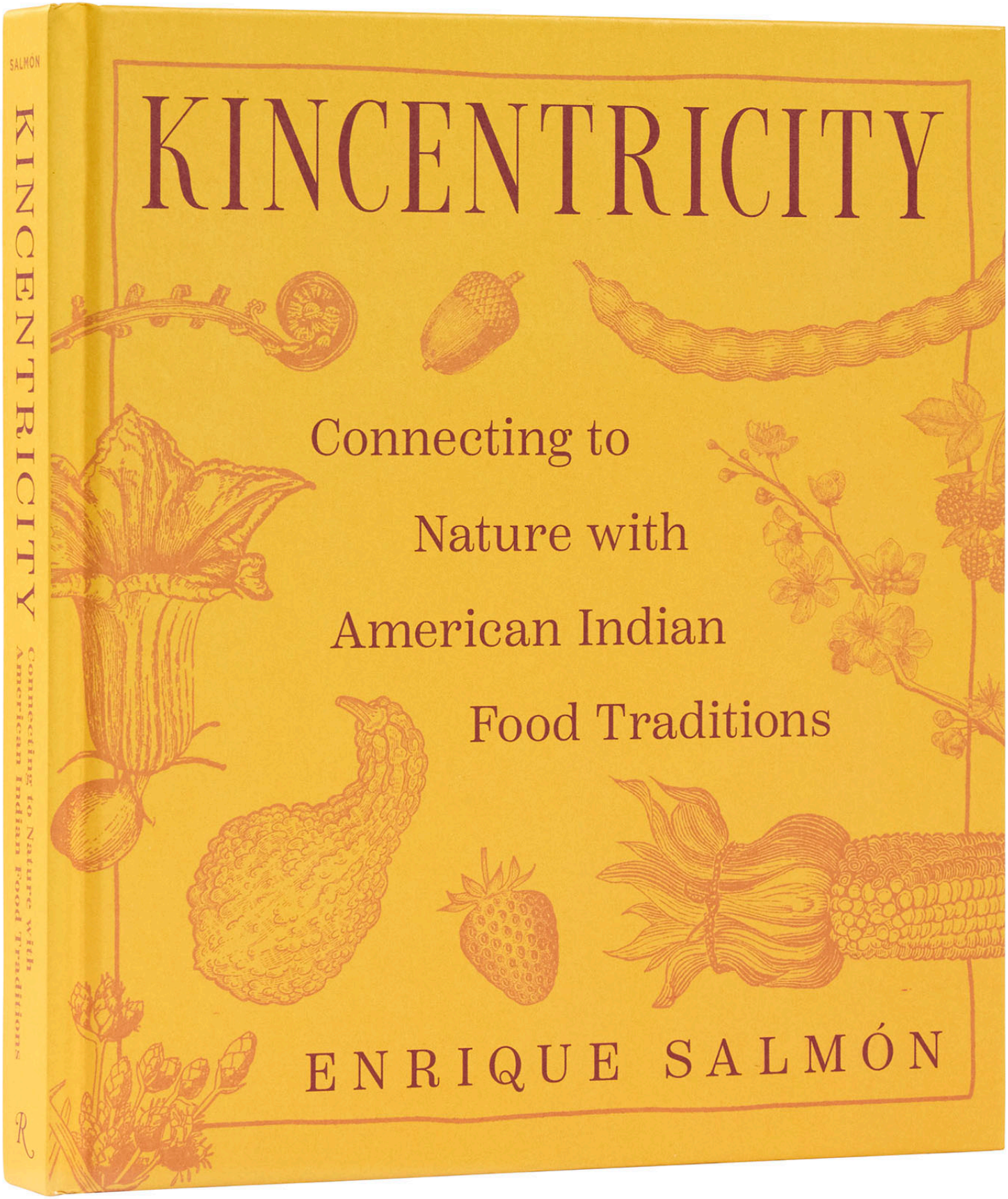
The flavonoid content of black walnut affords anti-inflammatory, anticarcinogenic, antitumorigenic, antioxidant, and antimutagenic pharmacological properties. The naphthoquinoe, juglone,

demonstrates effective antifungal and antimicrobial activity. Several studies have demonstrated that walnuts reduce blood glucose and lipids, protect the liver, are antidiabetic, and helpful for reducing blood pressure.

WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW TO COLLECT IN KINCENTRIC ECOLOGY

Black walnut is an eastern tree that is found mostly in riparian areas. It often grows alongside poplar, ash, cherry, beech, oak, and hickory trees. Toward the edge of its eastern range, it will be found in floodplains growing with elms, hackberry, ash, red oak, and boxelder. The range of black walnut is from South Dakota to New York, south to Georgia and Florida, and west to Texas. Arizona walnut, *J. major*, grows at elevations between 1,000 to 7,000 feet from West Texas and Oklahoma and to New Mexico and Arizona. It will very occasionally be found in Utah. It can be found in riparian zones and along streams. It often is found in deep canyons and ravines growing alongside cottonwoods, sycamores, and ponderosa pines.

The nuts normally fall and are ready for harvesting beginning in midsummer and into the fall. Be careful to wear gloves when collecting black walnuts in order to avoid staining your hands with the shells, which turn black after they fall. It might be a good idea to also wear old clothes. Walnuts can be eaten fresh, or stored in a cool, dry area away from direct sunlight for several months. If the sap is collected for medicinal use, it should be used immediately or it will dry out, crack, and transform into fine dust. The bark and shells can be stored away from the sun for up to a month, but will begin to lose their potency quickly after that.


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