SURVIVAL MEAT PERSERVING - PART 1, PEMMICAN

Preserving meat requires energy to be expended. Very simple concept. It is the method of using that energy that is of interest to us. The use of electrical energy via freezing is the most common form of meat preservation today -- and the most fragile, as we can expect the electrical grid to go down at some point in the near future. So, what else can we do to preserve meat?

All other methods of preserving meat also require the use of energy -- principally yours! Some methods are easier than others, but make up for that by using another energy source than electricity. Canning meats requires jars and lids and a heat source. Those are medium-technology items, however, and may not be available deep into a crisis.

The most primitive method of meat preservation -- and the most dependable -- requires a lot of human energy. These would be smoking, making jerky, and making pemmican.

PEMMICAN

Pemmican is the classic survival ration. It is really a paste of powdered jerky mixed with dried berries, nuts, and meted suet rolled up into balls. To make pemmican you must first make jerky and locate a source of fat for the suet. Beef or pork fat can be used, as other animals often do not have enough fat to use with their meat. Other fats, such as from vegetable sources, generally do not harden and are not recommended for use in pemmican.

The jerky for pemmican is made in the usual manner (that part will follow someday), but in thinner strips. The meat source used should be the best cuts available, stripped to be about one inch by 1/4 inch, and as long as possible. When properly prepared for pemmican, the jerky strips should be *very hard and brittle*, more brittle than needed for regular jerky. The strips are than pounded (clean rocks, a cleaned anvil and single jack, whatever) to powder the meat fibers, leaving the tendons, nerve fibers, etc, to feed to your animals.

The fat (or suet) used for pemmican is rendered (melted slowly without overheating) in a large kettle. The kettle is then taken from heat and allowed to cool. Then the fat is examined, and only the hardest, purest fat is put aside for use in the pemmican. The very soft fat can be fed to animals that are working, and/or used with wood ashes (preferably hardwood) to make soap.

Everything is then ready to make pemmican. You will need to make fist sized balls composed of 50% powdered meat (with a touch of salt added, if available, to stop salt craving), and 50% suet with a small amount of dry, powdered berries and/or nuts. The components are then thoroughly mixed (the suet can be softened with heat) and formed into fist-sized balls.

The pemmican balls must then be preserved and protected against moisture. This can be accomplished in a number of ways.

1. Wrapping the pemmican in waxed paper and dipping in wax. This is the easiest way, but may not be possible under primitive conditions.

2. Wrapping in cheesecloth, and dipping in suet. This is the "classical" method used by early expeditions to the west, the old U.S. Calvary, and mountain men.

3. Just dipping the balls of pemmican in melted suet. This is the least desirable method, but works.

4. Stuffing the pemmican into cleaned, washed intestinal material from the meat source animal, then dip in suet. This method works well, but is more time consuming than the others.

USING PEMMICAN

Pemmican prepared properly will last for many years and is a highly nutritious food source. It can be used in stews with tubers and corn meal added, cooked by itself, or eaten raw. If a mold forms on the pemmican ball, it is merely washed or scraped off, and the rest of the pemmican used. By itself, pemmican will keep people fit on long hikes or in other strenuous activity (because of the high fat content), and if used in conjunction with corn meal provides almost all of the nutritional needs required for continuous living and working. Only fresh greens need to be added to make a complete, well rounded meal!