

In fall, when acorns start falling from the oak trees it is the right time to be like a squirrel and harvest some acorns. Acorns can be processed by hand easily and turned into baking flour.

Having tried to grow and process other grains by hand, I can definitely say that acorns are the easiest I know of. Since we do not need to sow fields and fields of them, we do not need to use heavy machinery or draft horses to harvest or process them, and they come free to us from the forests we love and care for – Acorn flour is one of the most sustainable sources of flour we can ever have and why it was a staple food of North America before the arrival of Europeans as well as in other areas of the world.

Acorns are the nuts of oak trees. They are different than other nuts though. They are starchier and so taste more like potatoes, but they should not be eaten raw. The tannins in them are bitter and so they must be processed to be enjoyed and healthy.

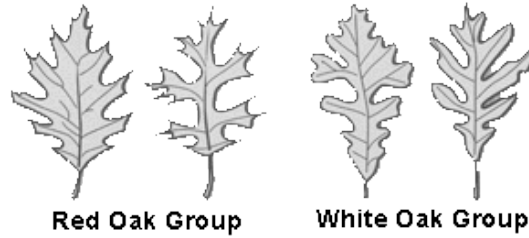
### Red Oak Acorns



### Chestnut Oak Acorns

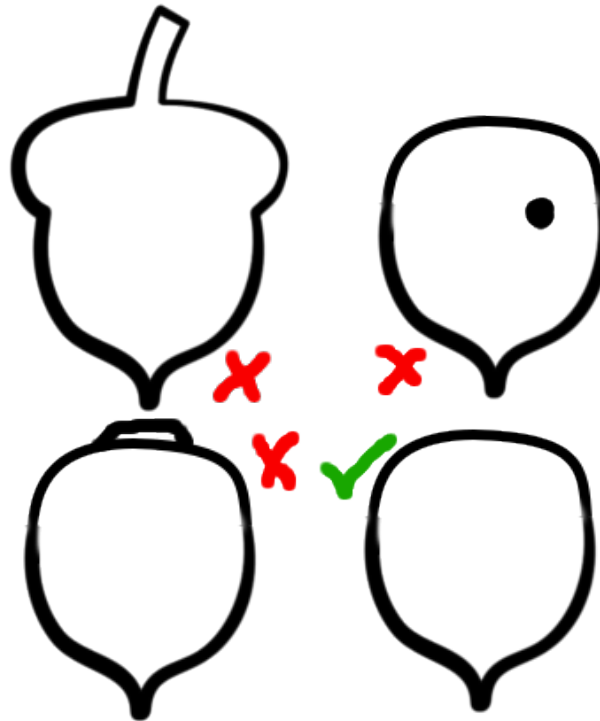


There are a few types of acorns in the Catskills, but they all are either members of the White Oak or Red Oak families. Chestnut Oak is a type of White Oak. Pin Oak, which has tiny acorns, is a type of Red Oak. However, other than those two examples, it can be difficult to tell the difference between white and red oak acorns. The best way to tell what you're looking at is to examine the leaves.



## Collecting

Go out with a bag and just pick them off the ground. Try to get them when they are dry. Don't take ones with cracks, little weevil holes, ones that look like the top is inflated or depressed, or with the caps still attached – they fell early because they had a problem.



## Storing

I collect as many acorns as I can in fall and spend winter processing and baking with the flour. With just a little collecting a day you can harvest enough acorns for a whole years baking.

Store acorns at about 40-50 degrees F in a dry space where rodents cannot get to them.

White Oak Acorns (which includes Chestnut Oaks) will need to be processed immediately because they begin sprouting in fall. Red Oak Acorns can be stored in their shells and won't sprout until the y think they have gone through a winter.

## Processing

1. Crack the acorns open with a hammer or rock or mallet. It's easiest on a hard surface that you don't mind banging up. They will crack easiest if the acorn is placed pointy side up and hammered on the point.
2. Discard or compost the shells and any acorns which grew mold.
3. Soak the nuts in a bucket of water. This is called leaching. It is the process to remove the bitter tannins from the acorns. It must be fully completed to produce tasty and healthy flour. Replace the water every day for at least a week. Depending on the number of acorns this can take a long time. You will see the tannins turning the water brown. The acorns are done when you can bite into one and it does not taste bitter.

Make sure to fill the bucket with water well above the acorns. The acorns will soak up some water

and if they are left exposed for too long they will grow mold.

Hot leaching is a method to get rid of the tannins faster. Bring the water and acorns to a boil in a pot on the stove and keep changing the water when it turns brown. It is quicker but requires more fuel energy.

Uses for the tannins may include tanning hides, use as a mordant for dyeing fabrics, or to add to garden soil to increase acidity.

## Drying

Lay the acorns out on a screen in a warm and dry place (above a wood stove or in the sun) and let them dry completely. Keep squirrels away!

## Grinding

Grind to flour with a hand powered meat grinder or a stone wheel grinder or an electric powered grinder.

I have learned to simplify this difficult step. By soaking the acorns for several weeks, they become soft enough to crush in hand and can be spread for drying to flour.

## Baking

Replace the flour called for in a baking recipe with your homemade acorn flour.

Usually bakes similar in consistency to corn flour and tastes richer than any flour I have ever used.

I recommend first trying  $\frac{1}{2}$  acorn flour mixed with other flours and then use more and more acorn flour as you love it more.

If you collect too many – get your friends to help process too!

This is just a bit of info, and I am sure you will learn more tricks as soon as you start making your own acorn flour!

## My mom's pumpkin bread recipe using acorn flour

Preheat oven to 350

1 cup brown sugar  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of oil and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of apple sauce  
2 eggs  
 $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups of pumpkin  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup warm water  
1 cup acorn flour and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup flour  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
2 teaspoon pumpkin spice  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of pecans or walnuts  
1 teaspoon of cinnamon  
1 teaspoon vanilla

Topping: 1 Teaspoon cinnamon,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup brown sugar, 2 Tablespoons butter –  
Mix together

Blend all ingredients and put in a greased and floured loaf pan. Sprinkle topping over batter. Bake 1 hour or til done.

