

Early Care & Education at Home

Bison



Did You Know

- Female bison (called cows) can reach the weight of a concert grand piano and stand 4-5 feet tall, while male bison (called bulls) can weigh up to double a female and reach a height of 6 feet tall. Bison calves match the weight of an adult medium/large dog at birth.
- Bison calves tend to be born from late March through May and are orange/red in color. After a few months, their hair starts to change to dark brown and their characteristic shoulder hump and horns begin to grow.
- Though large, bison can run up to 35 miles per hour. They can spin around quickly, jump high fences, and are strong swimmers. Due to their powerful head and horns, bison are incredibly dangerous to anyone they consider to be a threat.



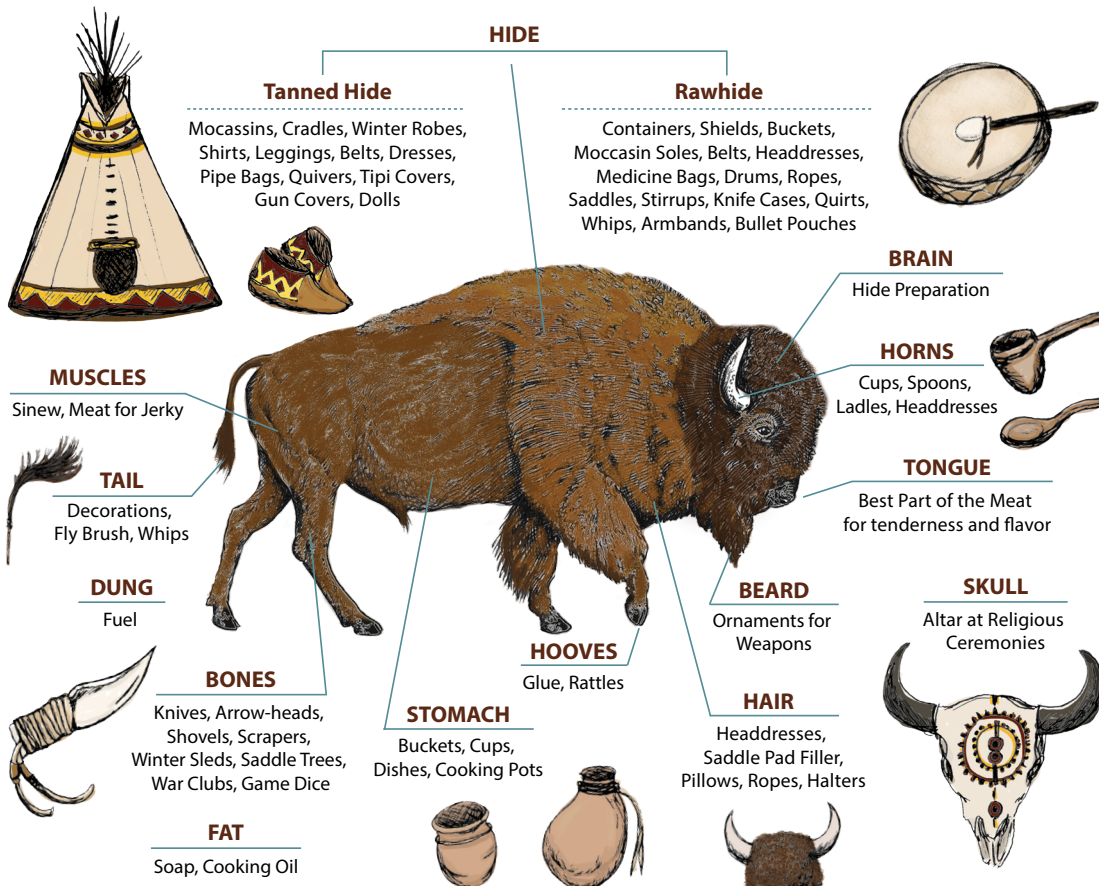
- Bison have been a critical species to tribes in Montana and the region for thousands of years, providing them with food, clothing, fuel, tools, shelter, and spiritual value. Every reservation in Montana has reestablished bison herds on tribal lands.
- Because of the way bison naturally roam on the prairies, they help aerate and fertilize the soil, spread seeds of important plants, and even help the plants germinate.
- In 2014, the Buffalo Treaty was signed between 13 different Indigenous nations in Canada and the United States. This treaty recognizes these nations as safe places for bison. As of 2021, 31 nations have signed the treaty. More information can be found at buffalotreaty.com.

What's in a name?

The American bison goes by many names, including the colloquial term buffalo. These materials use bison and buffalo interchangeably. The scientific name is *Bison bison*. Indigenous people from this area have used other names for these massive creatures long before any of these scientific terms were used:

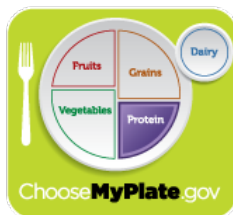
Blackfeet (Niitsitapi) – **innii**
 Assiniboine (Nakoda) – **tatanga**
 Sioux (Dakota) – **tatanka**
 Salish (Sélis) – **q'weyq'way**
 Crow (Apsaalooke) – **bishée**
 Cheyenne (Tsetsêhesêstâhase) – **hotoa'e**
 Gros Ventre (A'aninin) – **eneečee**
 Ojibwe (Anishinabe) – **bizhiki**
 Kootenai (Ktunaxa) – **Kamququkuṣ ʔiyamu**

Watch the Montana Harvest of the Month bison video to hear pronunciations of buffalo in several of these languages.



Nutrition Information

According to the USDA National Nutrient Database, bison is a rich source of protein (22 g per serving), which is important for building and repairing tissues, as well as making hormones and enzymes. The meat also contains a preventative ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids, at 4:1 (the typical western diet is around 15:1). These fatty acids are considered essential because we cannot make them naturally in our bodies. Omega-3 fatty acids are especially important for preventing heart disease and reducing inflammation. Additionally, bison is high in vitamin B12, a water-soluble vitamin that is important in building red blood cells, supporting bone health, and balancing mood. A single serving can satisfy one fifth of daily iron needs for most individuals (about 3.5mg per serving), an important mineral that promotes growth and development by way of proteins that are made by the body to deliver oxygen to our muscles.



For more information on the nutrition information of this delicious meat, visit <https://greatrangebison.com/bison-nutrition-information/>.

Buying Tips

While the most common bison meat available in Montana stores is ground, you can often find options for purchasing bison directly through producers. For a list of Montana bison ranchers, go to <https://montanabison.org/>.

Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit: mtharvestofthemonth.org.

Book Nook

Camas and Sage: A Story of Bison Life on the Prairie, by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent

Bison for Kids, by Todd Wilkinson

Tatanka and the Lakota People, by Robert Montileaux

Dance in a Buffalo Skull, by S.D. Nelson

Napi and the Buffalo, by Jason Eaglespeaker











Recipe

Butternut Bison Lasagna

Adapted from IndigiKitchen

Servings 6

Ingredients

- 1 lb  Ground bison
- 1 15 oz can  Tomato sauce, *low sodium*
- 1 small  Onion or wild onion, *minced*
- 1 tsp  Garlic powder
- 1 tsp  Dried basil
- 1 tsp  Dried oregano
- 1 tsp  Salt
- 1/2 tsp  Ground black pepper
- 1 tsp  Olive oil
- 1 large  Butternut squash, *peeled and cut into 1/2 in slices*
- 3/4 cup  Mozzarella cheese, *shredded (optional)*

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Add bison to pan. Cook on med-high heat until browned, about 6 minutes.
3. Add the tomato sauce, onion, garlic, basil, oregano, salt, and pepper. Turn heat down to low and let simmer for about 10 minutes, with a lid.
4. Assemble the lasagna in a 7x11 inch baking dish, or another medium sized dish. Add oil to the bottom of a baking dish, alternate layers of butternut squash slices with the meat sauce. Keep making layers until all the ingredients are used. Finish with meat sauce on top.
5. Optional: top with mozzarella.
6. Bake for about 50 minutes with foil on top, or until squash is soft. Remove foil and cook for another 5-10 minutes until cheese is golden.



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The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, FoodCorps Montana, Montana Organic Association, and Montana Department of Agriculture. More information and resources are available at: <https://mtharvestofthemonth.org>.

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