







Processed foods are often less healthy than country food and may have high levels of sodium, trans fats, and sugar. This, along with a sedentary lifestyle, contributes to the increase of diseases previously unknown among Inuit, such as diabetes and heart disease. Store-bought foods are now commonly eaten by Inuit, but they cannot replace the nutritional and cultural value of food acquired from the land, sea, and air, and may be modified or genetically altered.

## WHAT DOES COUNTRY FOOD MEAN TO YOU?<sup>ii</sup>

“We need Inuit country food to feel who we are!”

“Good for my body and soul.”

“[They are] not just foods we crave, but they are a part of us.”

“It means ... strength, and healthiness.”

“It’s also good for the spirit, and eating my own country means healing.”

“Eating my country food is less stressful, and I get less tired. I have lots of energy all the time.”

“If you compare Inuit and the caribou or seals, both Inuit and the caribou are fast runners.”

“When we eat the liver of the seal at minus 40 or 50, it means we are hot for the rest of the day. That is how the seal survives in the cold.”

“Getting country food is really important for us. For many, country food is not just part of their diet that they miss terribly; it helps them emotionally.”

“We have had occasions where someone is struggling and the first thing they ask for is their country food. Country food represents a way of life, not just a diet.”

“Country food means maintaining the good health that I was brought up with from birth. It means that I get to eat the freshest and purest forms of vitamins, minerals, and nutrition. If I don’t eat it, I get weak and sick.”

“Country food means many things to me. It provides a nutrition that I don’t get from store-bought foods.”

“The satisfaction of eating country foods cannot be described. There is a spiritual and cultural charge that comes from eating country food—especially caribou.”

“My children and I are smiling before, during, and after a meal of quaq (raw frozen meat or fish) or tiqtitaq (fried caribou). It means we are Inuit, and can continue to be Inuit, even if we are not living in the Arctic. It also takes me to the time and place where my grandparents survived on these foods.”

“Appreciation is always expressed to the hunter who harvested the catch and to God when receiving country food, while eating, and after.”

## HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET COUNTRY FOOD?

“I can get country from home because my son lives in Iqaluit and he sends me fish, seal meat, or maktaaq (whale skin with blubber).”

“I also have trips up north to Nunavut and whenever I am up there, I can get country food. So, I get it once every few months.”

“It is sent by relatives, and I bring it down when I travel anywhere north.”

“I get country food from my dad in Labrador. I get it a couple times a year when I go home or when my family comes here.”

“I get enough so that I can eat it a couple times a month.”

“If I was in Labrador with my family, I would be eating country food every day.”

“Occasionally country food is brought to our office (an Inuit organization), but not often enough lately.”

“Many times I get my own fish and caribou during my travels to Nunavut. Sometimes I order my caribou from my relatives in Arviat during winter.”

“I try to stock up and fill up my freezer at all times because I share my fish and caribou with my students and friends on a monthly basis here in Ottawa.”

Barry writes, “Although I was aware of some of the answers to the questions I posed to my fellow Inuit, I was not aware nor did I realize how powerful or meaningful the responses would be. Country food is everything to Inuit and not having access to it has an impact on families, communities, and individuals. It’s never easy to acquire country food in urban areas and issues such as cost, distance, availability, and government processes make it even more challenging at times. But as I learned, Inuit are resourceful and have found means to overcome those challenges to get the food that means so much to them.”

“My plan in setting out to do this project was—first and foremost—an art project as I strive to bring awareness and justice to what I call Contemporary Urban Inuit Photography. But as the project progressed, it at times seemed to take on a life of its own. I’m very proud of how it turned out in the end!”

Dedicated to Ottawamiut (the Inuit in Ottawa).  
*Nakummek!* (Thank you!)







Image 5. Contemporary implements used with traditional foods. (Photo credit: B. Pottle)

ጥንት 5. ድንጋጌዎችን ለግብይት ስራ ለመጠቀም ለውጥ ማድረግ (ጥንት-ጥንት: ለግብይት ስራ)



Image 6. Setting the table: a contemporary twist on traditional ways. (Photo credit: B. Pottle)

ጥንት 6. ስራ ማድረግ: ድንጋጌዎችን ለግብይት ስራ ለመጠቀም ለውጥ ማድረግ (ጥንት-ጥንት: ለግብይት ስራ)



Image 7. Maktaaq and iqaluk (char). (Photo credit: B. Pottle)

ᐱᓂᓂ 7. ᐱᓂᓂᓂ ᐱᓂᓂ ᐱᓂᓂᓂ. (ᐱᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂ: ᐱᓂᓂ ᐱᓂᓂ)



Image 8. Cutting iqaluk (char). (Photo credit: B. Pottle)

ᐱᓂᓂ 8. ᐱᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᐱᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂ. (ᐱᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂᓂ: ᐱᓂᓂ ᐱᓂᓂ)







## ENDNOTES

- i While some Inuit use the term “Inuit food,” Barry prefers “country food.”
- ii Quotations in this article are from an informal survey of Barry’s friends and acquaintances in different urban centres. “Although I know what country food means to me,” says Barry, “I decided to ask what it meant to other Inuit, as well as how often they eat country food and how they acquire it.”





