Cooking

Open Hearth Cooking
People prepared meals in the 18th century over a fire or hot coals. Fireplaces varied substantially in terms of how they were equipped, and what hardware was used to assist with cooking. Most fireplaces in frontier areas were small and did not include dampers. Some may have had a "crane" to move pots in and out of the fire, while others may have had a "crucible," a metal rod attached to a horizontal brace in the fireplace to move pots closer to, or away from, the fire or coals. Baking occurred in a cast iron oven (Dutch oven) on the hearth. In more densely populated communities, people used a brick or mud oven built outside the house.

On the Table
Unlike in Europe, laws did not restrict hunting and fishing, and the men of New France became excellent marksmen. The Abenakis quickly introduced new animal and plant foods of North America into their diets, including deer, other wild animals, corn, squash, and maple sugar.

"I have seldom seen any people shoot with such dexterity as these... There was scarcely one of them who was not a clever marksman and who did not own a rifle." – Peter Kalm, 1749

"Squashes are a kind of pumpkin which the Europeans get from the Indians... They are eaten boiled, either with meat or by themselves." – Peter Kalm, 1748

Re-enactor demonstrating outdoor cooking
Remains of a fireplace found at Fort St. Joseph
Carbonized corn cobs from Fort St. Joseph
18th century fireplace at Fort Michilimackinac. Photo courtesy of Clay Johnson
Ceramic fragments from Fort St. Joseph
18th century brass ladle from Fort St. Joseph
Bone-handled knife from Fort St. Joseph