

Braided Seal Gut — Qiluryaq

TAUGKUT QILURYAT EKLLINARTUT. – THOSE BRAIDED SEAL GUT LOOK DELICIOUS.



Photo: Ronnie Lind holds some braided seal gut.

Photograph by Sven Haakanson.

Visitors to Kodiak often ask how Alutiiq people can hunt protected species like sea otters and sea lions. In 1972, the Marine Mammal Protection Act prohibited the harvesting of all marine mammals to preserve their populations. However, this law recognizes the importance of sea mammals to Alaska Native life and includes a Native exception. Under the law, Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut hunters living along Alaska's coast may harvest marine mammals for food and the production of clothing and crafts.

In the Kodiak area, Alutiiqs continue to harvest marine mammals for both food and raw material. Seal meat and oil are widely enjoyed, as are the animal's internal organs. One Alutiiq delicacy is braided seal gut, a Native version of sausage. Women prepare this dish from fresh intestines. They begin by washing long pink tubes of gut, using fresh or saltwater to thoroughly remove the contents. This is a time-consuming job. Alutiiqs often stuff the seal gut with heart, liver, and fat. Then the guts are braided. Women work with three or more strands at a time to create a loaf three to four feet long and about three inches thick. Some braid long strips of seal fat with the gut. The final step is to cook the braid, which may be fried, baked, or boiled and shrinks in the process. The resulting savory dish tastes of the intestine's stuffing and seasoning.