

## Native American Basketry

While the history of baskets in the Old World can date back to ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, basketry was also an important part of the struggle to survive for the people of the New World as well. Practiced by virtually every Native American tribe, many of these people still make baskets in the same fashion that their ancestors have for thousands of years.

In ancient times, baskets were not an art form but a useful tool in the process of gathering grains, fruits, and nuts that was the main diet of many tribal peoples. These baskets were small in size and carried in the hands or were rather large and carried on the back. The women supported these larger containers by the use of a tumpline around the forehead. The wider opening in these baskets allowed the carrier to easily toss the gathered food over their shoulder. There were also special baskets known as creels that were used for carrying fish.

In areas that depended on hunting, people of nomadic tribes were continuously moving, following the game as it migrated. Baskets proved useful in these moves as they could be utilized to carry clothing, tools, and other necessities from campsite to campsite. The baskets that were made by the native women of these tribes were designed with a flat bottom so that these containers could be balanced on the head, freeing the women's hands so that she could carry other items.

As settlers from Europe changed the lifestyle and living patterns of these Native American people, the older ones taught the younger generation their native skills as a way to cling onto their identity as a people. Basket weaving done by Native American women today is accomplished much in the same fashion that it has been done for centuries.

Most Native American baskets today are made to be sold to non-Native American tourists and collectors. The tribes themselves still use certain baskets for preparing food and for use in religious rituals, but the days of hunting and gathering have disappeared.

Unlike commercially-made baskets, Native American baskets are made from materials that are found in nature. They are weaved from fibers from different plants and trees that are found in the area in which a particular tribe lives. Some tribal weavers also use certain plants to dye the fibers different colors. Finding these materials has also been a challenge for many Native American basket weavers. Due to urban development and pollution, many of these trees and plants do not grow wild as they once did. While ancient weavers could travel by foot to find the items that they needed, modern weavers are discovering that while some of these items are available, they can only be found in areas that are off-limits to them. Many of these materials have also vanished due to the fact that these plants were considered to be useless weeds to anyone but a basket weaver and were thus destroyed.

In a few short years, it may be impossible for Native American basket weavers to practice their craft as these materials may totally disappear. It is an art form that will be greatly missed.

## About the Author

We have baby gift baskets that are cute and practical. Perfect for the newborn and new moms. For more information, visit this article on [baby gift baskets](#).

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