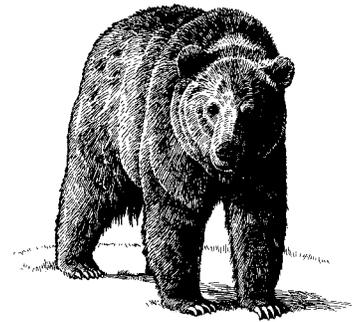




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## What Do Grizzly Bears Eat?

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The grizzly bear, like its cousin the black bear, is *omnivorous*, meaning it will eat plants, as well as insects and other animals. Scavengers by nature, grizzlies spend most of their waking hours searching for food. Forbs, roots, tubers, grasses, berries and other vegetation, and insects comprise most of the bear's diet. But grizzlies are very adaptable, finding and subsisting on a variety of foods if necessary. The grizzly diet can include small rodents, fish, carrion, and even garbage and human food if it is easily available.

Food sources vary in availability from year to year, and from season to season. Grizzlies move throughout their habitat looking for foods available at that time of year. The availability of many foods is known to the bears by season, and the bears move to these areas based on their experience. In this way, the general seasonal distribution and movements of bears are predictable. Ingestion of large amounts of food in a short time period is critical to grizzly survival, since they are only active and feeding for 6-8 months of every year.

**SPRING:** Grizzlies emerge from their dens from late March to May, whenever young vegetation begins growing. During the early spring months, bears move to low elevation areas, out of the snow, to feed on young, green vegetation. Common spring food sources include winter-killed animals, as well as ants, grasses and sedges, clover, dandelion, cow parsnip, and other plants.

**SUMMER:** From June through August, grizzly bears continue to eat forbs, dig for roots and tubers, and excavate insects, such as ants and grubs. Common summer food sources are thistle, fireweed, mushrooms, and moths clustering in rocky, high-elevations areas. In some areas, bears may prey for a few weeks on newly born elk, deer, and bison calves, until the young animals become too fast to be captured. In late summer, berry-producing shrubs provide a preferred food. For a few weeks during the summer, bears in the Yellowstone ecosystem catch cutthroat trout in spawning streams around Yellowstone Lake and Henry's Lake.

**FALL:** From September through October, foods such as berries, whitebark and limber pine nuts, insect nests, and starchy tubers and roots are important for the grizzly to build up fat reserves before winter hibernation. Before denning in late October or November, the bear spends more and more time searching for food and eating.

### **PLEASE DON'T FEED THE BEARS!**

Bears are very skilled at finding food, and aren't picky eaters – they are opportunistic, and will eat whatever is most easily available to them. They are intelligent, curious, and have excellent memories, especially about food sources. Even during years when there are shortages of some of the most common food sources, bears have plenty to eat.

It is very important that people in bear country refrain from feeding bears, and avoid inadvertently attracting bears to food sources. Bear attractants include garbage, any human foods, animal feed, game meat, and even scented toiletries like toothpaste and soap. While you may be sympathetic to a hungry bear, a bear that learns to associate people with food reward may become dangerous; eventually, the bear will likely have to be killed.

***Remember... A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR***