

# California Indian Basketweaving

## An Enduring Legacy

California Indian basketry is one of the great textile traditions of the world. The astounding functionality, beauty, variety, and quality of Native basketry throughout California reveals masterful technique, sophisticated designs, distinctive cultural traditions, and artistic vision.

Strong, versatile, lightweight, and often watertight, Native baskets were perfected to suit local food-collecting and cooking needs. Baskets were also mediums of exchange, expressions of wealth and status, and essential components of ceremony.

California Indian basketweaving is not only a part of our history, it is an enduring legacy. Today, this ancient art continues to resonate among a new generation of Native weavers, as a source of great pride and a meaningful, inspirational connection to culture, family, and land.

### Maidu Tray

Plumas County, c. 1900

Just as they do today, trays served many purposes. Some were designed for winnowing and parching seed kernels, others served as catch basins for acorn flour, and many Indian groups used trays in various types of games.



### Luiseno Tray

Riverside/San Diego Counties, c. 1900



### Tubatulabal Presentation Soup Basket

Kernville, Kern County, c. 1898

Some baskets were used as grand serving vessels—similar to the heirloom platters used in American homes at Thanksgiving. The large size of such a basket illustrated the prosperity and status of its owner.

### Kawaiisu Treasure Basket

Indian Wells, Kern County c. 1902

Also known as a “money basket” (because people kept their valuable shell-money or beads in them), this basket took many forms throughout Native California.



### Pomo Cooking Basket

Yukiah Rancheria, Mendocino County, c. 1895

Cooking baskets were primarily used to boil acorn soup. Size depended on how much soup was needed. Hot stones, plucked from a fire with wooden tongs, were put into a basket with leached acorn dough and water, which quickly came to a boil.



### Hupa-Yurok-Karuk Dress Cap

Humboldt/Siskiyou Counties, c. 1920

Caps were made and worn in several regions of California. Often, the cap served to protect the head from chafing caused by the tumpline of a burden basket. Caps were worn by both men and women, and were also used as units of measure.



### Atsugewi Burden Basket

Lassen County, c. 1890

The wide mouth of this burden basket facilitated the collecting of tiny seeds from dozens of native grasses and plants. Its conical shape also aided in weight distribution, as heavy loads were carried on the back with a strap, known as a tumpline, running around the basket and across the crown of the carrier.



© 2009 California State Parks

2009