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THE
SIOUX CHEF'S
INDIGENOUS KITCHEN



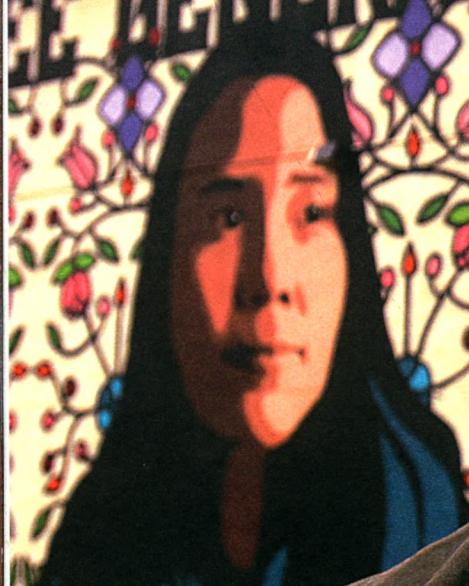
SEAN SHERMAN WITH BETH DOOLEY

This book is dedicated to our ancestors and all indigenous people who have suffered through centuries of colonialism. We, the First Nation descendants, are living proof of courage and resilience. We offer our work to the next generation so that they may carry the flame of knowledge and keep alive our traditions, our foods, and our medicines for generations to come. We devote these pages to the earth, Turtle Island, our home, our everything, in hopes that we indigenous people will always stand strong to protect her.



THREE GENERATIONS

THE HEARTS OF TWO



KEEP TOBACCO OUT

THE HEARTS OF TWO



INTRODUCTION

It is hard to describe the era and the area I was born into—Pine Ridge Reservation, 1974—wide-open prairies, scents of white sage, bergamot, tall grasses, big skies, and dry, windy, dusty heat. You can smell the weather coming on from miles away. Growing up on Pine Ridge in the 1970s was what most Americans experienced in the 1950s. No seat belts for kids: we rode in the open back of pickup trucks with gun racks in the rear windows.

My younger sister and I lived on our grandparents' ranch with cousins a mile down the hill. We all were a motley and feral group of kids, as wild as the dogs we ran with, exploring the grasslands and sand hills, scouting out antelope, mule deer, pheasants, grouse, sandhill cranes, salamanders, mallards, geese, jackrabbits, bull snakes, rattlesnakes, prairie dogs, coyotes, porcupines. Our TV had just three channels, so, except for the Saturday cartoons or reruns of *The Brady Bunch*, *Petticoat Junction*, and *Little House on the Praire*, we were never tempted to watch.

I remember my father trying to teach me to drive a stick in his '76 Ford truck when I was just barely tall enough to stand up over the steering wheel. By age seven, I'd learned to handle a rifle and was good at hunting game birds and sometimes antelope and deer, could help dig the wild turnip of the prairie, timpsula, and gather chokecherries. We all pitched in with chores like mending fences, moving cattle to pasture, checking water tanks and windmills, tracking the horses and cattle. We were dusty and gritty, but I never knew that we were dirt poor.



Sean and cousin Justin on Pine Ridge, 1982

The family ranch was about twenty miles outside the town of Pine Ridge and about ten miles away from Batesland, South Dakota, population 200, where I went to grade school in a class of about twelve. Being members of the Oglala Lakota, we attended powwows, Sun Dances, family gatherings, holiday parades, school events. Native American spirit was always present, as was the strong sense of our family. Lakota-language class was as much a part of our school curriculum as English, social studies, and math. My grandparents were both fluent in Lakota, and people from the smaller villages would stop by to visit and talk for hours in that musical language. We were proud of our tribe, proud of our heritage.

Every birthday, wedding, naming ceremony, cattle-branding day, national and traditional holiday, our extended family gathered on the ranch. Our mom, aunts, grandma, and older girl cousins bustled in the tiny kitchen cooking up hearty taniga, a traditional Lakota soup, and earthy timpsula

(wild prairie turnip), and Wojape, the Lakota berry soup. It's my favorite dish, and today, as it simmers in our indigenous kitchen, the warm, sweet aroma time warps me back to my freewheeling six-year-old self.

Except for the occasional trip to see other family and shop at the one grocery store in Pine Ridge, we hardly ever left the ranch. Our freezer was stocked with the ranch's beef and the game we'd bagged. Our shelves were lined with government-issued canned corn, canned carrots, canned peas, canned salmon, chipped beef, saltines, white flour, and bricks of bright orange commodity cheese. Although my grandmother tended a little garden, her fresh vegetables were a treat, not the norm.

* * *

I suppose it was my destiny to become a chef, but I couldn't have known that when my parents split up and our mom moved my little sister and me to Spearfish, South Dakota, to pursue her college degree. Spearfish is near a beautiful canyon, not far from the Needles Highway (named for the granite spires that jut out of the earth in the Black Hills) and close to our family's cabin. It's named *Xi Sápa*, in Lakota, and is close to Bear Butte, a sacred place for ceremonies and origin stories, considered the spiritual center of the universe.

For me, this hardscrabble city of 7,000 residents and 11,000 university students was a big, tough place—conservative, Bible-thumping, and white. As a brown and skinny kid with a thick rez accent, I was in the minority for the first time in my life. After school, I'd bike over to the university library where my mom studied and I was free to rove three full stories of books, a beautiful thing. On the rez, I'd explored the buttes and sand hills and here, in the vast open library, I wandered the stacks and pulled volumes of history, geography, anthropology, and fiction off the shelves and got lost in the thrilling landscape of ideas.

My mom, a single parent going to school and working two jobs, just didn't have time to shop and cook, so she relied on my sister and me to put meals on the table. Because I knew my way around the kitchen, I got a job at the Sluice as soon as I turned thirteen. Named for the gold-mining chutes, the Sluice was a short-order, hectic joint; I bussed and washed dishes and helped prep. That next summer, I worked at Sylvan Lake resort as the youngest on staff. I was a quick study and hard worker and soon pulled up to the grill. Our crew, college-aged kids, bored with steak and potatoes, explored new items such as rattlesnake and beaver, which for me was a thrill. I knew then I loved this work.

Another summer, working for the Forest Service, I identified plants in the Black Hills, documenting their history and culinary and medicinal uses, made notes, and drew pictures in my journals. Coded in my Native DNA is a sense of their value as food—purslane, wild yarrow, mint, bee balm, cedar, maple—all the edibles that surround us and grow under our feet.

* * *

Like most young men in their early twenties, I was overly confident and seeking adventure, so I upped and moved to Minneapolis, hometown of Prince and the Replacements, and landed in the Uptown neighborhood. Chock-full of independent restaurants, coffee shops, and music venues, it was diverse and crowded and I no longer stood out. I became sous chef at Broder's Pasta Bar and learned from chef Michael Rostance how to run a highly organized, efficient kitchen, skim stocks, roll out pasta, and navigate the wines of Tuscany and Bordeaux.

Kitchen experience, research, trial and error, and persistence made up for my lack of formal training, and I climbed up the restaurant food chain. By age twenty-nine, I was an executive chef overseeing several corporate white-table establishments and natural food cafés. But the price for such early success was high. Under the weight of soul-crushing pressures, the long, long hours and late, late nights, my marriage began to fray. I was young, I was burned out. I was hopeful and curious. So I headed to Mexico and took a year off.

We landed in the tiny village of San Pancho, officially San Francisco, north of Puerto Vallarta in the state of Nayarit. Its sheer remoteness and thick jungle prevented permanent European colonization until the late nineteenth century and much of the indigenous foodways have remained intact. Bananas, coconuts, and mangos grew for anyone to pick; chickens ran through the streets, and the fishing was great. I woke to the daily scent of strong coffee, chilies roasting over an open fire, tortillas baking on a *comal*. Kids in tattered T-shirts ran barefoot through the cobblestone streets, roosters and dogs wandered through the town at their leisure, plumbing was a luxury in the one-room homes. But the food, the food was bountiful, crafted from tradition, cooked with care.

There, sitting on the beautiful wide-open, tourist-free beaches, I watched in curiosity the local vendors selling their handmade goods and jewelry. The women and children in traditional dress were Huicholes, and I was fascinated by how similar their artwork, mannerisms, and sense of humor were to my own. They had beautiful beadwork that reminded me of the geometric patterns I grew up with in Lakota country, the colorful and meaningful plants and animals reflecting stories and legends. In a sweat lodge, called a *temescal*, they practiced ceremony that sparked my own childhood memories of our indigenous spiritual practices. I was consulting with a local restaurant in a small boutique hotel that sought to reimagine its menu with an extreme local focus, highlighting flavors of the ocean and jungle, mostly vegetarian with some local seafood.

In an epiphany, I tasted how food weaves people together, connects families through generations, is a life force of identity and social structure. After seeing how the Huicholes held on to so much of their pre-European culture through artwork and food, I recognized that I wanted to know my own food heritage. What did my ancestors eat before the Europeans arrived on our lands? I saw North America as a whole, with vast and varied landscapes, ancient migrations of people and agriculture whose methods and techniques spread northward with the corn cultures. I saw the deep

connections to nature, to the entire ecosystems of the indigenous groups. I yearned to understand all of the plants and all of their purposes. No longer did I see “weeds,” but food and medicine. I began to appreciate the purpose of everything in our natural world, to respect the plants and animals, sources of sustenance. As I began my research, I realized how grossly underrepresented Native American foods are in the United States. Mitsitam Café in the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., was the only Native restaurant I could find. No place showcased the indigenous foods of our different regions; there were no recipes with dishes that featured the wild flavors of the landscapes (local game, heirloom vegetables, foraged foods) cooked over wood fires.

I started reading everything I could get my hands on and had books shipped directly to me—cookbooks, magazines, research publications—that covered Native American cooking, history, wild foraging, ethnobotany, anything that might provide a glimpse into our authentic culture. I was excited to get back to the States and start talking to elders and exploring our landscapes. I had a clear vision of what to do next.

In my mind's eye, I could see that long ago the tribes were sovereign over their food systems, maintaining food security through a rich knowledge of the land and its food resources. They cultivated crops, foraged wild foods, hunted, and fished as good stewards. They relied on complex trade, held feasting ceremonies, and harvested food in common sites. In order to understand this cuisine, I had to return to its beginning and work solely with indigenous ingredients using simple tools and basic techniques. I found that, more than anything, my ancestors' work was guided by respect for the food they enjoyed. Nothing was ever wasted; every bit was put to use. This sparked creativity as well as resilience and independence. Above all else, they were healthy and self-reliant.

Most of what passes for Native American fare today—fry bread or Indian tacos—is not authentic at all. My early ancestors didn't eat the foods I grew up with or cooked in restaurants. Other than the taniga (a soup/stew of bison offal), timpsula (wild turnip), bison, and Wojape (chokecherry sauce), I knew little about our food culture. The vision I had was all-consuming and it drove me to learn more in order to discover what exactly makes up an indigenous food system and how I could apply that wisdom in my own contemporary kitchen.

I moved back to the States, settling in Red Lodge, Montana, and spent a summer on the Lazy EI Ranch, cooking, being outdoors, reading books, gardening, foraging, and planning. My vision became real in 2014 when, back in Minneapolis, I founded The Sioux Chef, a pure leap of faith. That August, I left my chef's salary, determined to focus on indigenous cuisine. By the end of September, I was hosting pop-up dinners, catering events, teaching and lecturing, building a team—all covered by our local and national press.

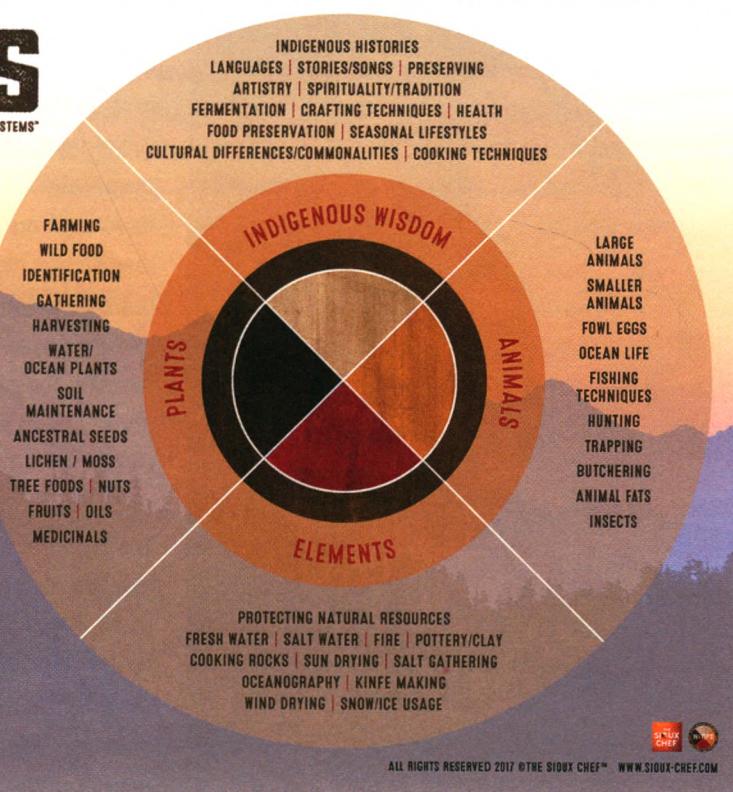
The Sioux Chef is a mission-driven enterprise of indigenous team members. It includes a full-service catering company, the Tatanka Food Truck, and (soon) a restaurant. We host pop-up dinners that weave together multicourse dinners with indigenous music, spoken word poetry, and

FOUNDATIONS OF AN INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEM MODEL



UNDERSTANDING THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIGENOUS FOODS SYSTEMS:

- 1 REMOVAL OF COLONIZED THOUGHT
- 2 RECONNECT SPIRITUALLY, MENTALLY, PHYSICALLY WITH THE NATURAL WORLD
- 3 UNDERSTAND AND BUILD INDIGENOUS FOUNDATIONS
- 4 REGAIN, RETAIN, SHARE, PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE

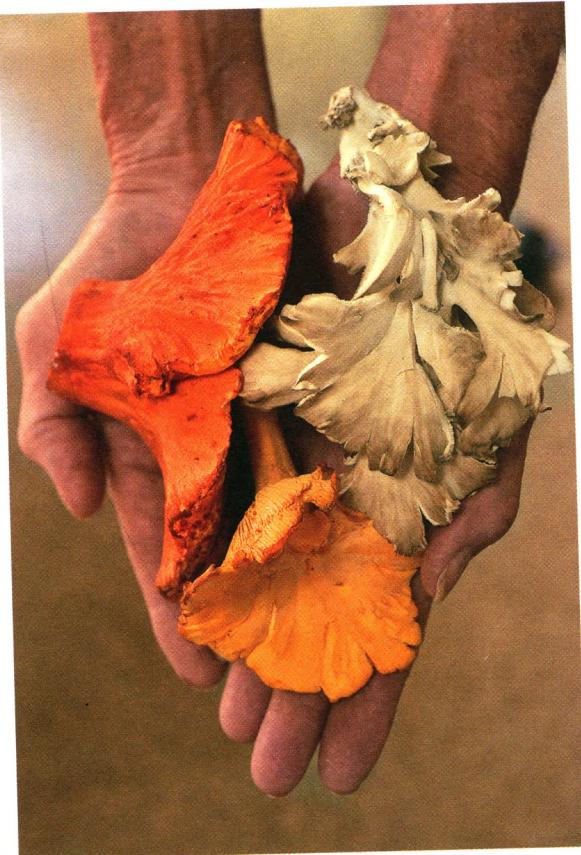


The guiding model for all of our work at The Sioux Chef

storytelling. In my work with the Sioux Chef team, I also lecture, teach, and write about indigenous foods. Our success at local, national, and international levels confirms how necessary this effort truly is. We've shared our work in California, Milan, at the United Nations. At the Terra Madre, Shilong, India, in 2015, a gathering of more than six hundred indigenous delegates, we realized that our work in mapping our own indigenous food systems applies throughout the world. Every day our work becomes richer and more interesting as we travel and meet with elders, indigenous chefs, historians, researchers, health professionals, and food justice advocates.

* * *

Why isn't the original indigenous diet all the rage today? It's hyperlocal, ultraseasonal, uber-healthy: no processed foods, no sugar, no wheat (or gluten), no dairy, no high-cholesterol animal products. It's naturally low glycemic, high protein, low salt, plant based with lots of grains, seeds, and nuts. Most of all, it's utterly delicious. It's what so many diets strive to be but fall short for lack of context. This is a diet that connects us all to nature and to each other in the most direct and profound ways.



This book is about the joy of indigenous cooking. It reveals the delight in finding ingredients right outside our kitchen doors. In a world that has become overcomplicated and reliant on appliances, gizmos, and tricky methods, we are returning to simple preparations that enhance the bold, fresh flavors of our local foods. These recipes, inspired by methods handed down through the ages, generation after generation, are integral to our culture, and, as with all good recipes, the dishes will change from cook to cook. These recipes are meant to be guidelines, not formulas.

We organized the chapters to reflect where ingredients are gathered with a mind to how most meals progress. We begin with lighter fare: salads, vegetable plates, soups, small plates that work as appetizers or starters or, when combined, make a full meal. The next chapter presents heartier dishes with

entrées of fish, game, and one-pot meals. Next are stories and recipes for snacks, sweets, and refreshing teas to serve between or following those meals.

Our “Indigenous Pantry” chapter will guide you in stocking the staple ingredients. Many you may already have on your shelves or they can be easily found in stores, co-ops, and farmers markets. We also hope you’ll want to try the less familiar wild flavors such as tamarack, cedar, juniper, and rose hips to expand your options.

We are not alone in this work. Our colleagues from other regions in the country have generously shared their knowledge, wisdom, and recipes. We often collaborate with these chefs to create indigenous dinners that reflect a diverse range of Native flavors.

Our final chapter, “Feasts of the Moon,” illustrates our connection to nature’s cycles with insights into our ceremonies and traditions. Here we create a calm, sacred place to celebrate Mother Earth’s gifts, give thanks for such unrequited bounty, and honor friendship and community. These are also a guide to how we organize our feasts.

These recipes along with the stories of goodness and resilience are told with hope and joy. *Pila-maye* and *Miigwech* (thank you in Lakota and Ojibwe). Now, let’s dig in.

SHARED VALUES/DIFFERENT REGIONS

As I've traveled throughout the world, I've learned how strikingly similar the indigenous approach is in every region. This book focuses on the Minnesota and Dakota territories—home to the Dakota, Lakota, Ojibwe (Chippewa, Anishinaabe), Mandan, Hidasta, Arikara, and Ho-Chunk—and the ingredients are specific to this region. But what I've found is that the methods in this book work no matter the ingredients. This concept is expressed in the recipes and stories from the other indigenous chefs who have so generously contributed to this collection.

(NOT) FRY BREAD

I'm often asked why we don't have fry bread on the menu or offer a recipe for fry bread in this book. Fry bread is a simple food but also a difficult symbol linking generation with generation, connecting the present to the painful narrative of our history. It originated nearly 150 years ago when the U.S. government forced our ancestors from the homelands they farmed, foraged, and hunted, and the waters they fished. Displaced and moved to reservations, they lost control of their food and were made to rely on government-issued commodities—canned meat, white flour, sugar, and lard—all lacking nutritive value. Controlling food is a means of controlling power.

Fry bread represents perseverance and pain, ingenuity and resilience. "Frybread is the story of our survival," writes Sherman Alexie. Yet, fry bread contributes to high levels of diabetes and obesity that affect nearly one-half of the Native population living on reservations. The average piece of this fried white-flour dough (the size of the eight-inch paper plate it's served on) weighs in at 700 calories and contains 25 grams of fat. When you pile on the processed cheese and potted meats of an Indian taco, you've got a recipe for chronic illness and pain. "Frybread has killed more Indians than the federal government," sings the rock star Keith Secola. Here's the thing: obesity and tooth decay did *not* exist among the indigenous people of North America before colonial ingredients were introduced.

Let's update this story with real corn cakes that enfold braised bison or smoked duck, authentic Native food. They taste of the time when we, as a people, were healthy and strong, and of the promise that we can stand up to the foods that have destroyed our health, the forces that have compromised our culture. And our corn cakes are easier to make and far tastier than any fry bread.



FIELDS AND GARDENS

Think of August's sweet corn roasted over a fire to be crispy and succulent, of poached eggs on a bowl of soft cornmeal, of a hearty, rich black bean soup. Not one of these dishes is difficult or complex and they're made with ingredients found right outside our back door.

To build the indigenous kitchen, I began by turning my focus to the foods that have always been available here. I had to shuck off layers of European culture and get my hands on native greens, herbs, vegetables, eggs, fish, and game foods that have stood the test of centuries. I began working with simple, direct cooking methods and the hand tools of my ancestors, and I learned to see the world through indigenous eyes.

After my year in Mexico, I took a job on the Lazy El Ranch in Montana—1,400 acres of unobstructed plains, prairie, and forest in the foothills, and I worked with a wise elder, ironically named Julia Childs. We stocked the kitchen with foraged ingredients—cattails, timpsula, wild mint, sage, and bergamot—and we harvested native pole beans, squash, and corn from her enormous garden. Under the big western sky, I could feel what life might have been like before the cowboys arrived, how cattle destroyed the Natives' lands where they lived, foraged, and farmed, and how lumbering decimated the once diverse and verdant forest.

Back in Minneapolis, it was easy to see that the foods we ignore or rip out as weeds are among the most delicious, interesting, and nutritious. Wild greens such as dandelion, purslane, plantain, and lamb's ear grow like crazy in our backyard. Instead of eradicating them, use them in salads and to season soups and stews. The acorns that crunch under car wheels, if gathered right when they fall from the trees, can be transformed into delicious gluten-free flour. A wealth of wild hazelnuts, raspberries, strawberries, and chokecherries grow along highways, free for the picking.

Before the Europeans arrived, my ancestors knew how to protect their foraging areas and they cultivated a range of foods using methods we've dubbed permaculture. The women did the lion's share of the planting, harvesting, drying, and cooking. They took great care of the soil and responded to the forces of nature in ways that seem remarkably contemporary. Buffalo Bird Woman, a member of the Hidatsa tribe, rotated her crops, composted waste, used every bit of the plant, including ash for seasoning, an ingredient in many trendy restaurant kitchens.

The work of our ancestors guides today's Native farmers and producers—Dream of Wild Health, Hugo, Minnesota, cultivates an enormous heirloom seed collection; and Wozupi, the Mdewakan-ton Dakota farm, cultivates organic vegetables and manages a heritage orchard, in Prior Lake, Minnesota. Both are making these valuable indigenous foods available once again to chefs and home cooks.

The recipes in this chapter for small plates and soups are straightforward, boldly seasoned, and unpretentious. Some of the ingredients—maple vinegar, sumac, tamarack, for example—may be unfamiliar, but they make terrific additions to our stock of everyday ingredients and help us appreciate the unique flavors of this particular landscape. We hope you'll give them a try.



THREE SISTERS SUMMERTIME SALAD WITH SMOKED TROUT

Blokétu Wathóthó īčičahiya

Serves 4 to 6



Three Sisters Summertime Salad with Smoked Trout

Together, the three “sisters” are a nutritional powerhouse. The corn’s complex carbohydrates, the protein-rich beans, and the squash’s vitamins make a complete meal. Corn nuts are tossed in for crunch, but sunflower and pepita seeds work equally well, too.

- 1 cup summer squash, cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices**
- 1 tablespoon sunflower oil**
- 2 ears Roasted Corn, page 13, kernels cut from cob**
- 1 cup Cedar-Braised Beans, page 36**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Wojape Mint Sauce, page 15**
- Dandelion greens (plus mix of wild greens)**
- 4 ounces smoked trout, cut into half-inch strips**

Heat a griddle or large heavy skillet over high heat and sear the squash slices on both sides, about 3 minutes. Set aside. Turn the corn, beans, and summer squash into a large mixing bowl. Toss with just enough mint sauce to lightly coat and serve on a bed of the mixed greens. Lay the trout over the salad.

WOJAPE MINT SAUCE

Wóžapi nakúŋ Čheyáka lyúltħuŋ

Makes about ½ cup

This is terrific with bitter greens such as watercress, dandelion, or sorrel. Store in a covered container in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days.

¼ cup Wojape, page 173

1 tablespoon maple vinegar, page 18

3 tablespoon sunflower oil

1 tablespoon maple syrup

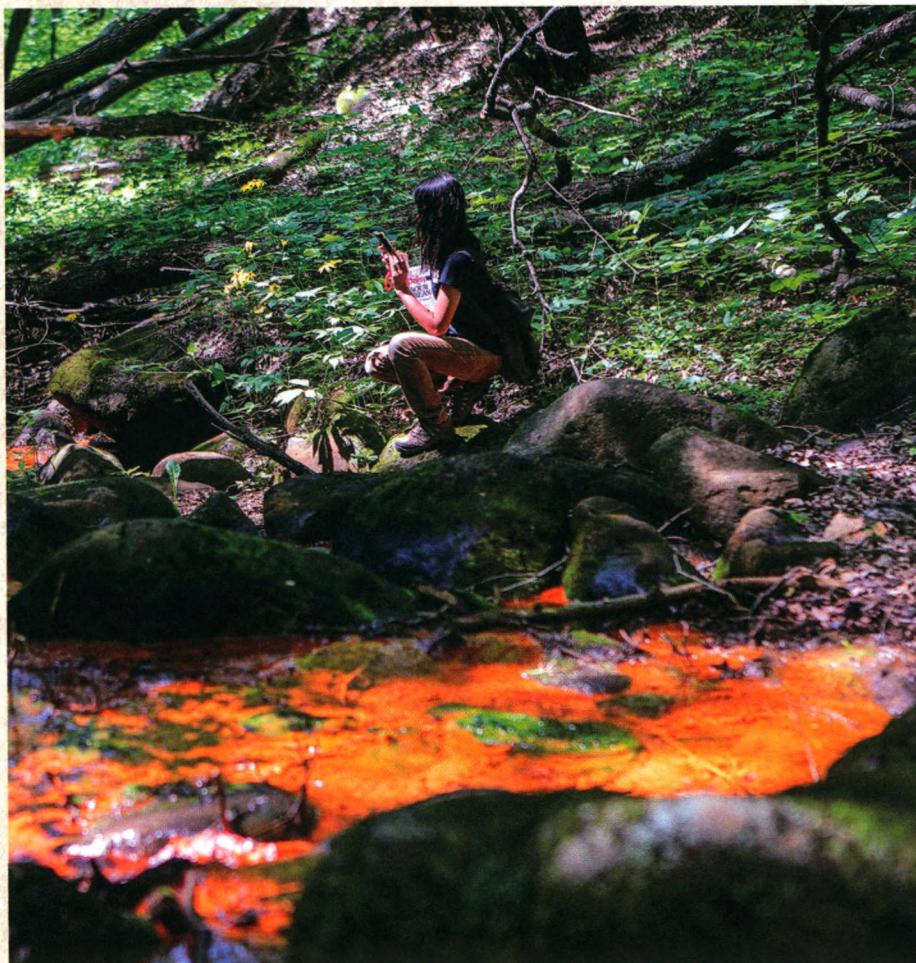
Generous pinch salt

1 tablespoon chopped mint

Whisk all the ingredients together in a small bowl. Taste and adjust the seasonings.

WILD GREENS

We've become so accustomed to ridding our gardens and lawns of dandelion greens, purslane, plantain, and other wild greens that we've forgotten they are good food. Although it's unclear if dandelions, purslane, and plantain are indigenous, there is some evidence that they may have reached North America in the pre-Columbian era, suggesting that these plants were already being eaten by Native Americans before Europeans arrived. Add wood sorrel, watercress, lamb's quarters, miner's lettuce, clover, and garlic mustard that grow wild in backyards, fields, and the borders of forests, and you have a great salad mix—delicious and loaded with vitamins. Instead of trying to eradicate these plants in our lawns, we can just eat them up!



Foraging for wild greens

WILD GREENS PESTO

Watȟótho yužápi

Makes 1½ cups

To make a bold, flavorful pesto, I try to balance a range of flavors: fragrant mint, potent mustard, citrusy sorrel or purslane, bitter dandelion, neutral lamb's quarters. Making pesto the old-fashioned way by pounding together the greens, nuts, and oil will yield a thick, rough sauce.

If you'd like something smoother, blend it all together in a food processor fitted with a steel blade. This will keep a week or more in the refrigerator in a covered container.

Wood sorrel, like its domestic cousin, adds a bright, lemony flavor to this sauce.

**2 cups wild greens, some combination of sorrel, dandelion greens,
purslane, lamb's quarters, wild mint, and mustard**

1 wild onion or ¼ cup chopped shallot

¼ cup toasted sunflower seeds*

⅔ to ¾ cup sunflower or hazelnut oil

Pinch salt

Pinch maple sugar

Pound together the greens, onion or shallot, and sunflower seeds with a mortar and pestle or by whizzing in a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Slowly work in the oil and season to taste with salt and a little maple sugar.

*To toast sunflower seeds, see page 158 or use unsalted toasted sunflower seeds, available in the bulk section of the co-op or packaged.

WILD GREENS GLOSSARY

AMARANTH

The entire amaranth plant is edible—its tiny shoots, the green leaves, stems, seeds, and roots. When harvested young, they add zip to salads and pesto and make a lively garnish for soups.

CHICKWEED

Early in the season, the entire plant is still tender and bright tasting, so we use it all in salads and pesto. Early in the season the leaves are mild, succulent, and delicate, then they grow bitter as the months progress.

CLOVER

Clover is the first green to appear in the spring and tastiest when it's enjoyed early on. As the season progresses, it becomes bitter.

DANDELION

This is our favorite spring green—lively and peppery, great in salads and wonderful in pesto. We often chop it to garnish soups and light stews. The entire plant is edible, so don't hesitate to use the pretty yellow flowers for garnish; when they first bloom, their flavor is mild and almost sweet.

DOCK

The big spiky leaves taste a little like lemony spinach. As the season progresses, they can become very astringent but suitable chopped and used as a garnish.

KNOTWEED

The young greens and stems are great diced in salads; peppery and grassy, they add zip.

LAMB'S QUARTERS

Lamb's quarters absorbs minerals from the soil and can add a lovely salty flavor to salads or pesto. The leaves can also be used like spinach, lightly sautéed or added to soups and stews at the last minute.

MALLOW

Mallow is one of the last greens of the harvest and one of the first to return in the spring. It is mild tasting. The entire plant, when diced, helps thicken soups and stews.

MUSTARD

Mustard greens make a spicy addition to salads and pesto. The seeds are easy to harvest for spice and homemade mustard.

PLANTAIN

Plantain leaves are delicious in salads, especially in those tossed with berries and apples.

PURSLANE

This is one of the most nutritious greens on the planet—loaded with vitamins and minerals. It contains more vitamin E than spinach, more beta-carotene than carrots, and is 2.5 percent protein. It is chock-full of omega 3 fatty acids that help boost the immune system and support brain function.

WATERCRESS

Watercress grows along fast-running cold streams and is one of the first greens to appear through the crusts of snow. It's bright and peppery, fabulous in salads, and great in pesto. It pairs perfectly with trout.



Foraging at dusk

NATURE'S SWEETS, TEAS, AND REFRESHING DRINKS

Creating delicious desserts without wheat flour, dairy, or processed sugar—the holy trinity of treats—may sound daunting. But in rebuilding this food system literally from the ground up, we've let our imaginations roam outside of the European dessert box. Nature's sweet gifts are the focus here.

These recipes rely on sweet and tangy fruits, corn and squash (roasted to caramelize their sugars), tree sap, honey, agave, and fruit syrups. The first people didn't use much honey, but it plays a significant role in our kitchen. We enjoy its natural goodness and versatility. Bees are pollinators, vital to our local food system, and we believe apiaries should be a part of every community.

Dessert at the end of a meal is a European convention. Our ancestors relied on sweet foods for energy; they played an important role in a healthy diet and were not considered indulgences. Chocolate was enjoyed as a bitter or savory drink until the Spanish arrived and sweetened it up. We've included a few recipes for chocolate sweetened with agave, because these two ingredients come from the same region. We also provide recipes for the traditional seed cakes our warriors, farmers, and foragers once carried with them as snacks.

Our refreshing teas and drinks pair beautifully with our meals. Some are calming, others are energizing; we enjoy them throughout the day. It was common for tribes to have drinking water with berries, herbs, or other flavors steeping in the camp. Food is medicine, and as we rediscover these delicious, nutritious, healing foods, we are reconnecting with our past and revitalizing our culture.



SUNFLOWER COOKIES

Wahčázi Tháŋka Sú Ağýabskuyela

Makes about 1 dozen cookies

Our signature sweet, sunflower cookies are delicious any time of day and are inspired by the sunflower cakes Native warriors relied on for strength and endurance. Sunflower is packed with magnesium, B vitamins, and protein—all extremely beneficial to girls and women.

1 cup Sunny Butter, page 166

½ cup maple syrup or honey to taste

Pinch salt

¼ cup cornmeal

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a small bowl, stir together the Sunny Butter, maple syrup, and salt, adding a little warm water if the dough is too stiff. Using a tablespoon, scoop up balls of the mixture and roll in the cornmeal. Place on a cookie sheet and flatten slightly with your hand. Bake the cookies until just firm, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove and set on a rack to cool.

EDIBLE FLOWERS

The flowers of berry bushes and fruit trees are beautiful garnishes and make a light, sweet addition to salads and sautés. Don't pick too many or the plant won't bear fruit. One or two won't make much difference to the harvest, but it will light up the plate. Scatter the edible flowers over sorbets or sweet cookies or cakes.



THE INDIGENOUS PANTRY



When I first started researching Native foods, I was fascinated with the idea of the food cache. I had read an old Lakota legend about a hermit who lived in woods far to the east who taught a brother and sister to bury their seeds and their harvest foods to keep them safe. Such legends, folktales, and stories provide insight to ancient cultures and are rich with meaning. When I discovered Buffalo Bird Woman's detailed account of an indigenous pantry, I was beyond excited. It was clear to me that all the dry foods, oils, salts, and seasonings kept buried or stored away for the long winters were the true base of the flavors of indigenous foods. Here was the best example of foods that people would be drawing on throughout the entire year. I can picture those ancestral pantries brimming with varieties of dried corn seeds and meals, dried squash rings, assorted vegetable flours, an apothecary of herbs and seasonings, ashes, salts, and roots.

As we design our restaurant, "The Sioux Chef—An Indigenous Kitchen," we are striving to re-create a modern indigenous kitchen fully stocked with preserved fruits, vegetables, fish, meats,

and seasonings. We are constantly gathering and drying, grinding, and storing the natural and flavorful ingredients that surround us—bergamot, hyssop, tree seasonings, fruits, barks, seeds. Using modern appliances, we freeze freshly picked berries so we can enjoy them in their most simple form, without the excess salt and sugar inherent in pickling or canning.

Drying meats, fruits, and vegetables not only preserves them but concentrates and intensifies flavors for addition to soups, stews, and sauces. We also smoke and dry meats to enhance their flavors and add smoke and ash to other foods. Because nature does not create consistent products, we enhance the natural qualities of the foods we work with by choosing seasonings we have on hand.

Once the pantry is well stocked, improvising dishes and creating your own variations comes easily. Creating an indigenous kitchen for the modern world requires attention to the cycle of food and our responsibility to nurture ourselves, each other, and our mother earth.

ACORN MEAL FLOUR

Úta Blú

Acorns taste like a cross between hazelnuts and sunflower seeds. They are abundant, easy to store, high in protein, and very nutritious. They are nearly as important to Native Americans as corn, squash, and beans.

The Cherokee, Apache, Pima, Ojibwe, and most other Native American tribes across the oak-growing North and South America routinely harvested and used acorn nuts from oak trees.

Because acorns are very high in tannin, the dry-tasting substance associated with dry red wine, they need to be soaked before using. The flour will keep indefinitely in a covered container in a cool, dry place.

To start, gather the acorns and examine each one carefully. Discard any that are cracked, moldy, or wormy. Early in the season the shells are soft and easy to cut; later you may need a nutcracker to shell the acorn.

Put the acorns into a large pot and cover with water by 2 to 3 inches. Set over a high flame, bring to a boil, and cook until the water turns brown. Drain and repeat until the water is clear, about 3 to 5 times. Drain and pat dry.

Preheat the oven to 250°F. Arrange the acorns on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake until the nuts are firm, dry, and toasted, about 1½ to 2 hours. Remove from the oven and cool.

To make the flour, place the nuts into a food processor fitted with a steel blade and grind to the texture of cornmeal.

HAZELNUT FLOUR

Úma Blú

Hazelnuts are deliciously nutty, are a great source of oil, and make a wonderful flour. Place the shelled nuts in a single layer on a baking sheet and toast in a 350°F oven until they smell toasty, about 3 to 5 minutes. Wrap the nuts in a clean dishcloth and roll to remove the peels. Then grind them in a food processor fitted with a steel blade, a blender, a coffee grinder, or a spice mill. Store the flour in a covered container in the refrigerator or freeze.

CHESTNUT FLOUR

Úma Iyécheča Blú

To make chestnut flour, chop peeled chestnuts, page 85, into small pieces. Dry in a food dehydrator or the oven at a low temperature until rock hard. Transfer to a flour mill, food processor, or coffee mill and grind to make a fine flour. Store in the freezer.

WOJAPE

Wóžapi

Makes about 4 to 6 cups

The scent of this traditional sauce simmering on the stove takes me back to my freewheeling six-year-old self. Our family relied on the local chokecherries I gathered as a kid. We'd spread a blanket under the trees and gather buckets full. There's no need to pit them because the pits drop to the bottom of the pot as the sauce becomes thick and lush. We'd sweeten it for a dessert or serve it as a tangy sauce for meat and game and vegetables, and as a dressing.

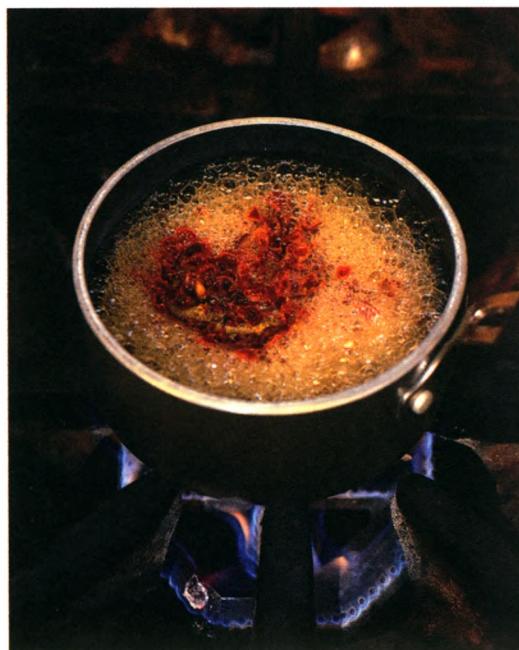
6 cups fresh berries—chokecherries or a mix of blueberries, raspberries,

strawberries, elderberries, cranberries, blackberries

1 to 1½ cups water

Honey or maple syrup to taste

Put the berries and water into a saucepan and set over low heat. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is thick. Taste and season with honey or maple syrup as desired.



Wojape



NATIVE HERBS AND SEASONINGS

Wičahiyutapi Ikčéka

BERGAMOT

The pretty, narrow, tubular flowers are maroon, magenta, and lilac and resemble a chrysanthemum atop a two-foot-high erect stalk. This member of the mint family attracts hummingbirds and helps repel mosquitoes and gnats. It's wonderful in apple jelly and wine.



Bergamot

SAGE

Dusty green leaves infuse meats and soups with an earthy, piney flavor.



Cedar

CEDAR

Great for braising meats and simmering into grains and stews.



Juniper

MINT

Bright mint works best fresh. It tends to lose its punch in heat.



Staghorn Sumac

JUNIPER

Those tiny dusty blue berries are peppery and give foods a ginny edge.

STAGHORN SUMAC

This northern sumac grows along ditches and on the borders of forests. Its deep red berries have a citrusy tang.

MUSTARD

Mustard grows wild and makes a very peppery green in a salad or as a garnish. Collect the seeds and you have a wonderful spice.

ROSE HIPS

Dried or fresh, rose hips add a light citrusy note to stocks and soups.

CULINARY ASH

Čhahóta

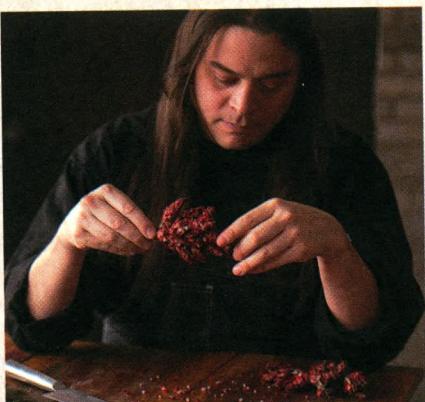
Culinary ash seasoning dates back thousands of years. Just as smoke was an important, primal flavor that cues our original use of fire to transform raw ingredients into delicious foods, burning trees and the hard, inedible parts of plants is an ancient method of creating flavorful spices.

The tastes of ash seasoning vary depending on the plant used—corncobs, sage leaves, juniper berries, rose hips, sumac—and the ash adds color and interest to many dishes. To create ash, hold the food over a flame with tongs or set it on a grill or under a broiler, rotating it until it's thoroughly blackened. Remove and place on a baking sheet until it is cool enough to handle.

Any food can be “ashed,” but here are those we like using the best:

- **Corn ash** is slightly sweet, dark, and a bit creamy.
- **Sage ash** is peppery and assertive.
- **Juniper ash** will turn the foods it seasons a dark, inky blue and add an earthy, piney, peppery note.

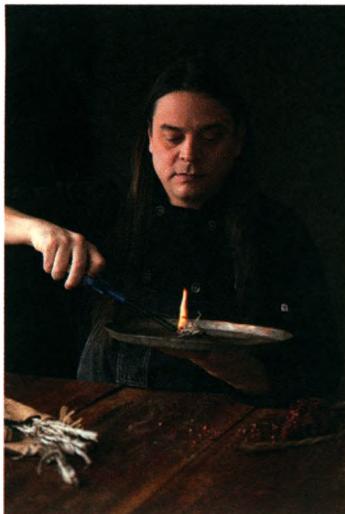
STAGHORN SUMAC



Pulling sumac berries for seasoning

Staghorn sumac grows throughout the upper Midwest and Northeast, winged sumac in the East and South, and smooth sumac throughout the east and central United States and the West. There are nonpoisonous sumacs that grow in open and edge habitats. The biggest difference between these varieties of sumac and poisonous sumac is the color of the berries. Poison sumac berries are white; all others are red or ruddy.

To use sumac as a seasoning, harvest the clusters and pull the berries from the branches. Spread out on a piece of parchment to dry for about a day. Then place the dried berries in a bag and crush. Store in an airtight container out of direct sunlight.



Making ash

MINERAL SALT

Many years ago, Native people gathered salt by following the animals to the salt licks. Salt from the oceans was traded and used as currency.

Seasoned salts are easy to make and handy to have on hand. To make an herbed salt, rinse and dry the herb well. Allow it to air-dry for a few days. Then immerse it in a jar of coarse salt. The salt will draw moisture from the herb and further dry it while the herb will infuse the salt with flavor. You can make these seasoned salts with just one herb or with a mix of the following herbs: sage, cedar, juniper, mint.

SMOKED SALT

Smoked salts are available in the spice aisles of supermarkets, in specialty shops, and online. Making your own is relatively easy:

2 cups wood chips soaked in cold water for 1 hour, drained

2 cups coarse salt

Prepare the grill for indirect heat (putting the hot coals on one side so that there is a cool side to work from). Toss the drained wood chips on the coals. Spread the salt in a thin layer in an aluminum foil pan and place it on the grate away from the fire. Cover the grill and adjust the vent holes for medium heat. Smoke the salt for 1 hour. Remove, allow to cool at room temperature, and then store in a covered jar.

RESOURCES

*As Sean continues to collect resources, he will update
the Sioux Chef Web site (www.sioux-chef.com).*

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NANCY BUNDT



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This author of many award-winning books, including *Savory Sweet: Simple Preserves*; *The Birchwood Kitchen; Minnesota's Bounty: The Farmers Market*; and *The Birchwood Cafe Cookbook*, published by the University of Minnesota Press.