



Cooking Up Native Traditions

Article

Minneapolis, Minnesota (Achieve3000, January 17, 2020). When he was growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, Sean Sherman's family pantry was packed with canned beans, boxed rice, powdered milk, and jugs of vegetable oil. These foods were provided by the U.S. government. Sherman, whose family are Oglala Lakota Sioux, would later raise this question: Why didn't these foods reflect his family's culture?

And Sherman would have even more questions: Why weren't Native American recipes being more widely used? Where could those recipes even be found? And why aren't there more restaurants serving Native American foods?

Sherman was determined to find answers. He met with community elders. He also spoke with Native American chefs and historians. He learned how his ancestors grew, hunted, and prepared their food. And he discovered how to regain an understanding of Native American food practices: by using local plants and other natural ingredients in the environment. The idea was to make food taste like where it's from. Sherman felt encouraged. He established his own Minnesota-based catering business. It's called The Sioux Chef. He also started NATIFS (North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems). His mission? To bring back traditional Native American food to today's world.

But why was it lost in the first place?

Before Europeans arrived, Native Americans used traditional practices to grow and hunt different kinds of food. They also developed methods of food preservation. But the arrival of Europeans changed things. Many traditional food sources were almost destroyed. Bison—an important part of many Native diets—nearly died out.

Making matters worse: During the late 1800s, the U.S. government sent Native American children to boarding schools. They were taught cooking and farming methods. But they never learned how to do things the way their ancestors did. So years of generational knowledge of Native American food traditions disappeared.

Through NATIFS and The Sioux Chef, Sherman is bringing back Native American food traditions. His recipes avoid ingredients that were introduced by Europeans, such as beef and wheat. Instead, he uses ingredients like elk, quail, mushrooms, and wild rice.

For Sherman, going back to his roots is not just about connecting with his culture. Unhealthy eating has led to illnesses such as diabetes in Native American communities. NATIFS hopes to address this problem by bringing back Native food practices. This is because Native foods also have health benefits. They aren't loaded with sodium, sugar, and bad fats.



Photo credit: AP/Amy Forliti

Sean Sherman whips up recipes using traditional Native American ingredients. That's what his catering business, The Sioux Chef, is known for.

Sherman is one of a small number of chefs serving traditional Native American ingredients. But this might be changing. Native American foods fit perfectly into the growing farm-to-table movement. It's all about using local fresh ingredients. Plus, Native American foods aren't processed and can easily be made vegetarian. One thing Native American food is *not*, says Sherman, is a trend. It's a way of life.

Video credit: The Sioux Chef

Dictionary

cater (*verb*) to provide food and drinks at a party, meeting, etc., especially as a job

indigenous (*adjective*) produced, living, or existing naturally in a particular region or environment

recipe (*noun*) a set of instructions for making something from various ingredients

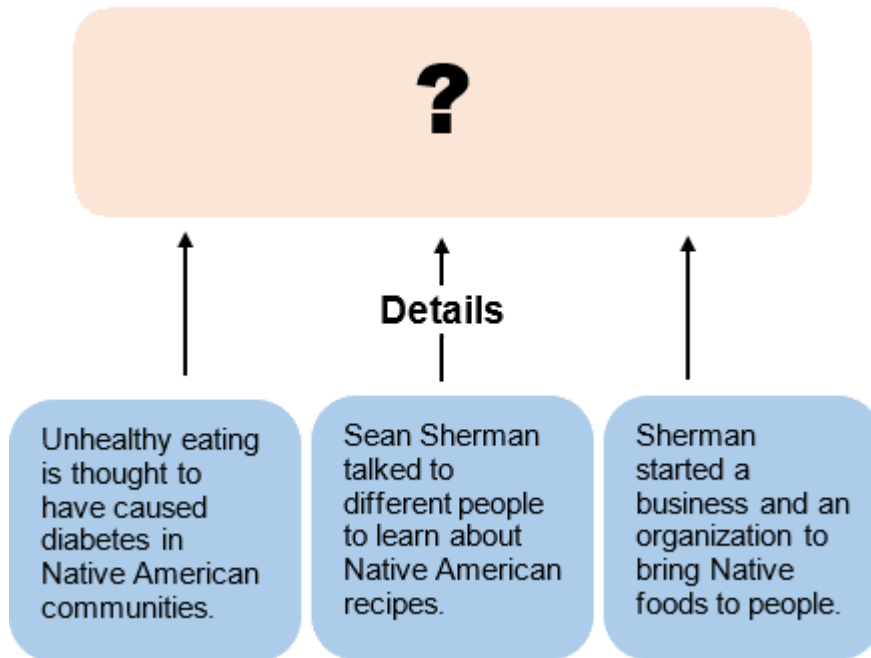
trend (*noun*) something that is currently popular or fashionable

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

Main Idea of the Article



Based on the Article, which best replaces the question mark in the diagram above?

- (A) When he was growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, Sean Sherman's family pantry was packed with canned beans, boxed rice, powdered milk, and vegetable oil.
- (B) Before contact with Europeans, Native peoples used traditional ways of growing and hunting food and also developed their own methods of food preservation.
- (C) Native American foods fit perfectly into the growing farm-to-table movement, which is all about using local fresh ingredients.
- (D) Through NATIFS and The Sioux Chef, Sean Sherman is reviving Native American cooking traditions and practices to both reconnect with his culture and to create food with health benefits.

Question 2

Which of these is an opinion?

- (A) Although the government meant to do the right thing, it didn't really help anyone when it gave free canned beans, boxed rice, powdered milk, and vegetable oil to Native Americans.
- (B) Through NATIFS and The Sioux Chef, Sean Sherman is bringing back Native food traditions while avoiding the use of ingredients that were introduced by Europeans.
- (C) In the late 1800s, the government sent Native American children to boarding schools where they were taught cooking and farming methods that were different from their traditional methods.
- (D) Sean Sherman wanted to learn what foods were included in the traditional Native American diet, so he met with community elders and Native American chefs and historians to get some answers.

Question 3

The Article states:

For Sherman, going back to his roots is not just about connecting with his culture. Unhealthy eating has led to illnesses such as diabetes in Native American communities. NATIFS hopes to address this problem by bringing back Native food practices. This is because Native foods also have health benefits. They aren't loaded with sodium, sugar, and bad fats.

Why did the author include this passage?

- (A) To describe how Sean Sherman is using ingredients such as sodium, sugar, and fats to create new dishes
- (B) To argue that many people avoid the traditional Native American diet because it can lead to illnesses
- (C) To point out that the only real reason Sean Sherman has recreated Native recipes is that it connects him with his culture
- (D) To show that traditional Native American foods are healthy because they aren't high in sodium, fat, and sugar

Question 4

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *indigenous*?

- (A) ceremonial
- (B) delicate
- (C) automatic
- (D) foreign

Question 5

Based on the Article, the reader can predict that _____.

- (A) more and more people will become familiar with the benefits of a Native American diet through the work of NATIFS and The Sioux Chef
- (B) Sean Sherman will include more canned beans, boxed rice, powdered milk, and vegetable oil in the foods prepared at The Sioux Chef
- (C) many Native Americans will slowly change over to an all-meat diet that includes large amounts of beef, elk, and quail
- (D) Sean Sherman will teach university courses that show students how to prepare traditional Native American dishes using European ingredients

Question 6

Which information is **not** in the Article?

- (A) What foods were commonly found in Sean Sherman's pantry when he was a boy
- (B) Which problem NATIFS hopes to address by bringing back Native American food practices
- (C) Why it is so difficult to find traditional ingredients, like mushrooms and wild rice
- (D) Who Sean Sherman turned to when he wanted to find out more about the food of his ancestors

Question 7

Read this passage from the Article:

[Sherman] met with community elders. He also spoke with Native American *chefs* and historians. He learned how his ancestors grew, hunted, and prepared their food. And he discovered how to regain an understanding of Native American food practices: by using local plants and other natural ingredients in the environment.

In this passage, the word *chef* means _____.

- A a professional cook who is in charge of a kitchen
- B a farmer who only grows natural foods
- C a respected person who is usually older than others
- D a person who studies or writes about history

Question 8

Which passage from the Article best supports the idea that Sean Sherman actively sought out the help of others when he wanted to learn more about traditional Native American foods?

- A Before Europeans arrived, Native Americans used traditional practices to grow and hunt different kinds of food. They also developed methods of food preservation. But the arrival of Europeans changed things. Many traditional food sources were almost destroyed. Bison—an important part of many Native diets—nearly died out.
- B Sherman is one of a small number of chefs serving traditional Native American ingredients. But this might be changing. Native American foods fit perfectly into the growing farm-to-table movement. It's all about using local fresh ingredients. Plus, Native American foods aren't processed and can easily be made vegetarian.
- C When he was growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, Sean Sherman's family pantry was packed with canned beans, boxed rice, powdered milk, and jugs of vegetable oil. These foods were provided by the U.S. government. Sherman, whose family are Oglala Lakota Sioux, would later raise this question: Why didn't these foods reflect his family's culture?
- D Sherman was determined to find answers. He met with community elders. He also spoke with Native American chefs and historians. He learned how his ancestors grew, hunted, and prepared their food. And he discovered how to regain an understanding of Native American food practices: by using local plants and other natural ingredients in the environment.