



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, fished, preserved, and prepared their food. And he discovered the way to reclaim 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 was inspired. He established his own Minnesota-based catering business. It's called The Sioux Chef. He also started the non-profit, NATIFS (North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems). His mission? To bring traditional Native American cuisine back to today's world.

But why was it lost in the first place?

Before contact with Europeans, Native peoples employed traditional agricultural and butchering techniques. They also developed methods of food preservation. And the foods they ate were as varied as North America's geography.

But as Europeans arrived, many traditional food sources, including heirloom seeds, were destroyed. Bison—which was vital to many Native diets—nearly became extinct. Making matters worse: During the late 1800s, the U.S. government sent Native American children to boarding schools where they were taught cooking and farming methods. But they never learned how to forage, farm, and hunt, as their ancestors did. So years of generational knowledge of Native American food traditions disappeared.

Through NATIFS and The Sioux Chef, Sherman is restoring that knowledge and reviving Native American cooking traditions and practices. 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 reconnecting with his culture. Native American foods also have health benefits. Many of the processed and canned foods provided to Native American reservations through government programs are full of sodium. And they're loaded with bad fats and brimming with sugar. It's believed these foods have



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.

contributed to serious health issues affecting Native American communities, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. NATIFS hopes to address this health crisis by re-establishing Native foodways.

Sherman is one of a small number of chefs serving and promoting traditional Native American ingredients. But this might be changing. Native American foods fit perfectly into the growing farm-to-table movement. It promotes local fresh ingredients. Plus, Native American foods aren't processed and can easily be made vegetarian or gluten-free. 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

forage (*verb*) to search for something (such as food or supplies)

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

inspire (*verb*) to make (someone) want to do something; to give (someone) an idea about what to do or create

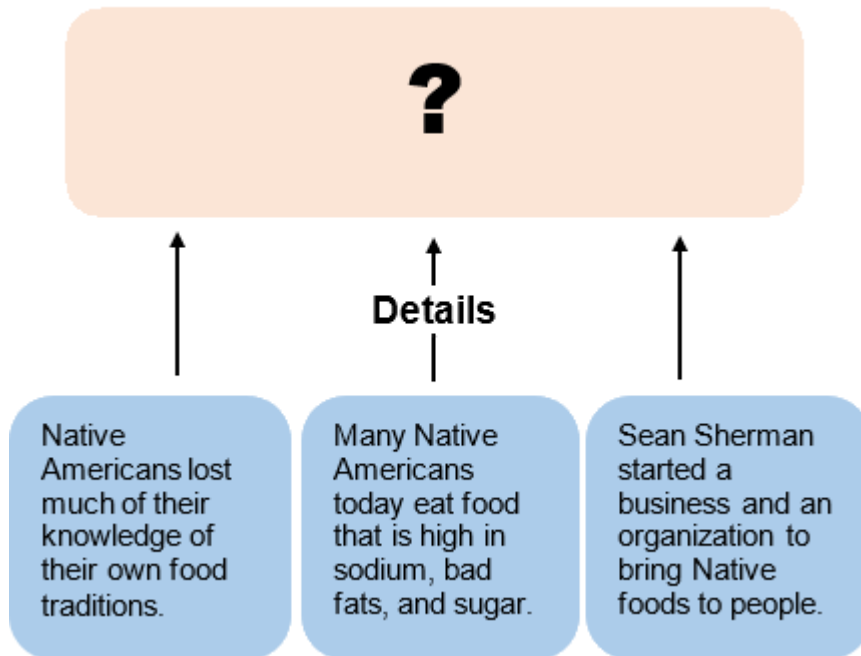
trend (*noun*) something that is currently popular or fashionable

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) Before contact with Europeans, Native peoples employed traditional agricultural and butchering techniques and also developed methods of food preservation.
- (B) Native American foods fit perfectly into the growing farm-to-table movement, which promotes local fresh ingredients.
- (C) 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.
- (D) 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.

Question 2

Which of these is a statement of 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) 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.
- (C) 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.
- (D) Sean Sherman's traditional recipes avoid foods that were introduced by the Europeans and instead include ingredients such as elk, quail, and wild rice.

Question 3

The Article states:

For Sherman, going back to his roots is not just about reconnecting with his culture. Native American foods also have health benefits. Many of the processed and canned foods provided to Native American reservations through government programs are full of sodium. And they're loaded with bad fats and brimming with sugar. It's believed these foods have contributed to serious health issues affecting Native American communities, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. NATIFS hopes to address this health crisis by re-establishing Native foodways.

Why did the author include this passage?

- (A) To describe a way in which the United States government has come to the aid of Native Americans and achieved good health outcomes
- (B) To point out that the rate of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer has been falling steadily in Native American communities
- (C) To suggest that the government has actually contributed to the health problems of some Native Americans
- (D) To say that Native Americans are now taking more responsibility for the health issues that currently affect their communities

Question 4

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *inspired*?

- (A) motivated
- (B) bewildered
- (C) concerned
- (D) annoyed

Question 5

The reader can predict from the Article that _____.

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

Question 6

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

- Ⓐ Who Sean Sherman turned to when he wanted to find out more about his ancestors' diets
- Ⓑ What harmful effects a diet high in sodium, fat, and sugar can impose on one's health
- Ⓒ What foods were commonly found in Sean Sherman's pantry when he was a boy
- Ⓓ Why it is so difficult to find traditional ingredients, like mushrooms and wild rice

Question 7

Read this passage from the Article:

Many of the processed and canned foods provided to Native American reservations through government programs are full of sodium. And they're loaded with bad fats and brimming with sugar. It's believed these foods have contributed to serious health issues affecting Native American communities, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. NATIFS hopes to address this health crisis by re-establishing Native foodways.

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

- Ⓐ a situation in which people are uncertain about something
- Ⓑ a difficult situation that needs serious attention
- Ⓒ a rule made by the government of a town, state, etc.
- Ⓓ a good or helpful result, outcome, or effect

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?

- Ⓐ 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, fished, preserved, and prepared their food. And he discovered the way to reclaim an understanding of Native American food practices: by using local plants and other natural ingredients in the environment.
- Ⓑ 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?
- Ⓒ Sherman is one of a small number of chefs serving and promoting traditional Native American ingredients. But this might be changing. Native American foods fit perfectly into the growing farm-to-table movement. It promotes local fresh ingredients. Plus, Native American foods aren't processed and can easily be made vegetarian or gluten-free. One thing Native American food is *not*, says Sherman, is a trend. It's a way of life.
- Ⓓ But as Europeans arrived, many traditional food sources, including heirloom seeds, were destroyed. Bison—which was vital to many Native diets—nearly became extinct. Making matters worse: During the late 1800s, the U.S. government sent Native American children to boarding schools where they were taught cooking and farming methods. But they never learned how to forage, farm, and hunt, as their ancestors did.