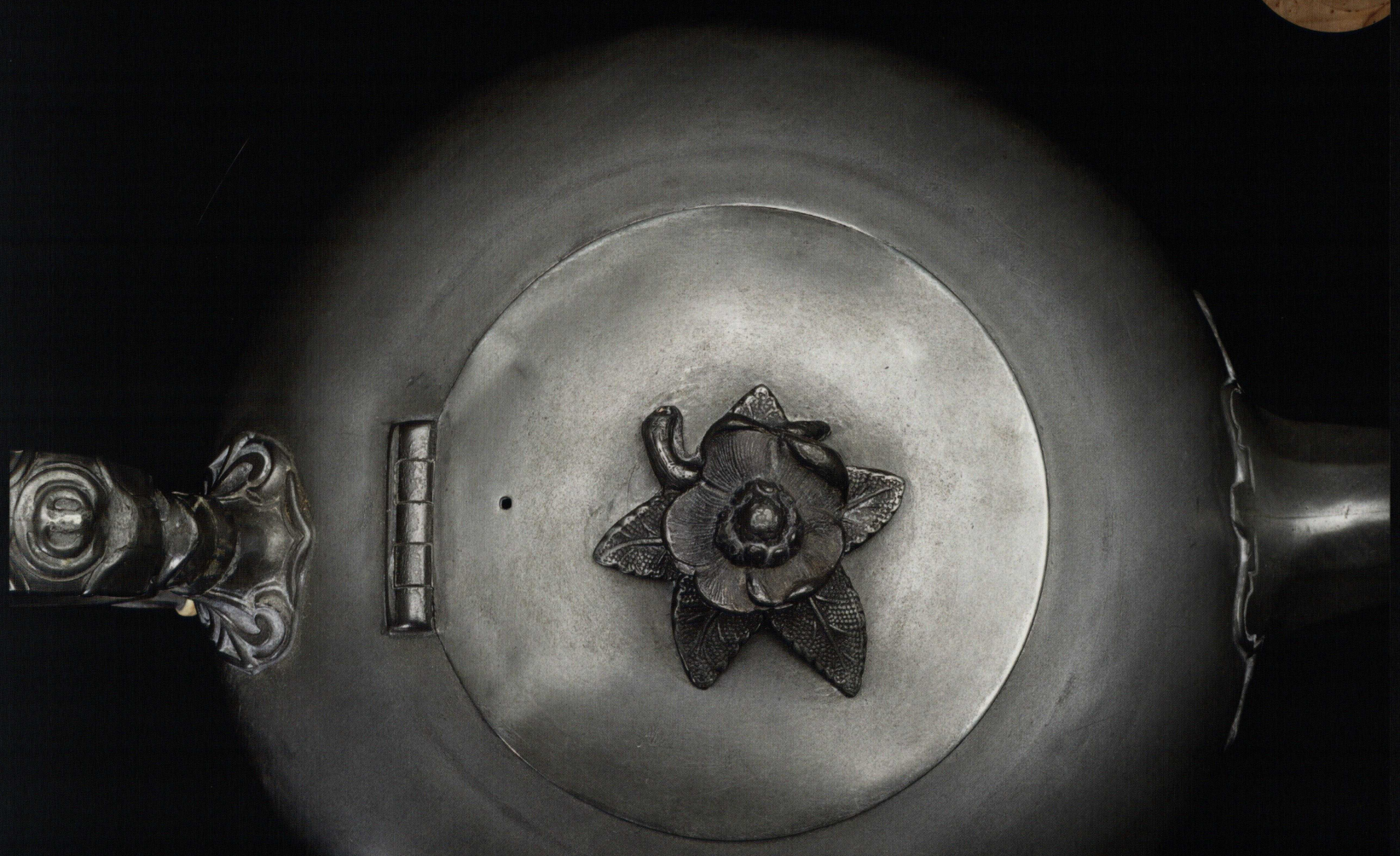
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The Food Issue

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PAGE 1: DETAIL FROM A TEA SET, 101 RANCH, CA. 1930. GM60.207. PAGE 3: THE THREE SISTERS. PHOTO BY LOIS ELLEN FRANK, PH.D.

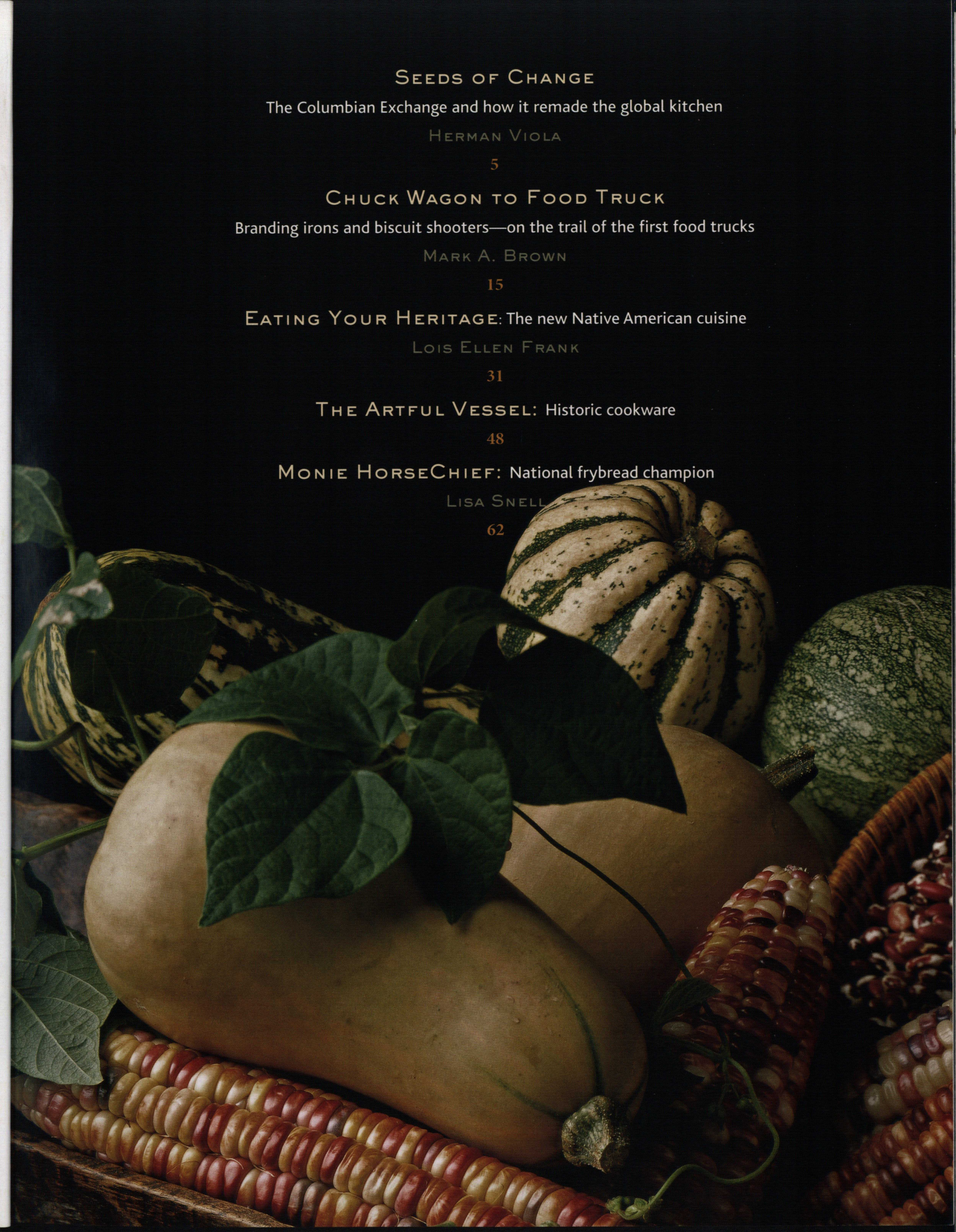
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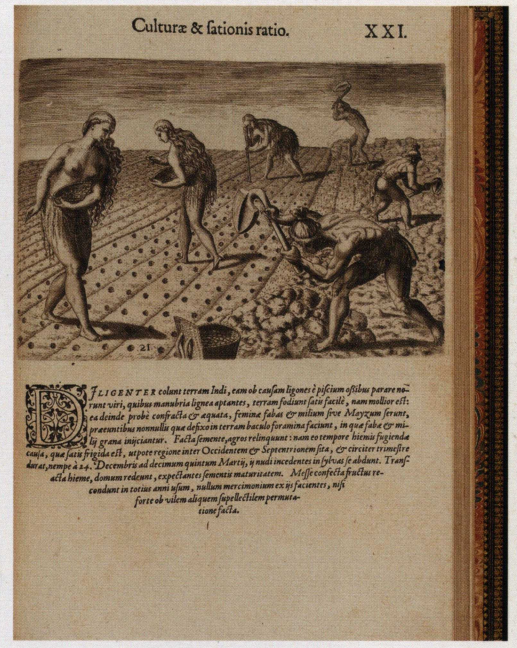
Seeds of Change

Herman Viola

The world of today owes much to a Genoese seaman who in 1492 discovered a land unknown to the peoples of Europe. Christopher Columbus's feat was remarkable, although, even after four voyages to the Americas he was never able to comprehend the significance of his explorations. He was not alone in this lack of understanding. It took decades for his fellow Europeans to appreciate the meaning of his accomplishments. No better example of this need be noted than the failure of European cartographers to name these newfound lands Columbia, in his honor. Instead, they named them for Amerigo Vespucci, whose widely circulated letter Mondus Nevus, written in 1503, publicized the discovery of the Americas. Columbus's journals would not be available to European readers till much later.

Columbus, however, did more than force European cartographers to revise their maps of the known world. He, and those who followed him, profoundly impacted the Western Hemisphere biologically and culturally through the introduction, sometimes deliberately and sometimes accidently, of plants, animals, and diseases. Eventually the processes of encounter and exchange that Columbus initiated had repercussions in Europe as well, impacting flora and fauna, altering the ethnic composition of countries, and changing the diet and health of people everywhere.

The processes of environmental change began in September 1493 when the Admiral of the Ocean Sea returned to America with an armada of seventeen ships that disgorged on the island of Hispaniola—today's Cuba—some twelve hundred would-be empire builders and a Noah's Ark of Old World animals and plants



"New World Tillers" (above) and "Native American Village of Secoton" (facing page) from *America*. Theodore de Bry. 1590. Part I. GM2475.154.

including horses, cows, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, wheat, barley, and shoots of sugarcane. Unintentionally, the expedition also brought weeds, rats, and germs.

Sugarcane, next to disease, is considered the most detrimental contribution of the Old World to the New because with it came the plantation system and the initial assault on the tropical rain forests of the Americas. Sugar was a labor intensive crop that consumed huge human resources and led directly to the importation of Africans as slaves to work the plantations. Scholars estimate that it cost the life of one slave for every ton of sugar produced. Africans not only made sugar production profitable but they also replaced Indians as the dominant ethnic group in the Caribbean. Ironically, it may have been maize—corn, a New World food Europeans took to Africa—that fueled the population growth on that continent, thereby enabling the Atlantic slavers to keep the sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations of the Americas supplied with labor.

Ironically, it may have been maize—corn, a food Europeans took to Africa—that fueled the population growth on that continent, thereby enabling the Atlantic slavers to keep the sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations of the Americas supplied with labor.

Europeans at first did not value the nutritional discoveries. It was the hoped for gold and silver to be found in the Americas that occupied their attention and in this they were not disappointed. Considerable mineral treasure was in fact found and exported to European coffers, but the real treasure proved to be the American food crops—maize, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cassava, tomatoes, peanuts, manioc, cacao, peppers, beans, and squashes, all of them totally unknown outside of the Americas before the Age of Discovery.

Cassava, which originated in tropical America, is today grown in over 90 countries and is the third most important source of calories in the tropics after rice and maize. Also known as yucca, manioc, and tapioca, this tuberous root was first introduced into the African Congo by the Portuguese around 1558. Today it is a staple food for half a billion people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, many of them poor and living on marginal land.

Today one year's worldwide potato crop is worth more money than all the gold and silver Spain ever took from the Americas. Because potatoes can grow from sea level up to 4,700 meters above sea level, they are readily adaptable to a variety of environments which helps explain why they are produced today in over 100 countries worldwide. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the potato is the third most important food crop in the world after rice and wheat in terms of human consumption. More than a billion people worldwide eat potatoes and the global total crop production exceeds 300 million metric tons.

The origins of the potato can be traced back 8,000 years to the Andean highlands of South America along the border between present day Bolivia and Peru. It was there that Peruvian farmers succeeded in selecting and improving the first of what was to become, over the following millennia, a vast array of tuber crops. In fact, the tuber known as "the potato" (*Solanum tuberosum*) contains just a fragment of the genetic diversity found in the seven recognized potato species and the more than 4300 varieties of potatoes in many shapes and sizes that are still to



Facing: "The Cacao Tree" from *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands.* Mark Catesby, 1743. Volume II, Appendix, Plate 6. GM3276.73.

be found in the Andes as well as some 180 wild potato species. The wild potatoes, though too bitter to eat, are important for their biodiversity which includes natural resistances to pests, diseases, and climatic conditions.

One hectare (2.47 acres) of potato can yield two to four times the food quantity of grain crops. Potatoes produce more food per unit of water than any other major crop and are up to seven times more efficient in using water than cereals. Since the early 1960s, the growth in potato producing areas has rapidly overtaken all other food crops in developing countries. It is a fundamental element in the food security for millions of people across South America, Africa, and Asia. Presently, more than half of the global potato production comes from developing countries.

Potatoes produce more food per unit of water than any other major crop and are up to seven times more efficient in using water than cereals. Since the early 1960s, the growth in potato producing areas has rapidly overtaken all other food crops in developing countries.

Scholars believe that maize, popularly known as corn, was domesticated from a Mexican grass called *teosinte* about 9,000 years ago in the Tehuacan Valley of Mexico. Beginning about 2500 BC, the crop spread throughout much of the Americas and then, thanks to Columbus and those who followed him, to the rest of the world because of its ability to grow in diverse climates. Sugar-rich varieties called sweet corn are usually grown for human consumption, while varieties known as field corn serve primarily as animal feed. Today corn is the most produced crop in the world—885,289,935 metric tons in 2012, followed by rice, wheat, and potatoes.

Tobacco, found on both continents, was another significant American plant gift to the world. Indians, who cultivated and smoked tobacco in pipes for medicinal and ceremonial purposes, introduced Columbus to the plant soon after he made landfall on October 12, 1492. According to his diary entry for that day, the natives brought him "fruit, wooden spears, and certain dried leaves which gave off a distinct fragrance."

A few weeks, later, while exploring the island that is now Cuba, several crew members observed "women and men, with a firebrand in the hand, [and] herbs to drink the smoke thereof, as they are accustomed." The Spaniards learned from the natives that the leaves kept them from getting tired or hungry. One of the observers, Rodrigo de Jerez, tried it and liked it. In doing so, he became the first European to smoke tobacco. He took some seeds—and his new habit—back with him to Spain. Columbus also returned with a few tobacco leaves and seeds, but most Europeans did not get their first taste of tobacco until the mid-16th century when adventurers like France's Jean Nicot—for whom nicotine is named—began to popularize its use.

Once introduced to tobacco, Europeans quickly adopted the new-found plant despite efforts by popes and kings to restrict its use. King James I of England, for one, wrote a treatise titled *A Counterblaste to Tobacco.* "What honour or policie," he asked in his 1604 essay, "can move us to imitate the barbarous and beastly maners of the wilde, godlesse, and slavish Indians, especially in so vile and stinking a custom?" No matter. Tobacco's economic impact and widespread popularity soon penetrated all cultures and became a mainstay of the American economy.

Less calorie rich foods such as tomatoes, chili peppers, cacao, peanuts, and

Facing: "The Virginia Potato Plant" from ***The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands.*** Mark Catesby, 1743. Volume II, Plate 60. GM3276.73.



pineapples also had a tremendous impact on Old Word diets. Indeed, these foods are now culinary centerpieces in many countries. Imagine Italy without tomatoes or Asian countries such as India, Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand without chili peppers, peanuts, and pineapples.

The Columbian Exchange went both ways of course. Besides sugar, which found the soils of the New World quite compatible, coffee also flourished in the Americas. In addition, Europeans brought peach, pear, orange, and lemon trees as well as chickpeas, grapevines, melons, onions, radishes, and various other fruits and vegetables.

An unintentional consequence of this exchange of plants was the introduction of new weeds such as clover, plantain, and the dandelion, which were very aggressive. They spread rapidly and outcompeted native plants, thereby impacting many ecosystems. Interestingly, few American plant pests thrived in Europe, so the invasion of weeds and grasses was largely one way.

One reason that weeds and non native grasses spread so widely in the Americas was the simultaneous introduction of livestock, another important component of the Columbian Exchange. Cattle, horses, and pigs, which adapted very quickly to New World grasslands, soon experienced population explosions because, upon reaching the Caribbean islands, the Spaniards simply set their livestock loose to multiply and flourish. The result was overgrazing that destroyed native ground covers, thereby enabling European grasses and weeds to establish themselves in place of native plants.

Contrary to popular belief, the roots of ranching are to be found not in America but in the Iberian Peninsula because many of the Spanish colonists who arrived in the New World were already well accustomed to the life of the cattleman on the open range. Ranching traditions considered uniquely American, like roundups, branding, and cattle drives, actually originated in medieval Spain . . .

Perhaps the most harmful of the livestock introductions was the tusked European swine, an aggressive omnivore. The pigs, literally, ate everything in sight—not just plants. They adapted everywhere in continental America from Nova Scotia to Patagonia. Indeed, although turtles, venison, and other game predominated in the diet of the first European settlers, pork quickly became a mainstay because it was plentiful, nourishing, inexpensive to buy, and free to the hunter.

With the livestock introductions came the ranching tradition. Contrary to popular belief, the roots of ranching are to be found not in America but in the Iberian Peninsula because many of the Spanish colonists who arrived in the New World were already well accustomed to the life of the cattleman on the open range. Ranching traditions considered uniquely American, like roundups, branding, and cattle drives, actually originated in medieval Spain, a country that had open grasslands and excellent horses available to rich and poor alike.

Because of the Iberian ranching tradition, Spain's colonists easily populated the areas and latitudes of the New World most suitable for ranching. Spreading north and south from Central America, the Spaniards encountered the three great grasslands of the New World: the Argentine pampas, the Venezuelan llanos, and the Great Plains of North America.

Spanish cattle thrived in the meadows and grasslands of the Antilles and accompanied the various entradas to the American mainland. Like horses, they enjoyed prodigious growth throughout the western hemisphere. Scholars believe that cattle became established north and east of Mexico as a result of the Hernando De Soto and Francisco Vasquez Coronado expeditions into the North American interior during the first half of the sixteenth century. Whether valid or not, cattle were a mainstay of the Spanish settlements later established in California, Arizona, and eastern Texas where ranching began in the late seventeenth century with the Catholic missions, which maintained the largest herds during the Spanish colonial period. When the missions collapsed, many of the cattle became feral, gaining later fame as Texas Longhorns.

The one gift from the Old World that America's native peoples came to embrace and cherish was the horse. On his second voyage in 1493 Columbus brought the first horses to the New World after an absence of some 10,000 years. The Conquistadores rode horses and used them effectively against the Indians they encountered. Indeed, the "sky dogs" terrified the Native Americans, who often thought they were monsters or special messengers of the gods. The first Hopis to see horses paved their way with ceremonial blankets.

Awe quickly gave way to a desire to obtain these wonderful creatures, but the Spanish were equally desirous to keep them out of Indian hands. Nonetheless, by the late 1700s virtually every tribe in the Far West was mounted or at least had



Fording Cattle on Milk River.
Olaf Seltzer, 1943, oil on board.
GM0137.834.

access to horses (some of the mountain tribes ate rather than rode theirs). How did this happen?

Historians once credited the Coronado and Hernando De Soto expeditions for this remarkable accomplishment, claiming that it was their runaway horses that stocked the plains with the enormous numbers of wild horses so famous in the lore of the West, but subsequent research has discredited this theory. Although both expeditions were well mounted—Coronado's, for instance had 558 horses—their horses could not have been responsible for the simple fact that Spanish law required soldiers to ride stallions. Thus, of Coronado's 558 horses only two were mares and both returned to New Spain with him. The generally accepted explanation now is that the Indians acquired their horses from Spanish herds in New Mexico. Some they captured, but the bulk they obtained as a result of the Pueblo Uprising of 1680. From New Mexico, horses spread north and east along established trading networks, although some were captured during intertribal raiding.



Cowboys on the Round-up.
Photograph. GM4527.85.7.

The Sioux are typical of the tribes whose culture was transformed by the horse. In the 1760s they were a canoeing people living in what is today Minnesota, yet within thirty years the eastern Sioux had become part of the greatest light cavalry the world has ever known. As a result, the image of war bonneted warriors sweeping across the Plains has so fired the popular imagination that the Sioux came to epitomize the Indian to people the world over.

Historians have only recently begun to unravel the story of what the scholar Alfred Crosby labeled the "Columbian Exchange." This story was told in *Seeds of Change,* the Columbus Quincentenary exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural history. Assisted by Crosby as well as other scholars of food and environmental history including Sidney Mintz, William McNeil, Stephen King, and Henry Hobhouse, the exhibit explained the biological exchanges Columbus initiated through five singularly powerful agents of change—namely, corn, the potato, sugar, the horse, and disease. Transplanted either to or from America, each of these agents dramatically and lastingly transformed our world.

Foremost was disease. The New World, in its isolation, had evolved relatively few diseases compared to the Old World. Although native populations, especially the Incas and Aztecs—the Greeks and Romans of the Americas, had developed highly sophisticated medicines and even surgical techniques to cope with illness, they had no effective response to Old World diseases such as small pox, measles, or even the common cold, for which they had no immunity. In the 16th century, for example, smallpox no longer reached epidemic proportions in Europe, but it wiped out entire populations in the Americas. Exact figures will never be known but scholars believe that 50 to 90 percent of the Indians in North and South America died of introduced diseases. Most of those who died never saw a European. The diseases radiated throughout the Americas like ripples in a pond. The demoralization and psychological devastation caused by Old World diseases also assisted European settlers in displacing the native peoples. It was disease, therefore, not technological or cultural superiority that opened the Americas to European exploitation and led Professor Crosby to later decry the Columbian Exchange as "ecological imperialism."

The forces of change Columbus unleashed continue to this day. Unfortunately, much of the change causes more harm than good. Five hundred years ago few gave any thought to the environment. Now, acid rain, global warming, waste management, and similar environmental concerns command attention the world over. Five hundred years ago tropical rainforests seemed to be an inexhaustible resource and impediment to progress. Today, they are considered essential to human welfare and a resource to be treasured and protected. Not only do rainforests have a major influence on the world's climate, but they shelter plant and animal species still unknown to science. In truth, the destruction of the rainforests can be likened to the destruction of a vast library whose volumes remain unread and unappreciated because the languages in which they are written have yet to be translated.

Although most world leaders now see the peril that faces the global environment, they are relatively helpless to curb the adverse forces of change because they are subject to complex factors such as population pressure, market economies, political philosophies, and international competition. Nonetheless, if nature is to survive the next five hundred years, humankind must accept the realization that natural resources are limited and must be managed with care, especially in ways that safeguard biological diversity. As Stephen King, one of the scholars who worked on the *Seeds of Change* exhibit, declared, "To ensure nature's future, we will have to devise new methods and technologies, new institutions and procedures, new global strategies and policies. This will be a continuing challenge to our science and philosophy." The choice is ours.



Chuck Wagon to Food Truck

Mark A. Brown

What is a food truck if not a moveable feast drawing the hired hands from the asphalt pasture?

"In the old days, with the blue sky above me, a good horse under me, the vast acreage of the old 101 Ranch rolling green about me and a bacon-filled atmosphere from the chuck wagon calling me, I was the richest of men."

TOM MIX,[1] "Happy Days on the 101 Ranch" (*101 Ranch Magazine*, 1926)

One partly cloudy Food Truck Wednesday in May, the Tulsa Drillers played host to the Springfield Cardinals in that rarest of pastimes, day baseball. The air was crisp and clean, free of the detritus of August. Springfield, in spring, swinging for fences. Nostalgic or not, the game was playing havoc with the parking around Guthrie Green. I circled the block three times before finding a dodgy parking spot on Cameron adjacent to a loading dock.

Where there used to be only dreams, now there were bodies, enough to rival a mall food court. The Green was being sodded—a worn-out spot, in front of the canopied stage—in time for another summer's treading. On a city block that had been mothballed for decades, there was a neighborhood feel and a heady blend of savory aromas. Rain began to softly spit, but I ignored it and followed my nose.

Choosing among food trucks is a compromise between desire and deferral. Thankfully, the variety in the Brady Arts District is as notable as the lines are long. There's the gourmet grilled cheese from The Meltdown, or one of Josh "Doghouse" Lynch's stuffed hotdogs, In the Raw "On the Roll" sushi, or something taco from Lola's Gypsy Caravan. Lola Palazzo, who once had a brick-and-mortar on this block, now cooks out of an Airstream with a sign on one end that reads, "Here today … Gone today."

1 Born in middle-of-nowhere Mix Run, Pennsylvania, Thomas Hezikiah Mix found an even more anonymous, if not eponymous, spot in Indian Territory. He padded his cowboy resumé at the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch and as town marshal of Dewey, where a tour of the Tom Mix Museum begins with a 15-minute documentary given largely to horse tricks and divorce (Mix married five times). The collection itself includes the usual haberdashery, books, and jewel-encrusted suits, plus a small (often monogrammed) arsenal of rifles and pistols. Other gems include a 15-foot anaconda skin, a set of leather horseshoes worn by Mix's trusted sidekick Tony, a 30-jar medicine cabinet that pretty-boy Tom never traveled without, a wood-bound register of The House of Mix inscribed by the Breakfast Club of Los Angeles, and the "Suitcase of Death"—a metal valise, manufactured by Halliburton, so called because it did what no horse ever could: break Mix's neck, when it slid from the backseat of his Cord Phaeton convertible after he drove it into a ditch. Suitcases aside, the sun on Mix refuses to set. Screenwriters of the 1993 shoot-'em-up *Tombstone* ended with this box-office cowboy sealing the coffin of Marshal Wyatt Earp with a line straight of Hollywood and Gospel of John: "Tom Mix wept."

As always, the line up to Philip and Danielle Phillips's Lone Wolf Banh Mi runs a good forty head. A *banh mi* is a fusion sandwich—a colonial collision of French baguette (Lone Wolf's come from Antoinette, on Brookside) and the pork, cilantro, pickled vegetable tossing of Vietnamese influence. But they were waiting to chomp an easy-twenty deep, so I moved on. I could go to Andolini's for a slice of pizza, or to The Wurst for a brat, or The Pita Place for that. Nearly to a truck, food truck food comes in a wrapper, be it tortilla or bun, seaweed or sandwich, or myriad flatbreads. When it comes to eating on the hoof, bread, broadly defined, remains the great conveyor.

I waded through a pack of middle-school students out on a field trip and found myself in front of Plum, Tiffany Poe's latest venture. The last time I saw her in a kitchen, Poe was leading a team of prep cooks, her hair tucked under a tall white toque. "Hey, stranger," she said, blonde curls grazing her purple Plum T-shirt, ordering for me. "You'll want the pork tacos. Oh, wait … You have to have the Rangoon." In a spring fling, I ordered both and signed on a Square with my finger.

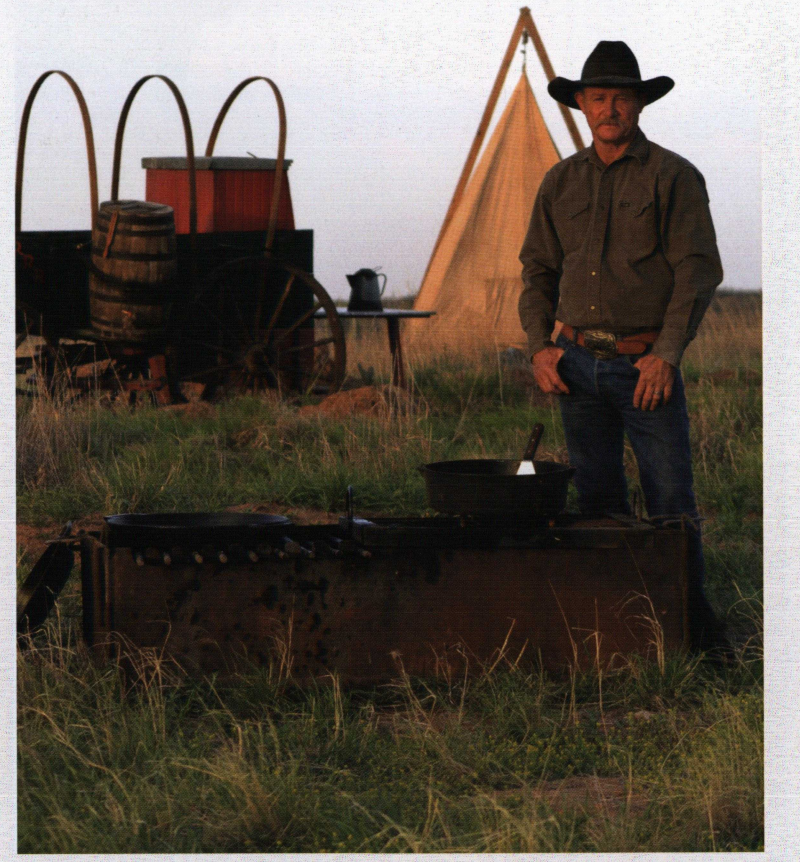


Food Truck Wednesday on the Guthrie Green, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 2014. Photo by Erik Campos.

Any other day, these trucks are likely to pop up anywhere. A truck picks up and moves in order to supply demand, wherever it arises. But these Food Truck Wednesdays are a bonanza, and the result of some serious investment that was decades in coming.

Until recently, street food was a dynamic of the great urban cores—New York City, Los Angeles, Chicagoland—where population density and foot traffic fed a market. These days, a food truck scene is one of the definers, if not requirements, of a city asserting its vitality. In such cities, the Austins and Portlands and Minneapolises and other lesser metropoles, trucks attract diners through Facebook pages and word-of-mouth buzz. In this marketplace, a restaurant "review" 25 words Tweeted five minutes into dinner. Lunch crowds congregate around trucks not because they're convenient but because they're cool.

In Tulsa, ground zero for that, for now, is a manicured patch of grass named for a poet rambler once mystifyingly dubbed "the Oklahoma cowboy," which sits just four city blocks from the dividing line, established in an 1833 treaty, that separated the Osage, Cherokee and Muscogee (Creek) nations. Especially on Wednesdays, when the trucks circle the square and unleash their frontier fusion on a herd of hungry clockpunchers. For what is a food truck if not a moveable feast drawing in the hired hands in from the asphalt pasture?



Kent Rollins. Photo by Shannon Rollins.

Chuck stop

You won't find Kent Rollins's 1876 model Studebaker wagon serving mess in the Brady Arts District, but he's as much food truck as Mike's BBQ or Grub Truck Tulsa. Clement Studebaker of South Bend, Indiana, began with a line of chuck wagons. The first automobiles were barely more than a cart with horsepower instead of horses. In fact, it was trucks like this that got this whole eating-under-the-stars thing rolling.

Rollins rides out of the Red River Ranch in Hollis, Oklahoma. He may be the only coosie[2] with a Food Network logo on his web site. "Coming to NBC Food Fighters July 22," another logo reads. And, across the homepage, an "Official Chuck Wagon of Oklahoma" button, from when then-Governor Frank Keating recognized Rollins as something of an ambassador. In fact, Rollins is a throwback.

"I've cooked for ranches all across the Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Kansas areas," he said. "Staying out on the wagon sleeping in a teepee from five days to five weeks.

2 A bastardization of the Mexican *cocinero*, or chef. Wallis footnotes a few more in his *Real Wild West*, a robust history of the legendary 101 Ranch: bean master, belly cheater, biscuit roller, cookie, dough-puncher, gut burglar, hash slinger, lizard scorcher, stew builder and swamper. My favorite, "Miss Sally," dates at least to the Civil War but, however clear the intent, the origins are hopelessly entwined in the lore of the land.



The Camp Cook's Troubles.
Charles M. Russell, 1912, oil on canvas. GM0137.913.

"I cook for real traditional working ranches, not dude or guest ranches. These are ranches that still feed cowboys off a wagon. The smallest outfit I've cooked for is about 40,000 acres and the largest nearly 300,000 acres."

He's thrown down with Bobby Flay, too, whipping the city boy chef in a chicken-fried steak cookoff. Hollis is the last outpost of southwestern Oklahoma, in the old Comancheria. It straddles the line between Abilene, Texas and Dodge City, Kansas. The Texas Trail cut a swath just east of Hollis, along the Salt Fork of the Red River. Rollins has the chuck in his veins.

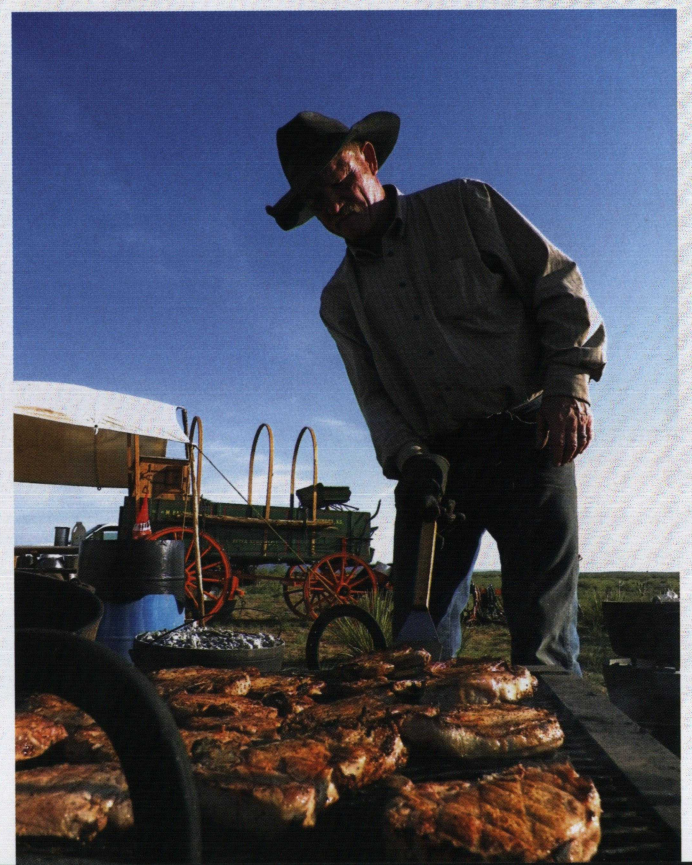
But read his menu and you might not think it all bad out there where the buffalo roamed: brisket slow-smoked over mesquite, the cowboy coal of the Texas scrub; green beans sautéed in bacon, garlic and butter; hominy and green-chile casserole, studded with bacon, bubbling with cheese, straight from a Dutch oven; and, for dessert, bread pudding with whiskey sauce, "if Kent doesn't drink it first," reads the web site.

It's a job that begs a snort. Many a trail cook kept a bottle in the chuck box—a kind of cowboy credenza propped onto the bed of the wagon—some even resorting to lemon extract when the brown liquor ran dry. A cook's day was long, eighteen hours, often punctuated by a drunken nap and interrupted by a breakfast schedule that began in the dark. Restaurant chefs I know talk of similar days and wasted nights. Chuck cooks would often take on the job when their bodies could no longer keep up with a drover's pace. They had a habit of sleeping with their dough starter, so it'd stay warm enough to meet the early morning rise.

The days of the big cattle drives are long over, but a cattle ranch will keep many cowboys busy, and somebody's got to feed them. Ranches hire workers from far and wide, then put them up in camps or bunkhouses, meals included.

"For a lot of ranches, it's still the most feasible and economic way," Rollins said. "They'll hire day workers or neighbor up. For remote ranches or large outfits it's easiest to have the wagon follow the cowboys around the ranch. On smaller outfits I might not move at all or just once.

A cook's day was long, eighteen hours, often punctuated by a drunken nap and interrupted by a breakfast schedule that began in the dark.



Kent Rollins, modern-day chuck wagon cook.
Photo by Shannon Rollins.

3 North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington and California. I always took anything west of the Mississippi River as western. By the Cowboy Hall's reckoning, it's more like west of the Missouri River, which leaves the State of Missouri ironically out of the West. Oklahoma is a fringe state, with its toe on the frontier and its heel dug into the Mississippi Valley, a very eastern bloc. Butcher Dennis Brown of Fairbury Steaks in Fairbury, Nebraska may have provided some accidental insight when I interviewed him two years ago on another topic entirely, that being Oklahoma's appetite for lamb and calf testicles. "You can draw a line down the center of the country along I-35," Brown said. "The bull balls go west and the lamb nuts go east." Cowboys on the cattle trail called them "prairie oysters" and tossed them straight off the calf onto the hot coals.

"There are still ranches and cowboys that like to maintain that tradition and history. A lot of camaraderie happens around the wagon that doesn't happen in any other setting."

Like out in the open, under the big sky that made Tom Mix wax poetic.

Happy trails

Wood smoke wafted in the hollow down the hill from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. A smell of hickory hung in the breeze. Traffic on Interstate 40 swished by beyond the embankment, separated from the grounds by a barbed-wire fence. A small band of chuck wagons huddled under stands of pine, cedar and cottonwood, sending up smoke signals.

The flags of the seventeen so-called Western States[3] fly on the south plaza. In the lush, green Nottingham behind the museum, families tested their archery skills on targets and rubber animals, including a cobra the size of a barstool. Inside the museum, couples were square dancing with partners in Kentucky colonel bowties and petticoats, promenading beneath sculptor James Earle Fraser's *End of the Trail.* Back outside, under a canvas tent, a swing band fiddled through a rendition of "Don't Fence Me In." You could hear "Roy Rogers: In His Own Words" or get a temporary tattoo or listen to an Annie Oakley impersonator apologize for the absence of her Frank Butler and, therefore, the hiatus from a frontier reenactment.

No matter. What's drawn a crowd to the 24th Annual Chuck Wagon Gathering & Children's Cowboy Festival isn't the snake-oil theatrics of "Dr. H.P. Hedgethicket III, Esquire," it's the food, and perhaps the chance to eat it the way cowboys did, however that might have been.

The history of the chuck wagon, like that of the West, is more recent than we let on. Today's frontier may offer wi-fi, at least in spots, but vast stretches of it remain open, hauntingly so, and the land grabs that played out at the end of the 19th century have left things more unsettled than set.

The history of the chuck wagon, like that of the West, is more recent than we let on.



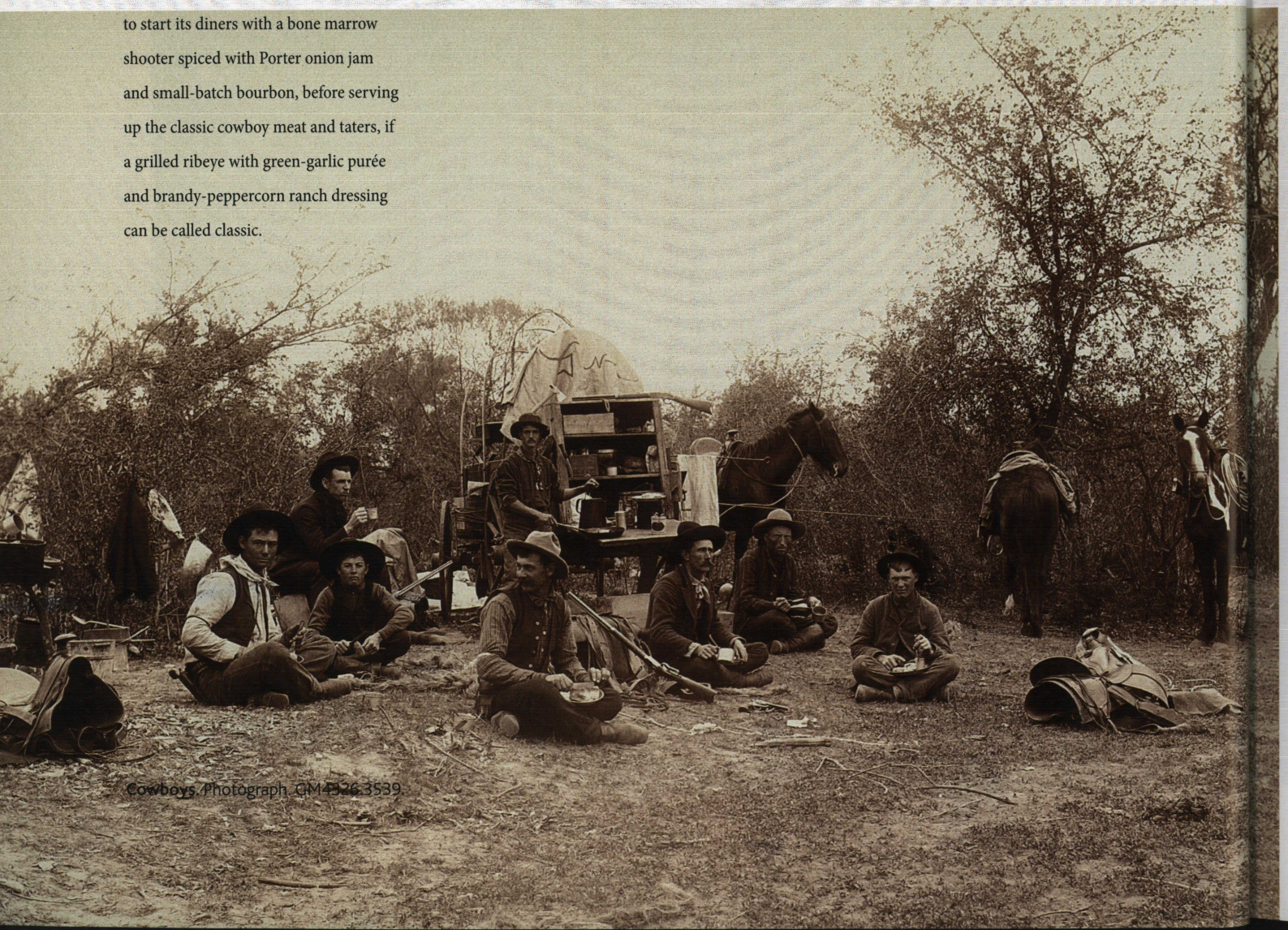


Food Truck Wednesday on the Guthrie Green, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 2014. Photos by Erik Campos.

It was on this vast prairie playground, barely 150 years ago, that drovers started driving Texas cattle to Kansas rail lines, and then in cattle cars to the stockyards that turned Chicago into a metropolis. The great cattle ranches of west Texas—the XIT and King, the Kenedy and JA—moved thousands of head at a time across such paths as the Shawnee Trail to Baxter Springs, the Chisholm Trail to Abilene (the one in Kansas), and the Great Western Cattle Trail all the way to Belle Fourche in South Dakota, a bit north of Deadwood—most of them on the bean-swollen bellies of a dozen or so hired hands. Michael Wallis called the chuck wagon "the heart of every trail outfit," knowing full well what got a cowboy's blood pumping.

Before the canneries came with their timeless tins of garden delights, cowboy "cookies" relied on a fistful of dishes, all of them cooked in a cast-iron Dutch oven set over (or under) a bed of burning embers. He carried flour, beans, sugar and sorghum, coffee, lard, dried fruit and belly bacon. He kept corn and oats for the team. The occasional beeve slain for the boys was wrapped in cloth until it was cooked as a steak or in a stew.[4]

4 One called "son-of-a-bitch stew" is little more than a prairie haggis minus the paunch. Into the pot went freshly plucked heart, kidneys, tongue, and a bit of tenderloin (the softer liver and sweetbreads went in toward the end of cooking), thickened with flour roux, eggs if they were around, and brains. Potatoes, tomatoes, onions, or chiles added variety, if in stock. Salt, pepper and sage for seasoning. The secret ingredient, if it can be called that, was "marrowgut," a semi-digested mélange riding between the two stomachs of a young calf. These days, you're more likely to find that on a farm-to-table menu conceived by an executive chef clad in tattoos and Tweeting the day's specials. In Tulsa, the Tallgrass Prairie Table likes to start its diners with a bone marrow shooter spiced with Porter onion jam and small-batch bourbon, before serving up the classic cowboy meat and taters, if a grilled ribeye with green-garlic purée and brandy-peppercorn ranch dressing can be called classic.



Cowboys. Photograph GM4926.3539.

Pretty much every coosie at the Chuck Wagon Gathering had a cast-iron Dutch oven of sourdough biscuits cooking over a bed of coals. (Actually, with the embers on top of the lid, so the biscuits would brown evenly instead of blacken on the bottom.) But I've been gluten-free for two years now and, anyway, am kind of naturally drawn to the flavor of cornbread. Not the sweet, caky kind, but the crunchy, savory version. Here's one adapted from The Southern Foodways Alliance Community Cookbook (Eds. Sara Roahen and John T. Edge, 2010, The University of Georgia Press) to fit a chuck wagon experience. The only thing remotely authentic about it is the Dutch oven.

Cowboy Cornbread

- 1 tablespoon Crisco, lard or bacon grease
- 2½ cups buttermilk
- 2½ cups cornmeal
- ½ cup rice flour (or white flour of your choice)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon sea salt

1. Build a fire in your charcoal grill and let the coals go from redhot to ashen.

2. In a large bowl, mix the remainder of the ingredients until well-blended but not overworked.

3. Place the Dutch oven onto the grill rack and melt the fat. At this point, you want the pan as close to the fire as possible.

4. Once the fat melts, pour in the cornbread mix and, if necessary, smooth and even it out in the pan with a spatula or wooden spoon.

5. Once the bottom has sizzled for a minute or two, move the pan off the direct heat and put the lid on the oven. (If your grill has a lid, just lower it and leave the oven lid off).

6. Bake the bread until the top turns gold and the edges crisp, refueling with more coals if necessary.

7. Carefully remove the bread from the oven with a large spatula, running it around the edges if need be to free up the bread. Place on plate and serve hot, with bits of crumbled bacon or butter or sorghum molasses.

The pots are brimming among the chucks rounded up for this two-dozenth Gathering, and the food is all-you-can-eat, if lacking in variety from wagon to wagon. "Why, beans and taters are all a man needs," said one cowboy cook ladling pintos into a paper cup. A young kid in a ball cap turned backward ate them as he walked and talked, an iPhone cradled to his ear. Old trail cooks would season their bean pots with such emulsions as "Charley Taylor" (sorghum and bacon grease) and "Texas butter" (hot water and lard).

Beyond beans, there was beef stew, spotted pup (a rice pudding studded with raisins, what the English call "spotted dick"), biscuits, corn bread and peach pie or cobbler. Only by the signs could you tell the cooks apart: There was the Honey Do Spoiler out of Pampa, in panhandle Texas; Cross Wagon, Vega, Texas; Cross Timbers Ranch from nearby Mustang; J-D Ranch of Amarillo; Prude Ranch, Fort Davis, Texas; and the Cocklebur Ranch of Lubbock.[5]

"What do they have to eat?" a woman in pink walking shorts asked, walking up to the pot of Prude vittles.

5 Mostly from Texas, and for good reason. Many a chuck wagon rolled out of the Lonestar state headed for the rail lines of the Midwest. Trail boss Charles Goodnight, co-founder of the Goodnight-Loving Trail (with Oliver Loving), is the man most often credited with pioneering the chuck wagon. Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* fictionalizes the Goodnight-Loving saga. Goodnight is the subject of a brief biography by William Hagan whose cover features an image of Goodnight that bears an uncanny resemblance, at least in profile, to a bison.

"Same thing you just had," said the man in line ahead of her.

The early wagons mimicked the Spanish carreta, simple wooden carts that were holdovers from the days of conquest. Like the legendary Civil War re-enactors who sleep spooned in ditches and smear animal fat in their beards, the best chuck wagons aim for a level of authenticity in both manner and gear, be it wood fires or wagon wheels.

Under one canvas tent, a hatless cowpoke named David Nuzum tended the coals on two Dutch ovens. He'd tried charcoal once, against his better judgment, but it took too long to get going and keep stoked. "Besides," he said, pointing to a pile of hickory stacked against a pair of Yeti ice chests, "I'm more of a wood guy."

The Big Pasture Chuck Wagon, owned and operated out of El Reno by B.K. Nuzum, looks like it might have rolled straight off the Chisholm Trail.[6] Built around 1904, the John Deere model is the real deal, from its square lug nuts to the zinc tabletop where Nuzum's grandson was patting out a sourdough. David reached into a drawer of the chuck box for one of B.K.'s business cards.

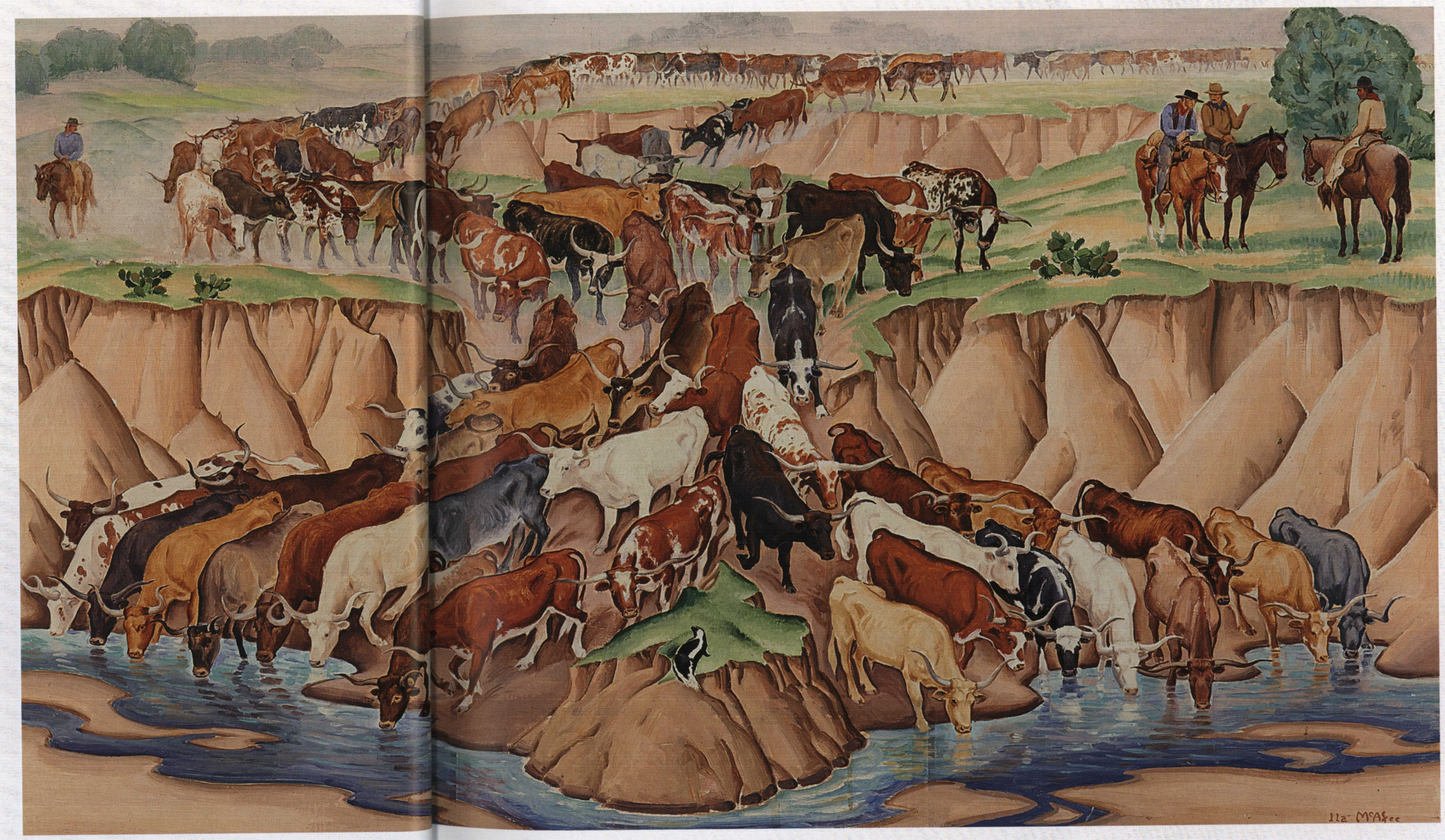
"Dad, he's one of them sticklers for detail," David said. "He looks for the original type stuff. It's like a science."

"And what I can't find I make," B.K. said with a wave of his hand, liver spots marking the years he's spent on these dusty trails. A real cowboy knew to ride into a camp downwind, so as not to get his dust in the cook's mess. Photos exist of cowboys eating on their asses, out of their laps, near a trough of Dutch ovens set out on the ground, their lids tilted against the edge of the cast-iron pots. In the background sits the wagon—the hub of both grub and gab alike.

6 Jesse Chisholm blazed the trail that bears his name, but he never drove cattle over it. Chisholm died in 1868, a year after the first drovers moved their herds to Abilene, Kansas. Of all the things that could fell a scout, trader and prairie diplomat who moved between cowboy and Indian camp alike, it was food poisoning that got Jesse, in a gutful of bear grease made rancid from storage in a brass pot.

The food truck craze, like a lot of cultural trends, came creeping onto the plains from the coasts. Angelinos have been eating tacos out of trucks since the first loncheras took root in the 1960s. New Yorker contributor Calvin Trillin has been writing about street food for decades, once remarking that the very definition of such cuisine meant some variation on the theme of meat sandwich. "They come and they go, these places," he told the *New York Times* in 2008.

But, as movements go, the food truck is still a relatively new one, especially in the second cities. New enough for NPD, a worldwide market research group, to have but a year's worth of data on food truck consumption.



Long Horns Watering on Cattle Drive.
Ila McAfee, oil on canvas. GM0137.537.



Here's a Tiffany Poe original. It'll feed a small crowd, though, I'd be tempted to make the whole recipe even for 2 or 4 folks, then make a curry out of the leftovers. Poe cooks out of her food truck, Plum.

Honey Plum Soy Chicken

Prep: 10 minutes
Cook time: 1 hour + 10 minutes
Serves 8 to 10

- 8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 2 cups red wine (omit if you don't do wine or use a combination of ½ cup soy and 1½ cup beef stock as a substitute)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 13-ounce jar plum preserves (Bonne Maman is the best)
- 1 cup honey
- 1 20-ounce bottle light sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh ginger, minced
- 4 plums, pitted and chopped
- 1 plum, pitted and thinly sliced
- 12 ounces egg noodles or linguini or use brown rice (as a gluten-free option)
- 3 green onions, sliced

1. Put the chicken thighs in a large bowl. Pour in the wine (or soy and stock).

2. Add the bay leaves, toss to coat, and marinate for 1 hour in the fridge.

3. In a separate bowl, add the plum preserves, honey and soy sauce, whisk to combine and set aside.

4. Heat the olive oil in a heavy pot over medium-high heat. Remove the chicken from the wine, then brown on both sides, about 2 minutes per side.

5. Reduce the heat to medium-low, then add the garlic, ginger and scallions. Stir it around in the bottom of the pan for a couple of minutes to release the flavor.

6. Add the chopped plums and honey plum soy mixture.

7. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cover and simmer for 45 minutes to an hour, until the chicken is falling off the bone.

8. Cook the noodles or rice according to the package directions.

9. Spoon the chicken and at least half the cooking liquid over the noodles or rice.

10. Garnish with the plum slices and a sprinkling of sliced green onion and have little bowls of the cooking liquid on the table so people can spoon on more if desired.

"We did a study on them," said NPD analyst Bonnie Riggs, who's been researching restaurant trends for twenty-five years. "It's not going to be a 'fast casual' thing that started with 1 percent share and now holds 6. But they're broadening their market."[7]

In spite of those lines you're used to standing in, few food truckers have found a parking place on easy street. Profit margins tend to be low, Riggs noted, and the limited window between prep time and consumption puts a ceiling on volume, however much traffic. Space, both in terms of the truck itself but also where and when to park it, is the compromise to mobility. Riggs recalled one Mexican concept from her research that began as a roaming school bus before making it as a brick-and-mortar restaurant. Food truck as test kitchen, if you will. Such transitions are the exception.

"These folks still pay quite a bit of overhead," Riggs said of truck operators. "They just thought that this would be an easy business, those millennials who couldn't get jobs."

Plum's Tiffany Poe, who's cooked in many a kitchen—most recently "Pioneer Woman" Ree Drummond's, up on the Osage plain above Pawhuska—says any start-up and overhead is easily trumped by the nimbleness of a truck. "You can be totally flexible on concept, versatility, and scheduling," said Poe, whose Plum offerings taste emboldened of the creative urge and liberated from the shackles of sameness. As an eater, I can taste the spontaneity. We order in a restaurant, but we participate in a food truck.

"They are very symbolic to this generation," Poe said. "The idea of being mobile, whimsical, and not committed to a location or time is appealing. Both the customer and the owners are freer to create unique dining experiences and events without being tied to one place, menu, or idea."

Philip Phillips of Lone Wolf Banh Mi calls this "expanding the territories," where the edible landscape is variable, the menu limited only by the cook's imagination and the eater's hunger for something new. And, of course, fast.

In short order, the market has found the truck, drawn by its novelty and good taste. Their customers were those who used to line up at drive-thru windows for burgers and burritos, chicken nuggets and deli subs. Now, the rest of the restaurant trade is taking note, and names.

"Roy Choi, King of L.A. Food Trucks, Moves On to a Hotel," read a *New York Times* headline last June. The hotel was The Line, which Choi opened on Wilshire Boulevard, the strip once home to the Brown Derby. "Mr. Choi, forty-four, is a creative force behind not only the restaurants and room service in the 388-room hotel, but also its overall vibe," wrote reporter Jeff Gordinier. Not bad for a guy once known for his Korean barbecue tacos. A *USA Today* story two days earlier was

7 We hit food trucks, as a nation, roughly 200 million times a year. It spikes in the summer months, like anything al fresco. We like them for their novelty—41 percent of customers told NPD they enjoy the different choices and fresher taste—but we like them more (44 percent) for their convenience. Still, that 200 million is less than half a percent of the industry total. Last year, Americans made 61 billion restaurant visits, 78 percent of them to fast-food places.



Food on the move the old way. Photo by Shannon Rollins.







Food on the move. Food Truck Wednesday on the Guthrie Green, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 2014. Photos by Erik Campos.

touting the arrival of food trucks in, of all capitals, Paris. Such is the evolution of the two-and-a-half hour lunch.

Still, Americans prefer a good fast-food experience to any other. Add to that convenience stores and their novel attempts at fresh food service and the pressure on food trucks is fierce. To compensate for the lack of white tables and full bars and ambience, trucks must create a sense of place. One in Seattle, a purveyor of pig, put ears on its roof and a snout on its steel grill.

In Oklahoma cities, on the fringe of the Great Plains, with more people in cars than on foot, food trucks and customers must agree on their terrain of exchange. In Tulsa, you're more likely to drive to a food truck than walk there. Mr. Nice Guys dresses theirs in the Rasta rainbow, out of which they push a highly addictive lobster mac-and-cheese. The line to get it is what drove me to Plum.

My lunch hour was into its second hour, so I ate Tiffany Poe's tasty crab Rangoon walking, crunching the crisp, golden wonton and dragging the cheese-soaked dumpling through the sweet dipping sauce. I wiped my face on my hands and my hands on my jeans. The temperature was in the low 60s and the rain had only threatened. The berm at Oneok Field called to me like a hanging fastball.



Along Reconciliation Way, coworkers shared sidewalk benches and talked past their sunglasses and ate their lunch out of foil boats tilting in their laps. They occupied a space that three years ago housed a chain-link asphalt compound. Barely north, past the KOTV tower and over the highway up on Standpipe Hill, the state college had built a tower where, before Tulsa was a city, the Dalton gang of Pawhuska scouted the landscape for rivals. A cowboy lookout, then and now.

Reluctantly, I got back in my car, with no yellow envelope tucked under my wipers and one taco left in my paper boat. Driving up Cincinnati Avenue on the way back to work, I steered with one hand and devoured the rest of the Korean pork tacos with the other. I ate with aplomb, using the passenger seat as a placemat.

MARK BROWN is a Tulsa-based writer and the author of *My Mother is a Chicken* (This Land Press, 2012).

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For more on Kent Rollins: http://www.kentrollins.com

Eating Your Heritage:

The New Native American Cuisine

Lois Ellen Frank, Ph.D.

Native people belong to oral cultures that pass down information from one generation to the next through stories, histories, legends, and myths. The elders imprint these historical accounts on the youth. Where foods are concerned, women have traditionally served as tribal historians. They commit to memory a body of past experiences and cultural traditions relating to food—how to prepare wild game and fish and how to find wild plants, which plants are edible, their names, their uses for food and medicine, and how to grow, prepare, and store them—as well as a multitude of other information relating to food and its uses. Food is indeed more than just something to eat. It is many cultural traditions that are woven into the fabric, like a beautiful blanket, of what it is to be Native American.

Four food groups make up Native American cuisine today: (1) native foods, which include both cultivated and wild plants that were used pre-contact; (2) traditional foods introduced upon first European contact but now inseparable from the group's identity, as in the case of sheep for the Diné; (3) commodity



Navajo woman preparing yarn.
Postcard. GM4337.4113.

Corn Maidens (Taos Pueblo). Detail, facing page.
Bert Phillips, oil on canvas. GM0137.2197.

foods introduced by the U.S. government during the Reservation period and still being distributed today; and (4) foods sharing components of the previous three categories that are innovatively combined or "fused" into a new Native American cuisine. This new cuisine combines contemporary elements, which might include culinary techniques, presentation, and flavors, with elements from the ancestral past. Native American chefs and cooks who are using ingredients from this fourth category are working to keep their foods vital and dynamic, and in some cases to restore and disseminate food and indigenous knowledge that is in danger of being lost to future generations.

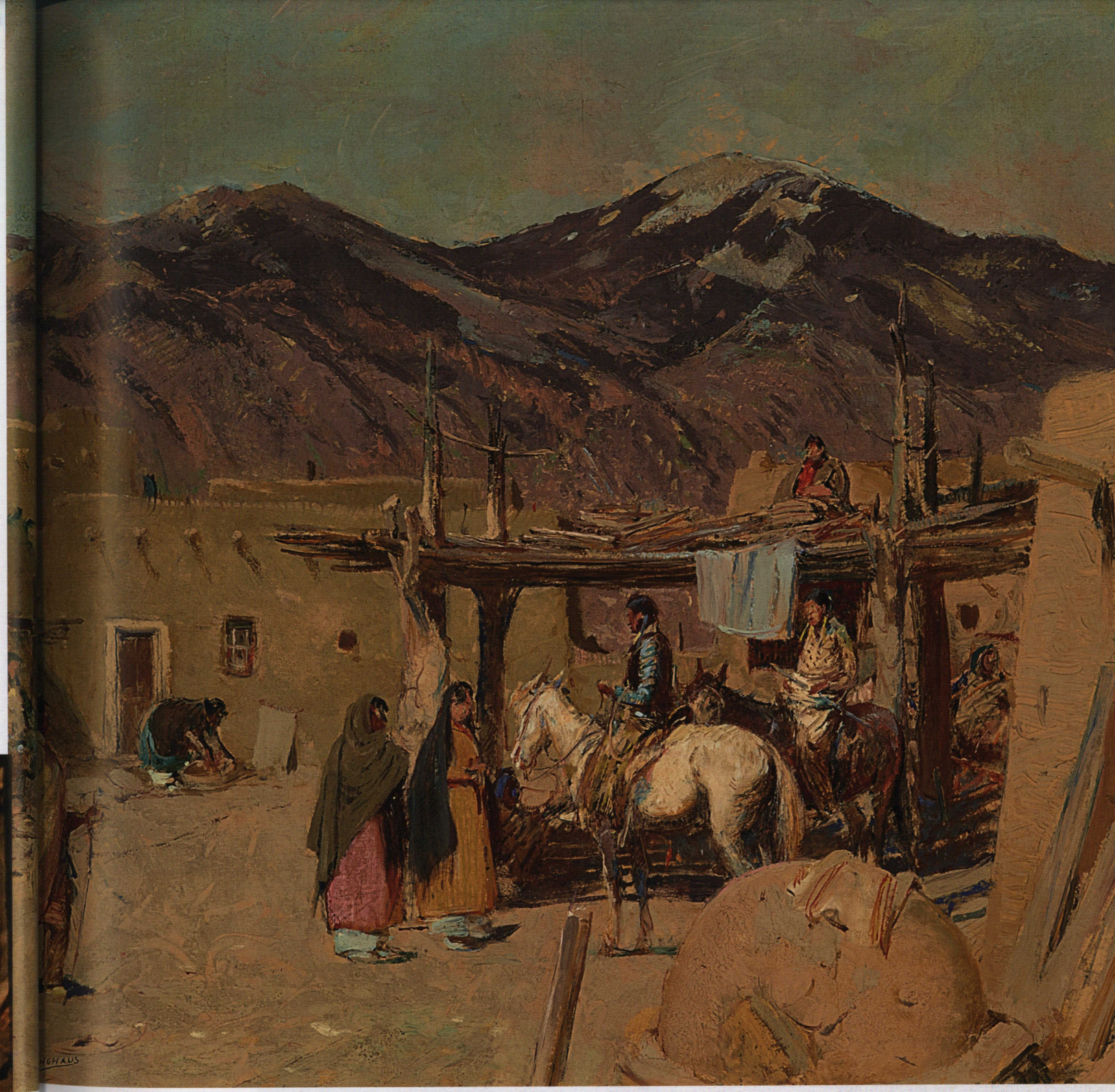
The Ancestral Diet

The variety of cultivated and wild foods eaten before contact with Europeans was vast. Native groups in the Southwest harvested and prepared ancestral ingredients for complex dishes that made up an intricate cuisine. They adapted to the unique environment of the Southwest by developing trade relationships with neighboring groups as a matter of survival.

In some parts of the Southwest, Native people had a diet of mostly plants. They were able to obtain sufficient nutrients from nuts, fruits, grasses, roots, and seeds. Carolyn Neithammer, in her *American Indian*



Corn strung to dry.
Photo by Lois Ellen Frank.



A Corner in the Pueblo.
Oscar Berninghaus, 1941,
oil on masonite. GM0137.515.



Metate. GM6145.18898.

Food and Lore, observes that "desert plants produce great quantities of seeds, and thus manage to propagate themselves in an area of uncertain growing conditions." With the use of grinding stones, seeds, nuts, and corn were ground into flour for breads, mush, and other uses. As much as 90 percent of the Pueblo diet consisted of calories consumed from agricultural products, with wild fruits, greens, nuts, and small game making up the balance. Because large game was scarce, textiles and corn were traded with the Plains Indians for bison meat.

Salt was one of the most prized minerals for both food and ceremonial use. It came from the Estancia Basin in eastern New Mexico, from salt lakes near Laguna and Zuni, and the Tohono O'odham obtained salt from the Gulf of California. Salt was traded between many tribal groups in the Southwest with tribes that didn't have access to it for items that were not available in those communities.

In 2009, scientists Dr. Patricia Crown and Dr. W. Jeffrey Hurst used an analysis of ceramics from Pueblo Bonito, the largest site in northwest New Mexico's Chaco Canyon, to document for the first time the presence of theobromine. This marker for Theobroma cacao, or chocolate, indicated that



***Harvest Still Life*.** Oscar Berninghaus, 1941, oil on canvas. GM0137.520.



Grinding stone. Photo by Lois Ellen Frank.

A southwestern larder.
Photo by Lois Ellen Frank.



. . . cacao was consumed in the American Southwest around AD 1000 to 1125, further proof of millennia-old and highly extensive trade routes. Items such as seeds, shells, beads, turquoise, and feathers were traded between the tribes from this region and tribes to the south.

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Locally harvested foods were dried and stored for use throughout the year. This included corn, beans, chile, squash, wild fruits, wild herbs, wild greens, nuts, and meats. Activities related to foods were, and still are, central to many Native groups. What are now classified as art forms in these communities were originally made for purposes that centered around food. Hunting, growing, gathering, cooking, and eating have taken on a spiritual aspect akin to prayer. The relationship between the land and the people is sacred. Foods that are bestowed upon the people are revered and have cultural meanings beyond simple nutrition. Corn, especially, has taken on the symbolic meaning of Maiden, Mother, Sister, nurturer, medicine, and healer in many communities.

Plant carbohydrates are known to provide a valuable, if not essential, nutritional supplement in the diet of virtually every culture. Corn, beans, and squash, called the Three Sisters by many tribes, are considered a sacred gift from the Great Spirit. While the term originates from the Iroquois of the northeastern United States and is not a traditional southwestern metaphor, these three plants have been used in the Southwest for millennia. These plants' nutritive properties form complete proteins, an important part of health and wellness, but the plants also provide an important lesson in environmental cooperation. Corn draws nitrogen from the soil, while beans replenish it. The tall corn stalks provide climbing poles for the bean tendrils, and the broad leaves of squashes grow low to the ground, shading the soil, keeping it moist, and deterring the growth of weeds. Plants were and are harvested not only as food but also as medicine, for making tools, and in some instances as components for making clothing.



Navajo weaving. Postcard.
GM4337.4107.



Purslane *(Portulaca oleracea)*.
Photo by Lois Ellen Frank.

Foods of the Southwest have a history that is closely tied to the people and the land. The landscape is a virtual foodscape filled with edible plants and local terroir.

One of the most prized of the southern desert staples is the mesquite, called *kui* by the Akimel and Tohono O'odham. Common species include honey mesquite (Prosopis glandulosa), velvet mesquite (P. *velutina*), and screwbean mesquite (P. *pubescens*). These hardy, drought-tolerant trees are well suited to the southern deserts because of their long taproots, which have been recorded at up to 190 feet in depth. They can also use water on or closer to the surface when it is available and switch from a shallow water source to a deep one and back again. Because mesquite is a legume, it fixes nitrogen in the soil. The ripened bean pods are typically ground into flour that is high in protein, calcium, magnesium, potassium, iron, and zinc as well as rich in the amino acid lysine. It is an especially good food for diabetics because of its ability to stabilize blood sugar. Mesquite bean flour is naturally sweet and has a nutty flavor that has been traditionally used in breads, tortillas, and other baked goods. Prized by desert dwellers who used mesquite pods as a staple food for centuries, it was also bartered with neighboring tribes.

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*), once a vital ingredient of prehistoric Puebloan diets, is extremely rich in omega-3 fatty acids and high in Vitamins A and C. Its succulent stems and leaves are most commonly boiled, sautéed, and eaten alone or in soups and stews, but they can also be dried for use in winter. It is one of a number of wild plants that were traditionally collected for food and are now known to have many medicinal benefits. I have seen purslane for sale at the local farmer's market in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and I encourage it to grow all over my property by spreading its seeds in areas where I want it to emerge after the summer rains.

Some Southwestern groups cultivated only a few crops, deriving most of their food from wild plants and animals. Other groups engaged in irrigation agriculture supplemented by hunting and gathering. The diverse settlement patterns of the

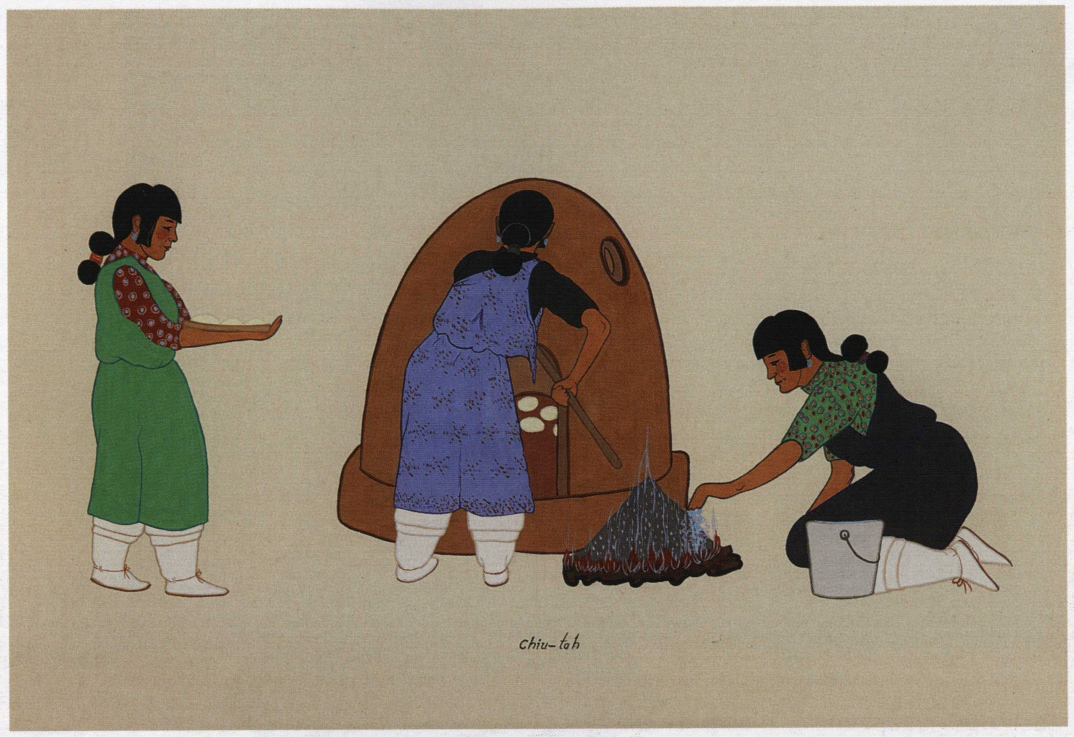


Navajo Shepherdess. Harrison Begay, tempera. GM0237.499.

Southwest are reflected in techniques of food production. The ingredients that the original Native American inhabitants gathered, domesticated, and ate for millennia before the arrival of the Europeans are multitudinous. Foods of the Southwest therefore have a history that is closely tied to the people and the land. The landscape is a virtual foodscape filled with edible plants and local terroir.

Diet Change after the Encounter with the Spanish

When the Spanish Conquistador Francisco Vasquez de Coronado and his party arrived at the cornfields of Zuni Pueblo demanding food in 1540, the demise of life as the Puebloans had known it had began. Pueblo villages throughout New Mexico and Arizona were altered by the Spanish with the introduction of new foods, a new religion, and a new way of being in the world. New foods that came with the Spanish included sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, the horse, peaches, apricots, plums, cherries, melons, watermelon, apples, grapes, and wheat. The Spanish brought additional types of chiles, tomatoes, potatoes, cultivated prickly pears, epazote,



Baking Bread. Vicente Mirabel (Chiu-Tah), tempera on paper. GM0237.66.

New Mexican historian Juan Estevan Arrellano explains that other, less obvious, influences came to this region along with the Spanish. Persian, Arabic, Moorish, Greco-Roman, Mayan, and Aztec influences are also embedded in every Southwestern garden and kitchen.

and so on, north from the tribes of Mesoamerica. They also introduced the adobe oven or *horno.* This new technology revolutionized Indian baking and introduced a variety of new breads, different from the original corn-based breads used in the area for centuries. Yeasted oven bread made from wheat was introduced to the New Mexico Pueblos, further changing the corn-based diet.

Spanish sheep changed the lifeways of the Navajo (Diné) dramatically. From the time the Diné first acquired sheep, their flocks have been central to their culture and lives. They have become master weavers, their blankets and rugs telling stories of a family's past or present. Newborn lambs are brought into the house when it is cold and fed by hand. Sheep are a sign of wealth and are given as a bridal gift to a woman's family from her prospective husband.

New Mexican historian Juan Estevan Arrellano explains that other, less obvious, influences came to this region along with the Spanish. Persian, Arabic, Moorish, Greco-Roman, Mayan, and Aztec influences are also embedded in every Southwestern garden and kitchen, so terms like "Spanish" or "Indian" do not necessarily capture the origins of all of the foods we find today on a traditional Southwestern table.

Government-Issued Foods and Reservations

The opening of the western frontier, triggered by the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, encouraged many people to move west into what was traditionally Indian country. Congress initiated the Federal Indian Removal Act of 1830, which evicted more than 100,000 Native Americans east of the Mississippi River to Indian Territory in Oklahoma, disrupting traditional ways of life, ceremonial calendars, and traditional foodways. The loss of land was devastating. In the Southwest, the Diné were also forced to leave their homelands and were consolidated onto a reservation. All nomadic tribes north of the new border with Mexico were to be settled onto reservations.

On August 10, 1864, Captain John Thompson and Kit Carson destroyed countless crops, wasting thousands of pounds of food, including roughly 4,000 Navajo peach trees in Canyon de Chelly, on their way to Fort Canby, Arizona (formerly Ft. Defiance) after overtaking Barboncito, leader of the de Chelly Navajos, who finally surrendered. Their sheep slaughtered, their crops burned, and their orchards cut down, the majority of the Navajo people surrendered and accepted deportation to the Bosque Redondo Reservation at Fort Sumner, in southeastern New Mexico. The approximately 8,300 Navajo who surrendered were forced to walk to Fort Sumner. This 350-mile walk is known as the Long Walk of the Navajo.

During the four years of internment, there was not enough land to cultivate, too little grass for grazing sheep, and inadequate government rations. By 1868, the

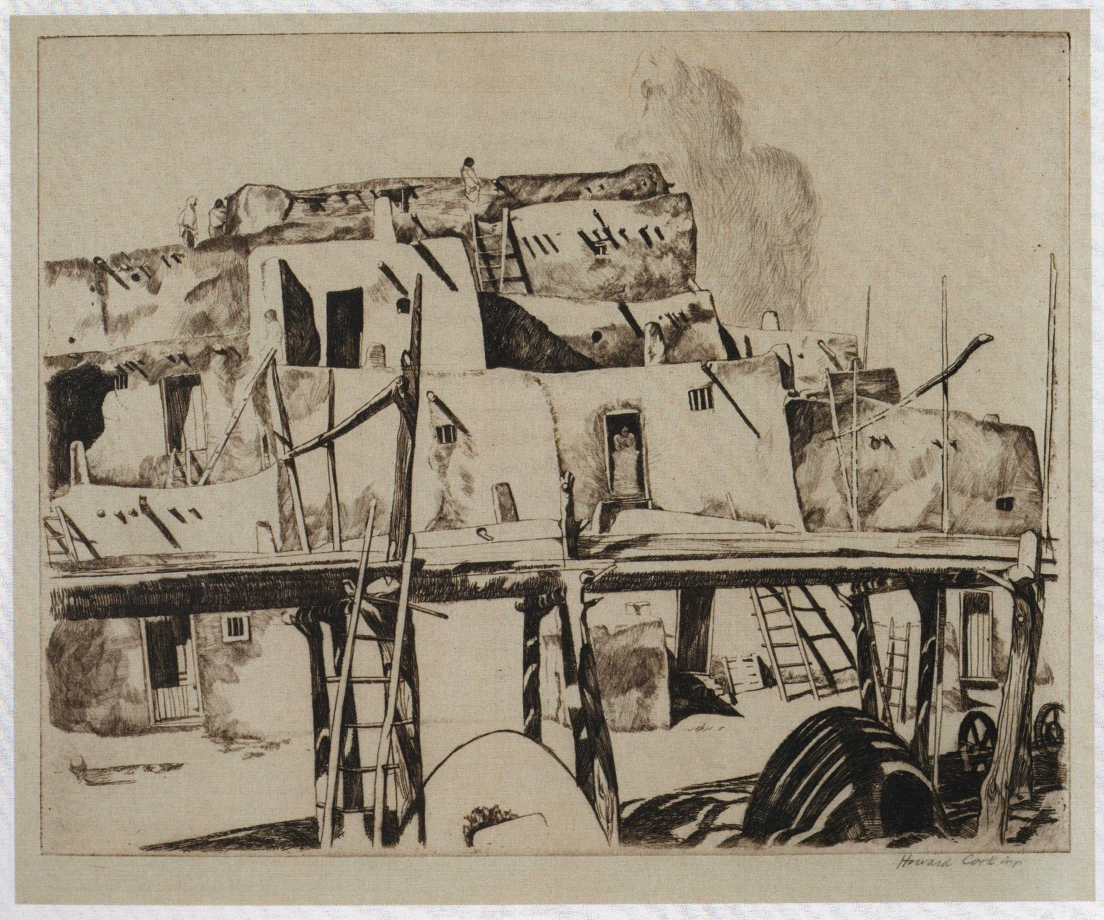


Canyon de Chelley, Arizona Navajo. William R. Leigh, 1913, oil on canvas. GM0137.962.

Indians at Fort Sumner were completely dependent on rations for sustenance. In one of few such instances in U.S. history, the federal government relocated a tribe back to its traditional boundaries, freeing approximately 7,300 survivors to return to what now makes up the Navajo Reservation.

Other tribes, such as the Mescalero Apache, Jicarilla Apache, and Chiricahua and Mimbreno Apache, in New Mexico, and the Akimel O'odham, Western Apache, Cocopah, Halchidhoma, Hualapai, Havasupai, Yavapai, Hopi, Maricopa, Mohave, Southern Paiute, Tohono O'odham, Yaqui, and Yuma, and the Confederation of Seven Bands of the Ute Tribe were all concentrated onto reservations, losing portions of their ancestral homelands, their hunting grounds, and in many cases their primary sources of wild and cultivated foods.

Although the Puebloans were able to stay on portions of their ancestral homelands, they too lost territory through land grants made to individuals and communities for new settlements during the Spanish (1598–1821) and Mexican (1821–1846) periods of New Mexico's history. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 destroyed nearly all of the Spanish documents in New Mexico, and only the land grants that were made after the Spanish re-conquest of New Mexico exist today. Eventually all of the nineteen remaining Pueblos of New Mexico—Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan), Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santa Domingo (Kewa), Taos, Tesuque, Zia, and Zuni—became federally recognized Indian reservations.



Taos Pueblo. Howard Cook, etching on paper. GM1437.310.

Government-issued food rations to relocated tribes originally included beans, beef (sometimes bacon), lard, flour, coffee, and sugar, distributed twice a month. This food distribution program led to one of the most dramatic dietary changes in Indian history.

The original intention of the U.S. government was to supply rations as an interim solution until dislocated and relocated Native peoples were raising enough food of their own. Instead, many Indian people from communities all over the Southwest became totally dependent on rations. Some tribes initially abandoned their traditional food-procurement practices but found that there was never enough of the government-issued food to feed all their tribal members.

Foodways are particularly entrenched in cultural identity. They are the earliest layers of culture to form and the last to erode. However, traditional foodways were wrenched into new forms during the Reservation period as Native cooks struggled to incorporate the new foods into dishes and recipes. As time passed, additional foods were issued as part of the commodity food program, such as cheese, egg mix, nonfat dry and evaporated milk, pasta, rice and other grains, dehydrated potatoes, peanut butter, crackers, corn syrup, vegetable shortening, and canned or frozen meat, poultry, and fish.

These distributed foods promote a meaty, cheesy, wheat-based nontraditional diet that has created problems such as heart disease, obesity, and Type 2 diabetes (all of which have reached epidemic levels in some tribal nations).

The iconic Indian Taco, one of today's best-known pan-Indian dishes, is actually a creative use of foods that were distributed to Native people during the Reservation period. Using existing cooking technology, Native cooks were able to concoct a dish that included foods that were familiar to them with others that were not. Wheat flour, baking powder, lard, and cheddar cheese were commodity foods issued to families on reservations. Beans, meat, green chiles, and tomatoes, already being produced by many families in the Southwest at the time, made a natural accompaniment to the new commodity foods. Although a relative newcomer to the Native table, the Indian Taco, and the fry bread on which it is served, is now considered indispensable at national fairs, powwows, and community events, both on reservations and in urban areas.



Chile peppers.
Photo by Lois Ellen Frank.

The New Native American Cuisine

Native American cuisine developed because of the role food plays in tribal ways of being, in cultural identity and connection to place. Food represents who the people are. Chefs and cooks are of the places they are from, and the places of the chefs and cooks are intertwined within the foodscapes that they create. Food is deeply performative, and the senses are the stage on which this new Native American cuisine is presented.

An example is the case of the Diné and their sheep; this lived experience exists because of place. Being with their sheep and raising them on their land becomes tied to the Diné's own experience of being. Food becomes the means of solidifying these social ties with the sheep. The food derived from the sheep becomes a way of

solidifying and maintaining human relationships. Food, in this instance, becomes part of a way of life that binds the Diné together. Sheep here are full of symbolic meanings that are both experiential and aesthetically expressive. They are imagined, held, remembered, voiced, and lived. Thus these expressions are tied not only to place and place memories, but also to identity.

Other foods, such as the Tohono O'odham brown and white tepary beans (bawï), cholla buds (ciolim or haanam), saguaro syrup (bahidaj sitol) and seeds (bahidaj kai'j), are also unique to that group, and inseparable from who they are as a people. Certain key species—mesquite, agaves, and columnar cacti—could each be called "the staff of life" to one or more cultures that lived within their range. As the peoples of this region became dependent upon the plants that evolved over hundreds of thousands of years, some of these plant species had their evolutionary destinies altered by those who gathered, saved, and selected their seeds, thereby domesticating them.



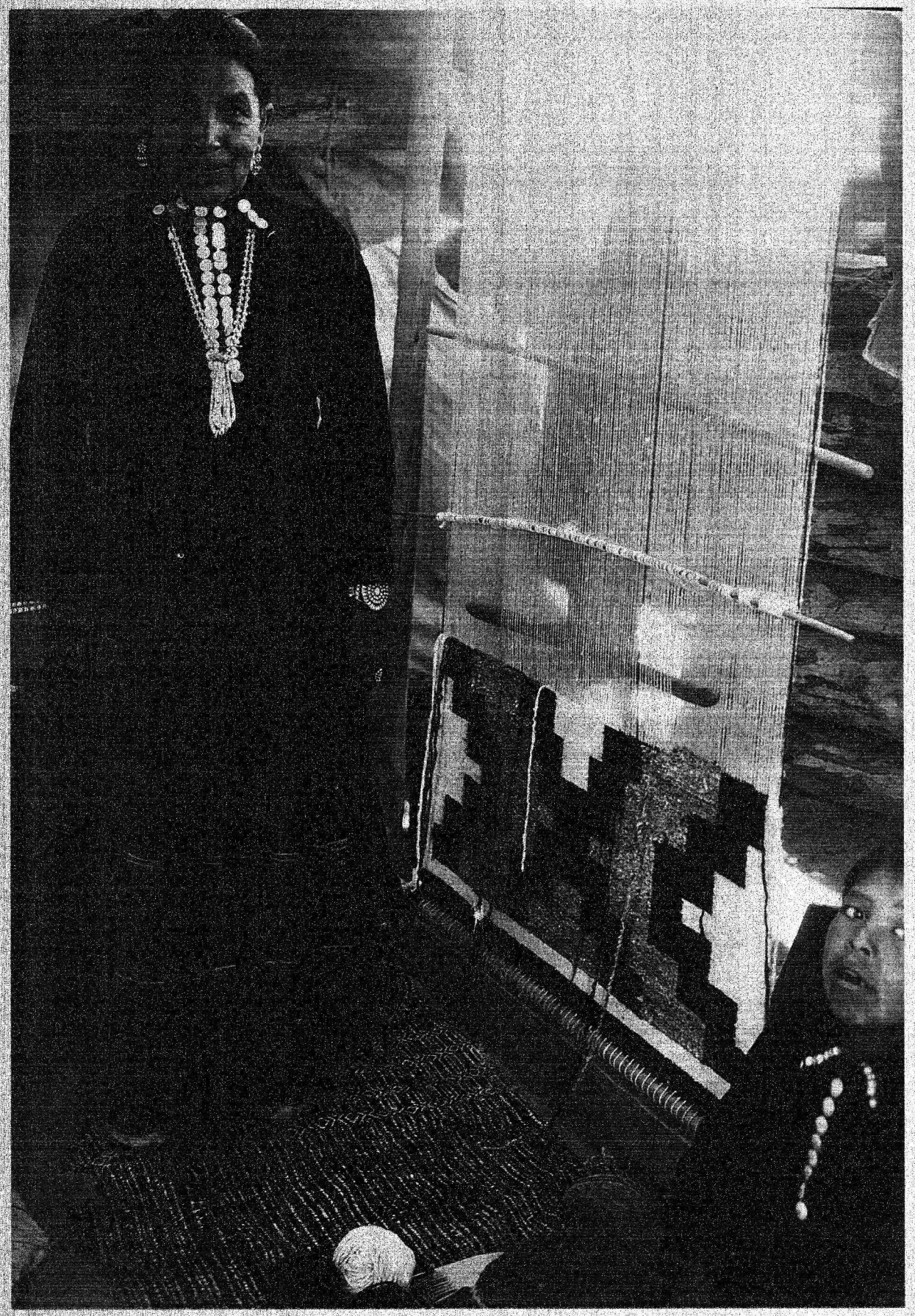
New Mexican ingredients, above, and a dish of hand-tied tamales, facing. Photos by Lois Ellen Frank.

By combining ancestral foods with foods from the two succeeding periods on the food continuum, the new Native American cuisine emerges. Part of the mission of the chefs preparing Native American foods is an understanding of the land and culture that gave rise to the flavors of this region, thereby helping the community members and patrons to understand their importance. The flavors of the desert become woven into the taste of the food. The increasingly fine distinctions from increasingly specific locales become the terroir of Native American cuisine.

Native American foods have a rich and long history in the Southwest. The foods are made up of ancient ingredients that existed long before contact with any outsiders, yet some 500 years ago, ancient ingredients were "fused" with new ingredients. Native communities adopted and adapted these new foods into their cuisine, but the newcomers also adopted and adapted ingredients from Native American communities into their cuisine.

In other parts of the Southwest this fusion is apparent where Native groups had contact with the Spanish. Gary Nabhan reminds us that "these foods have the flavor of place embedded in every mouthful, and provide residents as well as tourists with a unique experience of the region."

This hybridity and interaction, this fusing of foods from the different historical periods, this innovative approach to weaving together ingredients from the past with the present—this is the new Native American cuisine. The new Native American cuisine, therefore, embodies ingredients from each chef's place and is presented and created using contemporary and European techniques but based on each chef's own symbol of self-identity with performance being central to its expressive practice.



Doris Yazzie and her daughter Laura, Arizona. Postcard. GM4337.41.16

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The Artful Vessel

The design and decoration of clothing and shelters tells us many stories about human lives. Likewise, the construction and embellishment of vessels for cooking, serving, and storing food can illuminate the people who made them.

Like garments and like architecture, food-related objects sometimes cross that gauzy and controversial border between the utilitarian and what we call "art." We are a species that glories in elevating the necessary to the beautiful. A Plains beaded moccasin, a graceful Arts and Crafts bungalow, a vehicle or tool, even a weapon, all can do this transformative trick. So can a handsomely crafted 18th-century English carving knife or ornate tureen. A painted clay jar can transport the imagination as well as it transports water, and a teapot can pour out stories. A beautiful, useful object may also stir the passion of collectors, as was demonstrated in spring 2014 when a palm-sized white Ming-era porcelain cup decorated with painted chickens sold by Sotheby's to a Shanghai collector for more than $36 million. The spectacular Nampeyo jar at the end of this folio reminds us that all things utile can at times rise to lasting eloquence. As language may be used to hail a taxi or to write a philosophical tract, in Nampeyo's hands a lump of clay became a sonnet.

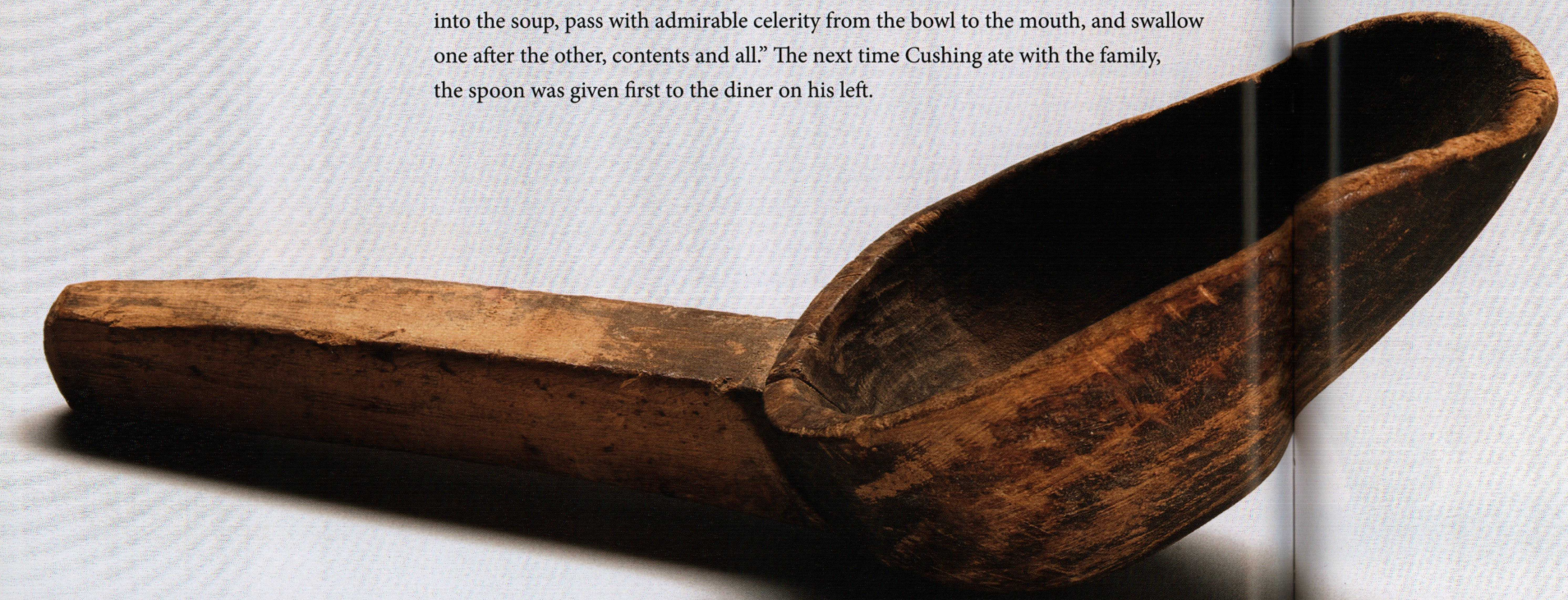
In 2011 Julia Child donated her simple kitchen and its contents to the National Museum of American History. The reconstructed room comprises an exhibition where viewers can see the patterns of use on the chef's copper-bottomed sauté pans and the heft and handle design of her cleaver, the distance between her sink and worktable. The place is visited regularly by museum-goers. Many are no doubt followers of Julia and her cuisine, which they would argue rose to the stature of art. But the other pull that attracts them—affection for the accoutrements of cooking and eating, both the humble and the extravagant—is also at work, and unlikely to end anytime soon. Perhaps in a museum in some far-distant future, a hologram of a 21st-century stainless steel whisk will spin like sculpture in a virtual vitrine, reminding viewers of the universal human desire to carve art from life.

The ethnographic items that follow were selected and identified by Eric Singleton, assistant curator at Gilcrease, and photographed by the inimitable Robert Cross. The two ceramic vessels that complete our brief "cook's tour," along with interpretive text by former Gilcrease curator Daniel C. Swan, were reprised from *Treasures of Gilcrease.* — CAROL HARALSON

Ladle, 1800s. GM7326.104.

In many cultures and into historic times individuals brought their own spoons to a communal meal or shared one supplied by the host. The tradition was not confined to North America; guests in 13th-century Europe often brought their own spoons, and knives, to a shared meal.

Frank Hamilton Cushing—the pioneering American ethnologist who lived among the Zuni from 1879 to 1884—recalled learning this style of eating in his detailed account, *Zuñi Breadstuff* (New York: Heye Foundation, 1920). After describing how the women placed the the bowls, pots, trays, and salt-jars on the floor near the hearth and called the diners to the meal (each person in the room replied "*Té-ä-tu'!*"—"It is well, be it so!"), the men assumed erect positions, drawing up their legs to take little space, and placed their left hands politely across the stomach to indicate that even half this meal would satisfy them. He continues, "There are only two or three spoons supplied. They are little earthen scoops with merely the rudiment of a handle. . . . A man hastily dips up two or three mouthfuls of soup with one, then passes it on to his neighbor, and so it and its few companions go round and round the circle." When Cushing ate for the first time with his Zuni family he was handed the only spoon first, as honored guest. "Ignorant of their etiquette," he wrote, "I clung desperately to the spoon throughout the remainder of the meal. They were equal to the occasion. They no sooner gave up hope of recovering the coveted article than they proceeded dextrously to fashion each mouthful of *he'-we* [bread] they tore off, into a sort of diminutive shovel, by pressing it down in the hollow of the hand. These shovels, supported underneath by two outspread fingers along either side and the thumb pressing what ought to have been the handle-end against the palm, they would dash into the soup, pass with admirable celerity from the bowl to the mouth, and swallow one after the other, contents and all." The next time Cushing ate with the family, the spoon was given first to the diner on his left.



Immediately below: Ladle, Sauk-Fox (Sac and Fox), 1800s GM7326.107.

Archaeological evidence suggests ladles were used by Native Americans going back at least to the Archaic Period (4,000 BCE–1,000 BCE).

Below: Ladle, Otoe, 1800s. GM7326.108.

Ladles like this one were typically made from ash or maple.





Ladle, Cherokee, 1800s. GM7326.117.

Ladles, or large spoons, were held by an individual, then brought to a meal and used to eat from a communal pot.

Ladle, Winnebago, 1800s. GM7326.109.

Spoons created with an effigy at the top were used in a ceremonial manner. This undecorated spoon was most likely an everyday item.





Sugar bowl and creamer from a tea set, 101 Ranch, ca. 1930. GM60.207.

This tea service set was made from silver and copper and each piece is inscribed with a picture of a longhorn with "101" emblazoned over the top. (See a detail on page one of this issue of the journal.) On the back it reads "To Will Brooks from the Miller Bros."

William A. Brooks was a cousin of the Miller Brothers of the 101 Ranch and the first director when the wild west show began making moving pictures. Among his innovations was the sack lunch. It was difficult to feed hundreds of actors on location so Brooks came up with the idea of bagging sandwiches, fruit, and cake in paper sacks that could be quickly and equitably distributed. (*The 101 Ranch.* Ellsworth Collings. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, p. 119.)

Water Bottle Basket, Paiute, ca. 1900. GM7136.274.

Baskets used by Native Americans to store and carry water were often covered in piñon pitch—a sticky substance produced by the piñon pine tree, which also supplies a nutritious and tasty nut.

When heated, the tree's pitch-like sap becomes soft and can be poured into and over a basket, creating a waterproof vessel.



Coffee Grinder, 1900s.
GM6616.157.

Made of iron, this coffee grinder was most likely used in a home; however, coffee grinders were produced in a range of sizes and styles allowing them to be taken via wagon, or later, packed in cars.

Thomas Bruff registered the first U.S. patent for a coffee grinder, a wall-mounted model, in 1798. Bruff was Thomas Jefferson's dentist. Packaged, ready-ground coffee was first available in New York around 1860.

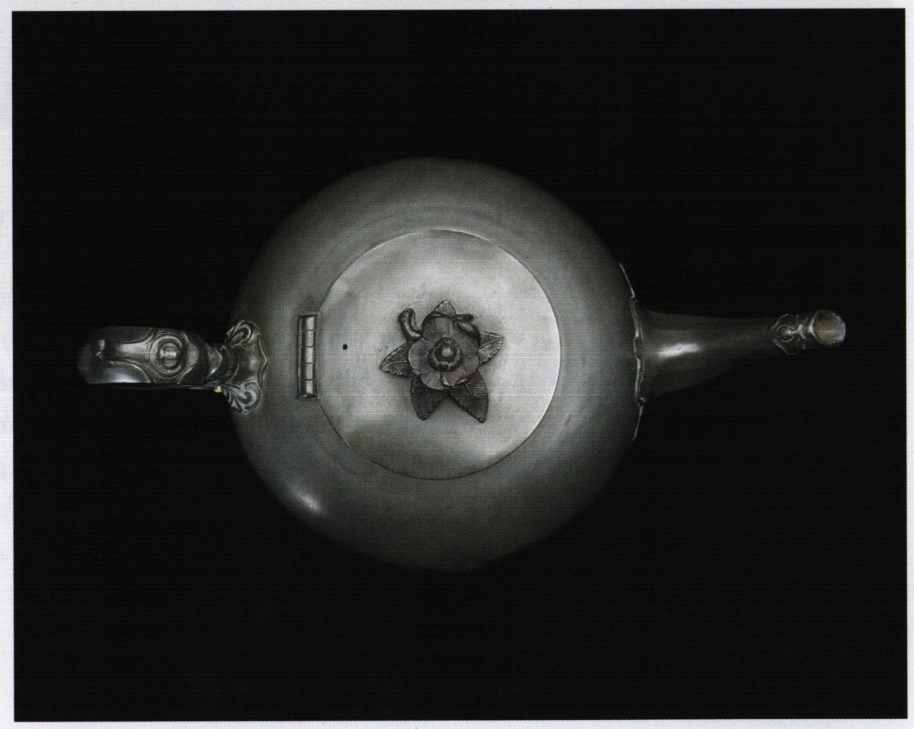




Burden Basket,
Cherokee, 1900s.
GM71.768.

Large baskets called burden baskets, sometimes tubular and sometimes conical, were used for transporting voluminous materials of all kinds. Typically, if the basket needed to be moved, it was strapped to an individual's back.





Teapot, possibly 1800s. GM60.210.

This teapot was made of pewter in a classic style and most likely used in an18th- or 19th-century home.



Polychrome jar, ca. 1925. Nampeyo, Hopi (ca. 1860–1942). GM54.4396.

Nampeyo, born in the village of Hano at the northwest tip of First Mesa, on the current Hopi Indian Reservation in Arizona, had a longstanding interest in the design elements found on potshards from the prehistoric sites she encountered in her travel of the mesa and the surrounding areas. Over a long and distinguished career, she applied her talent to a range of experimental and evocative design systems. The design here is an abstract bird motif that uses feather "fans" to represent wings and tail, with the elongated beak appearing to tuck under the wing. It is flanked by a highly stylized Katsina design.



Reserve black-on-white jar. GM5435.3177.

A natural extension of basketmaking, potterymaking began with the discovery that clay soils exposed to high heat are transformed into a hardened form. In the American Southwest, indigenous people created an incredible array of decorative forms and vessel types. The Reserve style (taking its name from Reserve, New Mexico) introduced several new design elements. Like other Native clay vessels, this one was not turned on a wheel but hand-formed using the coil and scrape method and fired at relatively low temperature.

Monie Horseshief

National Frybread Champion

Lisa Snell



Monie HorseChief.

Laughter and teasing are common in a Native kitchen. Especially when the chef is "World Frybread Champion" and "Frybread Queen" Ramona "Monie" HorseChief.

On this Wednesday, she's working in the kitchen in the break room of Tiger Natural Gas, a Native American–owned company located in south Tulsa. It hired Monie, who is Pawnee and Cherokee, to cater a special lunch of her locally well-known, championship-winning Indian tacos. Her homemade chili simmers on the stove. One batch is vegetarian—made with vegetable stock, fresh bell peppers and onions. A larger batch is beef and bean. A cracked door creates a breeze that carries the delicious aromas into the offices beyond. People wander in and out every few minutes, asking when it's going to be time to eat.

Monie is all gussied up in her new lime green chef's coat and sporting a white apron with "Frybread Champion" embroidered across the front. Her starched white chef's hat bears the title "Frybread Queen" in matching script. She laughs, points to her new duds and strikes her best runway poses for the camera. When Monie's cooking, she's having a good time, and you can't help but have a good time, too. In between the slicing and dicing, there's cutting up, jokes, and telling tales.

As she's forming rough ovals of dough for her frybread, I ask what advice she'd give a first-time frybread cook. "A lot of practice. You have to keep trying and stay at it," she says, as she flips the roughly shaped rounds of dough in a pan of flour before dropping them into a vat of simmering oil. It takes patience, she says. "Learning to do anything well takes patience."



In this group of Pawnee men, Monie HorseChief's ancestor Little Eagle is fourth from left. GM4326.5140.

"Ellis [Monie's husband] is always lecturing me on patience," she growls, rolling her eyes. Then she grins. We laugh. She doesn't like to be told to be patient. Yet she is careful and methodical each step of the way, dicing bell peppers and onions, sautéing them, adding them to the chili. She turns back to check her bread. It's turning golden brown on the bottom, so she turns it, and as she does, I notice slices of potatoes floating in the oil.

"Potatoes keep the grease from burning," she explains. "I don't know how that works, but it does. It was something my grandma did." Monie learned to cook frybread from her grandma Effie. "Au-Kit [Pawnee for "grandma"] would talk about how important food is and how frybread was good because it was filling and stayed in your belly a long time," Monie says. Au-Kit's given name was Effie Annie Little Eagle Osborne. She was full-blood Pawnee and she and her husband, also full-blood Pawnee, were missionaries.

"She would sometimes cook outside over an open fire and I would sit and watch her. She would share old stories with me about her childhood. She would sing and talk about the Lord and how important it was to be close to God," Monie says. "She was always praying for us."

Monie admits she and her sister Lisa were a handful growing up. "Whew, we were wild," she says with a laugh. "Now we're adults and we are coming to do God's work. Her prayers for us had already gone up, and although we strayed when we were young, we came back to the Lord." She sees her talent for cooking as "God-given" and her goal is to prepare the best food for people that she possibly can. She spent eighteen years training and working in the culinary arts. She went to culinary school in Tulsa and worked for many years as kitchen prep help and assisting local chefs in cooking classes.

It was her sister Lisa who encouraged Monie to start cooking competitively. Lisa talked her into setting up a booth at the annual World Championship Indian Taco Competition in Pawhuska in 1992. Lisa was selling tacos and tried to convince Monie to do the same. "I went down and it was horrible. I didn't do tacos. Lisa told me to do tacos. I did corn soup and frybread instead. I bet I sold,

literally, four bowls. People just felt sorry for me. My sister said, 'I told you so!' "

She was game to try again. The next year she made Indian tacos and Lisa served dessert tacos. Monie won second place in the competition. She went back again, and again, placing third, then finally first. "I didn't win one year. So I had to build back up and start over." She and her sister made a winning team. In 2009, they both took home first-place honors—Monie for her Indian taco and Lisa for her dessert taco. "Lisa worked on that dessert recipe for two years," Monie says. "It's a delicious combination of frybread, vanilla cream, and peaches topped with caramelized pecans and whipped cream."

The sisters pooled their resources and bought what they needed. They worked side-by-side and traveled the state selling tacos for lunches, in grocery store parking lots, school events, tribal functions, and powwows. At last year's National Indian Taco Championship, Monie took home the big check once more, winning first place. She followed up that win a couple of weeks later, at the inaugural Muscogee Creek Nation Frybread Championship during the Indian Fall Festival in Jenks.

Although Monie loves working alongside her sister, she often found herself doing her own projects, like making and selling hand-dipped chocolate strawberries for Valentine's Day and canning and selling her homemade salsa. She cooked for the Pawnee elders and started catering events. "Last year I hand-dipped over 2,000 strawberries," she says, somewhat incredulously. "That was a lot of strawberries."

She started catering full-time in August 2013 and launched her business, HorseChief Catering. She landed her first big job earlier this year and learned a hard lesson about her client base.

She was asked by the event coordinator if she could offer vegetarian tacos—that many guests would want a meatless, healthier option. Monie agreed and made a black bean chili topping to go over flatbread. "It won't sell. People don't want a healthier Indian taco!" She laughs now, but admits that was a hard lesson. "I sold twelve all weekend long. I sold more than 620 Indian frybread tacos!" She was stuck with a lot of vegetarian chili. "I had twenty-five pounds left over! What was I going to do with twenty-five pounds of black bean chili? I tried mixing it in with my regular chili . . . and people were all, 'What's that?' OK, never mind!"

Now that she's cooking full-time, Monie wants people to know that she does more than make award-winning Indian tacos. "I don't do only Native food. I do my strawberries, I do BBQ, and I do kebabs. I bake breads and make sliders. I also prepare game—I cook buffalo and venison. I don't care for venison, but I cook it and people love it."

It doesn't matter what she's cooking, just that she gets to cook, which is what she loves. Everybody loves food, she says. It opens up that door to conversation. "My goal is to, everywhere I go, to say Jesus' name at least one time with somebody. And that's it. And I do it. Not pushing. Just saying . . . I cook and we sit down and eat together. And we talk. God gave this to me and people need help." We all have God-given talents. Mine is cooking," she says.

And the secret to fluffy, championship-winning frybread?

"Don't beat it up!"

To contact Monie Horsechie, call 405-880-0653 or email Ramona.horsechief@yahoo.com. For information about Red Earth Festival, visit www.redearth.org

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