

Indigenous Cuisinology with Mariah Gladstone of Indigikitchen Ologies Podcast

January 26, 2022

Oh heeey, hi. It's that mechanical pencil that's out of lead, – oh wait! *Click click*; oh look, there you go! – Alie Ward. This episode's great. There's no screaming like last week's, but it's just a wonderful romp through time, and identity, and history, and culture, and food with someone who you may know as Indigikitchen online. Indigenous Digital Kitchen, online cooking classes. Indigikitchen. Can you dig it? You can.

Its founder grew up in Montana and got an environmental engineering degree at Columbia University in Manhattan and has been on the board of the Native Youth Food Sovereignty Alliance, is a Sloan scholar who, just a few weeks ago, graduated with her master's at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry via the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, which you may remember we talked about in Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer's Bryology, moss episode. Hello, everyone there.

This guest is of both Piikani Blackfeet and Cherokee heritage and is based on the 1.5 million-acre Blackfeet reservation in northwestern Montana. You may have seen her TEDxBozeman talk; you may have seen her on *The Today Show*, perhaps also. Kind of a big deal. I heard about her work and I've been wanting to have her on for years. Knowing she was also from Montana where my dad was born, where I have a ton of family, I was so excited to get to know her. And I was nervous, because she's very cool, and I had a bunch of questions, and I didn't want to be annoying. And you know what? After all that worrying, I *was* annoying, and I *did* ask embarrassing questions, but she rolled with it because she's awesome and that's what I'm here for.

Thank you for being here, by the way, especially you patrons who have made the show possible since before day one. A few days ago I asked what episode patrons wanted to hear and a bunch of you said, "Please, please, this one!" So, here you go. Also thank you to anyone listening to the show, recommending it to friends, and sending such sweet notes. Thank you to everyone who leaves a review, such as this one from C Go 1, who wrote that they liked that *Ologies* has donated to dozens of charities chosen by her ologist.

That's the cherry on top of an already 5-star show that hooked me.

C Go 1, thanks for the review. Hold onto your butts. Because of Patreon support and sponsors of the show, we were able to do our biggest-ever donation. \$3,067.79 worth for this episode. Why that number? It's a good story.

But let's get on with it. Indigenous Cuisinology. I wanted to call this 'culinology', but it turns out that that term is a registered trademark of some cooking school. But a word that has been in usage since at least 1911 is 'cuisinology', which is the study of a culture through its food. And Indigenous comes from a Latin root *indigena*, which is 'sprung from the land' or 'native'. You're going to love her. You're going to love her work so much.

So belly up, stuff a napkin into your collar. Boy howdy, get hungry for stories involving New York City elk meat, mushrooms dibs, fallen stars, food sovereignty, squash, acorns, flower bulbs, bison, the wildest of rices, acorn pies, pre-contact nutrition, meditations on fry bread, and how cooking with native foods isn't part of a past but an essential aspect of the future, with environmental scientist, engineer, cooking show host, and advocate, Mariah Gladstone.

Mariah: My name is Mariah Gladstone. She/her.

Alie: And now, you're based in northwest Montana?

Mariah: Yep, I'm on the Blackfeet reservation just south of the Canadian border. I'm about five minutes outside the eastern entrance to Glacier National Park.

Alie: Yeah, okay. I was just there this summer.

Mariah: Awesome!

Alie: I have relatives that live on that reservation in Browning.

Mariah: Okay, very cool.

Aside: Oh hey, what's up Evans family? Lila is of the Blackfeet Confederacy, and she and my cousin Boyd have raised a lovely family plus a bunch of beautiful, hairy bison on their ranch. And if they seem familiar, you heard their voices during the Bisonology episode of last year. 2020? I don't know. Love y'all, fam.

Mariah: That's a cool connection.

Alie: Yeah, it is! My dad's from up there, and then I have cousins up there as well, so we just got to see them this summer. But I wanted to ask a little bit about your background. So, you graduated with a degree in environmental engineering, and you also cook. Can you tell me a little bit about how long you've been interested in cooking?

Mariah: So, my mom was taking an early childhood development class when I was, I don't know, probably three or four years old. And in it, she was told that kids that grow up cooking have a better understanding of math because they learn how to do fractions and things become much more hands-on. So, she would have me cooking at home. We'd just make banana bread because we'd have overripe bananas, or cookies. So I learned what went into food. It kind of got me started on coming up with my own recipe ideas, so even when I was really, really little, I would wake up and I would go, "I had a dream! I have a new recipe for cookies!" And my mom would let me experiment with making cookies.

So, she made me write down everything I put into the recipes, so I have these things that are handwritten in marker with weird spellings, and sometimes my recipes turned out and sometimes they didn't. As long as I was supervised, the worst-case scenario was that we lost a little bit of flour, and sugar, and butter, or whatever.

Alie: Do you still have those handwritten recipes?

Mariah: I do!

Alie: You do?! Where do you keep them?

Mariah: I have them in my file folder cabinet. Yeah.

Alie: That's great. They should go right next to your degree. Just have them framed.

Mariah: Now I have an engineering degree I don't use, thanks to the great math knowledge.
[laughs]

Alie: Did it help in STEM? Did it help with math?

Mariah: I mean, probably. Because you know, if those things become very intuitive, if you know how to visualize those things, you can divide one half into half... I don't know, I'll credit that.

Alie: Not to mention that we are so behind on the metric system that it's even more work to try to figure out when you're actually cooking. But if we went by grams, things would be much more straightforward.

Mariah: Oh yeah. I've been following recipes that are written in a metric system, and I'm sitting there with my little scale, and I'm like, "Yeah, this is pretty cool, actually, but it feels more like chemistry class." So, I'm cool with it.

Alie: When it came to deciding what you were going to pursue for college, how did you pick environmental engineering?

Mariah: I've always been really interested in sustainability and finding ways to give back to my community. And for a while, because of my interest in math and science, I thought that the best way to do that would be through engineering, specifically through sustainability and looking at renewable energy. So, that's really what I studied. I did work on green energy building design in school and looked at wind power systems, and solar power systems, and things like that. That work has translated a little bit to what I do now because I still have a strong sustainability focus, but it's definitely not the true mechanical engineering side of things.

Aside: After Mariah graduated from Columbia, she said she was in a rush to find a job and she went into engineering management but didn't find it really had enough to do with her degree or what she loved in life. That's okay. As Rose Eveleth said in the Futurology episode, "The future isn't written. It just hasn't happened yet. It's okay to change course."

Mariah: If I looked back, I probably should've taken, like, a solar installer tech course instead of going for a full engineering degree. But it was definitely... You know, part of that journey in going to school, being in New York City, being away from my home community, and our foods, and struggling in New York City where you are supposed to be able to find any food you want, to find the foods I wanted.

And contrasting that to being back home during the summer on the reservation, and having all of these ancestral foods around me, but of course, being 40 miles away from a grocery store and having to think, "If I want to make a curry, what am I going to use for that?" And I'm like, "I'm going to make moose vindaloo because we have moose meat in the freezer and that's what I have access to right now." So, it kind of became this adventure in different foods.

It was that contrast in New York City life and reservation life that really led me to start re-learning so much of my own Indigenous food knowledge. Ultimately, I'd say that I'm very, very content with the field that I chose, though I'm fortunate that I do have that engineering background now so that I have a better understanding of how all of those things work together from this really sciencey perspective.

Alie: I'm wondering, when you talk about ancestral foods – I'm sure this must come up a lot too – that it's based so regionally and by nation, I'm sure. When you set out to learn more about it, did you start really locally, or did you have mentors or people that you looked to in other places?

Mariah: That's a great question, because there is this very regional focus in Indigenous foods. There are the foods that I have access to walking outside my door next to the mountains in Montana, and there are foods that folks in the Great Lakes Region have access to, or folks in the Southwest, and they're all very different. But there has been a common thread of trade that has united us in the past, and now of course there is a lot more interaction,

easy interaction, whether it's through Facebook, or conferences, or however Natives get together now that, kind of, continues and allows us to share our foods even when we are from different regions.

So, I was lucky that when I started I got to know some of the foods around my area, both from botanists and elders working within our community, and then I also got to know folks that work with foods from different areas. Sometimes those were chefs, folks like Sean Sherman who runs the Sioux Chef Organization. Or even, the first recipe I ever put out on Indigikitchen was a recipe that my friend Lakota Pochedley, who is Citizen Potawatomi, used to bring to potlucks in college. I messaged her and asked her to send me the recipe for it. It was a wild rice, berry, and maple syrup dish. So, she sent me a newspaper clipping from her home tribal paper. That's how we swap recipes. Even when it's not something that's specifically from our region, we have ways of interacting and learning more about those things.

Alie: Was there anything when you were in New York that you were really craving from home?

Mariah: Ooh, yes. Wild game meat for sure. I definitely, after a fall break I think, I flew back to New York with frozen deer and elk packed in my carry-on and wrapped in clothing so that it wouldn't thaw out on the flight back to LaGuardia. And I was like, "Well, if my checked baggage gets lost, I don't want to have rotting meat in there." So I was like, "I'll just wrap this in here." And TSA is like, "What is this?" I'm like, "It's frozen meat. It's solid. It's fine." And they're like, "Yeah, I guess that doesn't violate any rules."

Alie: It's got to be hard to have freezer space in New York too. Like the chest freezers, there's not a lot of those in New York.

Mariah: No, not a lot of chest freezers in New York, and of course all I had access to was my little, basic, dorm mini-fridge. But it did have a little freezer on top that was separate from the fridge part, so I had enough room to put my frozen game meat in there and thaw it out when I needed it. *[laughs]*

Native chefs always swap stories about TSA and the things that we've carried through TSA, and I know that every time anyone carries blue cornmeal through TSA it gets opened and it has to be... they swipe your hands for bomb residue or something. And we're all like, "It's just blue cornmeal." Mesquite flour, same thing.

One time, I flew to New York City to do a cooking demonstration at a college, and it was one of those fast turnaround flights, so I had to fly in in the morning and fly out in the evening, so all I had was my carry on. In it, I had just packed an Instant Pot that was filled with all the ingredients, and tools, and stuff that I needed. So, that's all I had on the plane with me. I'm like, "This is going to go through. It's going to set off the alarms, guys. It's just an Instant Pot." So they of course had to open it and everything, and it's just filled with my little cooking spoons and stuff in there. I was like, "See, it's fine." They're like, "What are you doing??" *[laughs]*

Alie: When you're flying around or when you're coming up with recipes, are you really, kind of, basing it on... rather than maybe hyperlocal, are you looking for seasonal types of foods that might be traditional to whatever season is coming up? How do you plan the recipes that you're going to film, and shoot, and disseminate?

Mariah: That's a great question. It's a combination of regional things, especially when I'm doing really old or ancestral recipes, things that would've been made very similar to the way

that I'm showcasing them. And in that case, of course, you're looking for a whole bunch of ingredients that would've been found in the same area.

Aside: By the by, we actually recorded this episode in late November, and to be honest, I didn't feel okay releasing this during Native American Heritage Month when all the editors of all the magazines and all the producers of news segments scramble to put up some relevant content as kind of a nod. Having 1/12th of the year to have your history recognized, and your customs appreciated, and your injustices acknowledged seems kind of like, more patronizing colonizer shit. So, it's coming out in January, which is still winter food season and still a good time to care about Indigenous people. So, wow, look at this! Evergreen content!

Mariah: We're thinking of foods that are in season right now, so of course it is the time of winter squashes, and it's the time of pumpkins, and it's hunting season, and there's all of these wonderful foods that are available now. It's after ricing, so people have fresh parched wild rice. It's fun to incorporate those all at the same time. Even though now, of course, we have ways of preserving food. So, I have picked berries from August but I can pull them out at any time and use them for things because I have them in the freezer, or I have them dehydrated, or whatever that may be.

But also, I recognize, you know, Indigenous people are living in the 21st century with everyone else and we have always used the tools that we have access to. And right now, maybe that's a big chest freezer. Maybe that's an Instant Pot. Maybe that is a coffee grinder that can blend sunflower seeds into flour at lightning speed.

Aside: PS, while we were recording this, I was like, "Ooh, what recipe uses sunflower butter?" So I didn't want to interrupt her, but if your stomach just gurgled in curiosity, I looked it up. She has a sunflower butter popcorn recipe that involves honey and maple syrup and the note that this stuff is addictive. I'm willing to take the risk. I'm going to link so much stuff on my website for this episode. It's going to get absurd how many links I mention are on my website. I'm sorry. Please do a tiny, imperceptible butt dance every time.

Mariah: Whatever it is, we are able to recognize that ancestral wisdom and the Indigenous brilliance of agriculture, or harvesting, or foraging, or hunting, or whatever it may be along with our presence in this day.

Alie: And you know, on the topic of agriculture, and foraging, and the work that you do to educate, how do you start to educate people about hunting, and gathering, and foraging versus land stewardship and where Indigenous food sources really come from? How much of that would you say people really understand?

Mariah: That's a good question. When I talk to non-Native audiences, I think I approach things quite a bit differently than when I talk to predominantly Native audiences. It is all based on setting this foundation. So, I start with a history lesson that talks about the really intentional work that has been done to dispossess Native people of our food systems, the targeting of Indigenous food systems that has occurred, whether that be through intentional hunting of bison almost to extinction, whether that be through the burning of Native crops, and fields, and storehouses of food, whether that's through the damming of rivers that stopped irrigation or stopped fish migrations.

Whatever that may be, we have to frame the work that we're doing with Indigenous foods within this larger historical context because, I think, part of the issue we have when we

talk about Native people and our food systems are all of these diet-related illnesses. But it's rarely talked about in terms of this bigger context which explains why we're at where we're at with diabetes, right? There's been intentional work to shift our diets into these highly processed, subsidized food systems. So, the work to restore that information and restore our access to those places also has to be really intentional.

So, I frame this within this "why" context; not just what we're doing but why we're doing it, and reminding people that it's not just about, you know, trying to regain physical health. Like, that's cool to not have diabetes that's harming your body, right? But it's really cool to be able to look at ancestral wisdom and the ways in which our ancestors recognized that need to really steward the land, this traditional land management that's been practiced.

I know a previous podcast episode talked about Indigenous fire ecology and that as a tool of land management, and that intersects with food in so many ways. Blackfeet people, for example, traditionally practiced prairie burning that would not only clear off the old, dry grass from the top of the prairies, but that blackened patch of grass would warm much faster in the springtime, would encourage new shoots of grass to grow, and of course become a big homing beacon for bison and other grazing ungulates on the prairies.

But also, those low-intensity prairie fires helped certain seeds, like our prairie turnips, germinate because it broke their seed coat and that was enough to really help them grow and create this wonderful... basically a prairie potato with a relatively low glycemic value.

Aside: I had never even heard of a prairie potato, but apparently they're in the legume family. They're also called breadroot and scurf pea. Also, Topeka residents? Capital city of Kansas? Topeka's thought to mean in the language of the Kansa people, 'a good place to dig prairie turnips'. So look around.

Mariah: So it was through those land management techniques and that recognition of our place within this work that we could help recognize not only how our food takes care of us but also how we can take care of the places where our food comes from.

Alie: You mentioned a little bit about how the diets veered off based on what was available and cheaper, less healthy foods.

Aside: See Mariah's TED Talk:

[clip from Mariah's TED Talk:] Government rations turned into the commodity food programming, issuing a limited number of staples like flour, sugar, lard. Thus was born fry bread. Delicious. And absolutely devastating to Native people.

Side note: Fry bread is this pillowy, oil-bathed white flour comfort food and it's used as a taco base or even as a honey-drizzled dessert. But it's been in the hot seat and was even the subject of a 2021 *New York Times* article titled "Fry Bread is Beloved, but Also Divisive," which quoted Cherokee writer Art Coulson as saying fry bread is "kind of like what one of the Supreme Court justices said about obscenity. I can't define it, but I know it when I see it."

So how does an expert feel about its place on the food landscape?

Alie: People hear 'Indigenous food' and they think fry bread. Does that just make you want to rage, ever, to be honest?

Mariah: You know, it's funny because fry bread of course came from a period of time where Native people were dependent on government rations, which were shelf-stable, processed boxes of food that were distributed to households. And they weren't things we recognized as food, so we made something out of them because survival. And that's where fry bread came from. So, I will say that fry bread is a traditional food in that it's part of our history and it got us through a period of time that would've otherwise meant starvation. But there is a tendency of oppressed people to mistake our oppression for our culture. And I think that's kind of what people do with fry bread, or commodity cheese, or whatever thing that has become part of these subsidized food systems.

So, I don't spend a lot of time trashing fry bread. People know that fry bread is not good for you, traditionally. But people also have deep family connections to fry bread. "Don't attack fry bread! You're attacking my grandma," right? So, rather than focusing on all this negative stuff... which I feel like is what a lot of nutrition educators do within our communities. They come in and say, "Don't eat that. It's bad for you." Like, yeah we know that, but also this is what we know how to make. So rather than doing all of that, we just focus on all of the resources that we do have, the things that we do have access to.

Whether it be in our grocery stores, or in our communities, or in the lands that we can forage, or the things that we can grow in our soils. Whatever it may be, those are the things that I focus on and really tie it all back to the incredible wisdom that has put those things in place, that has helped us recognize corn... Corn's edible, right? But the ways in which we eat corn now are not traditionally how they were eaten. Our ancestors recognized that corn had to be treated with this process of nixtamalization.

Aside: *What is it? [computer pronunciation: nex-tamal-i-azation]* Hmm... It's called nixtamalization and it comes from the Indigenous Nahuatl portmanteau meaning 'lime ashes' and tamal, for corn dough. So, nixtamalization.

Mariah: This process of treating corn with a highly alkaline solution that you make from adding wood ash to water, and it chemically dissolves the hull of the corn, and that transforms the bound niacin into free niacin, and you have amazing Indigenous chemistry happening while also recognizing that you've now added way more nutritional value to the corn, and the wood ash has added calcium, which is way more absorbable than the calcium in dairy, for example. And all of that has taken generations of Indigenous knowledge to put into place. So, I get to talk about all of this really cool stuff and I really don't have time to trash fry bread.

I mean, I think fry bread has its place in our culture because we can recognize it as something that helped us survive. It doesn't need to be put on a pedestal. It's kind of a trash food but that's... *[laughs]* There's also ways that we can re-Indigenize fry bread, right? We can make our fry bread using blue cornmeal instead of white flour. And we can use bison tallow as a frying medium. And we can add bison burger and make cool Indian tacos with these things. We can change how we imagine these foods. It doesn't need to be lard, and dry milk, and white flour, and white sugar, and cooking oil. There are ways that we can recognize that as part of our history but also work to recall some of that knowledge that had been really intentionally taken from us.

Alie: And when you were finding out about how food was processed, and cooked, and used, what kind of sources do you usually go for? Are you poring through biochemistry journals? What is it like when you find out something new that you hadn't known before?

Mariah: It's funny because, of course, I'm living on the Blackfeet reservation, so I have cultural connections here. I have Indigenous botanists that are super informed and have a lot of information themselves. But also, I'm a graduate student and I occasionally approach things from an academic side. I remember reading through old ethnobotany journals from folks that had studied with Blackfoot peoples up in Canada, and it was really interesting because I was reading through and I found someone had written a note about Blackfoot peoples using chokecherry wood, the branches, the twigs of chokecherry, and putting them in a roast as it cooked so that it would infuse it with flavor. Kind of like people would put cloves in a ham or something.

And I was like, "Wait! This is so cool!" You're taking a hardwood, a fruitwood, and you're infusing it as it's slow cooking. I was like, "It's basically a cross between cloves in a ham and smoking something with a hardwood." And I was like, "This is amazing. I have to try this." I had found it by digging through old journals from ethnographers and stuff that had lived with the Blackfoot for a couple of months. I was like, "This is crazy!" Because no, I hadn't heard that before.

Occasionally, I get information like that. Sometimes I get information just by reaching out to Native chefs and asking questions, especially if it's from a community that I don't have knowledge of. I've reached out to a Navajo chef friend of mine when asking about blue corn mush recipes. Like, "How much juniper ash are you actually supposed to add to how much water, how much blue cornmeal?" Whatever it may be, I'm like, "I know the ingredients. I don't know the proportions."

If you're talking with plant folks they might say, "Yeah, this plant is edible." Great. What part of the plant? When do you harvest it? Camas roots, for example, camas bulbs are edible...

Aside: What are these? I had never heard of them but they are plant friends in the asparagus family, and their flowers sometimes carpet whole-ass beautiful meadows with these lilac, or white, or deep violet blooms. And then the root? The bulb? Tastes like a frickin' baked pear! So go find 'em just by blossom spotting, right? *No!*

Mariah: But it is more traditional for people to wait until after they've bloomed, which makes them a little bit harder to identify. And of course, none of the plant identification books are going to show you how the camas is looking like when it's not blooming. And then you also have to know what it can be mistaken as, like death camas, which is a white flower versus a blue flower, but if they're not blooming when you're harvesting them, that's hard to tell.

And then you have to know, of course, how to cook it. And for camas, it's really, really, really high in inulin, which is the same thing that's in Jerusalem artichokes or sunchokes.

Aside: Inulin is a fiber, and I'm going to read between her lines here and break the windy news. She's talkin' farts, people. Delicious, creamy, sweet inulin has a price, and it's ripping hot ones for days.

Mariah: So, you have to basically slow cook these or roast these for an extended amount of time, and traditionally that was done in a big pit underground and they'd be roasted for up to 48 hours until, basically, the sugars are caramelizing and all the inulin's been processed down so your body can digest it. That's not something that it says if you're like, "Camas bulbs are edible," right? So all that information has to go along with it or else the resource

is incomplete. Just knowing that something is edible doesn't necessarily help as a resource all the time because sometimes it can be dangerous.

For example, chokecherries are edible, but the pits in chokecherries contain cyanide. But the pits were traditionally eaten by Blackfeet, and Lakota, and other people that have traditionally eaten chokecherries because we took chokecherries, smashed them with a rock in their entirety into little chokecherry pancakes. We basically made little fruit patties and then we dried them until they were dehydrated. And then, now they're dried out, they're very packable, they keep for a long time. But that drying process neutralizes the cyanide in them. So you can eat the pits because now they've been smashed into oblivion and also the cyanide is not going to harm you.

Some people will be like, "Oh, the Indians are magically immune to cyanide." Not quite. But it's the preparation method. Otherwise, if you make chokecherry syrup, you have to remove the pits. The cooking process will also neutralize the cyanide like it does in elderberries. Just the fun things that go along with knowing something's edible.

Alie: Yeah! It's like saying in New York, "How do you get there? You take the subway." And you're like, "Well... which direction, and what train? And where do I get off?" There's so much!

Mariah: Yeah, which direction, what line, why is this line always closed? [*laughs*] Just kidding.

Alie: What about some myths that you commonly encounter that you love to bust? Some flimflam that Native folks or non-Native folks think about Indigenous cooking.

Mariah: That's a great question. [*"Thank you."*] I need to think about that one.

Aside: Is it flimflam that the North American Indigenous diet is mostly acorns?

Alie: It's not all acorns, maybe?

Mariah: Acorns... Acorns are edible. [*laughs*] I'm just going to say, I don't come from any acorn-eating people. That sounds weird.

Alie: Okay, so I grew up in California and its golden foothills are studded with oak trees. I love them so much. I grew up collecting acorns for school projects. So, I thought it was a national teaching that Indigenous foods were all acorn-based. So that must be a myth. Turns out, it's incredibly regional, of course. Like, *drrr*, Ward. Did I embarrass myself? Sure, a little bit. So go text your crush, cut some bangs, ask the questions to the stuff you don't know, because we're all just going to turn into ashes one day, or fungus. Or if we're lucky, an acorn.

Mariah: I need to get my friends in Northern California/Southern Oregon to send me some acorns because I have been meaning to do recipes with acorns. Because the process of actually making acorns edible or delicious is kind of complicated. It has really high tannins, so you have to leach it out. There's a hot-leaching process versus a cold-leaching process, and there's a whole way of getting the tannins out so that your acorns taste like flour instead of, like, the bitterest thing on Earth.

And of course, different acorns have different flavor profiles. But I have a friend that does Indigenous food work in Northern California, and she has a recipe for... I think she calls them Indian whoopie pies, but they're these whoopie pies that are made with acorn flour because that is a traditional food for her people.

Aside: I searched around and I think she's talking about the very cool Sara Calvosa Olson's squash whoopie pies with maple cream, which are made with acorn flour. Sara has a ton of great recipes, including things like deer stew and beet-pickled quail eggs, acorn breads. Ah! So, for some beautiful photos and recipes, you can follow Sara on Instagram @TheFryBreadRiot. It's a great name.

Also, Sara runs acorn leaching workshops, and her website says, "This workshop is free to Native peoples, and \$300 for Non-Natives." Which, as a non-Native, I have to be honest and admit, I think is pretty awesome. Well done.

Mariah: But it's funny because, ironically, of all the foods I've worked with, I've never done anything with acorns. I have an elder that gave me a recipe for using acorns and making an acorn soup, and I'm supposed to film it and I haven't done it yet because I need to get my hands on some acorns.

Alie: Well, I have an oak tree in my backyard. If you need me to send you any, let me know!

Mariah: I'd be forever grateful to have a priority box full of acorns. *[laughs]*

Alie: Absolutely! I've got one in my backyard and one down the street that I've never seen have so many acorns. But I think that's... in California, maybe a part of one class that's just, like, "Acorns!" and that's all we get to learn.

Mariah: That's really interesting to me because, obviously, in Montana so much of our education is buffalo, bison, right? I just finished helping write the Harvest of the Month material for Montana Farm to School to add bison as one of the foods. So of course, it's all about bison as an original food and we really wanted to approach it and make sure this material that was going out to Montana schools was also culturally appropriate, so we're adding bison to that material. But of course, it's all about bison and then all the other things that bison was used for besides just food; clothing, shelter, tools, all of these other things.

Aside: Again, see that Bisonology episode, which will be linked on the episode page in the show notes. (Do a butt dance.)

Mariah: And then on East Coast, where my partner's from, he's Haudenosaunee Onondaga from New York, so a lot of their discussions about Indigenous food are about the three sisters, which is of course corn, beans, and squash, coming from a very different agricultural community, which is similar to how my mom's people, Cherokee, traditionally grew food as well. There's a lot of corn, beans, and squash. And then up in the Great Lakes Region, it's probably all focused about wild rice and ricing culture.

And then, you know, down in the southwest you get more corn, beans, and squash, but also there's sunflowers all over that people have incorporated and bred specifically that have very large-edible seeds. And cactuses. Cactuses don't get talked a lot about, unless you're in Mexico, in which case everyone's like, "Oh yeah, nopales." But then, we have prickly pear cacti in Montana, and those produce the same edible fruit, and that is a treat for Blackfeet people, but I've never heard that talked about in our school system, for example, as a traditional food besides when I show up and talk about eating cactuses with the kids.

But yeah, that's interesting because it's so regional. And that's the fun part of it. But there's also been so much ancestral trade that's taken place. There are anthropologists that are brilliant that have mapped out traditional trade routes based on archeological finds. They know how did this food get in this place because the climate would've made it

impossible to grow? How did they get it? Of course, Native people used drying as our primary preservation technique.

Aside: So drying, Mariah says, made it possible for different foods and resources to be carried long distances and then traded. There's a great article in *Indian Country Today* that states that "much of California's highway and thoroughfare system dates back to before European contact and there were Indigenous routes long before settlers arrived." And that's true for so many routes in colonized lands. The paper also quotes a study in the journal *American Anthropologist* that traces trade connections across the whole continent. And they dispersed California shells, and oil tar, and obsidian to the east while textiles and pottery came west, it says.

And on other continents, in Australia, so-called bush food, things like nuts, and grasses, and kangaroo meat, turtles, emus, fruits and nuts, those have become gourmet items. But Australian historians echo what Mariah is saying in that trade among Indigenous folks was widespread and still is, just in case anyone ever doubted that.

Mariah: I don't know if people have a lot of misconceptions about Native food. I think probably most people think potatoes came from Ireland, for example, and that's a big South American Indigenous food. Regardless of your type of potatoes, the Incan empire had a massive agricultural knowledge about potatoes. There were, and still are, thousands of varieties of potatoes. Tomatoes, of course, are an Indigenous food. Italians didn't have tomatoes until they were traded back to Italy with Columbus and future generations of folks. [*"I can make spaghetti!"*]

Aside: You know, for a long time, just the smell of marinara sauce reminded me of my Italian grandparents who, frankly, were assholes. [*"Nah, I'm good."*] So, given that food is loaded with so much emotion, I wondered if Mariah notices the opposite effect, like if this work makes her more excited about the things that she's eating.

Mariah: It's made me more conscious of the things that I'm eating and trying to think about the ways in which I can put good things into my body; whether those be from the land, or whether those be from farmers in my area, or from fish out of the lake, or whatever it may be. So that gets me excited too. I have to be careful because I talk about food all the time and good choices, but also one shouldn't feel guilty about eating, so that is, I think, something to just be aware of when approaching anything with food, that you should be excited about the foods that you're eating and you should be eating them because they make you happy. Eating traditional foods and foods that come from the area and that I get from other Native harvesters and producers, those things make me happy.

And I'm not doing that to try to feel skinny, or to try to look a certain way, or any of that. I think that's important to emphasize too, just because so much of our society is caught up in diet culture and this obsession with food, and I think that's something I want to be very careful to avoid. I'm trying to eat for health and wellness, not just for myself, but for my community and for the ecosystem around me.

Alie: I'm not sure if this has ever happened to you in the past, but I'll get into ruts where I'll just maybe eat whatever's around or available, or I won't spend much time thinking about what I'm eating. But I get so much more excited when I'm actually doing something intentionally, that I want to eat, that I'm excited to eat, that I'm learning about, that has more value to me, you know? I think context can be so important when you're excited

about what you're eating, as opposed to, like, "Ugh, I've got to eat something and whatever's easiest." You know what I mean?

Mariah: Oh yeah, for sure. I get ideas all the time about things that I want to try. I keep thinking that now that the water is mostly out of the wood for the year, it's transitioning into winter, I want to go harvest some wood, specifically serviceberry wood, and cut it into wood chips, and let those dry, and put them in the smoker and see if we can make, like, sarvisberry smoked elk, or sarvisberry smoked fish, or something like that, and try smoking with wood chips that I make myself. I think that would be super cool.

So, that excites me. I'm excited about trying traditional drying methods for preserving squash, and all these different things. So, I get to approach this from a fun, sciencey perspective, but also, you know, with that culinary side where I'm trying to make things delicious too, you know? It's not just about the science and about making things food safe, but also it's all of these other connections that go along with it. Ultimately, I just want to eat delicious food at the end of the day, too.

Alie: Yeah! Okay, so we have questions from listeners, if I may ask them.

Mariah: Yes!

Aside: Okay, but before we do, we always shout out a cause of the ologist's choosing, and this is the weirdest one we've ever done. It's the biggest single donation in *Ologies* history. For FAST Blackfeet, it's Food Access and Sustainability Team, which is a group of community leaders, and health professionals, and educators within the Blackfeet Nation who are dedicated to identifying food insecurity in their community, offering effective solutions related to access to healthy food and nutrition education, and addressing food sovereignty. This week the donation went specifically to them.

Right after I hit 'stop' on the record button, I asked Mariah, "Where do you want the donation to go?" And she mentioned this organization because she was on the board and she was helping arrange to buy and harvest a bison to feed families via the food pantry and to help other Indigenous folks get to know quality bison meat. And I said, "Oh, that's great! My cousins I mentioned earlier have a bison ranch up there!"

And she asked their names and it turned out, *she had already arranged to buy a bison from their herd! WHAT??* What are the fucking chances, you guys?? I'm so sad I stopped recording because it was such a fun, and sweet, and weird moment right at the end. I was like, "You're getting a bison from Boyd!"

So I hopped on the phone with my cousin Boyd.

Alie: Do you think they'll get to do any hide tanning at all with it?

Boyd: Oh, I think so. Yeah.

Alie: Awesome. Is that part of the process for some folks who come up to the ranch? They kind of harvest them themselves?

Boyd: Yeah. Yep, that's normally what we do. But we have a local guy that started a packing house... Well, she started it about three or four years ago, but she's just finally getting to the point where she's got all of her equipment and everything. Looks like she can probably process, maybe, six or seven animals a week. So, that's helped a little.

Alie: Oh yeah? What's that one called?

Boyd: C&C Meat in Duck Lake, Babb.

Alie: Oh cool.

Boyd: She's got two of our buffalo there right now and two steers. So, we kind of filled her up for the next couple of weeks. But yeah, so that kind of helps them.

Alie: Do you have any recipes that Lila's gotten from previous generations that you cook with?

Boyd: We mostly just eat steaks and burgers. *[laughs]* Nothing really fancy.

Alie: Mariah's got a great one where she makes lasagna with, like, a butternut squash as the noodles, and then layers it. It looks *good*. I want to make that. *[laughs]* She told me about it and I was like, "Ooh!"

Boyd: Oh yeah.

Anyway, we did some number crunching, and because of patrons and how great y'all are as an audience, and the sponsors of the show, we were able to cover the cost of a whole bison and processing. So I got to call Mariah back and tell her because I was so excited.

And I emailed Mackenzie at FAST to arrange payment to them, and it turns out she's an ologite! So that was fun, too. Hi, everyone there. She just let me know, Mackenzie did, that their planned harvest went well in December and that their local butcher, Christina Flammond, was there teaching folks about the harvest. Mackenzie says that that meat fed around 120 families, and the hide will be tanned and auctioned to go back into the kitty with the ologies donation for the next bison, and then both hides will be auctioned off, she wrote me, which will hopefully buy another bison, and keep the cycle going.

So that is the story of this week's donation, which is so exciting. I'm so stoked that this podcast and the community of folks were able to make that possible, along with sponsors of the show, who I genuinely like, and then we take some of that money and we give it away.

[Ad Break]

Okay, your questions. I went back in my questions doc to see who else asked this fun fungus question, and it turns out, only one of you dirty birds did.

Alie: Dirty Dan wants to know: What role do mushrooms play typically in Indigenous foods?

Mariah: Oh that's such a good question. It depends so much regionally, but here it's interesting because... As I said, I'm up in Montana, so we have... we are really fortunate. We have morels that grow, especially in our old, burnt forest. So that's a really fun activity for folks to go out and do, harvest morels a few years after fires come through. But we also have puffballs, and puffballs are, of course, these big mushrooms that grow mostly out on the prairies.

But there is actually a story that goes back that talks about an Earth woman marrying a Sky man. And when she came back down to Earth and gave birth, there was a rule that her baby wasn't supposed to touch the ground for five days. And on the fifth day, his grandma, the girl's mother, was watching the baby and she wasn't really watching him that well, so the mom came back into the lodge and was looking for her baby, and she's like, "He's under that blanket." And she lifted up the blanket and instead of a baby being there, it was a puffball. The baby had been turned into a puffball, and that's how we got puffballs.

So now, on some Blackfeet painted lodge designs, you'll see these circles. They're bright white circles on a colorful background...

Aside: Real quick, a lodge is what most non-Natives generally see and call a teepee. Although a teepee is a word from a different nation, the Dakota folks. In Blackfeet language, it would be called a niitoyi or a lodge. But some individuals' designs look like a band along the bottom with this graphic row of big polka dots. But...

Mariah: They're puffballs. They're mushrooms, is what they represent. And of course, there's so many other Indigenous peoples with different types of mushrooms, but we definitely have recognized mushrooms as part of traditional diets.

I was just reading a Cherokee story from my mom's people the other day about a type of mushroom. And our Cherokee stories tell us... They say, "Once you see the mushroom, it will stop growing. But if you put a stick through it, then it will keep growing." But it was interesting because I was reading this translation of this Cherokee text, and they also said, "In other words, if you see a mushroom with a stick through it, it means it's already been claimed and you have to leave it alone." But if it doesn't have a stick through it then you can claim it and you can come back when it's ready to harvest. [*"Oh, okay. I see what you did there."*]

Aside: It's kind of like putting a coaster on your beer. Like, "BRB, thanks."

Mariah: So I was like, "Oh, okay. That makes sense." But it's funny because they translated what that principle was. It was like, "We don't actually think that mushroom's going to stop growing. This is just how you claim it." But that's what the story is and that's why it relates. It's cool. But it's a delicacy, and then they talked about how to cook it up, fry it in a little bit of animal fat, bread it with a little bit of cornmeal or something. There's definitely traditional stories with fungi.

Alie: That's wonderful to think of paintings of just big puffballs. They're so giant!

Mariah: It was a coloring book, too. It was a children's coloring book that I was reading it in. It was written in the Cherokee language, and I was reading these translations, and I was like, "This is amazing!" Because of course there's, like, a black-and-white sketch for children to color in that's a mushroom. And it looked like a chicken of the woods; I'm not really sure. I need to find out what the actual scientific name is of this mushroom because it just had the Cherokee word for it. But it had this big stick through it and I was like, "This is great!"

Aside: PS, I asked Mariah later, and it's the Cherokee Nation Education coloring book, and that's called *Cherokee First*, and yes I will link that on my website.

Also, sidenote, a lot of Indigenous nations' names were given to them by other people, kind of like gossiping about them and then that name stuck. So if you're like, "Wait, why have I never heard of the Haudenosaunee or the Diné before?" Well, your grade school textbooks maybe used Iroquois or Navajo, respectively. Or rather, irrespectively, because a lot of times they were like, "What'd you call us??"

There are 573 tribes within the US, each with their own history, and traditions, and culture, and cooking. I wish this episode were 573 hours long, but we've got to get cracking.

A few patrons, including Aléx Cowles and beloved, longtime question-asker Kelli Brockington had healthy food questions. But one patron asked more specifically about symbiosis with your simmering intestines.

Alie: One listener, Aurel Chaoul Pelleg, had a great question: Has there been any research on Indigenous diet in relation to gut health and bioinformatics? And does Indigenous diet help improve gut health and thus indirectly help with mental health?

Mariah: That's a great question. So, yeah there's... I mean, there's been a lot of research that talks more about Indigenous diets on glycemic spikes and things like that. Gut health is still not talked about as much as it should be, but I think when we look at the foods that comprise Indigenous diets, they are predominantly anti-inflammatory foods. You're looking at a lot of, of course, fresh foods. There's very few grains. You're not going to see any wheat; you're not going to see any rice. Wild rice is actually a grass seed that's not related to other rice, if you were wondering.

But it's interesting because there's a lot of meats and proteins with relatively low ratios of omega-6s. So when you look at bison versus beef, for example, the bison meat is of course lower in fat. Even when you compare grain-fed bison versus grass-fed beef, you still have lower fats within the bison. But also your omega-3 to omega-6 ratios are much higher, so you're getting a lot of those really good fats with your wild game meat, with your bison. And that helped peoples' diets, it helped brain health, inflammation, all of these things that go into that.

And then we can look at your basic vitamins that people are consuming, because even when folks were eating predominantly dried foods, things like rosehips which have incredibly high rates of vitamin C, same for any type of pine needle tea, even prairie turnips have high rates of vitamin C. There's documentation long before people knew what vitamin C was or had any cures of scurvy, a hundred years before the cure for scurvy was documented, there actually was a written account of someone interacting with Native folks who told them to drink pine needle tea and cured their scurvy. But no one acknowledged it until a hundred years later. It's interesting things like that.

None of that really related to gut health explicitly, but there is a lot of research about that type of anti-inflammatory diet. Eating fresh foods, you're avoiding preservatives, things like that, and you're sticking to drying or freezing as your predominant method of preservation. So, that's all really good.

But I think the researcher that's probably done the most is Valerie Segrest. She has a whole unit about healthy beverage choices, and it's of course related to diabetes in many cases. But she's actually done some work on actual nutritional analysis, specifically for folks within her community around the Pacific Northwest. She works with the Native American Agricultural Fund and she just came out with her own cookbook. She's done some of the best actual research and numbers documentation that I've seen.

Aside: Oh hello, Valerie also had a TEDx Talk.

[clip from Verlie's TEDx Talk:] "My name is Valerie Segrest and I'm a member of the Muckleshoot Indian tribe. I work as a community nutritionist and a Native foods educator, and for the past several years have coordinated the Muckleshoot food sovereignty project."

And as long as I was just googling until my nails broke, another great voice in Indigenous health is Abaki Beck, who is a St. Louis-based writer and a public health researcher.

I will link her socials and her work alongside Valerie's on my website, also alongside the work of Sean Sherman, aka the Sioux Chef, who co-founded the North American

Traditional Indigenous Food Systems with Dana Thompson. It's just... put on deodorant, get excited, there's a link party in the show notes.

Mariah: But more and more folks are doing the work every day and it's really, really cool to see that. I also – just on a sidenote – the decolonizing diet project out of northern Michigan University, which was run by Professor Mary Reinhardt there, actually did a project where folks switched their diets over to Indigenous foods from the region. Not all the participants were Native, but everyone switched their diets to foods that would've been found in the Great Lakes Region prior to colonization. And I think they did an entire year of this. They have a cookbook now that's come out; you can buy it through the Northern Michigan University Bookstore.

Aside: It's called the *Decolonizing Diet Project Cookbook*, and I'm linking to that study on my site, of course. Also, the Decolonizing Diet Project, just yesterday, Monday, January 24th, posted that the National Congress of American Indians is seeking applicants for its Tribal Food Sovereignty Advancement Initiative fellowship. They're looking for applicants. *Of course* I'm going to put the link on my website! Move your bottoms!

It's a six-month paid position for entry-level college graduates. Amazing. Link on my website; they just posted this yesterday. Whoo, okay. Back to Martin's work and the Decolonizing Diet Project.

Mariah: And part of it's just recipes that they were experimenting with and trying to figure out what they were going to eat for a year. But it was interesting because they did the documentation on how their bodies felt, and their vitals over that period of time, and how that affected their own health. So that's, again, Indigenous foods from the Great Lakes Region, so they had corn, beans, squash, hazelnuts, black walnuts, hickory nuts. They had turkey, pumpkin seeds.

I remember my friend, who is Marty Reinhart's daughter, Daabii, was telling me about having to eat some pizza that had, like, turkey and pumpkin on it or something. But there was no cheese on it, of course, so she was like, "That was not a good pizza. Never eat that." [laughs] I remember she did not recommend the recipe. But they did have a ton of really cool recipes in that book and they did the documentation.

So, the decolonizing diet project has also put that in place as an actual research project. And then in my home community on Blackfeet, they will be doing a similar type of research project where they have participants switch to Blackfeet diets and provide them with food and track their vitals over the course of, I think, 90 days. I think it's a three-month program. So there are things happening; there are definitely research projects that are taking place. And also it's like, "How do we prove to the IRB that this is totally fine and people are allowed to eat Indigenous foods?"

Aside: Hey. Hey, okay? The IRB, Institutional Review Board, under the FDA, they just need to make sure it's okay to eat a whole foods-based diet, all right? Gotta be strict about it!

I looked around for this upcoming study, and I reached out to Abaki Beck and she pointed me to the Piikani Lodge Health Institution, which is run by Montana State University and Blackfeet member Kim Paul, who's done a ton of research on food systems. I'm going to link researchers, of course, on my website. And if you're like, "Less research, more foods please," well, non-Indigenous patrons had some questions.

Elise Hickman, Aly V, Concetta Gibson, Ali Vessels, and...

Alie: Orion McCullough wants to know: How can we make sure that when we're buying Indigenous ingredients and foods that investments are getting back to Native communities?

Mariah: So, for folks that are interested in buying Native foods from Native producers, look up the American Indian Foods Program through the Intertribal Agriculture Council. They work with a whole bunch of Native producers across the entire United States, and they work with really small producers that don't even have their own websites, so it's really cool because they help them market and sell their foods. Sometimes those are fish harvesters, sometimes those are folks making traditional teas, sometimes those are wild rice harvesters, whatever it may be. There's a lot of really great producers through that program.

And if you're interested in buying foods, especially really, really traditional foods like wild rice, for example, and you want to make sure you're buying hand-harvested, wood-parched wild rice from Native communities, rather than the commercialized version that looks black (you probably find it at your local health food store)... We call that driveway rice because "the only thing it's good for is paving your driveway." [laughs] ["Ouch"] But yeah, there are definitely ways of supporting Native producers. Check out the American Indian Foods Program. I think that's a great resource.

Aside: The American Indian Foods Program is a platform for American Indian food businesses to showcase their products, show people what they've got. They also have some of Mariah's recipes up, including an Instant Pot or pressure cooker wild rice dish. And shoutout to Native listener Sikwani Dana who asked: How do I cook wild rice so I like it? When I've tried it in the past, the taste was overpowering, so do I need to cook it for longer or overcompensate with other flavors? Sikwani, you might want to try Mariah's recipe with tepary beans and cedar-smoked salt, and some elk if you've got it or want it. Those recipes and resources are up at IndianAGFoods.org, which, yes, linked in the show notes.

Do you need more recipes, like a book of them? Patrons Mackenzie Cyr, Katie Pinette, Rosario Neyra, and RJ Doidge, who's a member of the Ologites Who Cook! Facebook group wanted to know:

Alie: Any cookbooks that you would recommend?

Mariah: Oh, there's so many good cookbooks right now. I mentioned Valerie Segrest's cookbook. The Sioux Chef came out with a cookbook a few years ago; that's still an awesome one. It's really, I mean, beautifully plated dishes. I think that won a James Beard Award.

Aside: Okay, I did fact check this, and Sean Sherman, aka the Sioux Chef, um... did not win a James Beard Award. He won two. [DJ airhorns] Two of them! Two James Beard Awards!

In 2018, the Sioux Chef's *Indigenous Kitchen* cookbook won the James Beard Award for Best Book in the American category overall, which is giant. ["Big. Huge!"] Big deal. And then, in 2019, Sean won the 2019 Leadership Award. So yes, look for his book, *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*, Sean's nonprofit called North American Traditional Food Systems, and the Indigenous Food Lab that he co-founded. So many links on the website! So many great people such as:

Mariah: Tashia Hart just came out with *The Good Berry Cookbook*, which is a wonderful cookbook especially for folks in the Great Lakes Region that are interested in learning a million

ways to use wild rice for everything. That's an awesome one. Those are three that come to mind right now.

Aside: And also that *Decolonizing Diet Project Cookbook* we mentioned earlier. Mariah suggested another one that was across the room on her shelf out of eyeshot that divides recipes into different regions, and it turns out it was *Spirit of the Harvest*. Yes, links. Website.

Alie: I thought this was a great question. This was from Stephanie Shirley who is a first-time question-asker and Diné. How do you propose Natives decolonizing our diet when most reservations are food deserts and lack resources to fresh fruits and vegetables, and planting crops in a drought is costly in an already-economically-disadvantaged community?

Also, what are your opinions on traditional foraging and herbalist knowledge being lost every day because of the increasing rate of elders passing away due to covid, among other things, before teaching the younger generation this knowledge because of language extinction? I ask because my grandma was an herbalist and that knowledge was not passed down because my siblings and I could not speak our language. Sorry this question is so long.

Mariah: Whoo. So many great questions.

Alie: I know! So many good ones. So, decolonizing a diet in a food desert and also not being able to pass down knowledge in terms of herbalism and foraging because of language.

Mariah: Okay, so many good questions. Food deserts, of course, it's a term used by the USDA to define people's distance from a place where they can buy food like a grocery store. And of course, grocery stores on reservations have their own challenges within the food distribution system, including of course the last-mile transport cost. A lot of high premiums added to fresh foods, like fruits and vegetables, for example.

Aside: One article about the FAST Food Pantry noted that a reservation the size of Delaware, like the Blackfeet reservation, can have two groceries stores and that a box of tea or a head of cauliflower can cost 10 or 11 bucks, which is hardly accessible. Even the Whole Foods organic moms I know would not spend \$11 on a head of cauliflower. Who's going to buy an \$11 head of cauliflower?

Mariah: So that in itself can be a challenge to navigate. That said, there are a lot of foods that folks likely do have within their communities. Wherever you're living, whether it's a true desert or not, there are foods that people have been eating there for thousands of years. Sometimes it's just learning some of the plants in your area, even if it's just little plants that you know you can harvest, and dry, and make tea out of later. That's something that can bring you connection to your landscape, it's relatively little investment, and those things are native plants so they likely do well in your climate because they're from that climate.

For example, here we have yarrow, which is a great plant. Grows all over the Northern Hemisphere, has a flavor profile similar to tarragon, so it could be used as a spice. Or it can be dried and made into a tea. Yarrow is also incredible if you ever get cut and you won't stop bleeding, you can chew up some yarrow leaves and put that on your wound and it will clot your blood. It's the OG Band-Aid. It was said that's what made Achilles invincible.

Alie: Really??

Mariah: The scientific name is actually *Achillea millefolium*, so it comes from that story. But it is common all over the Northern Hemisphere. So if you're lucky enough to live in a place with yarrow, that's super helpful and it's a good field medicine technique too. Lots of people live in places that have wild mint. That's something to know. Learn to identify whatever wild onions are in your area. There's so many types of wild onions that grow all around. If you have any types of fruit trees; berries obviously. All blueberries are Indigenous. We have Indigenous raspberries. Wild strawberries grow all over but sometimes you have to hunt for them because you have to look underneath the leaves.

There are of course sarvisberries or serviceberries, which grow all over as well. Some people call them juneberries. If you're in Canada, they're in saskatoon berries. There's lots of different types of things. I'm not even going to get into the many other hundreds of types of berries because it varies so much based on where you are.

Nut trees, whether they're black walnuts, or hickory nuts, those nice, beautiful, shelled tree nuts like pecans. Those are all Indigenous foods. Acorns: learn how to process them. There's foods that are out there and I love folks getting out and just connecting with our landscapes. Learning to identify what plants in your area and what you can do with them, how to prepare them.

Aside: For more on that, you can see the Foraging Ecology episode with Alexis Nelson, aka @BlackForager. Yes, I'm going to link her episode!

Mariah: So I think that's always great. I think that also we need to work on, obviously, institutional solutions to the status of food deserts, work with local producers to find out what people are growing. If you can buy directly from farmers in your community that are already practicing sustainable food solutions, talk about partnering and setting up a CSA, community-supported agriculture, where you can buy it directly from the farmer because they'll get a higher benefit for their food and they don't have to worry about transporting it to a major hub, things like that. That could be really beneficial.

In my community, we don't have a lot of local producers, we have a really short growing season, so that in itself can be really challenging to navigate. We also started a lot of folks this year, through our local food pantry, actually growing Native plants that we have traditionally used as teas because they're Native, they grow easily even in drought years. We taught them how to harvest them, and now they're selling those dried plants back to the food pantry so they can be distributed back to community members as part of Blackfeet traditional beverages. It helps provide a healthy beverage to food pantry participants that are relying on an emergency food supply. And it's helping provide an economic source for community members that are interested in growing native plants.

So, there's ways to do things, but it depends so much on the area you're from and what the resources are. I think that many of us are really fortunate to still have food within our communities, but part of it's been the knowledge that has been lost, not only when do we harvest those things, what do we harvest, how do we preserve those things so that we have food throughout the year? And then how do we ensure that we have a food distribution system that also makes sense for our communities?

Also, there was a question about traditional knowledge in there. Briefly, I would just say that if you're lucky enough to know someone that has traditional medicinal or botanical knowledge, even if it's just someone that knows a few plants in your area, go learn those

plants, go out with them, and then share that information. They don't have to be an elder. They don't have to be Native. If they can teach you to identify a couple plants, great. That gives you a starting point, and you can go and network, you can work with other Native folks who may have a little bit more information on that, and you can just keep building that knowledge. If there's a way for you to document it yourself, that's awesome as well. Even if it's taking out your iPhone and recording what they're saying so you can reference back to it.

That's why I got started doing the work that I do, because people would share information with me and I'd want to share it on a greater level. So, of course, I'd get their permission and then I am able to use that as a knowledge resource and really create a database where we can reference back to that over time and ensure that that information stays alive and people continue to add to it as well.

Aside: Just a side note, this past week my Native plant nerd friend David Newsom from LA's Wild Yards Project gave me a wonderful, educational tour of the buffet of edible plants in my yard. He left; I forgot every single one of them. And then I stood in front of each weed asking myself, "Can I eat you? I don't remember." So I second the videotaping with your phone machine so you don't have to sheepishly text your teachers later and be like, "What was this one?"

Alie: Last listener question, we got from a few people. Ali Vessels, Concetta Gibson, Aly V, Elise Hickman, and this is for non-Native folks: Cross-cultural implications. How do non-Indigenous friends do right by our Indigenous friends when making and sharing your incredible food? Are there appropriation concerns we should consider? How do you feel is the best way for non-Natives to appreciate and to participate in Indigenous food?

Mariah: Yeah, that's a good question. Regardless of the time of year, regardless of where you're living, I think one of the great things anyone can do is just learn more about the local foods that are accessible. I reiterate, learn about your plants. And that's just me as an ecologist thinking about, you know, how do you connect with your landscape, what do you know, how will you survive a zombie apocalypse, whatever it may be. How do you really learn about the land that you're on?

Obviously, a big part of that is learning about the plants, and the animals, and all those things that are sharing space with you. I think that's important. Whenever you get outside, you just learn a little bit more about those spaces, it can help inherently build that connection. If you go out berry picking, you also see the birds that are out there picking berries with you, yelling angrily maybe. You might run into a bear, right? But you understand all of those other creatures that are part of that connection with the berries too. And if something threatens the berries, you suddenly know that it's not just your berry patch that's being threatened, but you know all the other beings that rely on that too, so you're more inclined to take care of that because of your vested interest in it. And that sounds selfish but that's also, kind of, how people work.

And then, you know, with my recipes, I think food is meant to be shared. I think that there is a lot of value in just recognizing where those foods come from and knowing whether it's butternut squash that's been specifically bred by Native people but you picked up this butternut squash from your local farmer down the road and you're going to make it into a lasagna with some bison meat or whatever it may be. There's just value in recognizing that, even if it's silently, because I think that you're acknowledging these connections and all of this role that we each have on this landscape. So, I think that's a good place. I'm not

trying to make people feel guilty when eating food, for sure. There's benefit to eating local, fresh foods from your community for anyone. I don't think there's a downside of that.

Alie: Right, I think it's so much better for our mentality to get excited about eating healthier foods than to feel bad about eating foods that are thought of as unhealthy.

Mariah: For sure.

Alie: It's better to pick up a new habit than to shame yourself for an old one, you know?

Mariah: And if you're eating foods that are Native to your location, you are also inherently eating things that have lower transportation costs, lower input costs, are more resilient to your climate, all of those things. There's a lot of benefit in that as well. But ultimately, we get to eat delicious foods and share that with our people in our community. I think there's a lot of value in that.

Alie: Mm-hmm. Last questions I always ask are: The hardest thing about your job?

Mariah: Ooh, the hardest thing about my job... I'm thinking. *[laughs]*

Honestly, the hardest thing about my job is that, occasionally, I really have to clean my kitchen so that I can be on Zoom for everybody else. No, I'm really lucky. I get to create new things. I get to create recipes. I get to spend time outside. I get to garden, and hunt, and make it part of my career. No one told me in high school that I could do that, that that was an actual job. And honestly, it's really funny... I think the hardest part of my job is maybe just dealing with people that don't understand that I have a real job. *[laughs]*

Despite it being full-time work and I get to spend all of my time educating, and teaching, and working with foods. Whether that be as a contractor that's developing educational materials, whether that be teaching cooking classes, or being in the community teaching folks how to harvest Native plants. Whatever it is, it is full-time work, and it's varied, and I don't have a real schedule, and that works for me. But it's interesting because people go, "What do you do for work?" And they're like, "And you can, like, survive doing that?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I can actually. Also, I get to grow, and harvest, and hunt a lot of food. That also helps keep me fed but with delicious, healthy things from here."

There are new and exciting things every day and sometimes I get frustrated trying to learn how to use video editing software, and trying to clean my kitchen, and all of the other fun things. But honestly, it is the most fun and rewarding thing I could be doing.

Alie: Ah! Last question... I would usually ask what your favorite thing about your job is, but that was so beautiful already. What about your favorite dish? A lot of listeners wanted to know this too.

Mariah: Favorite dish... I'm a lasagna person. *[laughs]* No, one of my favorite things for any time of the year... And maybe it's because my family used to... My mom didn't like making, like, a big turkey or ham during holiday meals, so we would just get together and we would make a homemade lasagna for holiday meals. We would make it with bison meat rather than beef, or sausage, or something like that. So, bison lasagna became this holiday meal.

When I started doing Indigikitchen, I realized I could substitute butternut squash for the noodles in the recipe. And I actually just cut out the cheese. It wasn't necessary. But you could make a butternut bison lasagna with cheese if you really wanted to. I love the comfort food of eating lasagna for some reason. And of course, you know, tomatoes are

Indigenous, and squash is Indigenous, and you could use any type of wild game. Whatever ground meat you have access to works in lasagna. And you could add whatever veggies you wanted. If you wanted to put a whole bunch of substitutions in, it's really easy to change up lasagna. So, that is probably one of my favorite recipes because it's so simple, it requires a basic meat sauce and a butternut squash, and you just layer it, and you bake it until everything's soft. I'm excited now because that's a recipe that is going to accompany the Harvest of the Month materials for buffalo in the state.

Alie: Oh, that's great!

Mariah: Yeah, but also it's good comfort food. Every time I eat lasagna I feel guilty because I'm like, "I should be eating a vegetable." And then when I eat that I'm like, "I *am* eating a vegetable. It's the noodles. The noodles are a vegetable. This is fine."

Alie: I've seen pictures of it and it looks so good.

Mariah: It's really funny, when I do gigs anywhere in the country, I run into someone who's like, "I love the lasagna." And I'm like, "Cool. That's great. That's the best news ever. So do I."
[laughs]

Alie: Amazing. Any cookbook plans in the works?

Mariah: I have to finish my master's degree, which...

Alie: Oh, *that!*

Mariah: Should hopefully happen in December. And then I can talk to folks and see if someone wants to publish me. Who knows.

Alie: Publishers, lit agents, get atcha! Go for it.

So ask generous people not-genius questions, and just do it out of respect and curiosity and everyone will walk away better for it. Huge, huge thanks to Mariah Gladstone. I'm a giant fan of her and [Indigikitchen](#). She let me lob so many questions at her, and shared so much knowledge, and pointed out so many great people also working this space. Thank you to Lila and Boyd Evans and my wonderful cousins Jamie, James, Crystal, and all of you for raising bison for the community and letting me ask questions about it.

For more episodes with Indigenous ologies, I will link those on my website. You can also always find more topics at [AlieWard.com/Ologies-By-Topic](#). Easy to find whatever interests you. More links for everything I mentioned are at [AlieWard.com/Ologies/IndigenousCuisinology](#). That'll be linked right in the show notes. You can just go to that and... just an absolute trove, deep and never-ending; filled with links.

For more of Mariah's work, you can go to [Indigikitchen.com](#). You can follow Mariah Gladstone and congratulate her for getting her master's a few weeks ago. She's [@Indigikitchen](#) on Instagram and [@MariahGladstone](#) on Twitter and Instagram. Also, shout out to [SplitSunCreations.com](#) for their beautiful drums, and rattles, and crafts. That's her partner; they'll be linked on my page too because they make great stuff.

We are @Ologies on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). I'm [@AlieWard](#) on [both](#). Happy, happy, happy birthday to the dear Erin Talbert who not only admins the Ologies Podcast [Facebook group](#), but also spent countless hours with me cracking acorns from the oaks behind our houses since we were four. Love you so much. Thank you to Shannon and Boni of the *You Are That* podcast for helping with the

Facebook work. Thank you to Emily White of the Wordary for making our professional transcripts available for free on our website to anyone who needs them.

Caleb Patton bleeps episodes to make them kid-friendly, and then about every fortnight we've been putting out a *Smologies* episode, which is a condensed, shorter, very classroom-friendly cut of classics. Thank you to Zeke Rodrigues Thomas for handling those, and Steven Ray Morris for the assist. Thank you to lead editor, head cheerleader, Jarrett Sleeper of Mindjam Media for putting these episodes and my brain together every week. Nick Thorburn made the theme music.

And if you listen until the very end, I'll tell you a secret. This week it's that in my bathroom we have a toothbrush holder, and one of them has been broken for about eight or nine months, and I tried to weld it back together. I tried to superglue it. And every day I just look at it. I've got one that works. Jarrett's side, his toothbrush holder's broken and I don't know what is wrong with me, but I'm like, "Just order another toothbrush holder." Then I'm like, "Should I order two and just use one of them? Do I just grab the whole set?" I don't know, but every day I look at it and I go, "I gotta fix that toothbrush holder!"

Anyway, next week's episode is on ADHD, in case you've ever wondered, "Why can't I do this very simple thing?" We'll dive into executive functions, and it's a great episode for everyone who struggles with ever doing anything ever, which is exactly all of us.

Also, thank you to everyone who sent me such sweet, sweet messages after I ended last week's episode bawling. You are great, and I love you, and I will be back next week with another episode, of course, because I love doing it.

Okay, berbye now.

Links you may enjoy:

A donation was made to [FASTBlackfeet.org](https://www.fastblackfeet.org)

Interested in a fellowship with Indigenous Food Sovereignty? APPLY NOW:: The National Congress of American Indians is seeking applicants for its Tribal Food Sovereignty Advancement Initiative's Tribal Food Sovereignty Fellowship. It's a six-month, paid position for entry-level, college graduates. [More information here.](#)

[Via the Decolonize Diet Project Facebook group](#)

[Indigikitchen: About](#)

VIDEO: [Indigikitchen Today Show segment](#)

VIDEO: [Native American Nutrition Conference Day 1: Mariah Gladstone](#)

VIDEO: [Mariah's TEDx Bozeman talk: "Indigikitchen: Healing from trauma through traditional foodways"](#)

[Sunflower butter popcorn recipe](#)

[Cuisinology usage](#)

[Tribes Create Their Own Food Laws to Stop USDA From Killing Native Food Economies](#)

[Check out the musical crafts & soaps by Thae A• Gho Weñs Cook](#)

[Cut Bank Press article on Evans Ranch](#)

VIDEO: [Potawatomi Berry Rice recipe on Indigikitchen](#)

[Sean Sherman aka the Sioux Chef](#)

[NĀTIFS, An Indigenous 501c3 Founded by Sean Sherman & Dana Thompson](#)

Indigenous Food Lab on [NĀTIFS](#) and [Instagram](#)

Abaki Beck's work includes [“Ahwahsiin: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Contemporary Food Sovereignty on the Blackfoot Reservation”](#)

Follow Abaki on [Twitter](#)

[Crystal Wahpepah owns the Oakland restaurant Wahpepah's Kitchen](#)

[Nixtamalization](#)

[Camas bulbs](#)

[Fry Bread: it's complicated](#)

Professor [Devon A. Mihesuah](#) writes about Frybread in the [Native American and Indigenous Studies journal](#)

VIDEO: [“10 Indian Tribes You Are Calling By the Wrong Name”](#)

[Prairie potato basics](#)

[Native American Agriculture Fund](#)

[The Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance \(NAFSA\) + Indigenous Seedkeepers Network](#)

VIDEO: [Grant Many Heads' webinar on Blackfoot lodges](#)

[Cherokee kid's language book](#)

[C and C Meats in Babb, MT](#)

[Valerie Segrest TEDxRanier talk](#)

[Great studies via Saokio Heritage](#)

[“Feeding Ourselves: Food access, health disparities, and the pathways to healthy Native American communities.”](#) Longmont, CO: Echo Hawk Consulting.

[Piikani Lodge Health Institute](#)

[Niitoyis: Blackfoot lodge markings](#)

[What's an IRB?](#)

[DDP Project results and overview](#)

[Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the United States: Restoring Cultural Knowledge, Protecting Environments, and Regaining Health by Devon A. Mihesuah](#)

[Mariah's wild rice recipe](#)

[Marketplace: American Indian Foods Program through the Intertribal Agricultural Council](#)

[Sara Calvosa Olson's work](#)

Follow Sara on [Instagram](#)

[Acorn whoopie pies](#)

[Puffball mythology](#)

[Aboriginal Pathways and Trading Routes Were California's First Highways](#)

[Oak trees in California](#)

[“Reservation Dogs” clip](#)

Cookbooks:

Elise Krohn and Valerie Segrest’s books: [Feeding the People, Feeding the Spirit: Revitalizing Northwest Coastal Indian Food Culture](#) and [Feeding Seven Generations: A Salish Cookbook](#)
[Spirit of the Harvest – divided into regions](#)

[Decolonizing Diet Project Cookbook](#)

[The Sioux Chef’s Indigenous Kitchen](#)

[LAPL has more cookbook recommendations](#)

Other episodes you might like:

[Bisonology \(BUFFALO\) with various bisonologists](#)

[Futurology \(THE FUTURE\) with Rose Eveleth](#)

[Foraging Ecology \(EATING WILD PLANTS\) with @BlackForager, Alexis Nikole Nelson](#)

[Indigenous Fashionology \(NATIVE CLOTHING\) with Riley Kucheran](#)

[Indigenous Fire Ecology \(GOOD FIRE\) with Dr. Amy Christianson](#)

[Experimental Archeology \(OLD TOOLS/ATLANTIS\) with Angelo Robledo](#)

[Bryology \(MOSS\) with Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)

[Aperiology \(MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY\) with Joseph Saunders](#)