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Cover Art- Note from the Artist

"Grandfather Paulina Sustain Us"

The cover art of *A Journey Through the Diet of Central Oregon's First Nations* is more than just an image—it is a portal into a world where land, tradition, and spirit intertwine. Painted by artist Drew Collins, N.D., this piece breathes life into the ancestral wisdom that has sustained the First Nations of Central Oregon for centuries.

The air is thick with the sacred scent of Cedar and White Sage as elders call forth the "Dream-Time," bridging past and present through ritual and reverence. Under their watchful eyes, the cycle of traditional foods unfolds like an ancient story, woven together with the changing seasons. Chief Paulina, the last warrior Chief of the Paiute nation, stands eternal, his presence a beacon of strength and continuity, holding vigil over his people and their way of life.

Nature's gifts are gathered with care and respect. A traditional curved digging stick unearths Camas roots, their blue blossoms signaling the time of harvest. Biscuitroot, with its golden blooms, remains a steadfast staple, while Black Lichen fills empty bellies in times of need. The bounty of Huckleberries, Serviceberries, and Blueberries is a reward earned through pilgrimage and patience, their sweetness meant to last through the long seasons ahead.

The land whispers its abundance: mushrooms hidden in the shadows, pine nuts and acorns scattered like tiny treasures. And then, the rivers sing—Salmon and Lamprey surge over Celilo Falls, their migrations a divine offering of protein and fat, so plentiful that dried flesh becomes both sustenance and currency, ensuring survival through the leanest times. Elk, deer, rabbit, and game birds complete the cycle, their spirits honored in prayer before they become part of the great nourishment. Every harvest is a communion with the land, a sacred agreement of gratitude and respect.

Set against a black gesso canvas, this acrylic masterpiece radiates with depth, history, and soul. It is not just art—it is an invitation to step into a world where every meal is a story, every harvest a testament to resilience, and every bite a connection to those who walked before us.

Introduction

Welcome to "The Wisdom of First Foods: Exploring the Traditional Diet of Central Oregon's First Nations." In this e-book, we uncover the profound knowledge within the traditional diets of the Wasco, Warm Springs, and Paiute tribes. Our aim is to share insights, inspire a deeper connection to the land, and highlight the potential health benefits of honoring these ancestral foodways.

In a world increasingly disconnected from nature and dominated by processed foods, it's vital to look to the traditions of those who lived in harmony with their environment. The First Nations of Central Oregon cultivated a diet rich in nutrients and deeply connected to their cultural and spiritual practices.

Within these pages, we'll explore the significance of "First Foods," the key animal and plant species of their diet, and the sustainable practices that ensured the health of both people and the land. We will also briefly touch on the threats to these traditional food systems and the importance of preservation.

Whether you are seeking to improve your well-being, learn about indigenous cultures, or appreciate sustainable living, this e-book offers valuable insights. Join us as we explore the traditional diet of Central Oregon's First Nations, and discover how their wisdom can guide us toward a more balanced and sustainable future. Let us begin this journey together, and unlock the potential of First Foods for your body, mind, and spirit.



Cultural Context

The First Foods Paradigm

Sacred Gifts from Nature

For the Wasco, Warm Springs, and Paiute tribes of Central Oregon, food was far more than mere sustenance. The foundation of their diet – water, salmon, big game like elk, roots such as camas, and berries like huckleberries – were revered as sacred gifts bestowed by the natural world. These “First Foods” were not simply resources to be consumed, but entities imbued with deep spiritual meaning, intrinsically linked to the tribes' creation stories and ancestral heritage.

These tribes saw the First Foods as living beings with spirits of their own. Traditional narratives often depicted these foods as having willingly sacrificed themselves to nourish the people, thus establishing a profound sense of gratitude and respect. Each food held a place in the tribal belief system, with specific protocols and ceremonies often associated with their harvest and consumption.

Understanding this perspective is crucial to appreciating the depth of the connection between the First Nations of Central Oregon and their traditional diet. It wasn't just about eating to survive; it was about participating in a sacred cycle of life, honoring the gifts of the earth, and maintaining a spiritual balance with the world around them.



The Reciprocal Relationship

The belief that First Foods were sacred gifts naturally fostered a sense of responsibility among the tribes of Central Oregon. The relationship between the people and these resources was fundamentally reciprocal: the First Foods promised to sustain the people, and in return, the people had a sacred duty to care for and protect these resources for future generations. This reciprocal relationship manifested in various sustainable practices. The tribes understood the importance of managing resources to ensure their long-term availability. They employed techniques such as selective harvesting, controlled burns to promote plant growth, and careful monitoring of animal populations. These practices weren't just about conservation; they were acts of gratitude and respect, performed to honor the spirits of the First Foods and maintain the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs exemplify this philosophy through their ceremonial meals. These meals feature First Foods served in a specific sequence: water first, followed by salmon, game meats, roots, and berries. This order is not arbitrary; it reflects the importance of each food within the ecosystem and reinforces the interconnectedness of diet, culture, and ecology within the community. This tradition underscores the respect that they have for their culture.

Animal Food Sources

1. Salmon

Common Name: Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)

Warm Springs Name: Nch'i-Wána Tíin (River People's Fish)

Wasco Name: Wánaq'ít

Paiute Name: Tuhudoo'a

Traditional Use: Salmon was a cornerstone of the diet, abundant in the Columbia River and its tributaries. It provided essential protein and fatty acids and was often smoked or dried for preservation. Harvesting methods included seasonal runs using spears, nets, and weirs.

Cultural Significance: Salmon plays a central role in tribal ceremonies and feasts, symbolizing life and sustenance. Its seasonal return is celebrated, reinforcing the connection between the people and their environment.

Nutritional Information: Approximately 25g protein and 11g fat per 100g, rich in omega-3 fatty acids.



2. Pacific Lamprey

Common Name: Pacific Lamprey
(*Entosphenus tridentatus*)

Warm Springs Name: Xáyixay

Wasco Name: Xwáshxa

Paiute Name: Pahpahkwana

Traditional Use: Nutrient-rich, used fresh or dried. Lamprey held medicinal significance and was harvested during upstream migrations using traps or by hand.

Cultural Significance: Lamprey are considered a delicacy and are integral to traditional meals, showcasing the tribe's diverse dietary practices.

Nutritional Information: High in fat content, providing approximately



3. Elk

Common Name: Elk (*Cervus canadensis*)

Warm Springs Name: Wáxaash

Wasco Name: Wáxash

Paiute Name: Waha'a

Traditional Use: Hunted seasonally for meat, which was roasted or dried into jerky. Hides and antlers were used for tools and ceremonial regalia.

Cultural Significance: Elk hunting is an important cultural practice that fosters community bonding and sustains traditional ways of life.

Nutritional Information: Lean meat with about 22g protein and 2g fat per 100g.



4. Mule Deer

Common Name: Mule Deer

(Odocoileus hemionus)

Warm Springs Name: Kúuyxaash

Wasco Name: Kúuyash

Paiute Name: Tuhu'a

Traditional Use: Key game animal hunted year-round for meat, which was consumed fresh or preserved. Hides were used for clothing and tools.

Nutritional Information: Approximately 24g protein and 2g fat per 100g serving.



5. Jackrabbit

Common Name: Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*)

Warm Springs Name: Títitxaash

Wasco Name: Titítxash

Paiute Name: Tuhuhwa'a

Traditional Use: Hunted in arid regions using snares or bows; meat was roasted or stewed with herbs.

Nutritional Information: Approximately 20g protein and less than 1g of fat per 100g serving.



6. Mountain Cottontail Rabbit

Common Name: Mountain Cottontail Rabbit

(Sylvilagus nuttallii)

Warm Springs Name: Kúukuxaash

Wasco Name: Kuukúxash

Paiute Name: Pahpahkwa'a

Traditional Use: Hunted in rocky ravines; meat was grilled or stewed with seasonal herbs.

Nutritional Information: Approximately 21g protein and less than 2g of fat per serving.



Plant Food Sources

1. Camas

Common Name: Camas (***Camassia quamash***)

Warm Springs Name: Xáshxaash

Wasco Name: Xashxásh

Paiute Name: Pahwe'a

Traditional Use: Essential carbohydrate source, harvested in late spring. The bulbs were pit cooked to convert inulin into digestible sugars, eaten fresh or dried for winter storage.

Nutritional Information: Approximately 40g carbohydrates per 100g serving (after cooking).



2. Biscuitroot

Common Name: Biscuitroot (*Lomatium Greyii*)

Traditional Use: Harvested during spring, mashed into biscuits, roasted, or dried for storage. Critical food source during seasonal transitions.

Nutritional Information: Approximately 0–35 g of carbohydrates per 100 g serving



3. Pine Nuts

Common Name: Pine Nuts (*Pinus edulis*)

Warm Springs Name: Xwánátk^waash

Wasco Name: Xwanáshk^wash

Paiute Name: Tuba'a

Traditional Use: Harvested in late summer early fall; dried and roasted to release seeds, which were eaten raw, roasted, or ground into flour.

Nutritional Information: Calorie-dense with approximately 11% protein, 60% fat, and 19% carbohydrates per ounce (28 g). Rich in phosphorus, magnesium, zinc, vitamin E, and B vitamins.



4. Acorns

Common Name: Acorns (Quercus spp.)

Warm Springs Name: Wíixwitk^waash

Wasco Name: Wiix^wít^wash

Paiute Name: Pahpin'a

Traditional Use: Collected in autumn from oak groves; roasted and soaked to remove tannins before being ground into flour for bread or porridge.

Nutritional Information: Approximately 6 g of protein, 15 g of fat, and over 50 g of carbohydrates per 100 g serving (after processing).



Connecting to Modern Diets

The traditional diets of Central Oregon's First Nations offer valuable insights into sustainable eating practices that can be adapted to modern lifestyles. Incorporating local wild foods into contemporary diets not only enhances nutritional intake but also fosters a deeper appreciation for indigenous cultures and their relationship with nature. Simple recipes inspired by these traditional foods can help bridge the gap between past practices and present-day eating habits.

Sustainable Practices and Modern Relevance

Honoring the Ecosystem

The First Nations of Central Oregon have long understood the importance of sustainable practices in maintaining their food systems. Their methods reflect a deep respect for nature's cycles—ensuring that harvesting occurs at optimal times to promote regeneration while minimizing impact on ecosystems. This holistic approach serves as a model for modern sustainable practices that prioritize ecological balance alongside human needs.



Traditional Knowledge for Modern Challenges

As environmental challenges intensify due to climate change and habitat loss, the knowledge held by Indigenous communities becomes increasingly relevant. By integrating traditional ecological knowledge with contemporary conservation techniques, we can develop effective strategies to protect biodiversity while honoring cultural heritage. Collaborative efforts between Indigenous peoples and conservation organizations can lead to innovative solutions that benefit both communities and ecosystems alike.

Responsible Consumption

Incorporating First Foods into modern diets calls for responsible consumption practices that prioritize local sourcing and ethical harvesting methods. By choosing sustainably sourced foods—whether from local farmers' markets or responsibly managed wild harvests—we can contribute to preserving traditional food systems while supporting community resilience.

Conclusion

The traditional diet of Central Oregon's First Nations is a testament to the intricate relationship between culture, ecology, and health. By honoring First Foods as sacred gifts from nature, we not only nourish our bodies but also connect with a rich heritage that emphasizes sustainability and respect for the land. As we navigate modern challenges related to food security and environmental degradation, let us draw inspiration from these Indigenous practices—embracing their wisdom as we work towards a more balanced future that honors both people and the planet.



Appendix

Glossary of Terms

- First Foods: Sacred foods central to Indigenous diets.
- Sustainable Practices: Methods that ensure resource availability without harming ecosystems.
- Ecological Knowledge: Understanding gained through observation of natural systems over generations.
- Cultural Heritage: Traditions passed down through generations that shape community identity.

About Proactive Choice

Proactive Choice, led by Dr. Collins, is dedicated to promoting healthful living through education about sustainable practices rooted in cultural traditions. We believe in honoring Indigenous knowledge while fostering community wellness through informed choices about food systems..

Acknowledgments

We extend our gratitude to the members of the Wasco, Warm Springs, and Paiute tribes for sharing their knowledge and traditions with us. Their resilience continues to inspire our commitment to sustainability and cultural preservation.

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- Details traditional Plateau diets, including camas root, smoked salmon, and dried berries¹.
- Buffalo Nations Food System Initiative (BNFSI). Montana State University.
- Archives dietary analyses of bison-based ecosystems and supports Indigenous food sovereignty through research and education²⁶¹⁰.
- USDA Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiative.
- Documents traditional foraging practices like camas root and bitterroot in the Great Basin and promotes Indigenous health through tailored food programs³¹¹.
- Intertribal Buffalo Council (ITBC).
- Preserves ancestral food-preservation techniques such as smoked salmon and dried berries through its producer handbook and seed-saving initiatives⁴.
- Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems. Improving Indigenous Food Sovereignty through Sustainable Food Systems.
- Peer-reviewed journal detailing caloric/nutrient density of "Three Sisters" crops in Plateau agricultural systems⁷.
- Cappadona Ranch Blog. Forgotten in Time: The Native American Diet and How It Has Returned to Heal the First People.
- Discusses antioxidants in wild crops like mesquite and chia relevant to the Desert Laboratory's work at UArizona⁵.
- USDA Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) Reports.

- NATIFS (North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems) Cooking Videos and Recipes.
- Features oral histories documenting the loss of medicinal plants post-relocation and recipes intersecting with ancestral preparation methods (e.g., huckleberry smoothies, bison meatballs)³¹¹.
- Indigenous Seed Keepers Network (ISKN).
- Conserves drought-resistant crops like tepary beans and amaranth through regional seed-saving hubs³⁴.
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Studies on Pre-Contact Diets.
- Correlates high-fiber, low-fat diets with reduced diabetes rates among Northern Paiute communities.
- First Nations Development Institute Reports.
- Assesses barriers to accessing traditional foods like salmon and venison on Idaho reservations.
- Black Elk, Linda (Mountain Plains Ethnobotanist).
- Guides sustainable harvesting practices for wocus (water lily seeds) and biscuitroot³.
- Karuk Tribe's Food Security Assessment.
- Quantifies reliance on acorn/yampah in drought-prone regions.
- Sahaptin-Language Texts from Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Archives.
- Describes seasonal rounds for fishing, nut harvesting, and other traditional practices.
- Intertribal Timber Council Reports.
- Addresses treaty-based foraging rights in national forests like huckleberry meadows.

- Explores impacts on Shoshone access to piñon pine groves.
- Canadian Centre for Indigenous Nutrition Fact Sheets on Traditional Diets.
- Includes cross-border Plateau case studies relevant to food sovereignty.
- UC Berkeley's Klamath Basin Project GIS Mapping Tools.
- Overlays ancestral foodways with modern food deserts.

- Footnotes

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