

HEALTH & WELLNESS



Chef Sean Sherman and Chef de Cuisine Brian Yazzie plating. Sherman wants to reintroduce regional Native American cuisine through [The Sioux Chef](#), a Minnesota-based consulting and catering company—and restaurant in the making.

Sioux Chef Has a Plan: Introduce Traditional Native Cuisine One Region at a Time

By Lynn Armitage •

When you think of Native American cuisine, what comes to mind? Indian tacos? Buffalo burgers? Frybread? While beloved by many Natives and certainly tasty, these dishes are not the traditional foods of Indian country, claims [Sean Sherman](#), an Oglala Lakota chef on a mission to re-introduce regional Native American cuisine through [The Sioux Chef](#), a Minnesota-based consulting and catering company—and restaurant in the making.

Sherman says Native Americans used to be a very healthy people, eating foods that grew naturally in their specific regions, such as heirloom corn, chokecherries and elderflower. “But the government removed us from our traditional foods and forced us to rely on ‘oppression food’—flour, lard, salt and sugar—that had immense amounts of fat, sodium and carbs in it,” explains Sherman, who grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. “So after a couple of

generations, people are talking about grandma’s frybread recipe rather than the awesome dishes Natives made by gathering foods from the forest and growing their own vegetables.”



Sioux Chef team member Tashia Hart is a culinary ethnobotanist.

One day, while working as a professional chef fusing European-style flavors, it suddenly hit him that he should be making food from his own heritage. “There is no reason why Native American food should not be a popular cuisine. All these wonderful foods that have always been around us define America far better than hamburgers and craft beer,” he says.

This epiphany became the foundation of a business plan. Now, with the help of a [Kickstarter campaign](#), Sherman plans to open the first all-indigenous Native American restaurant based in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area showcasing Native foods from that specific region, a business model he aims to replicate throughout North America.



This is a maple and hominy cake with a cedar corn broth, smoked trout and sorrel.

“Why is it that you can find cuisine from all over the world in our many great cities, but not the food that comes from right under our feet, the food that is native to our regions and the Indigenous Peoples?” Sherman makes the case on his [Kickstarter site](#). And it appears that many people are supporting the concept. The campaign has far surpassed the needed \$100,000 goal.

With the Kickstarter investment, Sherman will create a 4,000-square-foot restaurant designed to be a “community gathering place” that seats a minimum of 100 people for lunch, dinner and maybe brunch. True to his business model, Sherman and his culinary team will focus on foods from the Minnesota and Dakota territories, creating dishes influenced by the many tribes of that region—the Ojibwe, Dakota, Lakota, Cheyenne, Winnebago and Ho-Chunk, to name a few.



Chef Sean Sherman is seen here foraging at dusk.

“It’s exciting because we are always discovering new flavors from the wild, adding more and more flavors to our repertoire as we learn and grow,” he says. His vision also includes a multi-use meeting room, an on-site perennial garden, Chef’s Table, outdoor grill and a state-of-the-art indigenous kitchen.

“We plan on using a lot of wood-fire cooking techniques, and rocks and clay for other heat sources, to break away from fossil-fuel addiction,” Sherman says. “We want to show people what a modern Native American restaurant can be.”



Rabbit, wild rice, and cedar are ready for a long stew.

As he works to bring The Sioux Chef restaurant to life, Sherman continues to travel all over the world showcasing indigenous food, networking with other chefs and teaching tribes how to create truly regional Native American cuisine. Most recently, he was invited to Copenhagen, Denmark for the exclusive **MAD** food symposium to contribute his ideas on how to build the kitchens of tomorrow.

The 42-year-old entrepreneur is also a father to 13-year-old Phoenix, who has quickly caught on to the benefits of clean eating. “My son doesn’t ever eat junk food, by choice, because I taught him to think about what is in the food he eats.”



Chef Sean Sherman is seen here after teaching Indigenous Food Systems to youth from 51 Tribal Nations.

Sherman looks forward to rolling out his business plan to other areas of the country and Canada someday soon. “North America is a huge land mass, from Mexico to Alaska, and there are so many different regions and different Native foods to explore. I am setting myself up for a lifetime of education to figure it out, little by little.”

Lynn Armitage is an enrolled member of the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin who may ditch her Paleo diet for something more regionally indigenous.