

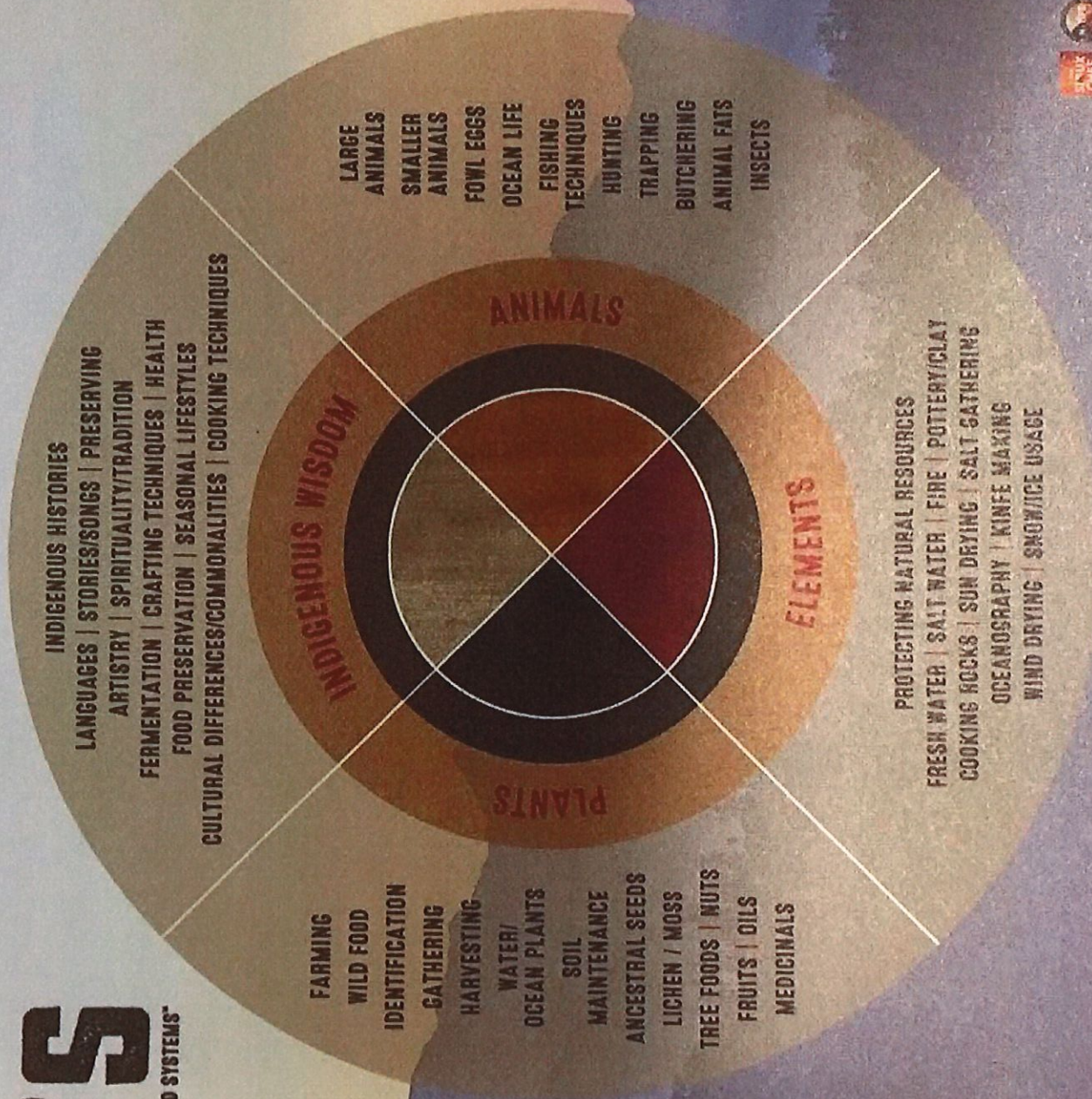
FOUNDATIONS OF AN INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEM MODEL

NĀTIES

NORTH AMERICAN TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS™

UNDERSTANDING THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIGENOUS FOODS SYSTEMS:

- 1
REMOVAL OF COLONIZED THOUGHT
- 2
RECONNECT SPIRITUALLY, MENTALLY, PHYSICALLY WITH THE NATURAL WORLD
- 3
UNDERSTAND AND BUILD INDIGENOUS FOUNDATIONS
- 4
REGAIN, RETAIN, SHARE, PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE



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The guiding model for all of our work at The Sioux Chef

(NOT) FRY BREAD

I'm often asked why we don't have fry bread on the menu or offer a recipe for fry bread in this book. Fry bread is a simple food but also a difficult symbol linking generation with generation, connecting the present to the painful narrative of our history. It originated nearly 150 years ago when the U.S. government forced our ancestors from the homelands they farmed, foraged, and hunted, and the waters they fished. Displaced and moved to reservations, they lost control of their food and were made to rely on government-issued commodities—canned meat, white flour, sugar, and lard—all lacking nutritive value. Controlling food is a means of controlling power.

Fry bread represents perseverance and pain, ingenuity and resilience. "Frybread is the story of our survival," writes Sherman Alexie. Yet, fry bread contributes to high levels of diabetes and obesity that affect nearly one-half of the Native population living on reservations. The average piece of this fried white-flour dough (the size of the eight-inch paper plate it's served on) weighs in at 700 calories and contains 25 grams of fat. When you pile on the processed cheese and potted meats of an Indian taco, you've got a recipe for chronic illness and pain. "Frybread has killed more Indians than the federal government," sings the rock star Keith Secola. Here's the thing: obesity and tooth decay did *not* exist among the indigenous people of North America before colonial ingredients were introduced.

Let's update this story with real corn cakes that enfold braised bison or smoked duck, authentic Native food. They taste of the time when we, as a people, were healthy and strong, and of the promise that we can stand up to the foods that have destroyed our health, the forces that have compromised our culture. And our corn cakes are easier to make and far tastier than any fry bread.

ACORN MEAL FLOUR

Úta Blú

Acorns taste like a cross between hazelnuts and sunflower seeds. They are abundant, easy to store, high in protein, and very nutritious. They are nearly as important to Native Americans as corn, squash, and beans.

The Cherokee, Apache, Pima, Ojibwe, and most other Native American tribes across the oak-growing North and South America routinely harvested and used acorn nuts from oak trees.

Because acorns are very high in tannin, the dry-tasting substance associated with dry red wine, they need to be soaked before using. The flour will keep indefinitely in a covered container in a cool, dry place.

To start, gather the acorns and examine each one carefully. Discard any that are cracked, moldy, or wormy. Early in the season the shells are soft and easy to cut; later you may need a nutcracker to shell the acorn.

Put the acorns into a large pot and cover with water by 2 to 3 inches. Set over a high flame, bring to a boil, and cook until the water turns brown. Drain and repeat until the water is clear, about 3 to 5 times. Drain and pat dry.

Preheat the oven to 250°F. Arrange the acorns on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake until the nuts are firm, dry, and toasted, about 1½ to 2 hours. Remove from the oven and cool.

To make the flour, place the nuts into a food processor fitted with a steel blade and grind to the texture of cornmeal.

HAZELNUT FLOUR

Úma Blú

Hazelnuts are deliciously nutty, are a great source of oil, and make a wonderful flour. Place the shelled nuts in a single layer on a baking sheet and toast in a 350°F oven until they smell toasty, about 3 to 5 minutes. Wrap the nuts in a clean dishcloth and roll to remove the peels. Then grind them in a food processor fitted with a steel blade, a blender, a coffee grinder, or a spice mill. Store the flour in a covered container in the refrigerator or freeze.

CHESTNUT FLOUR

Úma Iyéčheča Blú

To make chestnut flour, chop peeled chestnuts, page 85, into small pieces. Dry in a food dehydrator or the oven at a low temperature until rock hard. Transfer to a flour mill, food processor, or coffee mill and grind to make a fine flour. Store in the freezer.