



# HÓZHÓ MEALS

A RESOURCE TO PROMOTE INDIGENOUS FLAVORS



# Background

Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center (SWCAHEC) works toward improving rural community health as a healthcare capacity building organization. Working with healthcare organizations screening patients for social needs, we found that food is a consistent need throughout the Southwestern Colorado region. Our findings initiated several projects, one being this cookbook. Below are some graphs showing the results of regional screening for social needs in southwest Colorado.

## AHCM Activity Graphs

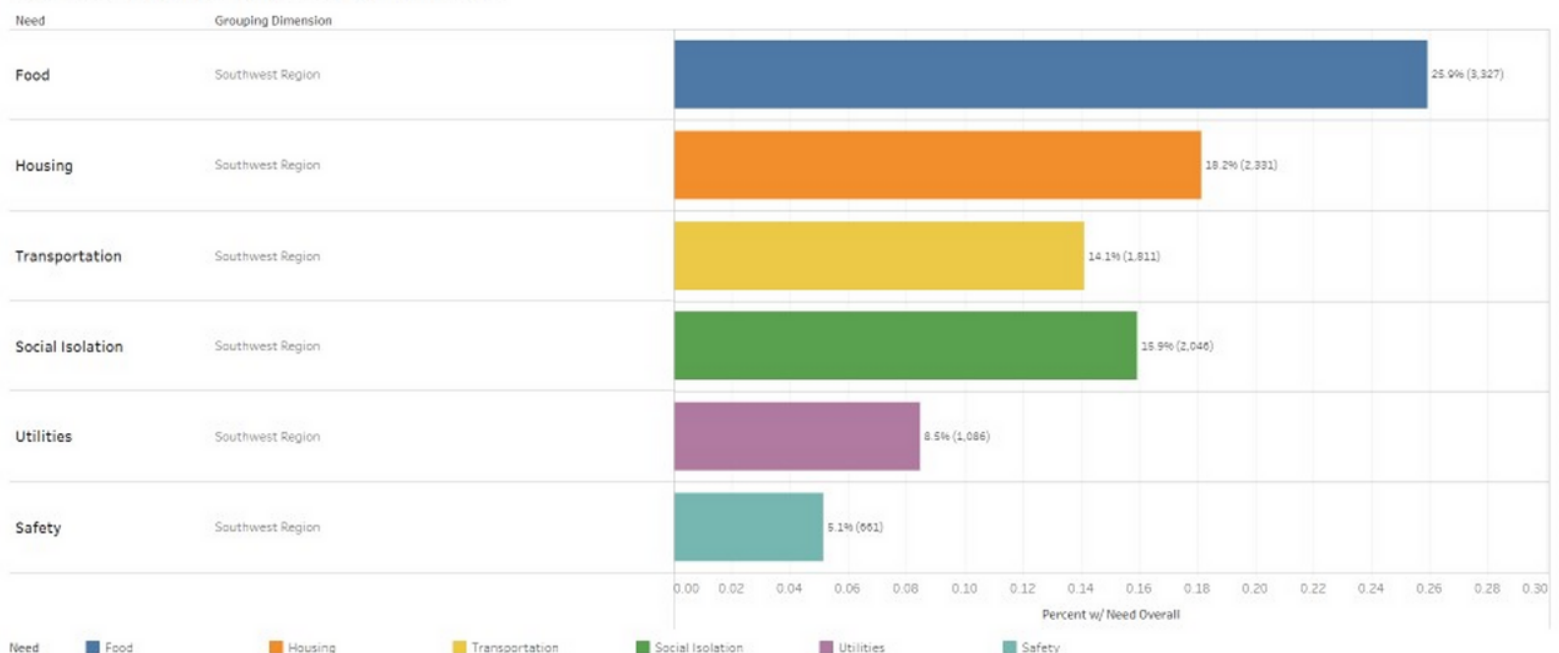
### Southwest Region

Group By Value  
Region  
Screener Sequence  
(All)

Screening data from: 10/9/2018 to 12/31/2021.

Showing data grouped by Region and filtered by Region for Southwest Region

#### Need Comparisons by Region for Southwest Region





# Philosophy



Hózhó is a wellness philosophy, compromised of principles that guide an individual's action, behavior, speech, and thought. It can be translated to living life in beauty, harmony, and balance in the Diné (Navajo) Language. Hózhó Meals invites the thought of eating food that is good for the mind, body, and spirit. Hózhó Meals is a compilation of pre-existing Indigenous recipes and resources that strengthen the resurgence of Indigenous foods. The purpose of this book is to promote Indigenous recipes that are accessible and affordable to most people.

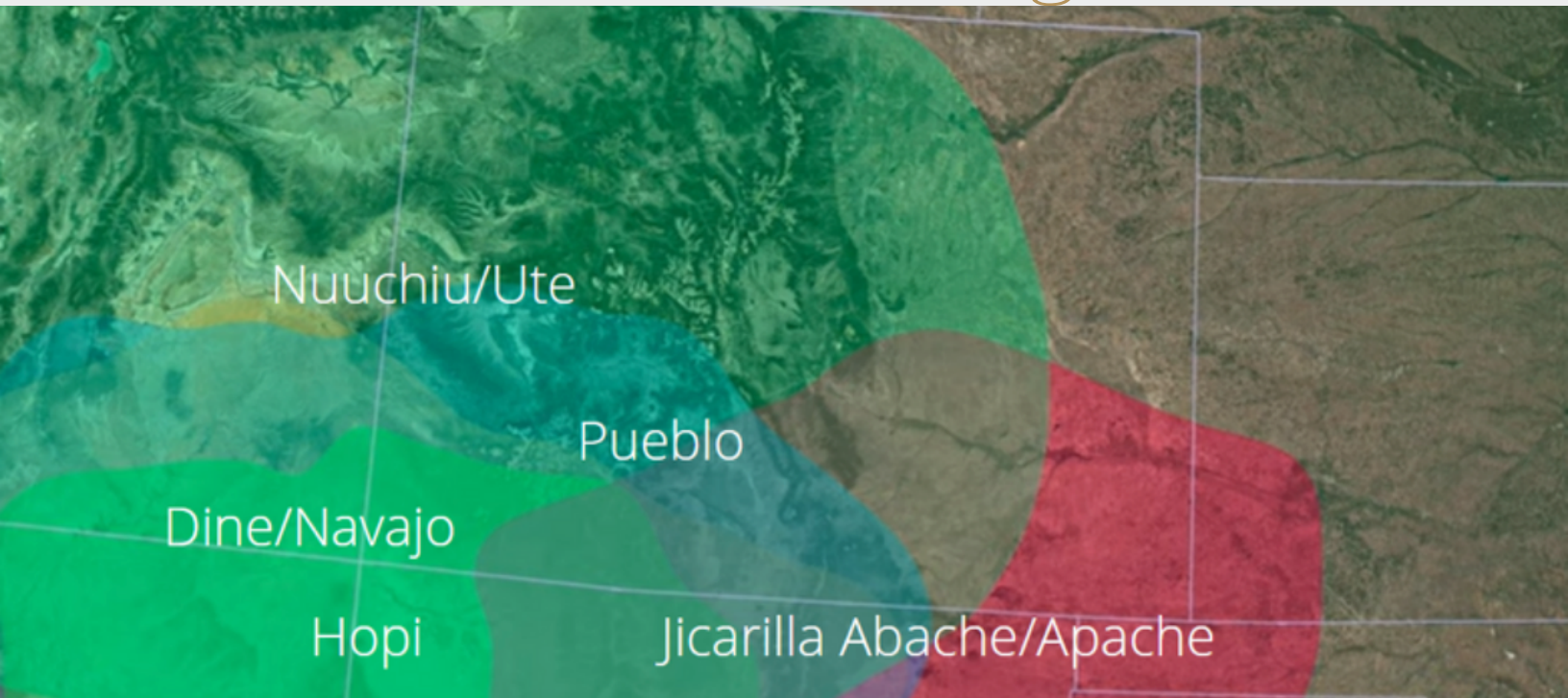
## FOOD IS MEDICINE

Food is more than what you buy in the grocery store and what you eat to survive. Indigenous food has culture, stories, songs, history, and relationship that tie us to our traditions and lands. Prior to colonization, Indigenous tribes throughout North America were self-sustaining people in excellent health. Since Euro-American influence, the overall health and wellness of Indigenous communities continue to deteriorate. For many tribes the preservation of culture and identity have initiated efforts to reclaim and revitalize Indigenous food.

## FUNDED BY AHCM

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# Land Acknowledgement



Today, we acknowledge that the ground beneath our feet is historically the home of Indigenous Peoples. It is the ancestral lands of the Puebloan, Ute tribes and Diné, who have occupied this land before colonization. The Weenuchiu band are now recognized as Ute Mountain Utes who are located in Towaoc just outside of Cortez, Colorado. The Mouache and Caputa bands make up the Southern Ute Indian Tribe of Ignacio, Colorado. Hesperus Peak, located just west of Durango, is the tallest peak in the La Plata mountain range, and is identified as one of the four sacred mountains by the Diné people, aka Navajo.

The history of these lands have been told from a western perspective, without fully acknowledging the indigenous people who occupied this land before it was La Plata County and Montezuma County. It is imperative to know that we are living and working on stolen lands.

We are here to create a peaceful environment for all and to be inclusive of history, culture, and humanity. Thank you for acknowledging the history of lands.

Ahe'hee

By Imo Succo, MSW, Regional Health Connector



# Blue Corn Mush



Blue corn mush is a traditional Diné meal; it is like cream of wheat or porridge. A meal that reminds many Diné relatives of home, ceremony, or their grandmother. Like many traditional Diné foods there usually are no measurements, just the palm of your hand and repetitive instincts. Here is a recipe we put together to share this comforting meal with all.

## Ingredients

3-4 servings

1 cup roasted blue cornmeal

1 teaspoon juniper ash

3 cups water

Optional toppings: Almonds and bananas, raspberries and peach jelly, cherries pumpkin seeds and chia seeds

Directions:

1. In medium sized saucepan, boil 3 cups of water.
2. In a medium sized cup, add in blue corn meal and 1 cup water and mix thoroughly.
3. Turn heat down to medium and slowly add in blue corn mixture into boiling water and stir until fully combined
4. Continue to stir blue corn mush for 3 minutes to make sure there aren't any lumps. Let it boil for another 5-10 minutes continuously stirring. Remove from heat and top with your favorite toppings.

## Tips

**TOOLS:**

Medium size pot, measuring utensils, measuring cup, whisk or Diné stirring sticks.

**ADDING THE ASH?**

Adding ash to the mush can happen just before the water starts to boil, after the water boils, or after pouring in the blue corn mix into the boiling water.

**STIRRING THE MUSH:**

In Diné culture most things are done in a clockwise order because the sun in the sky goes from east to west. When you are stirring the mush try doing it clockwise, as it is said to relax your mind.

## Nutritional Highlights

One ounce of the juniper ash in the blue corn mush provides as much Calcium as a glass of milk. Calcium is a building block for strong bones.

Check out NM PBS on YouTube, [“Blue Corn Mush | Indigi-Genius”](#)

# Juniper Ash



*What memories come to mind when you eat blue corn mush?*

“When I eat blue corn mush, I am reminded of home. Sitting at the table with grandma and grandpa listening to the radio, also listening to their stories of when they were little – a living memory sits with us at the table while we’re eating our mush.”

## Juniper Trees

### Juniper tree: Gad

Juniper trees grow on mesa tops and ridges. They produce berries that are used in cooking and when the berries dry out, they develop a hard shell which is then turned into protection beads and used in bracelets, necklaces, and earrings.



## Making your own Juniper Ash

### Juniper Ash: Gad Bit’eesh



Sharing traditional Indigenous knowledge with the next generation is important to preserving cultural identity. Making your own juniper ash continues the act of reciprocity and sustenance. We know that juniper ash, when added to blue corn mush, has nutritional benefits for the body. Here is how you can make your own juniper ash.

- 1. Collect the branch** - Before clipping your desired branch, make an offering- like corn pollen or a prayer, and thanking the tree in your language. Small clippings of the branch ensure continuous growth of the tree.
- 2. Practice fire safety** - Identifying a safe place to burn the juniper branch is important. Most commonly, people burn the branch in a charcoal grill, or something similar. Anything that allows the burning branch to burn out and hold the collected ash.
- 3. Burn the branch** - Remember to work in small batches. It'll keep the flame smaller and will burn thoroughly until it turns greyish white, and all flames are gone.
- 4. Sift the ash**- After the collected ash is cooled, began pouring it through a fine mesh sifter. After sifting store in a tight lidded jar and store in your pantry shelf.



# Three Sisters Stir Fry



Corn, beans, and squash are a delicious combination that is versatile and can be fixed up into casseroles, soups, and stir-fries. This recipe is inspired by [Indigenous Chef Nephi Craig](#).

## Ingredients

4 servings

1 cup summer squash of choice  
1 cup winter squash of choice  
1 can or 1 cup of black beans, drained, and rinsed  
1 cup of frozen, fresh, or canned yellow corn  
1 tablespoon of sunflower oil  
1 teaspoon of dried or fresh sage  
1 tablespoon sunflower seeds  
1 tablespoon pumpkin seeds  
½ cup of fresh cilantro  
Squeeze of lemon juice  
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Cut quarter inch cubes out of butternut squash and zucchini. Heat oil over medium high heat, adding winter squash until lightly brown. Then add soft summer squash and stir. After squash is lightly browned and soft, add in the frozen corn. Stirring occasionally. Add beans and fresh cilantro a few minutes before ending.
2. For additional crunch and texture, add in sunflower and pumpkin seeds.

Top with fresh sage, salt, and pepper and enjoy!

## Tips

### HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER

When planted, the corn stalks offer climbing support for the bean vines. In return, the beans give nitrogen back into the soil, fertilizing the corn and squash. The squash has spiny, large leaves to protect the beans from predatory animals.

*“Together these plants – corn, beans, and squash – feed the people, feed the land, and feed our imaginations, telling us how we might live.”*

*Robin Wall Kimmerer  
Braiding Sweetgrass*

Check out [GATHER](#) a documentary film about Native American efforts to revitalize Native foodways.



## Nutritional Highlights

Corn, beans, and squash work together nutritionally. The corn offers carbohydrates, beans offer protein, and the squash offers healthy vitamins and minerals that are all essential nutrients for the body.

# Guacamole Dip



Guacamole comes from our relatives in the south. It is very popular appetizer often served with chips, even served as topping to certain dishes. This recipe comes from the cookbook *Decolonize Your Diet: Plant-Based-Mexican-American Recipes for Health and Healing*.

## Ingredients

Servings: 2 cups

1 fresh serrano or jalapeño chili, stems and seeds removed and minced  
¼ white onion, minced  
4 ripe avocados, peeled, seeded, and cubed  
¼ cup chopped cilantro  
1 tsp lime juice  
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Using a small salad bowl and fork, mash Chile and onion to break down slightly.
2. Add cubes of avocado and smash, leaving some chunks
3. Gently stir in remainder of ingredients
4. Taste and adjust seasonings to your liking

## Tips

### SHOP SEASONALLY

Avocados are available all year round, but January – March is the best time for flavor. This means the avocado has higher oil content, which gives it a creamy, buttery texture.

*“The guacamole I grew up on were avocados and pre-made seasoned packaged guacamole mix. It was only just years ago I ventured off to create my own fresh guacamole, let me tell you fresh is best! Going the extra step in creating your own guacamole is worth it.”*

## Nutritional Highlights

Avocados are full of healthy fats, that help with lowering levels of “bad” cholesterol and can reduce blood sugar levels.



# Steamed Corn Stew



Steamed corn stew is known as a delicacy among Navajo culture.  
This meal is the perfect recipe for family gatherings.

## Ingredients

Servings: 2 cups  
2lbs. chopped lamb stew meat  
1 tbs sunflower oil  
1 minced onion  
1 garlic cloves, minced  
½ tsp. oregano  
4 dried red chili pods  
½ - 1 cup dried steamed corn  
Salt to taste  
8 cups water

### Directions:

1. Put all ingredients into a slow cooker
2. Cook for 6-8 hours on low-medium.
3. Check liquid occasionally and add more water for broth.

## Tips

### HARVESTING AND STEAMING CORN

Navajo corn is harvested in late August-September and is utilized in many ways. The process of making steamed corn is labor intensive, but completely worth it, as it creates a flavorful food.

Navajo families start by preheating an “earth oven,” which is a large hole in the ground heated by fire. Once cleared out, the fresh white corn is added to the pit with enough water to generate steam. Then it is covered quickly, while the steam is trapped, filling all openings, and cooked overnight. The next day, delicious steam corn is ready to eat or to be dried out to create “Neshjizhi.”

## Nutritional Highlights

Lamb meat is a high-quality protein source, which helps muscle tissue when it needs to be built up or repaired.

# Blue Corn Pancakes



There are many ways to use blue corn meal in dishes, adding it to your pancakes is just one of those ways to flavor up your dish. Here is a recipe from a grassroots initiative to reclaim and revitalize Indigenous health and wellness called [wellforculture](#).

## Ingredients

Servings: 2 cups  
1 cup blue corn meal  
½ cup of gluten-free pancake mix  
1-2 eggs  
Pumpkin seeds or pine nuts  
1 tbsp. coconut oil or oil of choice  
½ non-dairy milk of choice  
Pinch of cinnamon  
1 tsp. sea salt

1. In a medium bowl, mix the blue cornmeal, gluten free pancake mix, salt, and oil. Stir in the milk until ingredients are wet. Cover and let stand for a few minutes. The batter should be thick yet smooth.
2. Heat a large cast iron skillet or pan over medium heat, and grease it with a dab sunflower oil. When the surface of the pancakes is covered with bubbles, flip over, and cook the other side until golden. Careful when flipping since they're free of gluten they will not stay together as well. Do not overcook because they will harden.

When cooked and plated, sprinkle on pumpkin seeds, cinnamon powder and pour on natural maple syrup to taste.

## Tips

Anthocyanins are colored water-soluble pigments, responsible for the colors black, purple, or red in fruits and vegetables. They are rich in antioxidants, that help your body's defense.

*Beyond nutrition, corn is sacred.*

*"Corn is seen as far more than a simple symbol of food. It is also considered to be an important symbol of fertility, and even of life itself."*

*Please [visit the website](#) to learn more about corn and the significance to Navajo people.*

## Nutritional Highlights

This meal offers plus nutrition from the blue color of the corn and is Gluten Free.



# Bison Meatballs



Bison are a keystone species in the Great Plains, they help build habitat for many other species to thrive and have made a resurgence after their brutal history. For many Plains tribes bison are symbol of life and abundance, utilizing various parts of the bison for meat food, hides, clothing, shelter, and tools. This recipe is inspired by Mariah Gladstone founder of [Indigikitchen](#).

## Ingredients

Servings: 12-14 Meatballs

1lb of ground bison meat, can substitute for beef

½ cup blue corn meal

1 egg

½ cup Manoomin/wild rice

Jelly topping:

1 cup of frozen blueberries

1 cup of frozen blackberries

1 tablespoon of honey or maple syrup

Directions:

1. In a medium size mixing bowl, mix ground bison, blue corn meal, wild rice, and egg. Roll into 1 inch balls and cook over medium high heat, until center is cooked.
2. In a small saucepan, combine blueberries and blackberries, adding honey or maple syrup, stirring occasionally until sauce has a thick consistency.
3. Plate meatballs and top with berry jelly and enjoy

**Bison Wallows:** Bison create a bowl-like depression in the ground, by rolling around, giving themselves a dry “dust bath.” This helps cool them off from the summer heat and makes them less attractive from insects. The bison wallows collect water from a storm, then the compacted soil allows new plants and insects to thrive.



*“When I eat traditional foods it makes me really feel good, like, this is what our people have been eating for years and years and years. It’s always the aunties who make it the best too. The ones that know the recipes by heart that learned it from their grandmas. It tastes like love and joy.”*

## Nutritional Highlights

This is a protein dense meal, that is high in iron and zinc.

# Wild Rice Pilaf



Manoomin/Wild rice is a “sacred gift from the creator” and a staple food of the Great Lakes tribes like Ojibwe, Menomini, and Cree. This recipe is inspired by Sean Sherman’s cookbook, the Sioux Chef. The original recipe calls for a specific stock, wild mushrooms, and onions, but we alternated the recipe slightly to ingredients that can be found.

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons sunflower oil  
2 cups of mushrooms of choice, cleaned  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage  
½ cup chopped green onion  
½ cup vegetable stock  
2 cups cooked wild rice  
½ cup dried cranberries  
1 cup chopped walnuts  
1 tablespoon maple syrup, or to taste  
Salt to taste

### Directions:

1. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat and add the mushrooms, sage, and onion. Cook, stirring, until the mushrooms are nicely browned, and the onion is soft, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in stock, wild rice, and cranberries and cook until the liquid is nearly evaporated.
3. Stir in walnuts. Season with maple syrup and salt to taste.

## Tips

*“We must keep these waters for wild rice, these trees for maple syrup, our lakes for fish, and our land and aquifers for all of our relatives- whether they have fins, roots, wings, or paws.”*  
-Winona LaDuke

Check out:

TEDx – [Seeds of Our Ancestors](#),  
[Seeds of Life](#).



## Nutritional Highlights

Manoomin/Wild rice has higher nutrition than regular rice, with more protein, minerals, and B vitamins per serving than regular rice.





# Where to Buy



## Steamed dried corn:

[Benfarms.com](http://Benfarms.com) - (online order)

## Steamed dried corn, roasted blue corn:

[Ramonafarms.com](http://Ramonafarms.com) - (online order)

## Steamed dried corn, roasted blue corn:

NAPI Region 2 store, 6 miles south of Farmington, NM

## Online: Southwest Fresh Farm Cooperative:

## Wild Rice: (online order)

[Redlakenationfoods.com](http://Redlakenationfoods.com)

## Wild Rice: (online order)

[Nativeharvest.com](http://Nativeharvest.com)

# Indigenous Food Sovereignty Resources



## [Indigikitchen.com](http://Indigikitchen.com)

Indigikitchen is a digital online cooking show dedicated to re-indigenizing our diets using digital media, using foods native the Americas.

## [Sioux-chef.com](http://Sioux-chef.com)

A team of Indigenous chefs, ethnobotanists, food preservationists, adventurers, foragers, caterers, event planners, artists, musicians, food truckers and food lovers creating awareness and revitalization of Indigenous foods systems in a modern culinary context.

## [Cafegozhoo.com](http://Cafegozhoo.com)

Located in Whiteriver, Arizona, this cafe integrates Apache food-ways tastes and flavors.

## [Icollectiveinc.org](http://Icollectiveinc.org)

The I-Collective stands for four principles: Indigenous, Inspired, Innovative, and Independent. Subscribe to their multimedia cookbook, A Gathering Basket.

## [PCRM.org](http://PCRM.org)

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine – Native American Resources. Fighting Diabetes with ancestral plant-based foods.



# Local Food Resources



## THE GOOD FOOD COLLECTIVE

[www.goodfoodcollective.org](http://www.goodfoodcollective.org)

## MANNA KITCHEN

[www.mannasoupkitchen.org](http://www.mannasoupkitchen.org)

## SOUTHWEST FARM FRESH COOPERATIVE

[www.southwestfarmfresh.com](http://www.southwestfarmfresh.com)

## ARCHULETA FOOD COALITION

[foodcoalition4archuleta.org](http://foodcoalition4archuleta.org)

## HUNGER FREE COLORADO

[hungerfreecolorado.org](http://hungerfreecolorado.org)

Thank you to our  
contributors!



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