Alaska Traditional Foods Initiative & Movement

Melissa A. Chlupach, MS RD LD
Regional Healthcare Dietitian
NANA Management Services
“The gathering, hunting, preserving and eating of traditional foods is more than just a diet – it’s a way of life for Alaska Native people.”

Traditional Food Guide for Alaska Native Cancer Survivors, 2008
The Alaska Dietary Survey
1956-1961
Traditional Foods are Healthy Foods

**Bowhead Whale**

Bowhead meat is a healthy food high in omega fatty acids, protein, vitamins A, D, and K, and some essential minerals. It is highly recommended as part of a healthy, traditional diet!

**Whaling Captain’s Healthy Serving**

- **Yukon**
- **Heart**
- **Kidney**
- **Liver**
- **Guts**
- **Flapper**
- **Antlers**
- **Skin & blubber**
- **Nails/Claws**
- **Fruit & Roll**

**Nigipaag** - the “real food” is SAFE and HEALTHY to eat and essential to Yupik food well being.

The benefits of eating Alaskan traditional foods are many and are recognized by the state of Alaska’s Division of Public Health. The NSE-DWM continues to monitor the health of subsistence species. Call for more information at 907.852.0350.
Traditional Foods Movement

- Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Alaska Food Code
  - Has included verbiage about traditional foods for a number of years.
  - Traditional wild game meat, seafood, plants and other food donated to an institution or a nonprofit program.
    - Includes residential child care facility with a license from the DHSS, school lunch program and senior meal program.
    - Food must be whole, gutted, gilled, as quarters or roasts without further processing.
      - Animal is not diseased.
      - Food is butchered, dressed, transported and stored to prevent contamination, undesirable microbial growth or deterioration.

http://dec.alaska.gov/commish/regulations/pdfs/18%20AAC%2031.pdf
Traditional Foods Movement

• Alaska Traditional Foods Poster and Toolkit
  • Developed by Nancy Furlow and Sarah Shimer at UAA in collaboration with NMS, ANTHC, AK Food Policy Council AK DEC, among others
  • Posters are being distributed throughout the state.
  • Toolkit in print.
Traditional Foods Movement

• Farm Bill
  • The Agriculture Act of 2014 passed the Senate with an overwhelming bipartisan majority of 68-32 on February 4th, 2014. The Farm Bill was signed into law on February 7th, 2014.
  • Supported by former Alaska Senator Mark Begich.
  • This included Sec. 4004 Food distribution program on Indian reservations and Sec. 4033 Service of traditional foods in public facilities.
    • The term “food service program” includes:
      • Food service at residential child care facilities that have a license from an appropriate State agency.
      • Any child nutrition program
      • Food service at hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities
      • Senior meal programs
Traditional Foods Movement

• Farm Bill (cont.)
  • The Secretary and the Commissioner shall allow the donation to and serving of traditional food through food service program at public facilities and nonprofit facilities, including facilities operated by Indian tribes and facilities operated by tribal organizations, that primarily serve Indians if the operator of the food service program -
    • Ensures that the food is received whole, gutted, gilled, as quarters or roasts without further processing
      • Animal is not diseased
      • Food is butchered, dressed, transported and stored to prevent contamination, undesirable microbial growth or deterioration.
      • The food will not cause a significant health hazard or potential for human illness.
    • Traditional foods verbiage in the Farm Bill is very similar to the DEC Alaska Food Code.
What’s been happening?
Traditional Foods Movement

• Alaska Environmental Health Association Annual Meeting Discussion Panel – October 2014
• AFN – October 2014
  • Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture, spoke on the 23rd.
  • Leslie Wheelock, USDA Director of Tribal Relations, attended AFN as well and spoke with Mr. Vilsack about traditional foods.
• ANTHC Traditional Foods Work Group, headed by Dr. Gary Ferguson – October 2014
• FDA Conference Call – December 2014
• Alaska Food Safety Advisory Committee (AFSAC) quarterly meeting - January 2015
• Traditional Foods Meeting in Kotzebue – February 2015
• National Nutrition Month – March 2015
  • ANMC Nutrition Fair promoting Store Outside Your Door
  • SEARHC Traditional Foods table
Traditional Foods Movement

- Herring egg donation to ANMC – April 2015
- Traditional Foods presentation at the Alaskan Plants as Food and Medicine Symposium – June 2015
- Siglauq Grand Opening – July 2015
- Pioneer Network Conference in Chicago, IL – presented by Val Kreil – August 2015
  - “From Tundra to Table: One Alaskan Organization’s Journey to Bring Traditional Foods to its Inupiat Elders”
- National Title VI Training and Technical Assistance Conference and Tribal Consultation, Washington DC – presented by Val Kreil, Chris Dankmeyer, Cyrus Harris and Kay Branch – August 2015
  - “From Tundra to Table: One Alaskan Organization’s Journey to Bring Traditional Foods to its Inupiat Elders”
Traditional Foods Movement

- Seal Oil Task Force started in June 2015
- USDA Visit by Leslie Wheelock and Sedelta Oosahwee – September 2015
- Traditional foods presentation at the Alaska Environmental Health Association Annual Meeting – October 2015
- October Title VI Chat: Traditional Foods in Alaska: Past, Present and (webinar) – October 2015
- Traditional Foods table at ANMC’s Health Fair at AFN –
- Seal meat donation ceremony at ANMC – January 2016
- American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Exposition in Chicago, IL – Nancy Furlow and Sarah Shimer (UAA) – November 2015
- Alaska Public Health Association Health Summit – February 2016
- Alaska Food Policy Council Conference – February 2016
- Monthly traditional foods email updates
- Media coverage (ADN, Alaska Dispatch, Arctic Sounder, KTVA, Native America Calling)
Traditional Foods Movement

- September 2015
  - USDA Visit to Anchorage, Wasilla and Kotzebue
    - Leslie Wheelock, USDA Director of Tribal Relations
    - Sedelta Oosahwee, Associate Director, White House Movement on American Indian and Alaska Native Education Office
  - Meeting on Monday, September 2nd, 2015
    - ANTHC, SCF, NMS, DEC, Division of Ag, AK USDA, AK USDA Rural Development
    - No money to appropriate for a demonstration project, but grants are available
    - Encouraged to work with the AK USDA on developing a demonstration project
Traditional Foods Movement

• Utuqqanaat Inaat (A Place for Elders), Maniilaq’s Long Term Care
  • 2012, Maniilaq Association opened up an 18 bed long-term care facility
  • Elders would love it even more if traditional foods could be served on a more regular basis.
  • DEC and State Surveyors
    • Let the tundra be considered as the elder’s garden.
    • Any kitchen with a DEC permit can receive traditional game directly.
Traditional Foods Movement

- Maniilaq’s Hunter Support Program
  - Cyrus Harris, Natural Resource Specialist
  - Provide elders with native foods
Traditional Foods Movement

- Traditional Foods Meeting
  - February 2015
  - Organizations represented include Maniilaq Association, ANTHC, NMS, DEC, USDA, State of Alaska Governor’s Office, DHSS, Fish & Game (ADFG), Wildlife Troopers (ASWT), US Fish and Wildlife (USFW), State of WA, Mountain Pacific, JTAK Food Safety and LTC Ombudsman Office.
Traditional Foods Movement

• Action Items from Maniilaq Traditional Foods Meeting
  • Bringing up the idea to the Alaska Food Policy Council for Kotzebue to host a Town Hall/Listening Session.
  • There is a need to develop resources and guidance for the lay person to confidently be able to identify wholesome, properly handled game meats. This may best be developed in a collaborative manner between ADFG, ASWT, and USFW. This could be a useful educational resource statewide, if not already developed somewhere.
  • ADFG Barter/Sell matrix that clearly outlines the legality of transferring game meats.
Traditional Foods Movement

• Action Items from Maniilaq Traditional Foods Meeting
  • LTC Centers across the state could benefit from clear guidance about the implementation of the Farm Bill and how voluntary inspections of non-amendable species (i.e. wild game) may be performed.
  • School Lunch Program: Paulette Schuerch, Governor’s office
  • Policies for Maniilaq’s processing facility
Construction Phase
Potluck
Hmm, hmm good
Traditional Foods Movement

• Traditional Foods Meeting cont.
  • Another benefit, and very unexpected, was seeing and speaking with KTVa’s anchor Emily Carlson and her cameraman in town. They were originally in Kotzebue for AFN, interviewing the Governor and other legislators. They popped in during lunch and tagged along during the facility tour. It was great seeing a story unfold as they interviewed Cyrus, who beamed with joy and was proud of everything and everyone around him.
  • April 26, 2015 “In Kotzebue, traditional Native diet coming to long-term care facilities”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKOGtNNQ4lQ&feature=player_embedded
Siglauq, Traditional Foods Processing Facility

- An Inupiaq name meaning ice cellar or cold storage
- Grand opening was Tuesday, July 7th.
- Barrow, Bethel and the Kenaitze tribe have shown interest in the processing facility.
- Processed 200lb of Muskox in September and made Muskox stew while Leslie Wheelock and Sedelta Oosahwee (USDA) visited. This was the beginning of offering traditional foods as a menu item on Utuqqanaat Inaat’s menu.
Grand Opening of The Siglaq
Visit from the USDA

Freshly packaged Muskox
Muskox Stew
Traditional Foods Movement

• USDA Foods Help Nourish a Culture
  • USDA Blog posted on November 4th, 2015


Recent memos from the Food and Nutrition Service provide clarification on how traditional foods, including Musk Ox in the depicted stew, play a vital role within dietary guidelines. Photo by Sleda Oonahooe.

Unggnait Inuut in Kotzebue, Alaska offered meals with traditional ingredients, including Musk Ox Stew. With recent changes to the Farm Bill, senior living and child care centers now have additional guidance on how to include these and other traditional foods in served meals. Photo by OTR staff.
Traditional Foods Movement

• Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC)
  • There are 229 federally recognized tribes in Alaska.
    • More than any other state
    • This means that ANMC provides healthcare to more tribes than any other hospital in the U.S.
Over the last several years, the ANMC Food and Nutrition Services department, contracted by NANA Management Services (NMS), has looked at various ways to implement traditional foods into the patient menu.

- Reindeer stew
- Reindeer sausage
- Mixed berries
- Agutuk with and without fish (Eskimo Ice Cream)
- Wild Alaskan salmon
- Smoked salmon
- Pilot bread
- Fry Bread
Traditional Foods Movement

- Thinking outside of the box
  - Alaska moose salvage program
  - High tunnel discussion
  - Donations?
    - Herring eggs
    - Seal meat
    - Moose
    - Caribou
    - Fish
April 2015, ANMC received a donation of herring eggs from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska.

- Herring egg salads were prepared for ANMC patients and SCF elders lunch program.
- Roald Helgesen, CEO and Administrator for ANTHC, joined the NMS Food Services team at ANMC, passing out herring egg salad to patients.
- Feedback was positive and complimentary.
- “Gourmet” was used to describe the herring egg salad.
Traditional Foods Movement
Traditional Foods Movement

• ANMC and Seal Meat
  • Working with the Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission (ANHSC) on seal meat donations
  • First seal meat offering at ANMC on January 27th, 2016
Traditional Foods Movement

- ANMC At Your Request Room Service Patient Menu

Herring Eggs
Traditional Foods Movement

- Fiddlehead Ferns
Traditional Foods Movement

• Beach Asparagus
Traditional Foods Movement

• Schools
  • Try to offer as many traditional foods as they can...within the guidelines.
  • Fish to school program
    • Sitka – donations through the commercial fleets directly to the commercial processors
  • Today, schools around the State of Alaska can accept donated traditional foods. However, they are unable to receive reimbursement for the school lunch program if offered as a main meal.
    • AK Department of Fish & Game views this as a sale, which is illegal according to the regulations.
Alaska HB 179, "An Act relating to donations of fish and game to food service programs."

- Introduced to the legislature on April 1, 2015
- Sponsors: Representatives Kreiss-Tomkins, Millett, Ortiz, Kito, Stutes, Munoz, Wilson, Foster, Nageak
- HB 179 allows schools, medical facilities, senior centers, and child care facilities to accept and serve donated subsistence- and sport-caught fish, game, plants, and eggs in their food service programs.
- HB 179 will nourish Alaska’s children and elders, both physically and spiritually.
- It is on hold in Resources.

http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/29?Root=HB%20179#tab6_4
Healing Foods: Seal Oil & Meat

NMS developed a brochure for ANHSC

Healing Foods: Seal Oil & Meat

Seal Oil & Meat

Seal meat is an excellent source of iron, in fact, 3 ounces of braised seal meat has 34% of the Daily Value. You would have to eat 25 ounces of beef, 24 hot dogs, 66 chicken maggie or 33 ounces of corned beef hash (bacon) to get the same amount of iron as 3 ounces of braised seal meat.

Iron deficiency is a risk throughout the world. You. It is a part of many enzyme that help digest foods in our bodies. Many parts of our bodies are affected when we don’t consume enough iron (e.g., anemia).

In addition to iron, seal meat is a good source of protein, vitamins A & D, and minerals (phosphorus, potassium, and zinc). Plus, it’s low in sodium.

Seal Oil

Seal oil is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which may decrease diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, and autoimmune disease. In addition, there is evidence that omega-3 fatty acids may improve general health.

One tablespoon of bowhead seal oil has 800mg of omega-3 fatty acids, while spotted seal oil is almost half of this amount. Better, middling, and gravelly (gray) oil, vegetable shortening, and canola oil don’t even compare to seal oil.

Spotted seal oil is also a good source of vitamins A, D and E and the mineral Selenium. Unbearded seal meat, it is also low in sodium.

Recipe

Braised Seal with Vegetables

Ingredients

1/2 lbs. of seal meat or seal liver
2 large yellow onions
2 lbs. of potatoes
3 small turnips
1 head of cabbage
Petrul or wild parsley
Salt & pepper for taste

Prep:

1. Plane seal meat or a 2-3 gallon pot, fill 3/4 of the way full and bring to a boil.
2. Chop onions and add to boiling pot.
3. Bring water down to a simmer.
4. In the last 30 minutes add all the rest of the vegetables and salt and pepper for taste.
5. Serve hot.

Notes:

Adapted from Esongs Koltov, 2008

References


Traditional Foods Movement

• Seal Oil and the Seal Oil Task Force
  • Seal oil is a prohibited food in the Alaska Food Code
    • Because of significant health hazards and the potential for human illness, the operator of a food establishment may not allow seal oil in the food establishment under any circumstance.
  • Can we traditionally render seal oil, develop necessary safety procedures and offer it to healthcare and long-term care facilities, senior meal programs and schools? We’re working on it.
Traditional Foods Movement

- Seal Oil and the Seal Oil Task Force
  - Maniilaq Seal Oil Project
    - Brian Himelbloom & Chris Sannito
      - UAF - Kodiak Seafood and Marine Science Center
    - Eric Johnson
      - University of Wisconsin - Department of Bacteriology Botulinum Toxins Laboratory
Alaska Traditional Foods Movement
Supported by
“Happiness is healing. Elders need to taste the food they’ve grown up on so they can feel good about themselves again – it’s a healing thing.”

Frank Wright, Hoonah

Traditional Food Guide for Alaska Native Cancer Survivors, 2008
Thank you

Nakhwal’in shoo ihjii
(Gwich’in Athabascan)

Quyana tailuci
(Cup’ik)

Quyakamsi tagilghiisi
(St. Lawrence Island Yupik)

Pağlagivsigiñ
(Ifupiaq)

Quyana taaluten
(Cup’ig Nunivak Island)

Daneyosh
(Upper Kuskokwim)

Ts’en’ii, shign’ahdal
(Tanana Upper)

Awa’ahdah
aanda’laxsa’a’ch’t
(Eyak)

Yak’ei haat yigoode’e
(Tlingit)

Chin’an gu nin yu
(Đena’ina Athabascan)

Tats gwiik
(Haida)

Yuxudz yuxogh
srigisdheyh go ninuxdatl
(Deg Xinag Athabascan)

Enaa neenyo
(Koyukon Athabascan)

Awak’ikamshii
tagilghiisi
(Koyukon Athabascan)

Pałlagivsigiñ
(Ifupiaq)

Quyana taaluten
(Cup’ig Nunivak Island)

Ts’lm’wii’amhaw
(Tsimshian)

Waqaa
(Yup’ik)

Aang
(Aleut)

Cama’i
(Alutiiq)
Contact Information

melissa.chlupach@nmsusa.com

(907) 273-4250 (office)
(907) 748-4522 (cell)