

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

To Give and to Grow

Four female chefs descendent from Indigenous peoples across the Americas call upon diverse food traditions and flavors to create new dishes for you to try this Thanksgiving.

By Tiffani Rozier

Photographs by Sarah Anne Ward

Indigenous Ingredients

Passamaquoddy Amber Maple Syrup (\$6.50)

The *Passamaquoddy Tribe*, located deep in the woods of Maine, produces a delicious, 100% pure maple syrup, among other things. A portion of the proceeds also goes to a Native Scholarship Program for enrolled Native college students.

Tribal Blend Olive Oil (\$28)

This peppery, nutty oil is offered by *Séka Hills*, a purveyor run by the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation tribe in Northern California's Capay Valley, where members produce and sell a variety of tribal products.

Native Harvest Wild Rice (\$10.50)

Many Indigenous farmers and brands sell authentic wild rice. *Native Harvest* grows theirs in northern Minnesota, where it's hand harvested and wood parched by tribal members using traditional methods.

Smoked Piñon Pine Salt (\$10)

This savory sub for conventional sea salt is from *Sakari Botanicals*, which is native owned and operated in Tumalo, Ore., by a female farmer.

I STOPPED CELEBRATING Thanksgiving more than 15 years ago—at least in the conventional sense. Like many other Indigenous and African descendants, I've spent most of my adulthood piecing together my identity and connecting with my personal history and ancestry. Part of that discovery involved figuring out what “Thanksgiving” meant to me. To talk about “decolonizing” anything can seem both progressive and romantic. But what does that really entail? For me, it meant repurposing the day, practicing gratitude and sharing authentic dishes around the table.

This holiday season, *Millie* invites you to do the same. Sure, you can still have the iconic 16-pound turkey, but consider incorporating some new ingredients from Indigenous brands and farms into your spread. Here's how four women descendent from Indigenous peoples make Thanksgiving their own—inside the kitchen and out.



Mushroom and Buckwheat Risotto
By Lynnette Astaire

Chilled Amaranth Corn Pudding
By Andrea Murdoch



Andrea Murdoch

For many chefs like Andrea Murdoch, cooking is a form of self-expression; it's about telling a story.

As an Andean Native from Venezuela, Murdoch says cooking with Indigenous foods is a way to connect to her biological roots. She was adopted at a young age and raised in Ohio. "Holidays were typical run-of-the-mill events for us," Murdoch says. "And the food didn't change much year to year."

Today, Murdoch is the founder of Denver-based catering business Four Directions Cuisine, which sources Indigenous to bring unique flavors from North, Central and South America to its cuisine. "The food tells stories that I cannot get directly from my ancestors," Murdoch says. "I have what I like to call my 'Indigenous pantry'—with my pepitas, amaranth, chia seeds and more, all from independent farmers. Even if the ingredient isn't precolonial, I get it from an Indigenously owned brand."

Her recipe for Chilled Amaranth Corn Pudding highlights Indigenous ingredients that are accessible. As you consider the menu for your seasonal celebrations, Murdoch says: "Do some research. Think about what Indigenous people were growing and eating at this time of year before colonization."



Lynnette Astaire

Chef Lynnette Astaire was born in a town of 400 people in South Carolina and raised in Chicago.

Fed up with the lack of nutrition in her school's cafeteria, Astaire vowed to make her own food and even tried growing corn (which she describes as an epic fail)—when she was only 11. Now she is the founder and owner of Superfood School in Los Angeles, a 100% plant-based business that helps people add more plants to their diets and hosts food-focused retreats in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Astaire's experience with plants allows her to view the Thanksgiving table through a different lens and palate. While she grew up celebrating Thanksgiving, she says it never felt truly authentic to her. So she decided to make up her own rules. While building her cooking school, she realized that "the holidays are a great way to highlight the beauty of a plant-based lifestyle," she says. "I now use these traditions to introduce plant-based dishes and ingredients into the conversation." Her recipe for risotto uses buckwheat instead of the traditional arborio rice.



Sara Elise

Food industry leader Sara Elise was born to a Cherokee-Italian mother and Black father. Observing the Thanksgiving holiday was part of her life.

"It was a time of celebration despite anything else going on," she says. "The focus was never really on 'Thanksgiving,' but on being together."

But when Elise learned more about the holiday's origins, she decided to make the day about celebrating individuality instead—the good and the bad; the bitter and the sweet. Her cauliflower soup recipe, for example, is what she calls "a celebration of the whole self." "I am Black. I am Indigenous. I am Italian," she says. Indeed, when she doesn't feel like making the crumbled pork from scratch, she'll use sweet Italian sausages. And she says she uses collards because the wild cabbage was the only plant enslaved Africans were permitted to grow, so it's typical of the American South's cuisine.

Elise wants people to go further than just decolonizing a single holiday—she wants people to decolonize how they eat, cook and think about food. That's the goal behind her Brooklyn-based event catering company, Harvest & Revel, which uses organic, seasonal and locally sourced ingredients. "We should have a relationship to the crops we use," she says, adding that "we need to elevate and support the communities we live in by sourcing locally."



Kristina Stanley

For chef Kristina Stanley, the meaning of Thanksgiving has evolved as her understanding of her ancestral roots has deepened.

"My father was adopted and raised by Irish Catholic white folks and didn't learn he was Native until his early teens," Stanley says. "I grew up in Wisconsin right next to the reservation that he was from." Stanley says that being part of a religious family in the Upper Midwest meant that Thanksgiving was a traditional affair with large gatherings and football.

But about 16 years ago, Stanley was able to reconnect with her Indigenous family members and, through food, found her way into the Anishinaabe of the Red Cliff Tribe community, of which she is now a member.

Stanley—who has worked in the food industry for about 20 years—is the founder and head chef of Abaaso, a plant-based foods company that features Indigenous ingredients and tribally sourced products. She is also a chef, organizer and activist, and works with various organizations, such as the Indigenous group I-Collective, to raise awareness around the Indigenous Food Sovereignty movement and promote the use of resources from Indian producers.

She encourages diners to add the complex and beautiful flavors of precolonial foods to their pantries this Thanksgiving—like the wild rice, sourced Indigenously, she uses in her salad recipe.



Cauliflower Soup with Crumbled Pork and Braised Collards

By Sara Elise



Wild Rice Salad

By Kristina Stanley

The Recipes

YIELD: 4 servings

Wild Rice Salad *By Kristina Stanley*

for rice salad:

- 1 cup uncooked wild rice
- 1 T olive oil
- 4 cups water
- ½ cup roasted hazelnuts, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- ½ cup red onion, minced
- 2 cups mixed greens

for dressing:

- 2 T apple cider vinegar
- 2 T chokeberry syrup (or berry puree)
- 2 T avocado or sunflower oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Rinse rice in fine-mesh strainer under cold water. 2. In medium sized saucepan, add olive oil and rice. Toast rice on stovetop over low flame for 5 minutes. 3. Add water and turn up heat. Bring to a boil. 4. Lower heat and cover. Simmer for 45 minutes. Drain excess liquid and cool completely. 5. To toast nuts: Preheat oven to 325 F. Spread hazelnuts on baking sheet. Roast for 8 minutes. 6. Transfer rice to large serving bowl. Add blueberries, onions and roasted hazelnuts. Chill in refrigerator until cold. 7. Add mixed greens and dressing to serve. *For dressing*, whisk together ingredients in a bowl or glass jar.

Mushroom and Buckwheat Risotto *By Lynnette Astaire*

- 3½ cups vegetable broth
- ½ pound mixed mushrooms, thinly sliced (oyster and cremini are ideal)
- 2 T avocado oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 cup buckwheat groats
- 1½ tsp onion powder
- 1½ tsp garlic powder
- Sea salt and black pepper to taste
- Parsley, coarsely chopped (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat 2 T of broth in large, deep skillet over medium-low heat. Add mushrooms, pinch of sea salt and toss to coat. 2. Sauté for about 10 minutes until mushrooms are tender. Remove mushrooms from pan and set aside. 3. In the same pan (without cleaning), add oil and onion. Cook until softened. Add garlic, stir to coat. Add buckwheat groats and toss until slightly toasted, about 2 minutes. 4. Add 1½ cups broth and onion powder and garlic powder. Stir and allow to simmer, uncovered, until liquid is almost absorbed, then add additional ½ cup broth and stir and simmer until absorbed. Continue process until buckwheat is tender. 5. Turn off heat, add mushrooms, salt and pepper. Garnish with parsley.

Chilled Amaranth Corn Pudding *By Andrea Murdoch*

for pudding:

- 2½ cups corn stock
- 1 cup coconut milk
- ¾ cup amaranth
- ½ cup amaranth flour
- ¼ cup maple syrup or agave nectar
- ½ tsp lime juice
- Pinch of sea salt
- 2 T corn kernels

for corn stock:

- 4 ears of corn
- 6 cups water

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Bring corn stock and coconut milk to a simmer in a pot. Whisk in amaranth and amaranth flour and simmer for 15 minutes or until mixture thickens and amaranth grains tenderize. 2. Continue to whisk occasionally to prevent mixture from sticking to bottom of pot. 3. Remove pot from heat and stir in maple syrup, lime juice and pinch of salt. 4. Transfer to serving dish and chill in refrigerator. 5. Garnish with corn kernels and serve. *For corn stock*, preheat oven to 425 F. Husk corn, wrap each ear in aluminum foil and place on baking sheet. Bake until corn is soft (about 20 minutes, turning once halfway through). Remove corn from foil and cut off kernels. Reserve 2 T of corn kernels for pudding. Put roasted corncobs in 6 cups of water and simmer over low heat for one hour. Then, cover pot and simmer for another hour. Remove cobs from stock and discard. Should yield 3½ cups of corn stock liquid.

Cauliflower Soup with Crumbled Pork and Braised Collards *By Sara Elise*

- 1 large head of cauliflower, cut into florets
- 1 medium white onion, coarsely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 T olive oil
- 1 T sea salt, plus more to taste
- 1 tsp black pepper, plus more to taste
- 2 tsp smoked paprika
- 2 T salted butter
- 4-5 cups vegetable stock or water
- ½ cup almond milk (optional but recommended for creaminess)
- 2 Italian sweet sausages
- 2 cups collard greens
- 2-3 sprigs fresh parsley, chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 400 F. Add cauliflower, onion and garlic to large bowl. Drizzle in olive oil, salt, pepper and smoked paprika and mix together with hands or wooden spoon. 2. Place everything on foil lined baking sheet and roast until cauliflower is browned and slightly caramelized, about 25 minutes. Remove from oven. 3. Heat butter in heavy-bottomed pot until slightly browned. Add cauliflower mixture and 2-3 cups veggie stock. Cover and bring mixture to simmer for around 10 minutes. Stir occasionally, crushing some of cooked cauliflower with spoon. 4. Transfer mixture to a blender (or use immersion blender to blend in pot). Blend until smooth, adding more veggie stock if necessary. 5. Transfer soup back to pot, add almond milk and/or more veggie stock and adjust seasoning to your liking. Let soup simmer over low heat for up to an hour. 6. Meanwhile, cook sausages by removing casings and spreading crumbled sausage in cast iron pan over medium heat. Drizzle with olive oil and season as desired. Cook until browned. Set aside. Reserve pork fat in pan. 7. Cut collard greens into ½-inch long strips. In same pan with reserved pork fat, add greens and ½ cup veggie stock. Set to medium heat and cover. Cook until greens are tender and turning slightly brown, around 30 minutes. Remove lid, add sea salt and reduce liquid in pan by cooking over high heat for 2-3 minutes. 8. To serve, plate soup in warm bowls. Top soup with crumbled sausage, braised collards, sea salt, a drizzle of olive oil and fresh parsley.