

Chef Sean Sherman

A member of the Oglala Lakota tribe, [Chef Sean Sherman](#) was born and raised on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, as his parents and grandparents were before him. His focus is on the revitalization and evolution of Indigenous foods systems throughout North America. His studies on the foundations of Indigenous food systems have led to his deep understanding of what is needed to showcase Native American cuisine in today's world. Through his activism and advocacy, Sean is helping to reclaim and celebrate the rich culinary heritage of Indigenous communities around the world.

Sean has dedicated his career to supporting and promoting Indigenous food systems and Native food sovereignty. His goal is to make Indigenous foods more accessible to as many communities as possible through the non-profit North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems ([NĀTIFS](#)) and its Indigenous Food Lab professional Indigenous kitchen and training center. Working to address the economic and health crises affecting Native communities by re-establishing Native foodways, NĀTIFS imagines a new North American food system that generates wealth and improves health in Native communities through food-related enterprises.

After a long career as a chef in Minneapolis, Sherman realized in a vibrant food scene that celebrated exotic flavors and far-flung cooking styles, nothing represented the land they were currently on, or what the people indigenous to the area ate. After some research, he found this was true across the country: there were no Native American restaurants *anywhere* throughout most of North America. Traditional foodways had been almost entirely wiped off the map.

This set him on a journey to discover what his direct ancestors were eating, storing, growing, harvesting, foraging, trading, and sharing just a few generations earlier. While spending time in Mexico, he observed how many Indigenous groups had retained traditional cooking techniques — using clay grills and fire, growing corn and drying and pounding it into meal, and gathering ingredients from the surrounding desert, forest or plains. He was inspired to research and reclaim the traditional cooking methods of his own ancestors, as well as the “lost” knowledge of other dispossessed Indigenous people across North America.

In 2017, Sean and his team presented the first decolonized dinner at the James Beard House in Manhattan. His first book, *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*, received the James Beard Award for Best American Cookbook in 2018, and the 2019 Leadership Award from the James Beard Foundation. In 2021, Sean opened Minnesota's first full service Indigenous restaurant, Owamni, which received the 2022 James Beard Award for Best New Restaurant.

Sean has just been named one of the [Time 100 Most Influential People of 2023](#).

Chef Sherman has had the opportunity to build deep connections locally and internationally with tribal communities, academic institutions, culinary leaders, and thought leaders. He's witnessed varying degrees of Indigenous food knowledge across many communities and has seen a need for change everywhere. Through speaking engagements, community dinners, and culinary classes, along with social media, his first cookbook, the nonprofit NATIFS and the Indigenous Food Lab, he is working to influence many of these communities directly to effect change.

Sean serves on the boards of the [BIPOC Foodways Alliance](#), [Dream of Wild Health](#), [Seed Savers Exchange](#), and [Wholesome Crave](#).

For more visit his website seansherman.com.