

A man in a red shirt is looking down at a wooden boardwalk. In the background, there is a large plume of white steam rising from the ground, and a person wearing a purple hooded raincoat is visible. The scene appears to be outdoors, possibly at a food festival or a market.

Where Do We Look For Indigenous Recipes?

A companion resource to [*Cooking in Two Worlds: A Process Guide for Incorporating Indigenous Foods into Institutions*](#)

There is a great depth and richness that can be found in the stories of Indigenous culinary traditions and technology. While there are many books and resources to learn from, a crucial step to learning Indigenous recipes is connecting and building a collaborative and mutual relationship with the Indigenous peoples who will be accessing your institution and the First Nations community your institution occupies. Once a relationship is established Elders and cooks are much more willing to share community recipes. Recipes will vary within communities and families so it would be wise to get a selection of recipes. When sourcing community recipes it will be of the utmost importance to ensure a culturally safe and community-led process. Safety will be determined by each distinct nation and relationship. Being mindful of power dynamics, biases, paternalism, and power are important reflective practices and working on listening, presence, curiosity, vulnerability, and relationships are your foundational steps.

A crucial step to learning Indigenous recipes is building a relationship with the Indigenous communities whose lands your institution is on. Read Summary Resources [“Where do we begin?”](#), [“How do we build relationships?”](#), and [Cooking in Two Worlds: A Process Guide for Incorporating Indigenous Foods into Institutions](#) for further information.

Where Do We Look For Indigenous Recipes?

“People need to understand that you cannot simply compartmentalize food. Food is not just a thing that you consume for nourishment. It has social, cultural, emotional and spiritual components to it that you can’t just cut off.” – Jess Housty - Knowledge Holder

Community Recipes

Community recipes are the foundation of Indigenous food service. These are the staple recipes used in Indigenous communities. While it might be smoked salmon chowder on the coast, and moose bone broth in the north, these recipes bring more than just nutrients, they bring comfort. When we are gathering these recipes, we must understand that they remain the intellectual property of the family, or community that shared them and may not be replicated without permission.

Cookbooks

Indigenous cookbooks are a great resource for learning about some of the ways that Indigenous communities prepare food. Cookbooks offer a simple and effective way to build a foundational understanding of Indigenous foods. This foundational knowledge will facilitate learning about Indigenous foods that are produced and eaten in your local area. As most cook books will not be from your local community they should only be used alongside community sourced recipes. [Click here for a list of cookbooks written by Indigenous authors whose lands include B.C.](#)

Community Cooks

There is a wealth of food knowledge within communities and that includes cooks and chefs who prepare meals and menus for hundreds and thousands of people for community events. We ask that you reflect on who you are looking for as cooks? Do you want someone who is Red Seal only or are you looking for an Indigenous person who has lived the life of preparing community meals, for Elders, for family, for feasts, who have a holistic approach to feeding the Community? The first group is few, but the important second group are plenty.

Reflective Questions

- » How can you encourage and promote the cook’s good feelings and good intent?
- » How can you bring thoughtfulness around being in a good frame of mind and thinking about the clients, patients and communities who will be nourished by the foods you prepare? You are the medicine through the food.
- » What can you do to ensure that learning recipes isn’t an extractive process?
- » How can you share the story of the food with the people being served?
- » What can you do to keep the recipes safe?
- » Do you know of any local Indigenous cookbooks?