

# INDIGENOUS AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

For many native groups in the US preserving traditional agricultural practices of their culture is very important.

Indigenous groups often place high value on the sacred relationship between people and the land, plants and animals that provide food.

For many indigenous groups, this relationship between people and their food systems was disrupted by European colonizers who pushed natives onto reservations, over-hunted wildlife populations and introduced sugary, fatty foods (like sugar and lard) into their diets.

It is important to remember the history of indigenous peoples in our own home communities.

St. Louis sits on land that where Kickapoo, Osage, Miami and Oceti Sakowin (also known as Sioux) peoples once resided.

Today, many indigenous farmers, chefs and activists are working to restore traditional food systems.

Here are a few facts about traditional native foods:

**Acorns** are a great source of protein, vitamins A and C, and important amino acids. However, they require substantial preparation.

After acorns are gathered and ground up, the acorn meal must be leached and washed to remove the tannic acid that makes it bitter.

**Corn** is a symbol of life for many communities. In Hopi culture, a white corn powder, called *homa*, is used for prayer rituals, such as the naming ceremony of a baby.

**Mesquite**, flavorful bean-like pods, grow abundantly in arid climates. The Comanche tribe traditionally used mesquite to flavor bison, elk, deer, wolves and other meat.

