

MFSI's **Return to Your Roots** Newsletter

February 2009
Volume 4, Issue 2

February—Hotvle Hvse (*Wind Month*)

www.mvskofood.org

Return to Your Roots Food Sovereignty Symposium to be held in Okmulgee

Okmulgee, Ok., - The Mvsko Food Sovereignty Initiative (MFSI) will be hosting their first "Return to Your Roots" Food Sovereignty Symposium in the Mound Building at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation on March 20 and 21st.

This unique symposium, which is free and open to the public, will cover topics such as "food sovereignty for tribal nations"; historical information of traditional foods of the Southeastern Indians such as how they were grown and their

nutritional content; panel discussions of tribal agriculture programs by experts from various tribes throughout the United States, and much more.

This symposium is intended to provide educational and collaborative opportunities for tribal leaders, producers, enthusiasts and researchers from the native and non-native communities.

The Friday session on March 20th begins at 1:00 pm with a welcoming from Ben Yahola (Mvsko) and

(Continued on page 5)

It's soil testing time

Have you ever had your soil tested?

It's important if you plan on having a garden, your herd is relying on pastures or you are planning on growing a crop.

If your soil is imbalanced, it causes your plants to not receive enough nutrients. It may cause your plant to die as soon as it uses up the nutrients in the seeds or the plants may produce a lot of leaves but no fruit or veggies.

So, have your soil tested. It's easy.

Soil Test is a process that measures the nutrients available for the plants. The quantity of available

nutrients in the sample determines the amount of fertilizers needed for a particular crop. These "plant nutrients" are elements, such as phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sodium, sulfur, manganese, copper and zinc. A soil test also measures pH and the amount of acidity within the soil to determine if lime is needed and how much should be applied.

These nutrients also can vary by location, soil depth, slope and soil texture.

A good time to take a soil sample is 3-6 months

(Continue on page 2)

The Oneidas: Strong in Tradition, Sustenance and Thankfulness



Jeff Metoxen, Manager of the Tsyunhehkwa program.

By Liz Gray-Gore, MFSI

Tsyunhehkwa is an Agricultural Community and Culturally based program of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. Based on a Certified Organic 83-acre site, their program is founded on Self-Sustainability and service for the Oneida nation and the Community.

They have three main components, Agriculture, Cannery and Retail.

But what they do means more to them than just providing food for their people and the local community. To them, it means "Sustenance", or a right to sustain one's self through what the earth has provided for them since the beginning of time. It means, "Medicine" because of the spiritual and nutritional qualities in their foods that can't be found in store-bought vegetables, fruits, or beef. It means having a Sense of Pride that they are providing for themselves: growing, cultivating, harvesting what belongs to them.

Woven throughout all of these traits is also a sense of Identity—Because they are growing their traditional foods - corn, beans and squash - they are remembering who they are. These foods, which oral tradition tells them has been a gift from the Creator since the beginning of their existence, was made to take care of them. This belief in the foods they grow today becomes a reflection of who they are. They are still who the Creator intended them to be—the Oneida People of the Standing Stone.

Jeff Metoxen is the manager of the Tsyunhehkwa

(Continued on page 4)

It's soil testing time

(Continued)

soil sample is 3-6 months before starting any new garden or flowerbed. If you need lime, you will have enough time to apply it and have the soil adjust to the proper pH balance before it is time to plant. If you are checking nitrogen levels, take samples as close to planting time as possible.

You may need to take more than one sample of soil, depending on the size of your garden. If it is a small garden, two or three samples placed together can be sent off to be tested.

If you have large garden area that may have different soil types or has a hill or slope, then you will need more

samples. A field may need as many as twenty samples.

To gather your samples, use a soil probe, spade shovel or garden trowel. Do not use

galvanized tools because they will contaminate the samples with copper or zinc. Also don't use brass or bronze tools. Mix your samples in a clean, plastic bucket. Wash your bucket

thoroughly before using it for soil samples if it has been used to carry fertilizer or chemicals.

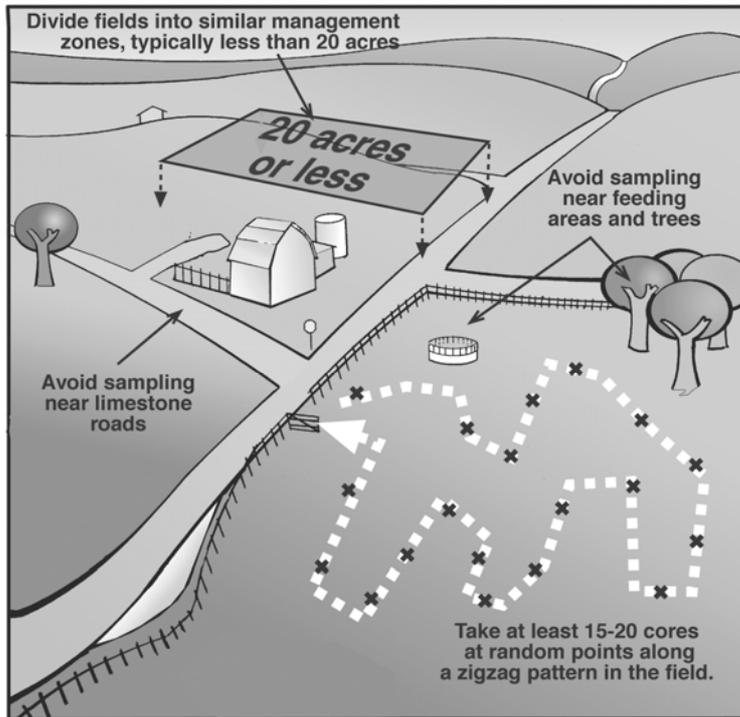
Also, make sure your sample isn't muddy and doesn't have roots and sod mixed in with it. The cost is usually \$10.00 per sample. It usually takes a week to 10 days to get the analysis back.

You should have at least a pint of dirt for sampling. Carry your sample in a clean glass jar or plastic baggies to your local extension office.

In Okmulgee, the OSU Cooperative Extension service is located at the fairgrounds.

Their address is 1901 North Oklahoma Avenue. You can call them at 918-756-1958.

MFSI is presenting a soil testing class March 16th @ 6:00 pm. Class taught by OSU Extension Agent Doug Maxey. For more info call 918-756-5915.



Graphic provided by the University of Missouri–Columbia Extension and Agricultural Information office.

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative Mission Statement

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative works to enable the Mvskoke people and their neighbors to provide for their food and health needs now and in the future, through sustainable agriculture, economic development, community involvement, cultural and educational programs

MFSI Board of Directors

Rebecca Lindsey June Thomas Jackson Barnett

Staff

MFSI Advisory Committee

- Johnnie Brasuell** – MCN Diabetes Program Director
- Sharon Iverson**- MCN Diabetes Program Dietitian
- Emman Spain** – MCN Cultural Preservation
- John West** – Horticulturist
- Yvette Wiley** – MCN Environmental Services
- Donna Williams** – Personal Chef
- Lou Fixico**-MCN Elderly Nutrition Service
- Ex Officio Members**
- Lester Ligons** – USDA/NRCS Tribal Liaison
- Bud McCombs**-Hunter, Fisher, Gardener

- Executive Director** - Vicky Karhu
- Co-Director**-Ben Yahola
- Office Manager**-Dicey Barnett
- Chumona Deere**-Projects Manager
- Elizabeth Gore**, Community Coordinator

A majority of the Board, Advisory Committee and staff are Muscogee (Creek) citizens. MVTO to Jesse Smith Noyes Foundation, USDA/CSREES, REACH Legacy Program, Seventh Generation Fund and our friends who have donated time and money to MFSI.

If you have any questions about our upcoming events or programs that we have to offer, please call our offices and we would be glad to talk with you or set up an appointment to visit with you. Want to subscribe to this newsletter? It's free! Send us your info. Office hours 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Monday through Friday except Thursday we are open until 7:00. Phone: (918) 756-5915 Fax: (918) 756-5918 Email: mvskokefood@gmail.com. Address: 208 West 6th Street, Okmulgee, Ok 74447.

Beans – Good For Man, Good For The Earth

By Dena Lindley, MFSI Research & Education

Beans are a *legume*, a plant that produces seeds in a pod and has the ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen in the soil to be stored and used as a vital nutrient for itself as well as other plants.

Beans are one of the oldest and most nutritious foods known to man and have been an important part of the human diet for thousands of years. They were one of the earliest cultivated food crops.

Dry beans (not green or string beans and soybeans) were domesticated about 7,000 years ago in both Peru (Andean region) and southern Mexico (MesoAmerican region).

In Mexico, the Indians developed and cultivated small-seeded variety white beans, black beans and many other colors and patterns while in the Andes very bright colored, large-seeded varieties were developed and cultivated.

By the time Europeans came to the Americas, Indian tribes had criss-crossed the American continent spreading these varied cultivars all over North and South America through

exploration, migration and trading with other tribes.

Fortunately for us, this nutritious gem is easy to grow and can help improve our health and our environment. Beans are one of the most nutritionally complete foods available. They provide an abundance of digestible protein, iron, magnesium, zinc, potassium and soluble fiber.

Beans are high in complex carbohydrates (the "good" carbs), high in protein, high in fiber, high in folate, low in fat, low in sodium, cholesterol free and rich in vitamins and minerals.

The calorie content of one cup of cooked beans is equal to one cup of cooked rice, pasta or a 7 ounce potato, but they are substantially higher in dietary fiber. They contain many nutrients similar to meat, but without the fat and cholesterol.

Dry beans are a wonderful addition to any garden, though the plants will use growing space for a longer season than many other plants due to maturation and dry down time. You can use less space in the garden by using trellises, teepees or fence panels for "pole" varieties. The trade-off is that they will dry well on the "vine", so picking and shelling them for use and storage is a snap.

Beans are planted in Oklahoma starting in May, when the soil is warm. They take about 3-4 months to produce bean-filled pods that may be shelled and used or dried. Beans will be easier to shell if left to dry down on the vine before harvesting. A dry bean will store indefinitely if kept in an airtight container away from moisture and vermin.



Remember to always sort and rinse beans before soaking and cooking as they often contain soil particles, small stones and plant matter when harvested and packaged.

Soaking dry-packaged beans before cooking helps to soften and return moisture to them. It also reduces cooking time and makes them easier to digest. Beans will rehydrate to at least 2-3 times their dry size when soaked. "As a rule of thumb", use 10 cups of cold water for each pound of dry beans, bring to boil and simmer for 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat and cover. Let stand for 3-4 hours, drain and rinse. A longer soaking time allows greater amounts of gas-causing properties to dissolve in the water, thus providing easier digestion.

After soaking, simmer beans until tender, stirring gently to avoid split skins and overcooking.

Do not add acidic ingredients such as lemon juice, vinegar, tomatoes, chili sauce, ketchup, molasses or wine to beans until fully cooked as these foods will prevent the beans from becoming tender.

Enjoy our healthy and delicious "White Chili" recipe using navy beans. Using great northern beans will reduce the cooking and soaking time, but will not provide as firm of texture as navy beans.

(See *White Chili Recipe* on page 5)

A bit about Beans

Because they have a low glycemic index, beans have the unique ability to provide energy over a sustained period of time by being slowly released into your blood stream. Also, beans are a great source of dietary fiber, which promotes a healthy digestive tract, helps lower blood cholesterol levels, and can reduce the risk of some types of cancer.

[Americanbean.org]

The Oneidas

(continued)

(*joon hey-qwa* "life sustenance") program. He will be a speaker at the "Return To Your Roots" Food Sovereignty Conference being held in Okmulgee, Oklahoma March 21st and 22nd. The conference is hosted by the Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative and co-sponsored by the Muscogee Creek Nation.

Tsyunhehkwa has a staff of 13 people who work with the community's needs and their goals. Jeff says he couldn't accomplish any of it without the support and help of the Oneida Nation, their community and friends.

The organization has two main goals, growing the foods and educating the people. Their mission statement reflects how much responsibility for the well-being of the Oneida people they hold: "*Playing a pivotal role in the re-introduction of high quality, organically grown foods that will ensure a healthier and more fulfilling life for the On^yote? aka, and being the facilitators of positive dietary and nutritional change.*"

Jeff will be the first to tell you that to understand their role and responsibilities as food producers you have to hear a portion of their Creation story.

Here is an excerpt of their information of the Creation story:

When the humans had been created, Shukwaya?tisu instructed them that all that was needed for a good life was readily available to them. They would want for nothing, there was water food, medicines-everything needed to sustain them. All that was asked of the humans was to gather what was provided and give thanks.

Over time, the Oneidas failed to provide this recognition and ignored these responsibilities. A Seneca Prophet of the people named Handsome Lake told the people that "The Three Sisters" (the corn, beans and squash) wanted to leave this world be-

cause the people were not recognizing them in their ceremonies and giving thanks for all that they provided. Handsome Lake knew the children would go hungry, and everyone would have no food to live and strengthen their bodies. Handsome Lake explained to the people that they had forgotten their responsibilities, and that the Three Sisters were going to leave this world if the people continued in this way. The people recognized they had failed and began again to honor the Three Sisters in their ceremonies."

On their website <http://www.oneidanation.org/> tsyunhehkwa it explains that during their ceremonies they open with their Thanksgiving address:

"At that time all of creation is listening to make sure that we mention them, and provide them proper recognition. The people included the Corn, Beans, and Squash, and they have continued to stay with us," it states. "It is our responsibility to honor and acknowledge these spirits, which encourages them to continue with their appointed responsibilities."

Although they use modern farm equipment to plant the white corn of the Oneida's, Jeff explains that they hand harvest to keep the traditions alive. They braid the corn, which is another traditional process to dry the corn; weaving 65 ears together making a long braid of corn which is looped at the end. This helps the tradition process of drying the corn. "Our white corn isn't like sweet corn, it has to dry down," says Jeff. "We dry it over a few months until it bakes down to 12% moisture."

According to Jeff, their corn isn't made to eat right off of the field. It will turn to mush if cooked fresh. But it is a perfect corn to dry and store for later use. It has a very strong hull so the hard wood ash is used to open the hull up and release the nutrients when it is prepared to eat. They've had it scientifi-



cally analyzed and found that the tradition of using wood ash increases the protein availability of the corn greatly.

It's another example that traditional food is healthier than modern food. This corn, having much less starch and a higher protein content than today's sweet corn, is better for the body.

"We have a challenge on how to get the information across. It is an encouragement role," says Jeff. "We are not here to tell the people what to do but a role of advising. Most people are not interested in giving up modern foods or eating at restaurants so we suggest mixing the traditional foods in with their daily lives."

Evidence has shown over and over that humans of all races were not designed to eat processed food.

"We are doing what we can here to share this information with our community. And that includes Native and non-Native people," says Jeff. "It's important to get this information out there. There is no set order or walls, our communities include everybody."

For more information on the upcoming "Return to Your Roots" Conference, go to www.mvskokefood.org or call 918-756-5915. Jeff Metoxen can be reached at (920) 869-2141.

Return to Your Roots Symposium

(Continued from page 1)

Vicky Karhu, Co-Directors of MFSI, followed by a Traditional Message given by Muscogee Nation Supreme Court Justice Amos McNac (Mvskoke). Opening Remarks will then be given by Muscogee Nation Principal Chief A.D. Ellis (Mvskoke), followed by Muscogee Nation Second Chief Alfred Berryhill (Mvskoke) who will discuss the topic: "What does Food Sovereignty Mean for Mvskoke People?"

Additional speakers and specialists from across the United States will be speaking at the Symposium on the following topics: Southeastern Indigenous Peoples' Food History; Presentations of Muscogee Community Garden and agriculture projects from Hanna, Duck Creek, Wilson and Eufaula communities; Panel Discussion of tribal agriculture programs; Food Sovereignty Community Models: Resources for Farmers in Oklahoma; Traditional Foods for Wellness; Growing Food By and For the Community; Grassfed Beef and Sustainability; Cooking with Traditional Foods and Food Sovereignty, Traditional Foods and the Future.

A traditional meal will be prepared for the symposium participants by the Arbeka Ceremonial Ground.

The Mound Building is the large, round building located within the Muscogee Creek Nation Complex at 2951 N. Wood Drive, located on the east side of highway 75 on the north end of the city of Okmulgee, Oklahoma. Enter the second gate and park on the east side of the building. MFSI would like to give a special thanks to our co-sponsors and supporters of the symposium: The Muscogee Creek Nation, the Muscogee Creek Nation Council, Duck Creek Indian Community, Eufaula Creek Indian Community and Darrell Fox of Cartridge World, Sapulpa, Oklahoma. For more info., please call our office at 918-756-5915.

White Chili Recipe

- (1) lb. Dry Navy Beans
- (1) lb. Ground Turkey or (2 cu. of cooked turkey breast, cubed)
- (2) 4 oz. Cans Medium or Hot Green Chili Peppers, diced
- (3) Tbs. Chicken Bouillon Granules
- (2) Med. Onions, chopped
- (2) tsp. Minced Garlic
- (2) Tbs. Whole Cumin
- (4) oz. Lowfat Monterey Jack Cheese, shredded (optional)

Parboil and soak beans the night before using. Drain and cover with fresh water and simmer until just tender. Brown ground turkey, drain and add to beans in a crockpot with 1 can of chili peppers, bouillon, onion, garlic and cumin. Stir, cover and cook on low for several hours. Taste and add more chili peppers 1 Tbs. at a time if more "heat" is desired. (Freeze leftover peppers for later use.) Serve hot topped with cheese. Serves 12

Nutrition Information per Serving: 241 calories; 28 g. carbohydrates; 20 g. protein; 6 g. fat; 31 mg. cholesterol; 4 g. fiber.

Return to Your Roots Sovereignty Symposium

Schedule of Events

Friday, March 20, 2009

1:00 PM – Welcome – Ben Yahola (Mvskoke) and Vicky Karhu, Co-Directors of MFSI

Traditional Message – Muscogee Nation Supreme Court Justice Amos McNac (Mvskoke),

1:15 PM - Opening Remarks – Muscogee Nation Principal Chief A.D. Ellis (Mvskoke)

1:30 PM - "What does Food Sovereignty mean for Mvskoke People?" – Muscogee Nation Second Chief Alfred Berryhill (Mvskoke)

1:45 PM - "Southeastern Indigenous Peoples' Food History" – Steven Bond (Chickasaw), Ethnobotanist and Ecologist for the Chickasaw Nation, Kent Sammann (Kiowa), Traditional Corn Specialist and Henry Washburn (Euchee Elder) with Adam Long (Euchee)

3:00 PM Door prizes and Break

3:15 PM - Presentations of Muscogee Community Garden and agriculture projects from Hanna, Duck Creek, Wilson and Eufaula communities

3:45 PM - Panel Discussion of tribal agriculture programs. Steven Bond, Chickasaw Nation, Randall Ware, Kiowa Nation, Jeff Metoxen, Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, Rupert Nowlin, Cheyenne-Arapaho Nations

4:45 Door prizes and Adjourn

Saturday, March 21, 2009

9:00 AM - "Food Sovereignty Community Models" – Pati Martinson (Lakota), Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Taos, New Mexico

10:00 AM - Resources for Farmers in Oklahoma - Micah Anderson, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Alan Ware OSU

10:30 Break

10:45 AM - "Traditional Foods for Wellness" – Liz Gore, American Indian and Minority Health Initiative and Native American Times and Darel Collins, Naturopathic Doctor and Owner of the Nutrition Shoppe, Okmulgee

Noon –Door prizes and Traditional Meal for symposium participants prepared by Arbeka Ceremonial Ground

1:30 PM – "Growing Food By and For the Community" Lillian Hill (Hopi), Hopi Tutskwa Permaculture

2:15 PM – "Grassfed Beef and Sustainability" Rupert Nowlin (Cheyenne-Arapaho)

2:40 PM – "Cooking With Traditional Foods" Melissa Harjo-Moffet (Mvskoke)

3:00 PM – Break

3:15 PM – "Food Sovereignty, Traditional Foods and the Future" Jeff Metoxen, Steven Bond, Euneika Rogers-Sipp, Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network, Ben Yahola

4:00 PM- Door prizes, grand prize and Adjourn.

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative

208 West 6th Street
Okmulgee, OK 74447

Community Calendar of Events

Feb. 10th - “Made in Oklahoma” networking event. By the Oklahoma Dept. of Agritourism. Location: Woods & Waters Winery, Anadarko, Ok. Please contact abby.cash@oda.state.ok.us .

March 5 thru Sept. 24 - Grape Management Course by OSU. Location: At the Cimarron Valley Research Station in Perkins, OK. For Info: Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404 or e-mail stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu.

March 7—Workshop for Ornamental Fish Pond Hobbyists, Professionals, and Commercial Aquaculturists. To provide educational and collaborative opportunities for enthusiasts, producers and researchers. Located in the Research, Education and Extension Complex located on the main campus of Langston University, Langston, Ok. Info: Mr. George Luker, 405-466-6104.

March 16th— “Soil Testing, Soil Science,” Speaker Doug Maxey, OSU Ag. Ext. Service, Okmulgee Co. Time: 6:00 at the MFSI Office.

March 20 & 21st—“Return to Your Roots Food Sovereignty Symposium”. Hosted by MFSI. To be held at the Mound Auditorium, Muscogee (Creek) Nation. (see page 5 for details.

March 24—Okmulgee Grass-Roots Producers’ Alliance meeting. Making plans for 2009 Okmulgee Farmers’ Market. Meeting time: 6:30. Location: MFSI Offices. Info: 918-470-3819.

April 8—Sustainable Black Berry Class. OSU Cimarron Valley Research Station, 10820 S. Jarot, Perkins, OK. Registration \$25. For info call Steph at 405-744-5404 or e-mail her at Stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu

April 11—Container Planting & Cool Weather Crop Planting. Speaker: George Driever, Area Pest Management Specialist from OSU Extension Service.

Volunteers needed!!!

We need volunteers to help with hospitality for the Return to Your Roots Symposium on March 20-21st.

All volunteers will receive a free T-shirt.

Call 918-756-5915 to register.

Must register by March 7th so we can order your shirt.

After hours, call Vicky: 918-470-3819 to register.

MVTO