

MFSI News

Hiyuce Little Harvest July 2007

MFSI's Mvskoke Food Heritage Documentary project

MFSI has received a First Nation's Development Institute grant for a new project. MFSI will use FNDI funds to document the food heritage of the Mvskoke people. MFSI staff will recruit high school youth and train them in video production. Youth participants will select film topics and interview an elder relative, to record their knowledge of food cultivation, harvest and storage practices and other subjects. Eight months of the project will involve documentary work; in the final quarter, MFSI will hold a film festival to premiere the young filmmakers' work. If you wish to suggest a young person as a potential participant, please contact MFSI.

MFSI and MCN's Diabetes Summit

On May 31st and June 1st the MCN Diabetes Program hosted the First Annual Muscogee (Creek) Nation Citizens' Diabetes Awareness Summit at First Baptist Church in Okmulgee. MFSI was proud to be involved with this landmark event and commends the sponsors, presenters and participants for bringing an abundance of valuable information together for the two-day summit.

MFSI had a display table featuring seeds of traditional foods along with live plants, to inspire attendees to plant a garden this summer. MFSI Board members June Thomas and Rebecca Lindsey were at the table, along with Executive Director Vicky Karhu and Projects Director Richard Anderson, to provide information about MFSI's work. We had a lot of interest in the display items and many people took advantage of an offer to receive free vegetable seeds.

Vicky Karhu was a Summit presenter, with the topic "The Benefits of Traditional Foods". She presented a slide show depicting various foods and preparation methods that predated European contact. Health benefits and nutritional values of traditional foods were also discussed. Workshop attendees provided anecdotes about the foods and family traditions. Everyone agreed they learned a lot and want to continue studying the good foods that sustained and nourished the Mvskoke people for centuries, and can still be grown and included in diets today.

The 2007 Diabetes Summit was well organized and an information packed experience for all in attendance. We look forward to the 2008 event.

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative

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MFSI Board of Directors

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June Thomas
Ben Yahola

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Emman Spain – MCN Cultural Preservation

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Yvette Wiley – MCN Environmental Services

Steve Wilson – National Indian Council on Aging

Donna Williams –MFSI Secretary/Treasurer

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Lester Ligons – USDA/NRCS Tribal Liaison

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Staff

Executive Director - Vicky Karhu

Projects Director-Richard Anderson

A majority of the Board, Advisory Committee, Ex Officio and staff are Muscogee (Creek) citizens.

Six Reasons for Supporting Farmers Markets by Richard Anderson

One-to obtain more nutrient value from your vegetables. Your likelihood of purchasing vegetables picked that morning, or the day before, is much greater when you patronize farmers market products. Most studies about food costs agree that food travels an average of 1500 miles to make it to your grocer's shelves. For vegetables that begin dying the moment they are picked, to survive that journey, they are picked green, then sprayed, gassed or otherwise treated. The normal rinsing, cooking and handling that takes place further reduces the vegetable item's original nutrient value. Nutritious foods typically taste much better than their low nutrient counterparts.

Two-reduce the fuel costs related to your food budget. The real costs of so-called "cheap" food will be the subject of a future newsletter article. However, even in the context of this discussion, and as follow-up to reason **One** mentioned above, purchasing more of your vegetables locally can help limit your family's impact on the environment. The fuel costs and "carbon footprint" caused by your farmers market food purchases are minimal compared to the costs of the 1500 mile "ride" your food typically takes.

Three-promotes genetic diversity and slows the spread of *GMO/GE* products. Purchasing farmers market produce means you may be purchasing items harvested from heirloom seeds passed down through generations of growers and gardeners. Conversely, buying conventional produce often means supporting corporate megafarms, where unnatural, *GMO* plant varieties have been developed and are cultivated on a large scale. The sheer number of vegetable varieties has been drastically reduced since 1900, making limited, existing varieties vulnerable to pest and disease events.

Four-it provides a local economic benefit. Purchasing farmers market products enables growers and their families to provide part-time, if not full-time income. Supporting local food production in this way also provides a local, economic "multiplier" benefit through your expenditures. Farmland, open spaces and "undeveloped" acreages cost taxpayers less than residential areas. This fact is borne out by studies that show residential development costs governments \$1.17 in services for every \$1.00 they generate. Farms and agricultural properties do not create the same burden for taxpayers; typically, they cost governments only 34¢ in services for each \$1.00 they generate in revenues.

Five-your local purchases make it more likely you can "know" your food, as many unknowns characterize the modern American food supply. Labeling laws do not require that foods identify their country of origin, which increases the possibility of banned pesticides/herbicides making their way into your food. Likewise, food lobbyists have successfully shielded processed food ingredients from being detailed on American food labels. Typically, only ingredients that create known allergic reactions are specified. The likelihood that you can talk to the grower of your food is possible when you patronize a farmers market, making it possible to learn details about the conventional or organic methods used to produce the food.

Six-it provides an environmental benefit. Supporting farmers markets makes it possible that green space and agricultural acreages may be preserved in your county. This type of land use makes it possible to slow global warming, countering the environmental "hit" caused by residential or commercial development. Wildlife, birds and beneficial insects all retain valuable habitat.


 **Okmulgee Farmers' Market, Fridays 10:00—2:00 on the Creek Council House Lawn** 


Indigenous Food of the Month: Squash by Vicky Karhu

When we think of squash the first image that comes to mind is usually the yellow straight-neck variety that is readily available in the grocery stores. This summer variety is a smooth skinned hybrid favored by most consumers. The more traditional variety, yellow crookneck, has a bumpy surface and a curved "neck" and is usually more flavorful. Other well-known squashes are the zucchini and patty-pan which are harvested with an edible soft skin. Winter squashes, such as butternut and acorn, are left on the vines until the skin is hard and can be stored for several months to use during the winter.

Both summer and winter squashes are easy to grow and have been a staple in the diets of all Indigenous peoples of the Americas for over 7000 years. When planted as part of the "Three Sisters" method the squash vines provide shade to cool the roots and leaf surfaces to collect dew to help water the two other sisters, beans and corn. Summer squashes mature quickly providing food within five weeks of planting the seeds. It is possible to get 3-4 plantings of summer squash in our climate and seeds should be succession planted every two weeks through August for continuous supply. Seeds may be planted in rows spaced two feet apart or hills spaced three feet apart and three to four plants per hill. Squash likes fertile soil that will retain water. It should be mulched to keep the roots moist and to hold back weeds that compete for soil nutrients. Squash leaves are large and shade out weeds after the plants are 2-3 weeks old.

Enemies of squash include the squash bug, vine borer, cucumber beetle and several types of fungal diseases. The best control for insects is to remove them as they appear (commercial organic farmers have devised vacuum systems for this task) and smash the eggs. Insects are hard to control without resorting to chemical pesticides that also kill the bees necessary for pollination. Be prepared for loss by succession planting so

that new ones will be ready to replace those lost to pests. Always rotate your squash rows/hills on a three-year rotation plan so that it is not planted in the same soil year after year.

The best defense against fungal diseases is to have well-fertilized, correctly spaced (for optimal air circulation) and healthy plants that resist disease. Always water in the morning or during the day; watering in the evenings, especially in humid weather, causes leaves to remain wet all night promoting conditions that cause fungal growth. There is no cure for fungus. Infected plants should be swiftly removed from the garden; dispose of them before the disease spreads to neighboring plants. Disease is spread by insects and direct contact with healthy plants. Do not touch healthy plants after removing sick plants until washing your hands with soap and water.

All squash contains Vitamin C, anti-oxidants and beta-carotene; darker colored winter varieties have more nutritional value than the lighter summer squashes. All supply abundant fiber and can be prepared in many delicious ways.

Old Fashioned Squash Casserole

Can be prepared with yellow crook or straight neck, zucchini or patty pans.

4 cups squash cut into bite-size chunks

1 onion chopped into large chunks

3 tablespoons butter

1 egg

1 pack crackers

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk

salt and pepper to taste

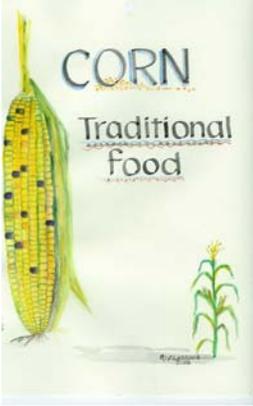
Sautee squash and onions in butter until onions are opaque. Season to taste. Cover bottom of 2-quart casserole dish with cracker crumbs. Add egg to hot squash mixture and stir. Pour over crumbs and sprinkle a light layer of crumbs on top. Pour in milk on top of everything until it is almost level with the top of the mix. Bake in 400-degree oven for 15 or 20 minutes or until bubbling and the top is turning golden brown.

Good served hot or as cold leftovers.

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative

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Calendar of Events

July 14, 4:00 to 6:00 pm, Organic Gardening class taught by Robert Stelle, owner of Sunrise Acres in Blanchard, OK. Title: **Organic Gardening: This Fall & Next Spring.** Robert & Barbara Stelle of Sunrise Acres, a certified organic farm, are willing to share their knowledge and growing experiences with you. Topics covered will be: planning, planting, maintaining and harvesting using natural and organic techniques. Come to the class armed with your questions..



WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO WORK ON OUR DOCUMENTARY FILM PROJECT?

Call 918-756-5915 with ideas, Elders to interview or young people to work on the production team.



**VISIT US AT THE MARKET ON MAIN
OKMULGEE FARMERS MARKET
10:00 am-2:00 pm EVERY FRIDAY
CREEK COUNCIL HOUSE LAWN**

