

# MFSI Newsletter

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

Otowoskrakko (Big Chestnut Month) Mvskoke  
yash'aTEnA zAfa (Leaf Browning Month) yUjEhLA  
October Issue 4 Volume 8

## Food of the Month: Pumpkin

AN INDIAN PUMPKIN STORY

by Rita Williams

October is upon us with the coming of fall. This is my favorite season of the year and just like clockwork, fond memories start to fill my soul again. The crisp cool mornings with the bright sun shining down to give us warmth seems to energize the spirit for the long winter to come. I always remember at this time when schools used to let out for two weeks for students to help farmers harvest the last of their crop. Cotton, maize, peanuts, etc., were picked clean from the fields. What was left the crows ate. If there was any time you heard something, it was them.

Today many people associate this month with Halloween, costumes, carnivals, spook houses, and pumpkin carving. Halloween evolved partly as a tradition of the Celtics as all Hallows Eve.

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MFSI extends our deepest condolences to the family of Jackson Barnett (MFSI Board Member)

### *Did You Know...*

Pumpkin is a squash and is from the Cucurbita family that includes squash and cucumbers.

One cup of pumpkin puree contains: 80 Calories, Carbohydrates-19 grams, Cholesterol-0, Fat-less than 1 gram, Potassium-588 milligrams, Protein-2.4 grams, Vitamin A-310% of RDA, Vitamin C-20% of RDA.

Pumpkins are 90% water. They are low in fat, low in calories, loaded with vitamins and just plain good.

## Rancher of the Month: Jim Bill Dodson

LONGHORN RANCHER RECALLS DUST BOWL

by Rita Williams

Jim Bill Dodson was about 7 or 8 years old during the time of the dust bowl. He was born and raised in the panhandle of Perryton, Texas where his father and grandfather ranched, farmed and hauled freight wagons.

The 1930s "Dust Bowl Days" also known as the "Dirty Thirties" was a decade of extreme blizzards, tornadoes, floods, droughts and dirt storms to Cimmaron County. Those who stayed to weather the storms were dealt every possible blow that mother nature could throw. They came through three years of record breaking drought and the worst dirt storm ever that is now called, "Black Sunday." On Sunday, April 15, 1935 the sun was shining and it was going to be a good day, so they thought. Then suddenly a large black cloud of dirt roared with thunder in the sky landing one of the worst

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## MFSI Information

### MFSI

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www.mvsokofood.org

### MFSI Mission Statement

Mvsoko Food Sovereignty Initiative works to enable the Mvsoko 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.

### Office Hours

Tuesday -Friday  
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

### Staff

Vicky Karhu and  
Ben Yahola (Mvsoko)  
Co-Directors

Dacey Barnett (Mvsoko)  
Office Manager

Freda Wyatt (Mvsoko)  
Community Coordinator

Rita Williams (Mvsoko)  
Community Educator

Adam Recvlohe (Mvsoko)  
Youth Coordinator

Anthony (Chako) Ciocco  
(Mvsoko)  
Communications  
Coordinator

## Food of the Month: Pumpkin Continued...

In ancient times they carved turnips and rutabagas from which pumpkin carvings have evolved.

Pumpkins are believed to have originated in Central America and some related plants have been found in Mexico dating back over 7000 years to 5500 B.C. During the early 1800s it was discovered that the Seminoles of Florida were raising pumpkins and would plant them beneath large oak trees. The vines would climb the tree and vine out on the limbs so that the pumpkins would hang down like a huge squash. The reason they did this was to keep the animals from eating them. Pumpkins are another staple used in the Native American diet. Not only did they use it cooking but they would dry the shells and cut strips to weave into mats.

### **Pumpkins in Creek County**

I have not met a Creek yet that does not know about cooking pumpkins. But if you ask them have they eaten pumpkin yet, many will say, no I can't find any. Usually Creeks know where you can find pumpkins, salt meat, purple hulls, sofke corn, etc., We are encouraging people to grow Indian pumpkins around Creek country and Sofke corn so it won't be lost to us. It's not hard to do, save your seeds (pumpkin) and plant them out your back door or just give us a call here at MFSI and we will share with you on preservation of seeds and planting.

Recently the Okmulgee Elderly Nutrition Center held a fall festival with a farmers market and people selling crafts. The nutrition program had many calls for cooking pumpkins. Barton Williams brought his pumpkins and purple hull peas. Needless to say the purple hulls went fast and the pumpkins did too. Wonder why we love it so much this time of year? The love of pumpkin still lives on..



Okmulgee Elderly Nutrition  
Center

## Recipe of the Month: Fried Pumpkin Blossoms

### Fried Pumpkin Blossoms

#### **Ingredients:**

1 Dozen Pumpkin Blossoms  
3 Eggs  
1 Dozen Saltine Crackers  
Salt to taste  
Pepper to taste  
½ Stick Margarine

#### **Preparation Directions:**

1. Crush crackers and place in a shallow bowl.

2. Add salt and pepper to taste.  
3. Scramble eggs in a second bowl.  
4. Dredge pumpkin blossoms gently in egg batter, then into the cracker crumbs.  
5. The flowers are tender, so it is better to set the blossom in the cracker bowl and pat on the crumbs. Turn over and repeat.  
6. Place directly into a frying pan with margarine or vegetable oil.  
7. Cook until slightly brown.  
8. Remove from pan and place on a paper towel to drain.

## Rancher of the Month Continued...

storms ever, so devastating was this storm that many thought it was the end of the world.



Tex's Texas Longhorn Show Bull

Jim has lived in the Wilson Community for 14 years. Around the community he is known as “Tex” a name which is fitting since he is from Texas and raises Texas longhorn cattle. “Tex is not a stranger to hard times having experienced the ‘Dust Bowl Days’ at an early age.” He remembers those times as being extremely hard on everybody.

“My dad had a rope tied from the house to the barn to the sheds so we could feel where we were going. The dust was so bad and thick you could hardly see in front of yourself. The dirt would form a drift along side of the house, barn, and shed about 5 ft. tall and where fence posts were you could barely see the tops. The dust wind literally cut our wheat off to the bare soil. When we milked our cow we had to cover the bucket real fast with a cloth to keep the dirt out.”

As he talked about the “Dust Bowl Days” he recalls a time that he says he will never forget: “My Dad raised cattle, well times were so hard that the government was buying out cattle from the ranchers and taking them to slaughter. I remember going with my Dad and Grandfather to haul the cows to slaughter. That was a sad time for me, If I ever remembered anything this is the one I will always remember.”

“We still attended school during these times. My teacher had a car and would pick me and brother up from home. We had to wear masks at school and wore them at home when we slept. During this time my uncles had come to live with us and I remember them having to sweep out the attic every day so the ceiling wouldn’t fall in.”

After graduating from school he joined the army then returned home to continue farming and irrigating with his father. Later he ventured into buying Texas Longhorns and shared with me about the nature of the longhorns. “They are independent, don’t require much feeding, easy to handle, once you teach them they don’t forget, they can live up to 25 years and its exciting to see when they are born because you don’t know what color you will get. To top it off the meat is good and lean, low in cholesterol. Once you eat their meat you won’t want another kind.”

Tex has shown many of his Texas Longhorn Cows and Bulls, and has won many awards but his most accomplished awards was his bulls winning in their category in the “All Age Grand Champion Bulls.” One championship was in 2003 at Louisville, Kentucky and winning another championship in 2004 at Glenrose, Texas. These are the only two to have won this elite championship.

When asked about the differences today in youth and cattle Tex spoke straight to the point. “I believe some of the older ones are forgetting about the younger ones, a lot of the industry is going away, it’s a plain fact that ranchers are not making money today and if we don’t get our young people interested in cattle and ranching it’s going away, simple as that. I have seen the young being neglected when it comes to parents spending time with their children. It’s easy to give them money and say, ‘here go to town.’ But it all goes back to the parents. Children will do what they see their parents do. I remember the story of my grandparents when they moved from Jacksboro. We lived in a dugout until the fleas ran them out, then they built a two room house.”

The times his parents and grandparents lived through were the Great Depression and Dust Bowl Days of which he experienced. Many farmers and ranchers picked up their families and moved out of state, just giving up fighting the land. Those that stayed would learn a new way to conserve the land and prevent the devastation caused by loosened soil. They learned a new way to rotate, farm, plant and protect soil. I wonder if this climate change were to repeat itself today would we survive? We better pray it doesn’t.

# “INDIGENOUS SOLUTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE” with a Focus on Indigenous Women’s Roles

by Freda Wyatt

On July 19th-31st my son Ace and I attended a two week extensive hands on training in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The hands on training covered topics on indigenous sustainable traditional knowledge, and wisdom. “Putting the traditional wisdom, knowledge of our elders and ancestors into actions.” Other topics covered were women in agriculture, traditional agriculture, organic agriculture, seed saving, natural healing and traditional foods.

The workshop consisted of a full day agenda which taught how to use these disciplined methods and integrate them into a sustainable living system. We toured the home of Roxanne Swentzell who is Santa Clara Pueblo and lives on the Santa Clara reservation. Her home was designed as an experiment in sustainable living systems.

Roxanne built her home in a shed where there are no

trees, no plants, no animals, just pounded down dirt and lots of ants. Her house has adobe walls with lots of trees and bushes. They use manure and straw to build up their soil and let their turkeys and chickens roam the yard for fertilizer. She built a cold frame onto the house with a cover to keep it warm in the winter and grew greens year around. Straw mulch is used in places that need to be moist which keeps the soil from drying out. Roxanne would also use bath tub water and having it to run down into a swell, watering the plants. The run-off water from the house seeps into rock-filled ditches, so it doesn’t escape into the driveway. What once was barren ground is quite alive today.

*“Putting the traditional wisdom and knowledge of our elders and ancestors into actions.”*

We also toured a rural garden that was worked by four Native American women. A meal was prepared by one of these ladies in an outdoor kitchen where vegetables and fruits are brought from the garden. After dinner we heard a panel of mothers, grandmothers, cooks, farmers and others. Most of the panel echoed the same sentiment... that we need to teach our young the value of hard work in farming and gardening.

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## “Roasting Chestnuts Over an Open Fire...”

by Adam Recvlohe

Fall is already underway with the cold weather and changing of the colors. Traditionally, Mvs-koke Peoples would be gathering chestnuts this past and present month to prepare for the winter, hence the names Otowoskoce and Otowoskv Rakko, known as Little and Big Chestnut Months.

Times have changed, however, and for the past 50 years chestnut trees have been on the decline due to a fungus which attacks the stalk causing them to split. Some researchers believe the fungus came from overseas, either China or Japan, from a chestnut tree of the Asian variety sometime around the turn of century. This type of



chestnut tree was the carrier of the fungus but the difference was that these varieties were more resistant and immune.

Over the next half century millions and millions of chestnut trees would suc-

cumb to the fungus and overtime our landscape would drastically change. As we sit around and listen to old Christmas car-

ols about roasting chestnuts over an open fire, one should ask, “can we roast chestnuts over an open fire?” Many organizations now are working to revitalize the chestnut tree population through a genetic crossing of Asian and American chestnut varieties for the tree to have both qualities, to be resistant to the fungus but also adaptable to the environment. Hopefully the time will come again when we can gather chestnuts during Otowoskv Rakko.

# Este Menettvlke Emponvkv

## Youth Speaks

Hompetvn Estè Cate Emvponicv  
(Language of Food)

by Adam Recvlohe

After studying and working towards fluency the past three years in the Yuchi Language I am now turning my attention to Mvskoke. Being comfortable speaking Yuchi I am at a point where I feel that I can begin to learn another. The time spent working on the language, and now working with MFSI, I have always understood there to be a strong connection between language and food. Language is born out of a way of life, a day to day rhythm, that encompasses the people and all that surrounds them. This includes particular plants which are incorporated into the diet. Eventually certain plants become staple foods which become an important expression of the culture. Therefore a people come up with words, in the language, that describe or name these particular plants and foods that are key to day to day life. In Yuchi and Creek, there are words for lambs quarters (gOb@nd@^ wAchEkO/tahwv), poke salad (shw'@^/osa) and wild onions (zOT'E s'E/tafvmp). Once a part of the normal diet for Yuchi and Mvskoke Peoples have now lost significance in a world that

can provide food not for, but without thought. There is no thought of where the food comes from, how the animal or plant was treated, whether there is any shred of integrity involved in the production or manufacturing process. What is most concerning is the lack of knowledge and also the words for some of these plants that our cultures thrived on. I too am ignorant about most of these plants as well. When to eat them, how to harvest them, what they look like, where to find them. Trees as well, once a significant source of medicine, have lost all of their value in these modern times because we have not been taught their many uses. There is more to learning a language than to take what one wants to say in English and translating. There is a way of life, a rhythm, inherent in the language which is expressed in the words we use to describe our environment. We may not get to retrieve all of the knowledge that the elders have, but what we can work towards passing on as much as we can now. Food and Language, both are an expression of who we are as a people. Without them who would we be?

*“Food and Language, both are an expression of who we are as a people, without them who would we be?”*

Come and submit your children's artwork in what hundreds of children have already participated in....



### YOUTH ART CONTEST

Categories and Prizes:

Child (6 years & under)

1st- \$20

2nd- \$15

3rd- \$10

Youth (Ages 7-11)

1st- \$50

2nd- \$30

3rd- \$20

Teen (Ages 12-18)

1st- \$200

2nd- \$125

3rd- \$75

Adult (Ages 19-21)

1st- \$300

2nd- \$200

3rd- \$155

### Contest Rules:

1) Draw, paint, photograph, or otherwise create a piece of art (8 1/2" x 11" or 11" x 17") showing the spiritual and physical benefits of traditional Mvskoke foods and games.

2) One submission per person.

3) All submissions due 9 am November 3rd.

4) Artists (or parents) must sign a release form for MFSI to use art.

Send art via e-mail, mail, or drop-off to:  
MFSI 208 West 6th Street  
Okmulgee, OK 74447  
info@mvsokokefood.org

Winners announced Nov. 6th in Okmulgee. Winners will be contacted by phone or email.

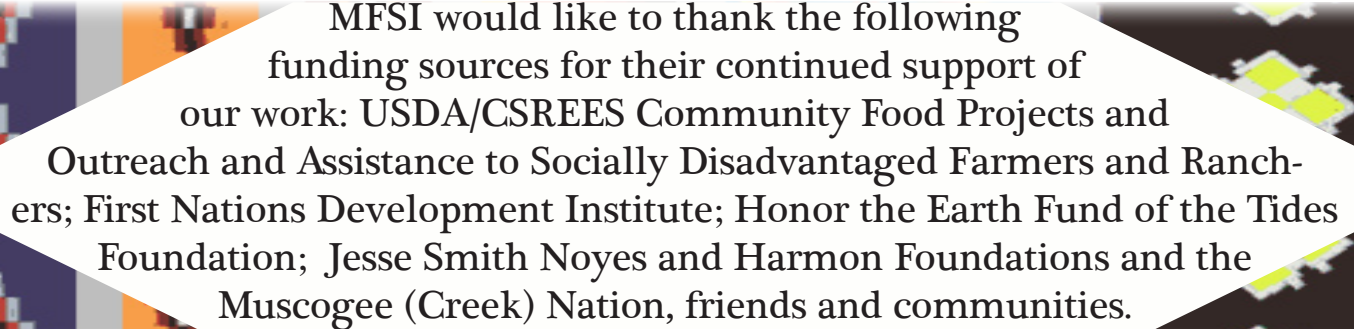
To see the flyer in a larger format go to:  
[www.mvsokokefood.org/ArtContestFlyer.pdf](http://www.mvsokokefood.org/ArtContestFlyer.pdf)

# Calendar

**JANUARY 8TH AND 9TH 2010-** Horticulture Industries Shows, TTC North Campus Great Information for area food production. Register at [http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/pdf/exhibitor\\_registration.pdf](http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/pdf/exhibitor_registration.pdf)

**JANUARY 20-23, 2010-** Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Annual Conference in Chatanooga Tennessee. Call MFSI if you are interested in carpooling to this conference.

**JANUARY 23, 2010-** Breakout Session at SSAWG Conference “Native Food Sovereignty” – What is food sovereignty? How is it different from food security? Take a look at the history of food interaction between Native and non-Native people in the Southeastern United States. Learn about what is being done today in Oklahoma to ensure food sovereignty for Indigenous people, and what non-Native people can do to work on this issue. Vicky Karhu and Ben Yahola, Mvskoke



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