ZUNI

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Dowa Yalanne (Corn Mountain)
PREPARED FOODS

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BLUE CORN BREADS (MUK’YABA:WE)

There are several variations of blue corn bread in Zuni. The dough can be shaped into patties (muk’yalvæwæ) or into blue marbles (muk’yálvæza). The blue corn meal mush is also wrapped in corn husks. These are called chu’tsva:ce.

Blue corn bread is usually made in the winter time. One belief is that if it is eaten in the summer, hail may come and destroy the crops. Another belief is that it should only be made and eaten in the morning as it might cause sickness if eaten in the afternoon. However, many Zunis make and eat it any time of the day with no harmful effects.

To prepare blue corn bread patties (muk’yalvæ:we), take the blue corn off the cob and grind it to a coarse texture with a hand grinder. This is sifted, but does not need to be toasted. Next, boil 6 cups of water before making the dough.

To make the dough, use several cups of blue corn meal, baking powder and water. Limestone ashes (adæza) may be used instead of baking powder. These ashes help the corn mush turn blue. Baking powder produces a light green color. Ashes from the chamisa brush, corn cobs, or cedar can be substituted for limestone. The amount of ingredients can be increased or decreased depending on the size of the family.

When the color of the dough turns blue-gray, shape it into thick cakes about 2 inches in diameter. These are then put into the pot of boiling water and boiled for 45 minutes, or until it becomes thick like mush.

Blue marbles (muk’yalvæza) are made from corn which has been roasted or heated in the oven until it is lightly browned and cooked. Then it is ground to a fine consistency either on a hand grinder or with a hand grinding stone. Limestone ashes (adæza) and water are added to form a stiff dough which is then shaped into marble-sized balls. These are dusted with blue corn meal and dropped into a pot of boiling water. They are boiled only a short time because the corn has been pre-roasted. The liquid or juice (P’ya:va:we) remaining after boiling either the patties or the blue marbles is saved to drink when they are eaten.

To make blue corn bread wrapped in corn husks (chu’tsva:ce), soak ashes in water until they dissolve. Then strain out any remaining lumps. The raw blue corn kernels are boiled in 2 or 3 quarts of the ash water for about 20 minutes or until the skin or covering on the corn comes loose. The corn is then washed thoroughly, strained and rinsed until all the ashes and skins are removed from the corn. The corn is soaked in clear water and strained again. Next, it is ground while still wet and used immediately to make chu’tsva:ce.

A layer of this cooked mush about 1/2 inch thick is put on a wet corn husk and tied up in a slender bundle the same length as a tamale. These bundles are then boiled until the corn husks soften. They can be eaten fresh or reheated.

Blue corn bread is tasty with onions, tomatoes, cilantro, or mixed with green chile and salt (k’ya:kh’ê:zæme) in stew bowls. It makes a filling meal when eaten with jerky or other traditional foods. Blue corn bread was and is still very popular in some families to this day. It is considered one of the delicacies among the traditional foods of Zuni.

CORINA LAIWAKETE
GRADE 12

CHILE STEW (K’YAWAHOW:WE)

Traditionally, chile stew is eaten during Shalako’s time, night dances, initiation time or anytime during the year.

In ancient times when there were no wood stoves, stew was cooked with hot stones. A stone which had been heated in open fire would be added to the pot of food being prepared. At least two stones had to be used. When the one in the pot cooled off, another heated stone was added. The stones would be alternated until the stew was cooked. This method was very time consuming.

Special cooking pots were designed for cooking over the open fire. Their clay construction was much thicker and heavier to withstand the heat.

When cast iron pots became available, chile stew was cooked over an open fire in these. After the fire cooled down, the meat or jerky was fried. The water, wild onions and corn were added to the pot.

Here is how chile stew is made in Zuni today. First, set the oven at 300 degrees, or if it’s to be cooked on top of a wood stove, it should be about that same temperature. The ingredients used to make the stew are venison, mutton or beef, red or green chile, potatoes, garlic and coriander.

Cut the meat into cubes and fry or boil it. For a family of six use 3 to 3-1/2 pounds of meat. Now fill a 2-gallon pot about half full of water and let it simmer for an hour. Then add peeled, cubed potatoes.

The chile for the stew is prepared in this manner. Roast the red or green chile 10 to 15 minutes. Then let cool for about 10 minutes. Next peel the chile, grind it, and mix it with coriander. Blend these two ingredients with a little garlic powder. Add this to the stew, and let it simmer for an hour and a half.

The smell of stew will make you hungry. It looks like any ordinary stew, but the taste is better. Hot oven bread or tortillas are excellent additions to chile stew.

SANGELITA WEEKOTTY
GRADE 11
**JERKY (SHIK'USNA:WE)**

Jerk has long been known to the Zuni people. In ancient times jerk was preserved and stored for winter use. Hunters and farmers would take jerky when they went on a hunt or were out tending their fields.

Described here is the traditional method of preparing jerky. First, the deer has to be skinned. All the meat is taken off and cut into thin slices. It is cut with the grain. Most deer meat is found on the front and hindquarters. There’s not too much meat on the rest of the body. Meat trimmed from the ribs and other bony sections is often used for posole. In the past the bones were taken to the Skull Shrine (Dowap'ya) at the base of Dowa Yalanne Mountain.

When all the meat has been cut into thin slices, it is time to hang it up. It is sprinkled with chile (dakó), with mint (masmu), or salt (małtse) to prevent spoilage while it is drying. It needs to hang until it is wrinkled and hard. The length of time varies with the weather. When it is completely dry, it is salted and eaten. The same method is used to make jerky out of mutton and beef.

Some Northwestern people use jerky for smoking like tobacco, but the Zuni people just eat it. It is also used in cooking, especially in making stew, hot tamales, and other traditional foods.

The thing I like most about making jerky is that it’s good, delicious and nutritious.

**BRIAN AHUHTTE**
**GRADE 10**

**MUTTON STEW (CHULEYA:WE)**

Mutton stew became a traditional food in Zuni after the Spanish introduced sheep (kwamwak) in 1539. Prior to 1540, a similar stew was probably made with the meat of wild game in the Zuni area such as deer, elk, and bear.

Since the introduction of mutton, the stew has developed into what we presently have, chuleya:we. Mutton stew is a traditional food during the time of Sha'la'ko, the event which highlights the Zuni calendar.

The event of Sha'la'ko, which arrives in late November or the early part of December, is a preparation for the visitation of our ancestors. All Zunis are committed and obligated to help. Refusal or reluctance to participate in the activities is in a sense to be disrespectful of our ancestors. Therefore, misfortune will come to those who refuse to comply. All family members and close relatives of a family whose house is to be blessed during the evening of Sha'la'ko must be present at the home and do what is asked of them. Mutton stew is prepared in large quantities to feed all the Sha'la'ko guests.

Ingredients needed to prepare mutton stew are 3 to 4 cups of white corn, a shoulder of mutton or a package of stew meat, cilantro (kwasloni) and red chile powder (k'i'd saz). First, place the water on the stove to boil. Then wash and peel the skin off the white corn on a metate (ak'ó). Cut the meat into cubes and add it with the white corn to the boiling water. Cook the stew for approximately 3 hours or until the meat is tender and the corn starts to open up. Add cilantro and red chile powder for flavor.

There are two main ways of cooking stew: inside on a stove, or outside in a beehive oven. If cooking inside, cook the stew slowly for at least 3 to 4 hours. Cooking outside takes a long time. Overnight cooking is preferred by older Zuni women.

A fire must be built inside the beehive oven to get it ready. Usually the hot ashes are left in the oven to cook the stew overnight. The opening is sealed with a piece of flagstone and mud in order to keep the heat from escaping. The next morning the opening is unsealed and the stew removed. Mutton stew takes much time and effort, yet makes a delicious meal.

Not only do we Zunis prepare chuleya:we for our own physical sustenance, but we constantly bear in mind our ancestors or beloved ones that have gone to their rest. Through our offerings of small amounts of chuleya:we and other traditional foods placed either in the fireplace or by the river, we nourish their existence in the spiritual world during their visitsations on big occasions such as Sha'la'ko.

**KARLA CHAVEZ**
**GRADE 12**

**PAPERBREAD (DOW HEWE)**

Paperbread is a very thin, translucent wafer bread. It can be grey in color when using blue corn, or white when using white corn. Zunis usually stack their bread flat, unlike other pueblo peoples who roll theirs up like newspaper. To many outsiders, it is commonly known as piki bread.

Paperbread is baked on a big flat stone, a sandstone that is found on the west side of Dowa Yalanne Mountain. Long ago many people owned he'ye stones, but today few people own one, so it is considered a precious item.

To prepare the stone by smoothing and shaping is a long process. It could last all day. The stone will be flat after the smoothing and shaping are finished. It is seasoned by repeated rubbings with pisto or squash or pumpkin seeds. The stone has to be hot enough for the seed and seeds to melt and be absorbed by the stone.

Every inch of the rock must be covered. In addition, it is believed that the stone should be prepared with good, positive feelings in order for the stone to come out right.

Preparation of the stone is also a time-consuming process. After the corn is harvested and shelled, it is preheated before being ground on a metate (ak'ó) and mano (tullem) or more recently with a grinding machine. It is then stored away in flour sacks for later use.

Around Sha'la'ko time, the paternal and maternal aunts announce that there will be a corn grinding ceremony (kwamwak). Ladies young and old gather at the six Sha'la'ko houses to grind blue corn to the beat of chanted songs. The chanting group is composed of men from different medicine lodges.

The ladies knead to grind using an ak'ó and jalatine. The metate is a large malpais rock with an oval groove in the center. The mano is the hand grinding stone. The number of metate stones depends on the amount of corn to be ground. When grinding is completed, the flour needed for immediate use is kept out and the rest is stored in a cool, dry place for later use.

Before the dough is mixed, a fire is built in the cookhouse. Cedar wood is always used because it produces a high temperature. This fire should be lit for the duration of cooking. The he'ye stone is supported on its ends over the fire.

Another important ingredient of paperbread is ash (ake'e) which gives the bread its blue-gray color. Ashes are prepared from a limestone rock found by the gravel pit on the road to Ojo Caliente. The ashes are obtained by a process similar to firing pottery. The rock is fired, cooled, and then soaked in water for the meal. If lime-stone ashes are not available, juniper ashes, or baking soda may be used as these have the same effects. However, if too much baking soda is added, the paperbread will have a greenish color and a bitter taste.

Now begins the process of preparing the paperbread mixture. Water and meal are cooked to a medium thick mush over moderate heat. The ashes are then added. In
another bowl, toasted corn meal is mixed with enough cold water to form a dough.

The next step is the baking of the bread. The ńwéñe stone is greased with a sheep's brain or spinal cord. Then the stone is tested with a small amount of the mixture to see if it is ready. The woman making the bread dips her fingers into the mush mixture, scoops up a quantity, and mixes it with some of the corn meal dough until it becomes the right consistency. She then spreads it quickly and lightly across the stone from right to left with her fingers. If the stone is not hot enough, the paperbread will be too thick. It only takes a few seconds before it starts peeling around the outside edges. Then it is lifted gently at the top corner and peeled off. It is stacked up flat in a basket and the next one is started.

Long ago, the young ladies began making paperbread at an early age. They were not taught, they learned by watching the older ladies. These days, not too many ladies know how to make paperbread. They depend on the older ladies to make it.

Paperbread, a traditional Zuni food, is made for the coming of the Shá'atlak's and also in late June or early July for the return of the rain dancers from their annual pilgrimage to the Zuni Heaven (Kwásalawáwa). This bread is also fed to the kachinas during dancing festivities.

Debra Natachu
Grade 12

Pumpkin Blossom Cakes
(Adeyá: ń́bałólóya)

Pumpkin blossom cakes are one of the traditional Zuni desserts. Few people know how to make them today.

Summer pumpkin blossoms (adeyáñwe) are needed. They can be picked when the blossoms first open in the middle of June or July. The winter pumpkin blossoms taste bitter. The seeds of the summer pumpkin are a little larger than Halloween pumpkin seeds.

First clean the inside of the blossoms and let them dry. In a bowl, make a fairly thick paste of blue corn meal and water. Add about 1 teaspoon of sugar if desired. Then stuff the blossom with this paste. Lay the stuffed blossom on top of a stove or a griddle heated to a moderate temperature. Put a small plate or something similar on top of each blossom to flatten it so it will cook more evenly. In the old days heavy flat rocks were used. After one side of the blossom is browned turn it over and brown the other side. When finished eat it like any cookie or cake.

Pumpkin blossom bread may be prepared by grinding dry blossoms and white corn meal together to make a paste (not too fine), adding salt or sugar as desired. This paste is then placed on corn husks like tamales and boiled in water until cooked. This blossom bread is called adeyá: ńwe.’

Debra Natachu
Grade 12

Sheep Head Preparation
(Kyane:l Oshokwinne)

In Zuni, sheep heads are prepared in the following way. When butchering, cut the sheep's head off at the throat where there is a soft spot between the joints at the back of the neck. Next, throw the head into a fire, so that the wood will burn off clear to the skin. Wash the head so that it is clean. Finally, put the head in a roaster over one-half full of water and cover the roaster.

Now there are two methods of cooking. The first is in one of the outside ovens, which is most often used to bake bread. Build a fire for some hot charcoal, gather it around the roaster, and cover the door with a flat stone. Place some mud mortar around the door, so that no heat escapes. Leave the roaster in for about 10 hours. Some people leave it in overnight for a slow cook before a big event. The second method of cooking is by digging a pit in the ground, and building a fire in it. After that, the roaster is set in the middle of the coals and covered with the remaining charcoal. Both methods are excellent for steam cooking the sheep's head and other parts of a sheep, such as stomach sausage (tewábalone) and stew (tsuñeyámc).

Debra Natachu
Grade 12

Tamales
(K'ola muwe)

The origin of tamales (k'ola muwe) is not known. They may be derived from the Mexicans or Spanish. In Zuni, tamales are considered a ceremonial dish and used as traditional meal offerings. Tamales are prepared during night dances, at Shá'atlak's or any other big occasion, but they are popular year round.

The ingredients needed for tamales are pork, mutton, or beef stew meat (shíh'ábume zee), onions (makkawáwi), chili powder (k'ővéi), salt (naz, k'one), shortening (cháme, zo), white corn (ńk'ebace, chwe), hominy (cháme:ńńk'ebac, k'we), blue corn (cháme, k'ëlna) or corn flour (ńwe' vene), corn husks (ńwe’) and coriander (búuká-wa).

The first step in making tamales is preparation of the blue corn (ńk'ë'kwa). Boil the corn with sifted ashes until it is tender and the covering of the corn peels off easily. Wash it thoroughly to remove all the ashes. Then grind it in a hand grinder until it becomes medium fine and turns into corn flour (ńwe' vene). It may also be ground with a metate (ńk'ë) and mano (yatlone).

Debra Natachu
Grade 12

Zuni Plants

Robin Glascocok
Grade 10

Zuni Plants

Zuni Plants

Zini Plants

Zuni Plants

Zuni Plants
Tortillas (Hebachiwe)

Tortillas, brought to Zuni by the Spanish, have been almost a staple in the Zuni diet for over a hundred years. Salt tortillas (ki'w hebachiwe) were described in Zuni Breadmaking by Frank Hamilton Cushing in the late 1800s. He stated that very finely ground white corn or wheat was mixed with yeast to make a stiff dough. Balls of this dough were then flattened out on a smooth stone or counter. Before baking, the women used the tips of their fingers to make indentations on each side of these thin cakes. As they were baked on a hot stone or griddle they were turned often until well browned on both sides.

Today, ingredients used for tortillas are flour, salt, baking powder, lard, and water. Also needed are a large bowl, a rolling pin and a stove. First, pour 4-1/2 cups flour in a large mixing bowl. Mix in 1 teaspoon of salt and 2 tablespoons of baking powder. Add 1/4 cup lard and warm water.

Stir all these ingredients together until they form a dough. Then cover the dough with a cloth and let it rest for a few minutes. Now the dough is ready to shape into little round balls. A rolling pin is used to roll out the dough into flat, thin, circular shapes. Long ago, women used an ear of corn for a rolling pin.

To cook a tortilla, place it on the stove or griddle until it puffs up. Then turn it over and let it bake until both sides are done. Stack them on a plate and keep them warm until ready to eat. In Zuni, young men are warned by women not to pick the last cooked tortilla from the top of the stack. If the young man goes into the armed forces, he might get shot or wounded by the enemy.

Tortillas look like round, flat frisbees. They are white and have brown spots on them from cooking on the stove. They smell and taste good and are used with any type of meal. They are especially good with beans. In Zuni, they are used in many of our religious activities like the give-away dances.

Edmund She lendewa
Grade 12

Zuni Bread (Dowa mu’le, mulonne)

Zuni bread is always served on special occasions such as Sha’lako, night dances, give-aways, and other ceremonials, as well as for everyday meals. Our Zuni elders are more accustomed to eating traditional bread with meals than store-bought bread.

Today, there are two different types of yeast used in Zuni bread. Long ago, Zuni cooks discovered how to produce yeast. They mixed chewed salt (a coarse corn meal) with a finer meal and warm water which was then placed in small, narrow necked pots by the hearth to ferment. To this, they added lime flour and a little salt. This yeast sourdough starter has been handed down from generation to generation. Today, it is kept fresh in the refrigerator.

Before this traditional starter can be used, it must be soaked because it dries out. Next, flour and warm water are added to make a batter. This is left in a warm place overnight. It will be ready to use in the morning.

The other way Zuni bread is made is with store-bought yeast. Ingredients needed are one or two packages of dry yeast, one big bowl of warm water, and 3 to 4 cups of flour. First, the yeast is dissolved in the warm water. Then flour must be added to make dough. The sourdough batter is placed in a small bowl and set in a warm place overnight. The next day, the batter is mixed with some flour, dry yeast, salt, warm water, and a portion of sheep tallow (shu’ bihamun). After all the ingredients are mixed, the kneading begins.

The dough has to be kneaded for about 2-1/2 hours. It is a tradition for all the women in the family to work at this together. When kneading is complete, the dough is put aside for about 2 hours to let it rise.

After the dough has risen the first time, a fire is built in the oven. Normally, old dried juniper wood is used to build a fire. It takes around 2 hours for the oven to reach the right temperature. During this time, the dough develops its sour flavor.

When the second rising is finished, portions of dough are kneaded and shaped into individual loaves: long oval shapes with one end folded back on top. These loaves look almost like golf players’ caps or the well known Ivy-league caps.

A bed is then made for the dough: a place to put the loaves while they rise again. It could be on a large cloth on a table or on the floor. After the loaves are put “to bed” they are covered with another cloth.

As the loaves rise, the oven is checked to see if it is hot enough to bake bread. To do this, a broom is made out of some juniper branches (homa-