



Key Ingredients at the Nohwike' Bagowa Museum, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Fort Apache

Key Ingredients: America by Food opened in Fort Apache at the **Nohwike' Bagowa (House of Our Footprints) Museum** on Saturday, May 7, and ran through June 19, 2011. The museum was established in 1969 as a repository for the oral histories and artifacts of cultural, historical, and artistic significance to the White Mountain Apache people.

Around 15,000 tribal members reside on over 2,600 square miles of tribal trust lands in east-central Arizona. The White Mountain Apache have lived and farmed for generations at the confluence of the North and East forks of the White River. In 1870, the U.S. Army established a military post there that would become Fort Apache, in consultation with local Apache leaders to keep the peace in the region.



The Key Ingredients banner flies outside the Commanding Officer's Quarters.



Visitors enjoy the "cheeseheads" at every host site!

The Commanding Officer's Quarters, a Victorian mansion on Officer's Row, was built in 1892 and housed visiting dignitaries from government and the military. Fort Apache became the home of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Theodore Roosevelt Indian Boarding School after the army left in 1922. **Fort Apache Historic Park** is now owned and operated by the White

Mountain Apache Tribe, and the newly-restored Commanding Officer's Quarters recently housed another visitor from Washington, D.C.: the Smithsonian's Key Ingredients exhibition.

Though the national and local exhibits opened to the public on May 7, the Grand Opening of Fort Apache's Key Ingredients project was really the following Saturday. On May 14, *Ndee La Ade'/Gathering of the People* 12th Annual Great Fort Apache Heritage Reunion featured food vendors and acorn stew tasting in addition to the **Apache Song and Dance Celebration**, Fort Apache tours, and arts and crafts demonstrations. Some of the food vendors represented a local tradition called the "Tailgate Café," where community members sell frybread and beans, green chile burritos, and Apache dumplings from their trucks or roadside tables in nearby Whiteriver.



One of the many dances performed as part of the Apache Song and Dance Celebration.



White Mountain Apache cooks serve traditional acorn stew.

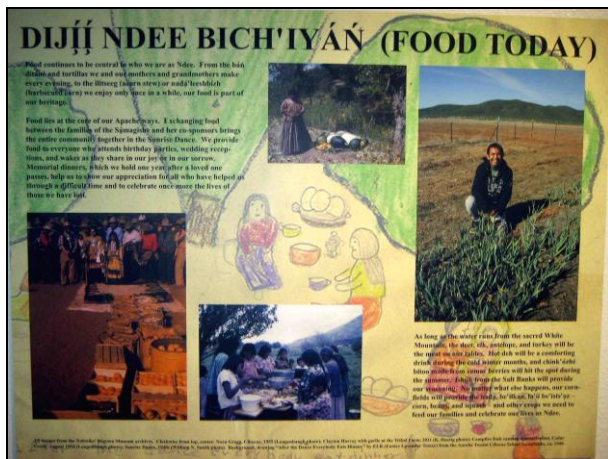
Some out-of-town visitors acted as docents for the Smithsonian exhibition during the grand opening event. A group of archaeology students from Simon Fraser University in British Columbia were doing research at Fort Apache over the summer under the direction of Dr. **John Welch**. Welch spent two decades working with the White Mountain Apaches before moving to Canada, and continues to serve as an advisor on sacred sites protection and Fort Apache National Register Historic District redevelopment.

One of Welch's PhD students, **Jennifer Lewis**, noted that most of the day's visitors to the national exhibition in the Commanding Officer's Quarters were actually nonnative people from out of the area. Attendees to Fort Apache's *Gathering of the People* were primarily White Mountain Apache tribal members, but the museum also marketed the coming of the Smithsonian to the surrounding White Mountain communities of Showlow, Pinetop, and Lakeside, which may account for the high tourist visitation to Fort Apache for this multi-event summer festival.

The local exhibit, *Ndee Bichiyan Nlt'éeé/Apache Food is Good*, was installed at the museum and will remain on display into 2012. The exhibit includes wild and cultivated Apache plant

foods, traditional food gathering and preparation tools, and historic and contemporary photographs and descriptions of traditional Apache foodways.

The exhibit also features student drawings from *Our Apache Book*, which consists of two scrapbooks of student drawings of Apache life and foodways in the 1930s and 40s. Compiled by teacher **Aurelia Tossini** at the **Cibecue Day School**, they contain the first known use of a written form of the Western Apache language in a classroom. The scrapbooks were re-discovered by the Tribe in 2002, and AHC grants have helped support their exhibition and the publication of a bilingual reader incorporating some of the drawings. A portion of the exhibit will become a traveling educational trunk for use in regional schools.



A local exhibit panel with one of the Cibecue scrapbook drawings as background.



A traditional Apache basket in the exhibit holds a variety of indigenous seeds.

The Nohwike' Bagowa Museum also held a series of Apache Arts Workshops on the Wednesdays in June. Demonstration programs on traditional food arts included workshops on Apache Burden Basket-Weaving, Apache Saddlebag-Making, and Tulapai Strainer-Making, the latter for making a beverage fermented from corn sprouts.

According to Nohwike' Bagowa Museum and KI Project Director **Karl Hoerig**, the historically devastating Wallow Fire may have kept tourists away from Fort Apache and suppressed their visitor numbers during their Key Ingredients tour stop. Despite this, staff estimate 1,800 visitors to the Smithsonian exhibition and 2,400 attendees at their local exhibit and workshops, for a total Key Ingredients visitation of 4,200 people.

Hoerig writes, "Our opening weekend of the Key Ingredients exhibit was overshadowed by the Locust Wildfire that closed the main highway through Whiteriver, blocking most of our potential visitors. Much of the rest of our run saw many fewer visitors than normal as vacationers avoided the area because of the Wallow Fire. But hosting the traveling exhibit was nevertheless a great experience for our institution, and the growth in our understanding and interpretation of traditional Apache foodways that it brought will positively impact our programming for years."