



Key Ingredients at the Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum, Topawa

The Smithsonian's traveling exhibition Key Ingredients: America By Food opened in Arizona on October 23, 2010, at the **Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum** in Topawa, a village located just south of Sells and north of the international boundary with Mexico.

Just prior to the opening, museum staff hosted the Installation Workshop for the six Arizona host sites. **Terri Cobb** from the **Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service** in Washington, D.C., showed representatives from each site how to install and care for the exhibition, and project scholar **Mary Melcher** presented on other issues related to the statewide tour.



Workshop attendees assemble the Smithsonian exhibition.



Chuck Sternberg from Oracle puts a finishing touch on an exhibit panel

Attendees enjoyed a wonderful lunch from the Desert Rain Café, a project of the **Tohono O'odham Community Action (TOCA)** in Sells that features a traditional, healthy Tohono O'odham food in every dish.

Museum staff also created an impressive companion exhibit entitled *I:da Jewed O Wud T-Ki: This Land is Our Home*, about how desert foods have played an integral role in O'odham physical and cultural survival. The goal of their exhibit, as well as of their supplementary public programs, was to help Nation members understand the history of traditional O'odham foodways and land cultivation, the recent rise of diabetes and loss of health on the Nation, and the potential for a return to healthy eating using indigenous foods.

Topawa's grand opening reception was held on the back patio overlooking sacred **Baboquivari Peak**, the center of Tohono O'odham cosmology and home of I'toi, the creator. It opened with a talking circle, when staff and guests shared favorite foods and memories, family food traditions, and concerns about the loss of health and traditional values. **The Desert Rain Café** once again provided

delicious seasonal foods after the sharing session, and the **Healthy O’odham Promotion Program (HOPP)** also offered samples of indigenous foods such as O’odham squash and *pico de gallo* using cholla buds.



Fresh pico de gallo with cholla buds.



Nina Altshul and her husband Peter with students from Ajo’s GED program.

Many activities were on hand that day, as the **Tohono O'odham Community College’s Agricultural Department** demonstrated how to mill mesquite pods into flour and handed out packets full of mesquite flour recipes. On behalf of the International **Sonoran Desert Alliance** in Ajo, the next host for Key Ingredients, **Nina Altshul** and students from their “GED in the Garden” program showed their support for Topawa and the statewide tour by providing samples of mesquite-squash cookies made in solar ovens. Guests were also invited to take samples from the museum garden of traditional O’odham crops such as squash, corn, pumpkin, and cantaloupe home to share with their families.



Staff member Jeanette Garcia shares a food memory in the talking circle.



O’odham squash from the museum garden.

In addition to the Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum's very successful grand opening, staff provided a variety of public programs to Nation members for the rest of their tour stop. They partnered with the **Kitt Peak Educational Team** to hold a Storytelling and Astronomy Night in Topawa, when astronomers provided telescopes to view our galaxy and to discuss how legends and science converge. A partnership with HOPP and TOCA resulted in Movie-and-Discussion Nights in Sells, complete with sugar-check and smoothie stations.

TOCA also joined with **Indian Health Services** to provide free cooking courses that focused on diabetes, dialysis, and family cooking, and featured recipes using traditional ingredients such as cholla buds, tepary beans, and mesquite flour. The same partners also offered *Healthy Choices* youth field trips and discussions about the importance of exercise, an active lifestyle, and healthy eating choices, and HOPP offered dance classes for all ages entitled *Dance your Auth Off!*



A HOPP representative offers indigenous food samples to some guests.

Project Director **Jennifer Juan** said of her experience,

"I was truly blessed to be involved with this project. I was able to learn much more about O'odham food traditions, family structure and history. I met many new people who awakened and encouraged a new love for gardening and traditional foods. Best of all, I was able to share this enthusiasm with visitors and co-workers during planning, tours and programs."

Jennifer's experience reflects the best of what Key Ingredients initiates in host communities throughout the country, and more broadly what Arizona host communities experienced during previous Museum on Main Street tours. After hosting a total audience of almost 2500 at their exhibits and public programs, the exhibition closed in Topawa on December 4, 2010, and re-opened in Ajo on December 11, 2010.