

Introduction

For centuries, Florida was the domain of Native Americans, long before European explorers arrived at the shores. The Seminole nation, including the Miccosukee, are a blend of many tribes, fully involved in contemporary life but still proudly cherishing the prized traditions of their long-ago ancestors. During special occasions, they continue to prepare the foods of generations past, a most healthful and satisfying diet.

Popular staples of the traditional Seminole diet are coontie and pumpkin. Coontie is a wild root, mashed and dried, from which tasty breads are baked. Pumpkin is used for a variety of delicious dishes. A traditional drink is sofkee, a milky-based mixture of coarse grits. In the tribal villages of the past, the fire might burn all day long with an iron pot hanging over filled with the gritlike substance. During the day the inhabitants could dip a sofkee spoon into the pot when hungry, partaking of this communal staple.

The recipes here offer many hearty dishes, especially beef and venison. Pork, frog legs, turtle, squirrel, and turkey are favored foods and are often cooked as stew-like dishes. Fish, of course, is also a popular choice. Corn is used frequently. Biscuits and gravy, sweet potatoes, peas, beans, sugarcane and the tender heart of the cabbage palm, cooked and raw, are foods reflective of the Seminole heritage. Featured fruits are guavas, sour oranges, limes, bananas, plums, and blueberries.

The Seminoles have long enjoyed many a feast of these foods. They may be seasoned as you like, but be sure to use only the freshest ingredients as have these native Floridians throughout the years.