

Tasting Native Cuisine and Culture

The Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum hosts the fourth annual Taste of Native Cuisine and Culture Expo on Nov. 15 in Ignacio. Attendees will enjoy traditional dance, music and indigenous food with a contemporary spin from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday.

“Food is a great way to make a connection to all people, because everyone needs food to survive,” says Shirley Cloud Lane, education director for the Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum. “An event like the Native Cuisine and Culture Expo gives our people – the Southern Utes – a chance to share recipes that have been a part of our way of life for generations.”

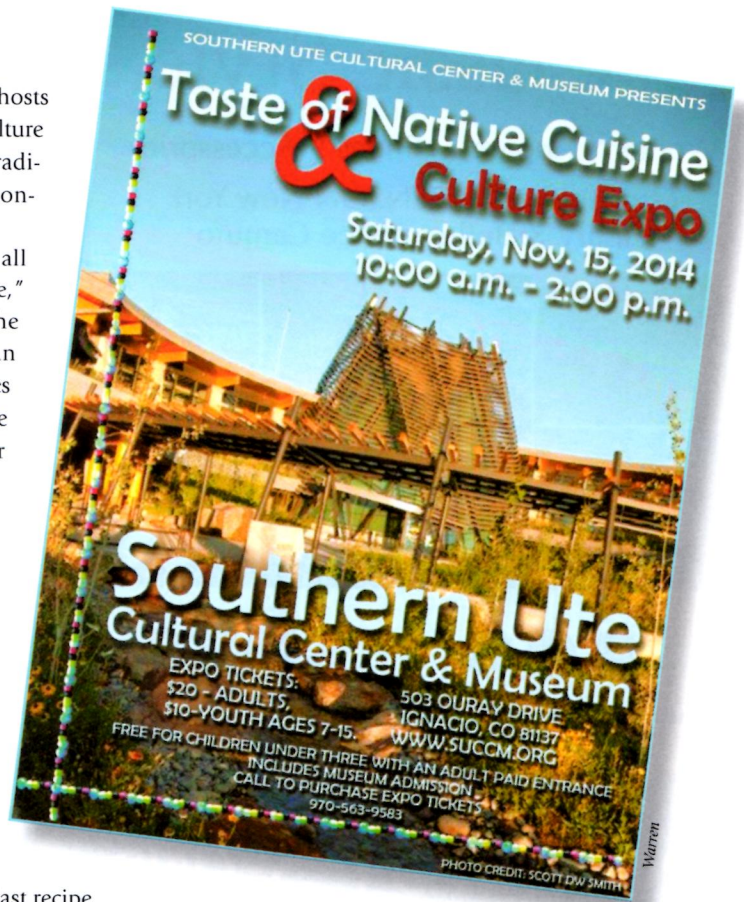
Executive chef M. Karlos Baca, a classically trained chef who studied at the California Culinary Academy, grew up on the Southern Ute Reservation, where his family has lived for a hundred years. He says the goal is to introduce Native food staples in a new light. For example, last year’s menu included pork belly braised in Navajo tea, and cranberry and habanero mousse garnished with yucca chips and candied bearberries.

Bearberries are no longer commonly used, and Baca and his co-chef, Anthony Hamlin, spent about eight hours together harvesting the berries from the wild – yielding just two cups. “The last recipe I found using a bearberry is from more than 100 years ago,” Baca says. “I was telling myself, ‘There’s a good chance I’m the only person in the world who has ever candied a bearberry.’”

Any meat for the event, such as bison, deer and elk, will be harvested from the reservation by tribal members. “We call that harvesting – we don’t hunt,” Baca says. “We pray before we go and take a life. We consider it ‘harvest,’ because we thank them for offering themselves to feed our people.”

This year, Baca says he plans to encourage the up-and-coming chefs on his team to create menus. Some ingredients may include cattails and pine needles, possibly nestled in whipped cream on a dessert dish. Beth Lamberson Warren, fundraising program director for the center, says this year’s event should be even bigger than last year’s, and that everyone is welcome. Warren says that, at last year’s event, watching chefs Baca and Hamlin at work was a joy. “I personally loved every bite of the extensive menu.”

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for kids age 7 to 15 (free for children under 7 with an adult paid entrance) and includes museum admission. Available after Oct. 1 at (970) 563-9583. ■



Food is a great way to make a connection to all people

by Jen Reeder

Journalist and travel writer Jen Reeder enjoys many foods from around the world.

