

# EDIBLE NEW MEXICO

A Visit To Italy

November 10, 2022

www.ediblenm.com/a-visit-to-italy/

Readership: 4,826

TRENDING: Meet and Eat, Paloma
f t p i s SEARCH



READ THE MAGAZINE - STORIES - RECIPES GUIDES LOCAL HERO AWARDS - EDIBLE FILMS

## A VISIT TO ITALY

Nov 9, 2022 | Early Winter 2022, Eat, Stories

### FEEDING ALL RELATIONS WITH PLANT RELATIVES

Words and Photos by *Ungelbah Davila-Shivers*




*Tina Archuleta prepping prickly pear tartar.*

Plant food is Indigenous food. Squash, beans, corn, amaranth—these are the foods that have sustained Pueblo and other Indig nations across Earth linked for hundreds of thousands of years. Tina Archuleta, a citizen of Jesus Pueblo and award-winning author of *Itchy Plant Based Pueblo*, is bringing culturally relevant meals like plant-based enchiladas, steaks, and reimagined to the grub-and-go menu of her newly opened restaurant at Arroyo Plaza in Albuquerque, across from the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center.

A finalist at the 2020 Food Forward Entrepreneurship and Investor Fair, Archuleta says, "Plant foods are Native foods. Plants are our oldest ally. Plants are our relatives and they're here for us. My food is not going to hurt anyone. I am barely any sugar in my recipes. I don't use bleach-bled flour. I don't use lard. I don't use cheese, which is very high in saturated fat. I am thinking of the Native people to not commonly both (because the diabetes). And this food is not hurting them. It's medicine."

More than 180 years ago, Archuleta was inspired by *Baratieri* to transition into a plant-based diet. She began farming produce at her home in Jesus Pueblo and selling it at the community farmers market. During this time, *Baratieri* began asking her how to cook with the produce she was selling, such as kale, and she saw a need in her community for education around the reintroduction of plant foods into people's diets. She began giving cooking demonstrations and then those her path toward using food as medicine and farming for sovereignty took off. But her real story begins at her grandmother's kitchen table. In her great-grandmother's garden in Santa Domingo Pueblo, and along the fertile shorelands of her home.

"When you're driving through Jesus, you can see all the colors of the rainbow," she says. "I would say that's when my journey began. You start as a youth in Pueblo communities helping to the field with food, for that's what my earliest memories are, of me processing food, and not in the field with my family."



*Locally produced tartar for prickly pear fruit compote.*

Growing up in the Pueblo, she recalls, most of her childhood was spent outdoors during a time when the digital world was a distant future dream. Playing by the river and in the mountains instilled in her a deep connection to her homeland and the plant life there that has been the ally of her people for generations. She remembers her grandmother using plant medicine to soothe her and her relatives when they were sick, and the massive garden her grandma *Baratieri* had and great-grandma Helen Fraga grew. "These gardens provided the writings and amounts of tomatoes, peaches, and other nutritious foods, always available to her when she visited."

"When we were sick, my grandma *Baratieri* Archuleta would steam us with amaranth and we would drink pepperoni tea," she remembers. "My grandma always had a garden, so I was always out there with her and she was always processing food, because she had so much. She would just have a basket on the table of tomatoes as whatever harvest she had." These hermits included cultivated fruits, like capers and peaches, as well as wild-growing ones and prickly pear.

Today there is much conversation about the food movement and terms like food sovereignty and food justice. For Archuleta, these terms are new expressions of practices that have always been a part of her world, either working for or against her and Indigenous peoples' ways of life. "There's a lot of cliché words around the whole movement, and it's hard for me to fall into that language," she explains. "But for me, food sovereignty is the controlling of our own food as a sovereign nation, as well as the self-sovereignty of controlling the food we intake as a people, individually."

Over time, self-reliance of this nature has dwindled for reasons ranging from the domestication of certain foods, such as amaranth or other Native plants that are highly nutritious but identified as "weeds" in Western culture, to the influence of government commodity foods to dependence on grocery stores that aren't easily accessible—resulting in more processed foods in the diet. She recalls a *Baratieri* elder woman at an intertribal food sovereignty summit telling her that as a child she was disappointed at her parents because she believed the foods identified on the American flag provided were the most healthy and that the traditional foods in the elder's childhood home at Tewa Pueblo were not. The foods represented on the pyramid at that time were influenced by European diets brought to Pueblo people and others.

The Italy menu is vegan, relying only on plant-based recipes that Archuleta herself has developed to create traditional Pueblo foods like red chiles and tortillas, as well as desserts like her seasonal prickly pear chocolate, which was locally gathered prickly pear fruit compote, processed in-house by Archuleta.

"We can remove ourselves from that oppressive food system by not supporting the commercial dairy industry, not supporting the commercial meat industry, not supporting fast food, and just kind of sticking to our Native foods. That's another level of food sovereignty," says Archuleta. "And that's the level I like to be on myself. I don't eat fast food. I don't support the fast food industry. I don't support the meat and dairy industry. And that all falls back to Earth ethics for me, and how we'll, as an individual, impacting the Earth. These industries are not helpful to where we're trying to go in the healing of the Earth."

The Italy menu is vegan, relying only on plant-based recipes that Archuleta herself has developed to create traditional Pueblo foods like red chiles and tortillas, as well as desserts like her seasonal prickly pear chocolate, which was locally gathered prickly pear fruit compote, processed in-house by Archuleta.

"We can remove ourselves from that oppressive food system by not supporting the commercial dairy industry, not supporting the commercial meat industry, not supporting fast food, and just kind of sticking to our Native foods. That's another level of food sovereignty," says Archuleta. "And that's the level I like to be on myself. I don't eat fast food. I don't support the fast food industry. I don't support the meat and dairy industry. And that all falls back to Earth ethics for me, and how we'll, as an individual, impacting the Earth. These industries are not helpful to where we're trying to go in the healing of the Earth."



*Prickly pear fruit (cactus fruit) - round, green and white (cactus) fruit of many Native foods that has been used by generations of Southwest cultures.*

"My grandpa has stories of when he was a child, they would build structures like their cornucopia and they'd have pumpkins, to keep them and his later on. They don't do that anymore," says Archuleta. "Food sovereignty is not an idea or a concept, you're not just controlling the food that they're taking but you're being aware of how it got to your plate."

But given the strength of Jesus Pueblo history and the massive produce in the "Red Fruit" region for the children to eat, on the border between Community Gardens, which grow some food from their gardens in the community building.

"That's what Italy is really for us. It's so strong to get food from Native farmers here to Italy where I process it and eat it in their people," she says. "It's going through this cycle of sovereignty, where we're controlling how we eat food. It's not just getting to the point where we're not participating in a food system that's oppressive and abusive."

