

# TURTLE ISLAND

BY SEAN SHERMAN WITH KATE NELSON AND KRISTIN DONNELLY

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Before reading *Turtle Island*, what did the term “Turtle Island” mean to you, if anything? How has your understanding of its cultural significance changed or deepened after reading?
2. What region of North America are you from and how familiar were you before reading the book with the Indigenous communities who call or called the land home? Were you familiar with any of the ingredients discussed from your region?
3. Which images or passages most vividly brought a place, landscape, or moment to life for you?
4. The authors describe how each foraged ingredient carries “a story, a purpose, and a role in the ecosystem.” How did this idea influence the way you experienced the recipes and stories in the book?
5. Can you share a moment or passage that changed or deepened your understanding of how food, land, and identity are connected?
6. Sean Sherman shares ancestral wisdom from Indigenous communities across North America. Which idea, teaching, or practice resonated most with your own life or with the way you cook?
7. How do you imagine Indigenous foodways might grow or adapt in the years ahead? And what role, if any, do you see . . . yourself playing in that evolution?
8. Did the combination of cooking instructions, personal stories, and historical context help you “experience” these foods in a different way than a standard cookbook or history book might? How so?
9. Before reading *Turtle Island*, had you used any of the ingredients discussed in the book—foraged wild foods, game meat and birds, Native agricultural products—in your cooking? After reading, is there an ingredient you’re interested to try or perhaps have realized you already use regularly?
10. Throughout the book, the portraits of Indigenous peoples showcase how the connection of land and food is an intrinsic part of their identities. Their stories are filled with reverence and respect for cooks, farmers, healers, and seed savers, as well as philosophies and beliefs around foraging, hunting, growing, and cooking. Was there a story that particularly stood out? What about that story or message resonated with you?
11. What is the first recipe that you’ll try from the book? What’s one way you can honor the Indigenous community it comes from when you prepare it?
12. There is an extensive history of attacks on the food sources of Indigenous peoples by groups such as European settlers (earth-scorching campaigns) and the U.S. government (intentional killing off of bison). Many of the chefs and farmers that Sean Sherman speaks of are also considered activists. After reading this book and cooking from some of these recipes, how has your understanding or perspective on Indigenous food sovereignty changed when you think of their history and fight for survival?
13. After reading *Turtle Island*, do you see any shift in your own connection to the land where you live and the food you eat or your perspective on the diverse regions of North America?

