

Is the Tomato Italian, American or Indigenous?

When we say *tomato* what food comes to mind? Do you think of spaghetti or pizza? Maybe chili? Often, people assume tomatoes originally came from Italy, since many Italian dishes are made with tomato sauce, like spaghetti and pizza. Tomatoes originated in South America, so if you thought chili, you were thinking about an American food dish and closer to tomatoes original homeland. Beans, tomatoes and chili peppers all originate in South America. After explorers came to the Americas, these food items were later introduced to Europe. Nearest we can tell, the first tomatoes came from what today is Peru. Wild tomatoes still grow in the Andes Mountains of South America. We can say tomatoes are indigenous to Peru because this is the closest known place of origin or birthplace. Now what do you think, is a tomato indigenous to Italy or America?

in-dig-e-nous

adjective

Originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native.

What are some Indigenous Foods to Turtle Island?

In review, the word *Indigenous* refers to place of origin or birthplace. What then do we mean by Indigenous food? Indigenous foods originate from the natural, local environment and become a part of the diet of the people who live locally. For example, wild rice or minoomin is considered an Indigenous food to the Anishinaabe people. Turtle Island is minoomin's original home; it grows locally, is harvested locally and is a big part of our yearly diet.



“Before 1492, tomatoes, potatoes, wild rice, salmon, pumpkins, peanuts, bison, chocolate, vanilla, blueberries and corn, among other foods, were unknown in Europe, Africa and Asia. Today, we think of tomatoes as an Italian staple, or potatoes as quintessentially Irish or northern European, and even of peanuts as native to Africa. But American Indigenous farmers cultivated and developed these foods over hundreds of generations, long before Europeans exported them throughout the world”, explains Kevin Gover (Pawnee), director of the National Museum of the American Indian Smithsonian Institution, in the foreword for *The Mitsitam Café Cookbook: Recipes from the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian* by executive chef Richard Hetzler.

Many foods people enjoy today are from the Americas or Turtle Island. Check out this link for a list of 10 key Indigenous foods from our Turtle Island ancestors:

[10 Indigenous Foods Thought to Be European - Indian Country Today](#)

Can you Name these Indigenous Foods of Turtle Island?

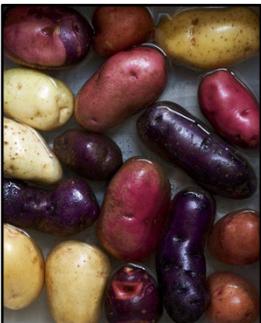


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