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Hundreds of Traditional Foods Are At Risk:

First Ever Redlist of Endangered American Plant and Animal Foods

Released For the Harvest/Holiday Season

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz.— A coalition of experts on sustainable agriculture and food aficionados have compiled a redlist of more than 700 uniquely North American plant and animal foods that are at risk of extinction.

In an unprecedented effort to rescue endangered foods, seven prominent organizations have formed the group Renewing America's Food Traditions, (RAFT). The Redlist was compiled as a result of research and recommendations from dozens of food historians, farmers, plant explorers, genetic conservationists, and agricultural activists.

RAFT is composed of organizations involved with sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and people who love to eat. The coalition is launching its national campaign with the release of the book, *Renewing America's Food Traditions*. This book highlights the stories of twenty authentic American foods, and includes the first Redlist of America's Endangered Foods.

“As we bring in our harvests and prepare for the winter holidays, it is fitting to recognize the diversity of foods lost from our holiday tables which could be returned if consumers, chefs, conservationists, and producers begin to more effectively collaborate with one another,” said Dr. Gary Nabhan, Director of the Center for Sustainable Environments (CSE) at Northern Arizona University. Nabhan facilitates the coalition comprised of American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, Chefs Collaborative, Cultural Conservancy, Native Seed/SEARCH, Slow Food USA, Seed Savers Exchange, and CSE.

The Redlist is available online at www.environment.nau.edu/raft —a working list of traditional foods includes 81 fish and shellfish, 26 native wild food plants, 51 rare livestock and poultry breeds, 234 heirloom vegetables, 248 fruits and berries, and 55 grains and nuts. The Redlist was compiled as a result of research and recommendations from dozens of food historians, farmers, plant explorers, genetic conservationists, and agricultural activists.

“These foods have declined as their wild habitats or agricultural landscapes have been degraded and destroyed,” Nabhan explains, “Hybrids and GMOs (genetically modified organisms) have usurped their markets, while ethnic communities have lost traditional ecological and culinary knowledge about their harvesting and preparation.

In addition to the redlist of endangered traditional foods, the RAFT book highlights some interesting hidden stories such as the hot Datil pepper of Minorcan immigrants to Florida and the oily Eulachon smelt that provided the foundation of Northwest trade routes. The book details ten success stories of efforts to recover such traditional foods throughout every region of the continent, from Alaska to Florida; and ten profiles of America’s most endangered foods documenting the cultural and culinary traditions put at risk when these foods are over-harvested or neglected.

Ultimately, RAFT strives to put these foods back on our tables as it assists family farmers, fisherman, foragers, and ranchers of both Native American and immigrant cultures, in reviving the production and use of these foods to benefit their own communities. RAFT also assists with marketing and distribution strategies for those ethnic communities that wish to sell their surplus to the wider American public.

“The peoples of the Americas were diverse in their use of locally available ingredients,” notes Fernando Divina, award-winning chef, RAFT advisor, and co-author of *Foods of the Americas*. “A resurgence of demand for heirloom varieties of produce may engender new, more effective means of distribution.”

Note: Anyone interested in receiving the *Renewing America’s Food Traditions* book, should contact Gary Nabhan, PhD, or Ashley Rood.

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