

Smoked Beets with Tepary Beans & Prickly Pear Glaze

University of Arizona

Essay:

The University of Arizona is located in the Sonoran Desert of the southwest. While the desert lacks the lush crops that many other regions enjoy, there are crops that are utilized in Tucson cooking. In March, 2024 Arizona Dining chose to feature a Smoked Beets with Tepary Beans & Prickly Pear Cactus Glaze as a local foods recipe as part of national nutrition month. Tepary beans are a drought resistant bean that offers an excellent source of protein and an amazing amount of fiber. We purchase these beans from Ramona Farms located in Sacaton, AZ (about 80 miles northwest of the University). Nopales were also featured in the dish which is an edible cactus pad that is cleaned, diced or julienned and cooked. These cactus pads contain vitamins A & C and have a citrusy flavor. We sourced these from the Community Food Bank Farmer's Market cooperative in Tucson 10 miles from campus. These crops grow throughout the greater Tucson area. Lastly, the Prickly Pear fruit comes from the prickly pear cactus and has a melon-like flavor. We sourced these fruits from a local company called Cheri's Desert Harvest (just 2 miles from campus) who produces prickly pear syrup from local farms. These local ingredients were promoted to students through marketing local flavors at 2 locations. The first was a full-service restaurant offering a plated dish. The other was an all you care to eat location offering vegetarian and dedicated made without gluten location. The University specifically would like us to procure from a local company versus a corporation which was helpful as we discovered Ramona Farms and Cheri's Desert Harvest. As our usage grew, we were able to generate pars for ordering as well. We have grown a strong relationship with the Community Food Bank Farmer's Market and purchase in season produce for special event featured dishes. The goal of featuring this dish was to offer a local and inclusive recipe that all could enjoy while educating students on the delicious flavors of Tucson ingredients. Objectives were 1. Provide a local dish that is also made

without gluten, vegan and halal to allow all students to experience, 2. Educate students on the local crops including edible cactus that they see several times a daily throughout Tucson, 3. Offer a variety of textures, flavors and colors for a beautiful and flavorful dish and 4. Market in an innovative manner to raise awareness. The recipe provides production steps with easy-to-follow directions with sub-recipes and includes HACCP guidelines. Nutrition analysis is included with serving sizes and icons indicating allergens and dietary preferences. Students were surveyed on the recipe and overall satisfaction is achieved 93% of students surveyed (n=471) indicated 5/5 stars for texture, color, temperature and flavor. One student commented "I love that you are using local tepary beans and cactus in your cooking. This dish is delicious, and I hope to see it featured again!"

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