

2008 HONOREE

JAMES LEWIS AWARD


WALTER WHITEWATER
Native American Chef

Walter Whitewater was born in Pinon, Arizona and is from the Diné (Navajo) Nation. He grew up traditionally and began cooking as a young boy after seeing people cooking at some of the traditional ceremonies his family attended. He began cooking professionally in 1992 in Santa Fe, New Mexico at Café Escalera under executive Chef David Tannis. Tannis apprenticed under the legendary Alice Waters of Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California.

As culinary advisor on the cookbook *Foods of the Southwest Indian Nations*, Whitewater (along with Lois Ellen Frank) won the James Beard Award in the Americana Category in 2003. He has appeared on several food-related television programs including *Southwest Cooking with Bobby Flay* on Food TV Network in 2005, *Native Foods and Farming: Market to Market* on Iowa Public Television in 2005 and, most recently, *The Secret Life of Southwest Foods*, which is presently airing on the Food TV Network.

Most recently, Chef Whitewater has started a Native American catering and food company with Lois Ellen Frank called Red Mesa. Red Mesa cooks for private events, parties, corporate meetings, gallery openings and Native events and organizations all over the United States. Together, they have worked with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), the Tohono O'odham Community Action group (TOCA), the Center for Sustainable Environments at Northern Arizona University (CSE), the Cultural Conservancy in San Francisco and the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA), and the Museum of Natural History in New York. They have also opened the exhibit "Totems to Turquoise" at the Autry National Center and Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, with a food tasting and lecture in April 2007. He was one of the featured Native American chefs for two consecutive weekends at "Connecting Communities: Native Foods and Wellness," an event at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center (IPCC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico in October 2007.

During Chef Whitewater's professional cooking experiences, he has remained active in many of his traditional ways at his home in Pinon, returning each year for ceremonial obligations. Presently, Chef Whitewater teaches classes on Native American foods of the Southwest at the Santa Fe School of Cooking with Chef Lois Ellen Frank. Their cooking classes feature recipes from the James Beard Award-winning cookbook, *Foods of the Southwest Indian Nations* (Ten Speed Press). Chef Whitewater also teaches private Native American cooking classes and is invited for guest chef appearances nationally.