

Traditional Foods Among Native Elders

*Frequently Reported Items
Across DHHS Regions*

2024 Brief Report

*Utilizing Data from Identifying Our Needs:
A Survey of Elders Cycle VIII (2020 - 2023)*



National Resource Center
on Native American Aging
NRCNAA

About Us

National Resource Center on Native American Aging

The National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) is committed to identifying Native Elder health and social issues. Through education, training, and technical assistance, we assist in developing community-based solutions to improve the quality of life and delivery of support services to the Native aging population.

The NRCNAA serves the elderly Native American population of the U.S. The three centers are committed to increasing awareness of issues affecting American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian Elders. We are a voice and advocate for their concerns. Through education, training, technical assistance, and research, the center assists in developing community-based solutions to improve the quality of life and delivery of support services to this aging population.

Center for Rural Health

The Center for Rural Health (CRH) was established in 1980 within the University of North Dakota's School of Medicine & Health Sciences. It is one of the nation's oldest, largest, and most experienced organizations committed to providing leadership in rural health. CRH's mission is to connect resources and knowledge to strengthen the health of people in rural communities. CRH serves as a resource for healthcare providers health organizations, citizens, researchers, educators, and policymakers across the state of North Dakota and the nation. CRH activities are targeted toward identifying and researching rural health issues, analyzing health policy, strengthening local capabilities, and developing community-based alternatives. Although many specific activities constitute the agenda of the CRH, five core CRH divisions serve as the focus: (1) community outreach and engagement, including the designated North Dakota State Office of Rural Health; (2) education and information dissemination, including the Rural Health Information Hub website; (3) Indigenous programs, including two national American Indian centers; (4) program evaluation; and (5) research.

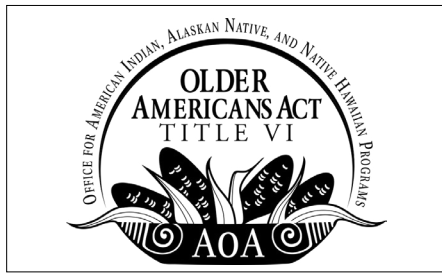
About This Report

As part of the Cycle VIII survey “Identifying Our Needs: A Survey of Elders,” information was collected from 19,744 Native Elders ages 55 and older on various health and social demographics. Included among these was a question addressing Elders’ consumption of traditional foods, asking them to list the traditional foods that they regularly consumed. A total of 9,031 Elders wrote in a response regarding the traditional foods that they regularly consumed. Because Elders typically listed multiple foods, these answers were then separated into 25,247 responses/categories; 506 were subsequently removed due to being either unknown or unclear, or the Native Elder writing that they did not eat traditional foods or did not know what a traditional food was, resulting in a total of 24,741 responses.

Responses were then organized based on the respective Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) region that the Elder resided in. While there are a total of 10 DHHS regions in the United States, information for DHHS Region 3 in this report is not shown, as there was only one tribe from that area.

This collection of reported traditional foods was subsequently used to create word clouds. Throughout the word clouds, larger words indicate foods that were more frequently listed, although there is some variation in sizing in order to get the words to fit. It should be noted that the traditional foods summaries listed in the following pages do not provide an exhaustive list of all foods, but rather are intended to serve as a general synopsis of foods reported by Indigenous communities.

What We Can Do For You



Title VI Needs Assessment: "Identifying Our Needs: A Survey of Elders"

This survey gathers information on health and social needs of your Elders to help with tribal planning, long-term care discussions, and grant applications.



Urban Needs Assessment: "Native Urban Elder Needs Assessment Survey" (NUENAS 1.0)

This survey gathers information and social needs of urban Elders to help with tribal planning, long-term care discussions, and grant applications.



Resource Center on Native Aging and Disability (RCNAD)

The RCNAD is a national hub aiding tribal communities and organizations serving American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Elders in building self-sustaining supportive programs for Elders and adults with disabilities.



Native Elder Caregiver Curriculum

Elder caregivers in your community are one of our most valuable resources. This tool is designed to aid professionals, relatives, and community members who had the responsibility of caring for Native Elders in their homes.



Native Aging in Place Project

This tool is designed to aid professionals, relatives, and community members who have the responsibility of caring for Native Elders in their homes.



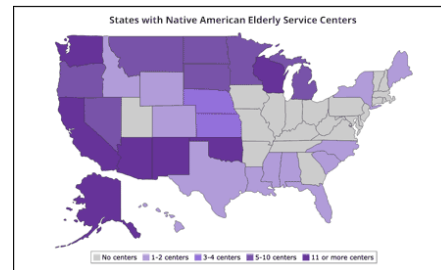
Well-Balanced Program (Wise Elders Living Longer)

This is a group program designed specifically for Native American Elders, combining exercise, information, and social interaction to help Elders remain active and independent as long as possible.



Honoring Native Elder Veterans

To honor and recognize our Native Elder veterans, we are sharing their stories of service, selflessness, and dedication.



Native Service Locator

This interactive map provides a list of tribal elderly services available across the United States.

Who We Are

The NRCNAA is made up of experts, researchers, and leaders with diverse backgrounds and experience. Our team is committed to helping improve the lives of Native Elders and working to ensure they get the resources they need.



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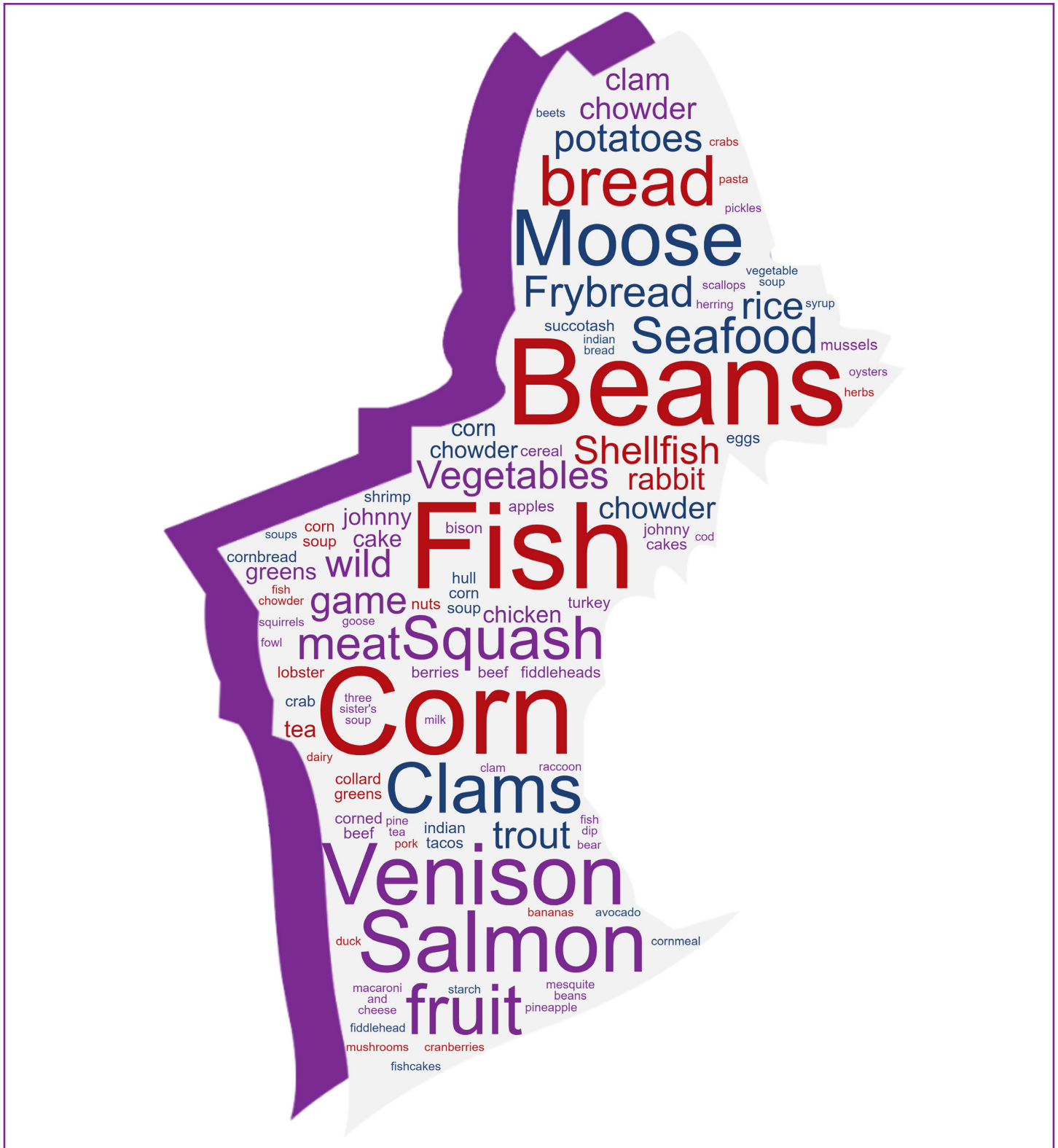


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DHHS Region 1: Boston

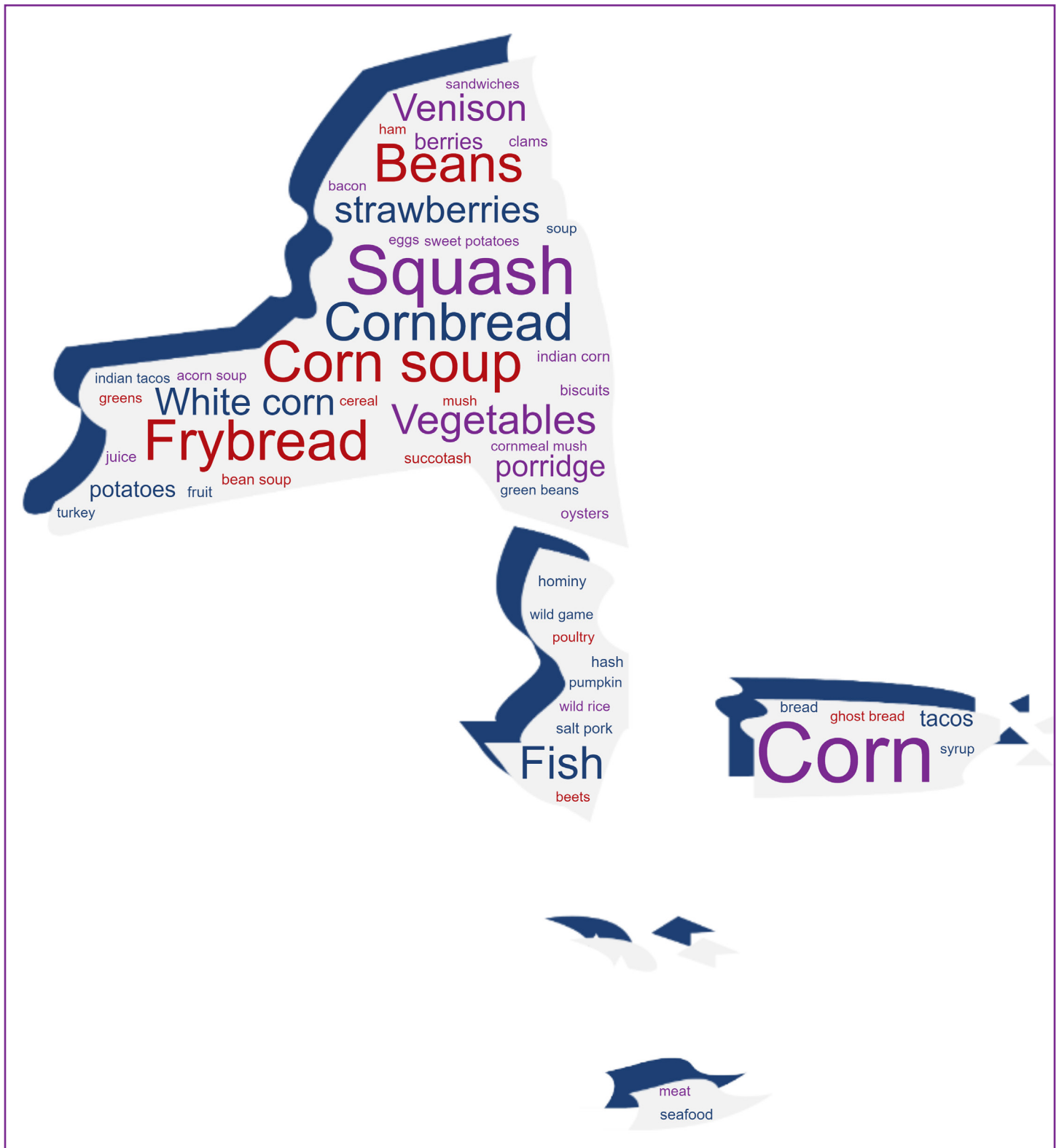
Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont



Among the tribes surveyed in Region 1, the most commonly listed traditional foods were fish, beans, and corn. This was followed by venison, salmon, fruit, moose, bread, squash, seafood, and frybread. Other commonly listed responses included meat, wild game, trout, potatoes, rice, shellfish, johnny cakes, greens, and chowder, among others.

DHHS Region 2: New York City

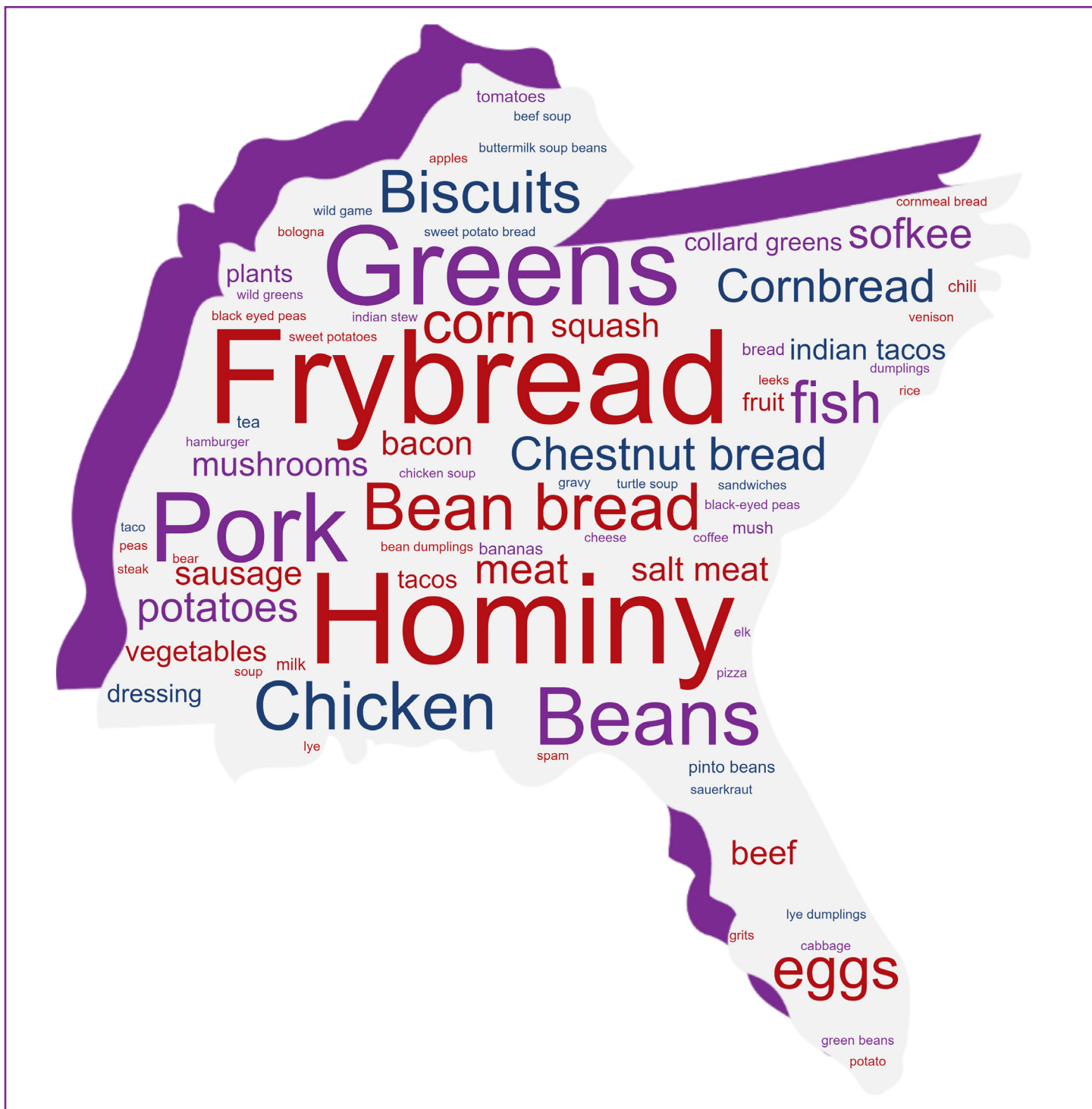
New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands



In Region 2, foods such as corn, squash, frybread, beans, corn soup, and cornbread were most commonly listed. Other responses included venison, strawberries, white corn, vegetables, porridge, potatoes, fish, and tacos. Sandwiches, green beans, fruit, greens, eggs, sweet potatoes, biscuits, pumpkin, wild game, salt pork, ham, beets, and acorn soup were also mentioned.

DHHS Region 4: Atlanta

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee



Because only one tribe participated in Region 3, responses for that region are not shown in order to protect identifiable information.

The most commonly listed traditional foods in Region 4 consisted of frybread, hominy, greens, and pork. Others included foods such as chicken, beans, eggs, biscuits, corn, bean bread, fish, and cornbread. Sofkee, beef, sausage, potatoes, vegetables, meat, squash, dressing, salt meat, Indian tacos, and collard greens were also reported.

DHHS Region 5: Chicago

Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin



The most frequently reported traditional foods for Region 5 included fish, rice, wild rice, venison, fruit, squash, beans, buffalo, potatoes, and berries. Other popular items were bread, corn soup, hull corn soup, wild game, vegetables, Indian tacos, meat, and hominy. This was followed by a variety of foods, such as walleye, zucchini, Oneida corn, blueberries, poultry, maple syrup, dairy, tortillas, quinoa, applesauce, blackberries, tomatoes, oatmeal, meat pies, and strawberries, among others.

DHHS Region 7: Kansas City

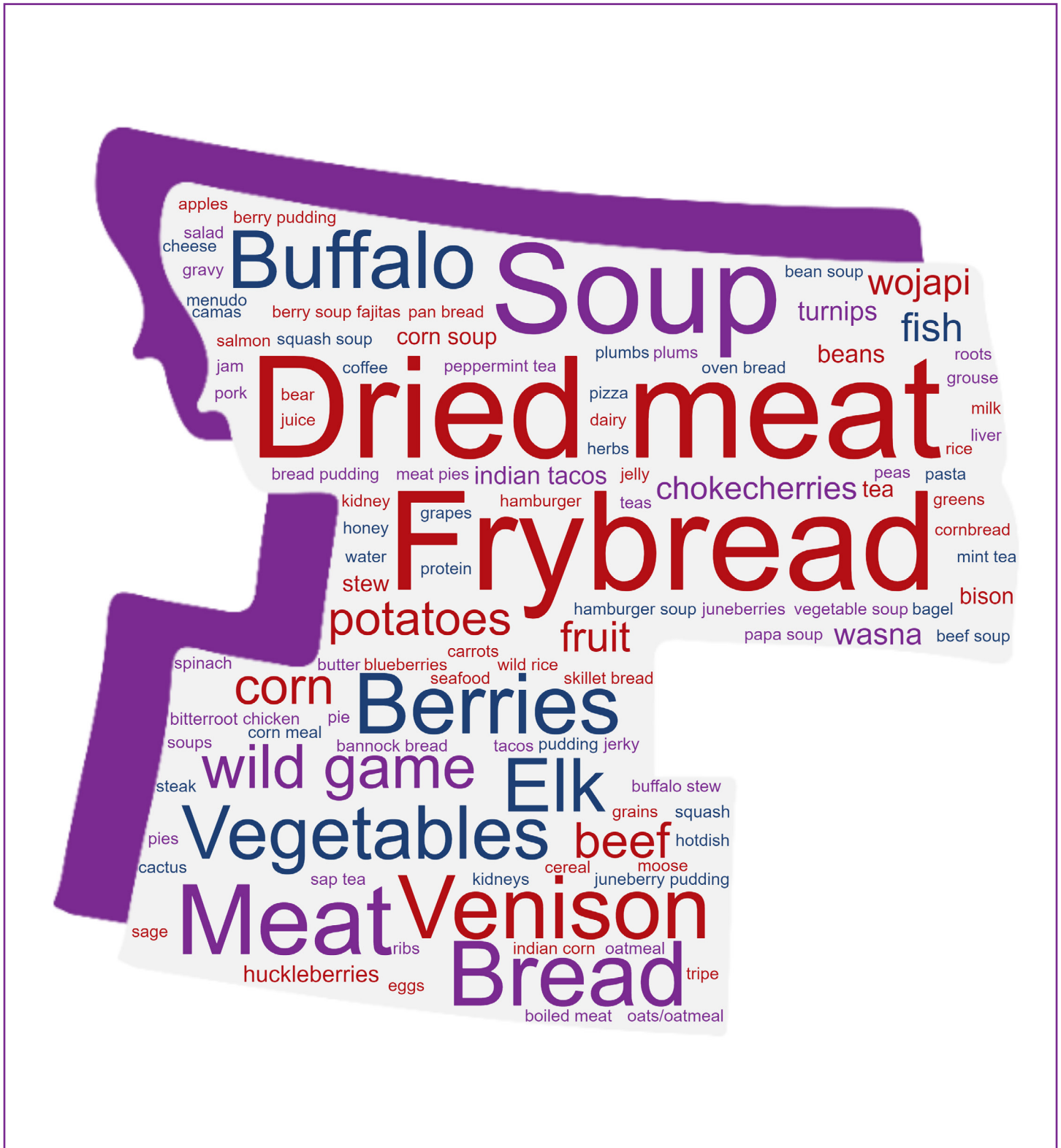
Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska



Frequently listed traditional foods in Region 7 included frybread, squash, corn, beans, soup, buffalo, corn soup, vegetables, and Indian corn. Other common items were wild rice, wild game, chokecherries, potatoes, berries, venison, beef, pumpkin, tacos, hamburger, pasta, bacon, salad, and green beans, among others.

DHHS Region 8: Denver

Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming



Region 8 had several traditional foods such as dried meat, frybread, soup, buffalo, berries, elk, vegetables, venison, meat, and bread. Additional items that were often listed included corn, beef, wild game, potatoes, fruit, wojapi, fish, chokecherries, Indian tacos, huckleberries, beans, turnips, bison, wasna, and stew, among others.

DHHS Region 9: San Francisco

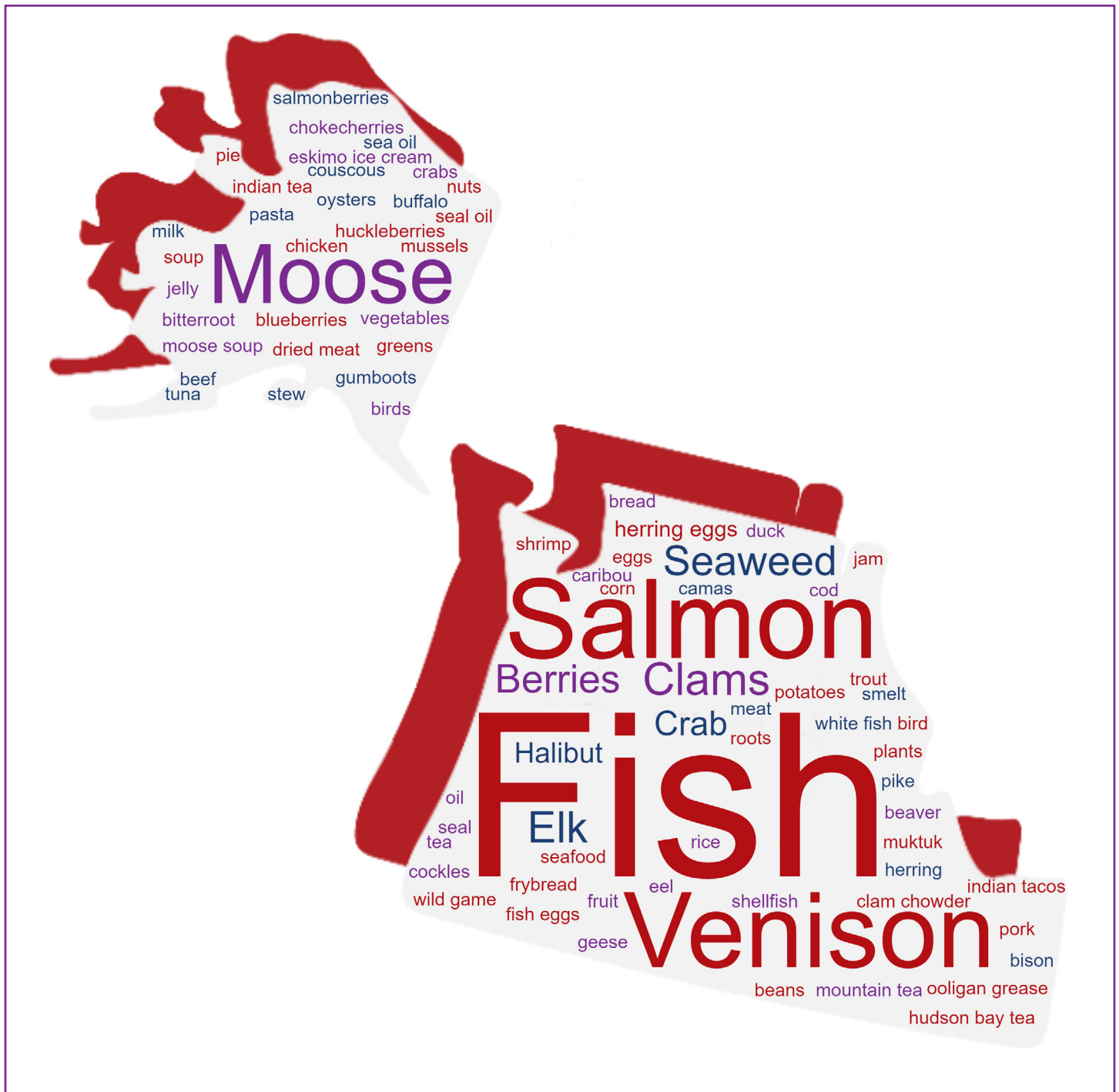
Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau



In Region 9, the most frequently listed traditional foods included beans, fish, venison, squash, tortillas, frybread, rice, corn, salmon and vegetables. Other foods commonly reported included meat, potatoes, popovers, taro, bread, acorns, berries, fruit, blue corn mush, soup, spinach, seaweed, salad, eggs, and sweet potatoes, among others. When looking at foods across multiple locations in a region, please note that foods are not listed based on specific location within that region - for example, tacos and soup are not the most commonly listed food items specific to Hawaii, but rather are part of the Region 9 food items as a whole.

DHHS Region 10: Seattle

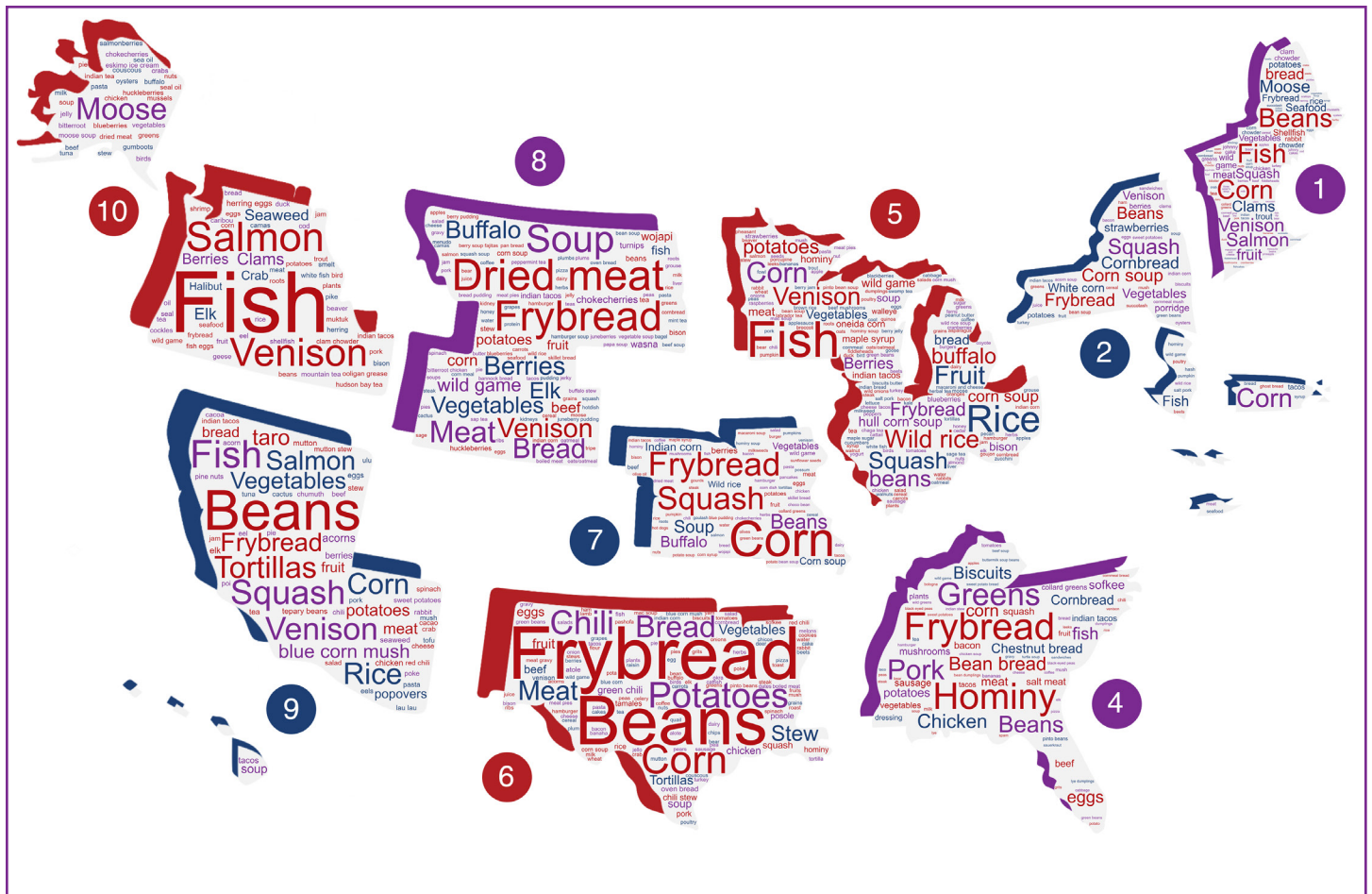
Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington



Region 10 traditional foods included fish, salmon, venison, and moose. Others included foods such as seaweed, berries, clam, crab, elk, halibut, as well as salmonberries, stew, herring eggs, ooligan grease, cod, shrimp, Indian tacos, shellfish, and beans. Jam, plants, clam chowder, fish, pasta, oysters, beef, seafood, frybread, geese, beans, beaver, blueberries, couscous, and vegetables were also listed, among others. When looking at foods across multiple locations in a region, please note that foods are not listed based on specific location within that region - for example, moose was not the most commonly listed food items specific to Alaska, but rather is part of the Region 10 food items as a whole.

DHHS All Regions

Traditional Foods Among All DHHS Regions (Excluding Region 3)



In the word cloud above, all of the DHHS regions are shown together (excluding Region 3) in order to get a sense of how commonly reported traditional foods differ across location. Foods such as frybread, corn, squash, and beans (among others) were frequently listed across almost all areas, whereas other popular traditional foods varied by region. For example, moose, fish, salmon and venison were especially prevalent in Region 10; dried meat, soup, and buffalo were common in Region 8; and hominy, pork, and greens were more common in Region 4. Together, word clouds such as this aid in highlighting the similarities across regions but show the unique cultural differences that are reflected in local food availability, preferences, and nutrition.



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