

Diné be' iiná, Inc.

The Navajo Lifeway

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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www.navajolifeway.org

RENOWNED NAVAJO CHEF

PREPARES BANQUET FOR SHEEP IS LIFE CELEBRATION

Friday, 20 June 2008, 5:00 p.m.

Greyhills Academy Campus, Tuba City, Arizona, Navajo Nation.

Walter Whitewater, award winning Navajo Chef, is preparing the banquet for the Sheep is Life Awards Dinner on Friday, June 20, beginning at 5:00 p.m. at Greyhills Academy in Tuba City.. Chef Whitewater has crafted a menu featuring locally-grown Navajo-Churro lamb in two of his specialty dishes: lamb-stuffed green chile and chipotle-rubbed roasted leg of lamb with wild cherry sauce. The full menu and banquet details are on www.navajolifeway.org.

Chef Whitewater grew up in a traditional Navajo household in Piñon, Arizona, where his family was self-sufficient raising sheep and vegetables. His grandmother was a well-known weaver. In a recent interview, he recalled that his interest in cooking began at an early age, even though cooking was not part of a traditional male role.

In 1992, when he began working as a professional chef in Santa Fe, he said that he was the only Native American in the profession at that time. Over the years, he worked with a range of ethnic and creative cooking traditions, including contemporary and traditional Southwest, Spanish, and Asian in kitchen environments ranging from Mu Du Noodles and Bishop's Lodge in Santa Fe to restaurants in other states.

Currently he teaches at the Santa Fe School of Cooking with chef Lois Ellen Frank, another Native American cook, and makes guest appearances at restaurants nationally. He has been on

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numerous cooking shows. In March, he was the first Native chef to receive the James Lewis Award honoring Cultural Awareness. He collaborated with Chef Frank to adapt many Native recipes and ingredients for her book, *Foods of the Southwest Indian Nations* (2002).

Diné be' iiná, Inc. is honored that Chef Whitewater is bringing his talents to showcase the Navajo-Churro lamb at Sheep is Life. As part of this exchange, Chef Whitewater is starting a flock of Navajo-Churro sheep at his homeplace to recover the pastoral lifeways of his childhood and promote healthy eating with traditional foods. He explained that, since he has been involved with the Navajo-Churro sheep as a chef, he has begun to understand what his grandmother was teaching him many years ago.

Organized by Diné be' iiná, Inc. (The Navajo Lifeway), the twelfth annual Sheep is Life Celebration honors the central role that sheep and fiber arts play in the philosophy and daily life of traditional and indigenous cultures throughout the world. Storytelling and sharing are the heart of the Celebration. Everyone is welcomed to bring fiber arts projects and stories to share.

In addition to Friday's Awards Banquet, Sheep is Life presents a Navajo Rug Auction on Saturday beginning at 4:00 p.m.; free Sheep to Loom demonstrations on Friday and Saturday from 9:00 am. to 5:00 p.m.; eight fiber arts workshops beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday; and sheep shows, wool grading, and management workshops throughout the weekend, June 19 – 21. Sheep is Life is at Greyhills Academy Campus in Tuba City, Navajo Nation.

DBI is a community-based, nonprofit organization founded in 1991 by Navajo shepherds and weavers. Sheep is Life is supported by the USDA Risk Management Agency and WESSTCorp. For more information, go to www.navajolifeway.org, call 928-652-3247, or e-mail dbi@navajolifeway.org.

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EDITORS: Attached is a narrative bio for Chef Whitewater. Please call for interviews and more information, and photos. thank you for helping to promote this community-based, annual event in the Navajo Nation.