

WATCH LIVE PRESIDENT BIDEN TO SPEAK ABOUT HURRICANE RECOVERY FROM PUERTO RICO

# Indigenous chef keeps Wampanoag traditions alive in her kitchen

Chef Sherry Pocknett, owner of Sly Fox Den Too, cooks with sustainably raised, hunted and fished animals at Charlestown restaurant

By Jenna Pelletier Globe Correspondent, Updated September 29, 2022, 6:00 a.m.




Sherry Pocknett, seen here with her daughters Chryema and Jade Pocknett-Galvin, is the owner of Sly Fox Den Too and a Wampanoag chef who specializes in cooking indigenous foods. RYAN T. CONATY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

CHARLESTOWN — Chef Sherry Pocknett started cooking locally and seasonally long before the term farm-to-table became buzzy. A member of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, she has been foraging, farming and fishing since she was growing up on Cape Cod in the 1960s.

“Our people have always focused on local food,” Pocknett says. “In the fall, we’d have raccoon and rabbit. In the springtime, it was striped bass with fiddlehead ferns, sunchokes and wild ramps.”

Pocknett now shares her Indigenous culture through the food she serves at her 30-seat Charlestown restaurant, Sly Fox Den Too. She runs it with her daughters, Jade and Cheyenne Pocknett-Galvin. The trio make dishes including quahog chowder, venison skewers, and three-sisters rice with corn cakes.

Advertisement

The restaurant is named after Pocknett’s father, Chief Sly Fox, Vernon Pocknett, who died in 1999. “He taught us everything,” she says. “He took all of the tribal kids under his wings and taught us how to fend for ourselves in nature,” she says.



Sly Fox Den Too, on South County Trail in Charlestown, R.I., keeps Indigenous food traditions alive. RYAN T. CONATY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The “too” in the name references the fact that Pocknett’s Charlestown restaurant is actually her Plan B. Shortly before the pandemic began, she started raising funds to renovate a property near her home in Preston, Conn. She is still working on developing the project, called the Sly Fox Den Restaurant, Museum, and Oyster Farm, where she plans to cook as well as offer educational programming on Indigenous culture. But her progress has been slow.

“It’s been really hard with the pandemic, and I’ve almost given up a couple of times,” she says. “It’s my real dream though.”

For now, Pocknett is renting the [Sly Fox Den Too’s space on Route 2 in Charlestown](#), which she stumbled upon while attending a Narragansett tribe event. The restaurant also serves as a hub for her catering business and a revenue source for her Connecticut project.

Advertisement

### Q: How did you become interested in food and cooking?

**Pocknett:** I’ve always loved to cook for people, even back when it was in my Easy Bake Oven. And I helped my mom in the kitchen a lot as a kid. I also remember doing things like going blueberry picking with a little basket around my neck when I was 3 or 4 years old. We were always self-reliant and harvested a lot of our own food. When I was older, I started waitressing at my uncle’s [now closed] Mashpee restaurant, The Flume, which was really popular. In my 20s, I got into catering through that restaurant and started traveling around to different pop-ups and events, which I still do today. I make things like bison burgers, frog legs, turtle soup and smoked mussels. Later, I got the opportunity to become the food and beverage manager at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center, and that’s how I ended up in Connecticut. I decided to stay in the state after I left that position.

### What does the term Indigenous food mean to you?

We embrace the bounty of each season and cook with sustainably raised, hunted and fished animals. We also use our original crops, like the three sisters combination of corn, beans and squash. I believe that we are here to love one another, to help one another, and to take care of the land, and those concepts are important to our food as well.

Advertisement



Chef Sherry Pocknett, owner of Sly Fox Den Too, remembers helping her mother in the kitchen when she was a little girl. RYAN T. CONATY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

### What motivates you to keep these food traditions alive?

Wampanoag people have been here for 12,000 years, and we’re not going anywhere. It’s important to educate the public to let them know that we’re still here and we still have our traditional lifeways. I also think of my children and grandchildren. They need to know and love their heritage and make sure it stays alive.

### Which dishes on your menu do you think best represent Native American cooking?

I do my own version of a corn cake with ground yellow cornmeal. I put scallions and dried cranberries on it — people love it. I also make frybread, which came from out west and represents a painful time in history, when the Navajo were forced to relocate from Arizona to New Mexico and use government rations like flour and lard. But, you know, they created something really good out of it. I also love serving local fish, like striped bass and bluefish. And I always use maple syrup from the nearby Mashantucket Sugar Shack.



Roasted rabbit with root vegetables cooked at Sly Fox Den Too. RYAN T. CONATY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

### What’s your vision for your project in Preston, Conn.?

We’ve had the property since 2019. We’ve come a long way with it, but we still have a lot of work and fundraising to do before we can open. It’s a beautiful place — right on the Poquetanuck Bay and a mile from my home in Preston. The vision is to have a restaurant with at least a hundred seats, as well as a living history museum with an outdoor kitchen and a large wetu, or wigwam. We want to have interpreters doing demonstrations on the property, plus a garden and eventually an oyster farm. It will be a fun place for students and adults to come learn about Indigenous peoples.

Advertisement

### Last year you were featured on Hulu’s “Taste the Nation with Padma Lakshmi.” What was filming that like?

It was awesome. Before she came, I didn’t really know who she was. But I welcome anyone who wants to come and take a cooking lesson from me because I love to teach. She was very gracious — and so was her crew.

*This interview has been edited and condensed.*

Sly Fox Den Too, 4349 South County Trail, Charlestown, R.I., 401-642-7350, [slyfoxdenrestaurant.com](#)



Poached eggs over duck hash with crispy duck skin. RYAN T. CONATY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Show comments

## Black News Hour presented by The Boston Globe

Run by Black journalists at The Boston Globe, “Black News Hour,” a new radio program, delivers reliable news that connects with our community and expands on deeper issues impacting our city.

### BOSTON GLOBE VIDEO

Rescue crews piloted boats and waded through flooded streets Thursday to save thousands of Floridians trapped after Hurricane Ian destroyed homes.

### MOST POPULAR ON BOSTONGLOBE.COM

- Abuse in National Women’s Soccer League was systemic, damning report finds
- After ‘horror show’ hiker rescues, N.H. asks whether criminal charges are the next frontier
- Family reeling after Truro man dies in New Bedford jail following his arrest on charges of killing his mother
- Left by the side of the road by a Lyft driver and then charged for a pricey second ride
- David Sedaris on angry letters, getting COVID and things you can’t say on TV
- Here are five no-electricity products to lower your energy bills this winter
- Here’s how to find out if your doctor has a troubled history, and what to do about it
- This week’s TV: True-crime kidnapping, a ‘Community’ movie, and a Hilary Swank series
- Bailey Zappe’s fairy-tale debut had all the makings of a winning show for the Patriots, until the end
- The Patriots might have lost, but Bill Belichick’s performance? It was masterful.

### VEWS FROM OUR COLUMNISTS

- YVONNE ABRAHAM**  
A huge chance for Chelsea
- JENEÉ OSTERHELDT**  
The Hispanic history I carry with me: Catherine McKenzie
- ADRIAN WALKER**  
After 51 years in prison, Ramadan Shabazz deserves his freedom
- SHIRLEY LEUNG**  
I finally biked to work. Was it worth it?
- THOMAS FARRAGHER**  
A cancer survivor walks to keep her friend’s memory alive
- KEVIN CULLEN**  
Marty Walsh proves you can go home again
- DAN MCGOWAN**  
Contest: Pick the winners in the Rhode Island general election

### MORE ON GLOBE.COM

<p><b>SPONSORED BY: WOMEN IN REAL ESTATE</b> <b>Women in Real Estate: 18 powerhouse players in the Greater Boston area</b> Over 65% of agents in the booming local real estate market are female.</p>	<p><b>Abuse in National Women’s Soccer League was systemic, damning report finds</b> An independent investigation into the scandals that erupted in the National Women’s Soccer League last season found emotional abuse and sexual misconduct were systemic in the sport, impacting multiple teams, coaches, and players, according to a report released Monday.</p>
<p><b>Family reeling after Truro man dies in New Bedford jail following his arrest on charges of killing his mother</b> Since Friday, the extended Howe family has been overwhelmed by tragedy — the murder of matriarch Susan Howe in her Truro home and the apparent suicide of her son, Adam, while jailed on charges of killing his mother.</p>	<p><b>After ‘horror show’ hiker rescues, N.H. asks whether criminal charges are the next frontier</b> With volunteer rescue teams and conservation officers already “stretched thin,” officials in the state take a defiant stand against irresponsible hiking.</p>
<p><b>THE FINE PRINT</b> <b>Left by the side of the road by a Lyft driver and then charged for a pricey second ride</b> The customer says the second ride-share she took on her journey more than doubled the cost of the trip.</p>	<p><b>Here are five no-electricity products to lower your energy bills this winter</b> As colder months near and the cost of heating your home soars, these devices may make it easier to avoid raising your thermostat.</p>
<p><b>RI ARTS</b> <b>David Sedaris on angry letters, getting COVID and things you can’t say on TV</b> Ahead of his reading at The Yets this week, the humorist shared his particular brand of comedy in this Q&amp;A.</p>	<p><b>Here’s how to find out if your doctor has a troubled history, and what to do about it</b> It’s hard to learn about problems in a physician’s past, but here are some tips that can help.</p>
<p><b>DAN SHAUGHNESSY</b> <b>Bailey Zappe’s fairy-tale debut had all the makings of a winning show for the Patriots, until the end</b> The rookie quarterback was 9 for 15 passing for 99 yards and a touchdown in his NFL debut. The third-stringer took over for an injured Brian Hoyer.</p>	<p><b>MATTHEW GILBERT   YOUR TV GPS</b> <b>This week’s TV: True-crime kidnapping, a ‘Community’ movie, and a Hilary Swank series</b> Pocknett has announced that it has greenlit a “Community” movie, with a number of original cast members already signed on to star.</p>

### MOST READ IN THIS SECTION

- Family reeling after Truro man dies in New Bedford jail following his arrest on charges of killing his mother
- Here’s how to find out if your doctor has a troubled history, and what to do about it
- RI ARTS: David Sedaris on angry letters, getting COVID and things you can’t say on TV
- Man found dead in Millbury home texted he had feared he would be killed; partner charged with assault to murder
- Doughnut breakfast sandwich, ribbon-cuttings: Baker quietly taking local roads to exit
- Somerville man dies after rollover crash on I-95 in Foxborough; 5 others seriously injured
- An island of acceptance in an ever-redder Texas: How San Antonio, a gateway for migrants, became a hunting ground for DeSantis
- Former State Police union boss Dana Pullman and former lobbyist Anne Lynch face trial for alleged kickback schemes
- Prison guards beat him and shattered his face. Eight years later, this formerly incarcerated man gimpes justice.