

# Indigenous flavors meet fine dining

## Native chef brings a unique culinary experience to a luxury resort in Willamette Valley wine country

By Jennifer Burns Bright for Travel Oregon; originally posted Feb. 21, 2023

Growing up on the banks of the Siletz River in Oregon's Central Coast town of Siletz, chef Jack Strong learned traditional foodways as part of his Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians upbringing. When the executive chef and cookbook author took the helm at renowned JORY Restaurant at The Allison Inn & Spa in Newberg in October 2022, he found heritage foods ready to welcome back his family.

Wild mussels, harvested by coastal Tribes for thousands of years, were enduring on the wave-beaten rocks just a couple of hours away. "My wife was craving them so bad, she looked for days ahead at the tides and the time worked out for 5:30 a.m. at Seal Rock," he says. "She collected just enough to steam some for later and she felt like she was back home again."

Strong hopes to share similar ingredients foraged or grown in Oregon – and that warm, welcoming feeling – with visitors to the Willamette Valley wine-country resort. He says he plans to "bring some fun and whimsy to already great food and let people know the stories behind it."

### A commitment to Native and homegrown cooking

The chef – who has earned a James Beard award nomination and an award for culinary excellence for outstanding executive chefs at Marriott hotels – has spent much of his 30-year career highlighting homegrown and Native cuisine at Arizona luxury hotel properties, most recently at JW Marriott's Scottsdale Camelback Inn Resort & Spa.



Jack Strong

He's also no stranger to Oregon's food scene, having graduated from Lane Community College's culinary program in Eugene, worked at the restaurant in his Tribe's Chinook Winds Casino Resort in Lincoln City and served twice as a guest chef at the prestigious International Pinot Noir Celebration, held each summer in McMinnville.

### Dining at a Willamette Valley favorite

Strong is in a great place to achieve his goal of sharing stories and providing a warm welcome in the restaurant. The boutique resort's extensive property features not only 85 luxury rooms, a spa, and the restaurant and banquet facilities, but also comes with a meticulously maintained 1.5-acre kitchen garden and beehives overseen by resident master gardener and beekeeper Anna Ashby. Pro tip: For visitors looking ahead to possible menus, Ashby posts weekly State of the Garden

reports on the resort's website sharing what is ready for the kitchen.

With a strong culinary team in place – plus new director of wine Brian Cook, who oversees a 500-label portfolio focused on Oregon wines – the chef seeks to continue to elevate the dining experience for guests. "It's not just about my vision here," he says. "It's cultivating the talent and helping them grow."

The evolving menu for the intimate restaurant will shine a spotlight on foods indigenous to the Americas. This means bushels of tomatoes, squash and beans but also the bounty Oregon's famed agriculture in the Willamette Valley provides. He plans to embrace partnerships with smaller local wineries and continue to purchase from area producers that create artisan cheeses, meats, fruits and vegetables.

The spacious kitchen takes its farm-to-table approach seriously, expending the effort needed to transform raw materials

into fine dining. The team creates its own charcuterie from premium meats, including bacon, ham and terrines. Each week, they receive sustainably farmed white sturgeon from Fort Klamath in Southern Oregon, breaking down the whole fish and using as much of it as they can. That might include a seared preparation served with ivory lentils and garden purple cauliflower. Even hamburgers are all made in-house, says Strong – from the Wagyu steak trim to freshly baked buns and homemade pickles.

### Telling the story of local food

As Strong gets settled in his new position, he plans to do more to support and highlight Tribal foods, focusing on seasonal cooking and telling the story of a dish's heritage. Already guests can see influences on the menu such as a mouthwatering dish featuring the mussels beloved by his Siletz Tribal ancestors and family alike. The chef simmers these humble shellfish in a fumet (fish broth) enriched with butternut squash and venison sausage with sage and charred apples. It's all the more impressive to learn that the fumet is made from fish bones of the sturgeon they receive each week. "The broth is so good, we have to manage the portions on it," he says, laughing.

In the future, Strong would like to add tasting menus, perhaps with themes that might reflect on the history of foodways in the area, and continue to build relationships with local producers. This might include wine dinners and a happy hour for locals, providing glasses of wine and fun things to eat in a lounge atmosphere.

For the time being, if you're interested in getting close to the action and innovations under way, book a seat at the exclusive Chef's Table, where up to 10 guests can request a spot near the glass-enclosed kitchen.

Courtesy photo by Anya Cam, The Allison

## CTSI Jobs

Tribal employment information is available at [ctsi.nsn.us](http://ctsi.nsn.us).

Note: "Open Until Filled" vacancies may close at any time. The Tribe's Indian

Preference policy will apply. Tribal government will not discriminate in selection because of race, creed, age, sex, color, national origin, physical handicap, marital status, politics, membership or non-membership in an employee organization.

For more information about the Siletz Tribe, visit [ctsi.nsn.us](http://ctsi.nsn.us).

## Enrollment Committee

### Current Vacancy – Term Ending February 2025

Application deadline for consideration to fill the vacant committee position is July 12, 2023

Any Tribal member interested in serving on the Enrollment Committee must fill out the following form and return it to the address below prior to close of business on July 12, 2023.

Please mail or fax your application to Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Attn: Executive Assistant to Tribal Council, P.O. Box 549, Siletz, OR 97380-0549; fax: 541-444-8325.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Roll No: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Day ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Evening ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Appointment to the committee will be made at the Regular Tribal Council meeting in July.

Culture  
Camp July  
11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>

Registration forms are available on the CTSI website at [www.ctsi.nsn.us/culture-language](http://www.ctsi.nsn.us/culture-language) or at your area office.

If you have any questions, contact Buddy Lane at:  
1-800-922-1399 or 541-444-8230 [BuddyL@ctsi.nsn.us](mailto:BuddyL@ctsi.nsn.us)

Applications can be submitted via online or mailed to:  
PO Box 549, Siletz, OR 97380 or faxed to 541-444-8392