



Rise Up: Season 3, Episode 1 Transcript  
“The Indigenous Kitchen & Return of the Fair”  
Featuring Sean Sherman and Celia Sweet

**Nick Hylla:** [00:00:00] Hey everybody. This is Nick. Before we dive into this episode, do us a big favor and click subscribe in your podcast player around YouTube by doing so you will be alerted every time we post a new episode. And if you feel so inspired, you could also thumbs up or comment, to get us more engagement. I also want to remind everybody that the Fair is back.

June 24th to the 26th at the MREA, campus in Custer, Wisconsin. We have a beautiful campus. There'll be thousands of the nicest people, you would ever hope to meet here, and we promised the weather will be beautiful for information or to buy tickets, go to the energy fair.org. That's the energy fair.o-r-g we hope to see you there.

[Intro]

Well, it is our pleasure today to sit down with Sean Sherman of The Sioux Chef, and, cookbook author, which, we have been enjoying fiercely over here. How are you [00:01:00] doing today, Sean?

**Sean Sherman:** I'm doing so well. Thanks.

**Nick Hylla:** Great. I want to start with maybe an easy, softball question for you.

What are some of the things that you like to cook and eat?

**Sean Sherman:** I love cooking, you know, and I love outdoor cooking especially, so I think it's just so nice that the weather is finally starting to turn an edge a little bit here because I just love being outdoors. But, you know, That's it, that's such a tough question.

So it's like, what's your favorite music to listen to or something, you know? Cause I just, I love food so much and I love seasonality. So I love the wild foods and I love all the seasons, you know, it's just now maple season right now. So we've just been pulling all of like the maple sap and Birch sap and black walnut sap and box elder sap and all the things.

And, you know, there's like

**Nick Hylla:** Walnut sap what, what do you do with black walnuts?

**Sean Sherman:** Same thing. Just cook it down until, you know, really reduces down to a syrup, and you can make sugar out of it too, if you wanna go a little bit further from there, but you know, it's just this, the turn of the season. So the things are starting to wake up, you know, the trees are thawing [00:02:00] and things are starting to happen.

So, but yeah, for cooking, I don't know. I love, I love Mexican food, but I love, I love the work that I'm doing. I love all the indigenous foods. We have so much great and native corns



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and wild rice and all the things. And, you know, I have a restaurant, so it's just so fun. We're always just playing with food.

So there's just so much, it's hard to pick.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah. I mean, you have such a long history cooking in in your book there's a great overview of kind of your travels. I mean, you founded one of the most innovative and culturally grounded restaurants in the U.S. You authored the cookbook it's earned recognition as best American cookbook in 2018.

You've received a James Beard Leadership Award so many more accomplishments that you have maybe, can you tell us, what motivated you to become a chef and an educator? And you know, what, what experiences have you have made you the chef that you are today?

Well, I think the motivation of becoming a chef being, becoming a chef was completely accidental and never intended for that to happen.

**Sean Sherman:** I just had worked [00:03:00] restaurants ever since I was super young. So I always started working in restaurants when I was 13 and I just worked restaurants all through high school and college and just got pretty good at it. So when I moved out of South Dakota and I moved into Minneapolis and started working in better restaurants in the city I just moved my way up, really fast, you know, so I just had a really good strong work ethic. And then I got an opportunity to be a chef my first restaurant, my first chef job at a restaurant was at a Spanish restaurant in Minneapolis. And we were one of the first Spanish tapas bars that happened kind of when that tapas boom happened, you know, in the early two thousands.

But I'd always also worked with a lot of farm to table kind of restaurants, too, which really, it was really nice. Cause I got to know a lot of the growers and I was just utilizing plants that weren't on the typical big box trucks, you know, and just being a lot more open to trying out new things and the experimenting with different foods and flavors, and just being curious about cultures and stuff like that. So, you know, it's been a crazy journey, but I just, part of me always loved food history. I just [00:04:00] like really like to know where food came from and I just really love studying, like where did all these things originate, unless the history of new migrations of foods and things like that.

And then, you know, eventually I just kind of hit that point where I just realized the complete absence of my own culture and foods, like just realizing there was no native restaurants out there. And there were very few books on the topic and you know, everything was really fusionized with just, you know, kind of colonial thought processes.

And I just really wanted to know, like, what were my ancestors truly eating and how are they preserving foods and storing foods and you know, where, which part, which plants were they using and which parts of the plants were they using and when were they harvesting those and where were they getting salts and fats and sugars and so many questions, you know?



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So it's been a long journey trying to piece this all together.

**Nick Hylla:** That's, a good lead into a question I've really wanted to ask you. And it's apparent kind of in your cookbook *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*, but how do you decolonize a meal?

**Sean Sherman:** So, you know, first off you [00:05:00] just understand what colonialism is I think is, is always the first step.

Colonialism is defined as the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another region and occupying it with settlers and then just extraction. So extracting lots of raw natural resources, you know, and it's, it's all about turning those extractions into profit, usually for a very small group of people.

But just leaving behind a lot of devastation and typically trauma when it comes to the indigenous peoples of certain areas. So just understanding that we, you know, The United States is a perfect example of the colonial machine and colonialism in general. And just knowing that colonialism still exists in many parts of the world, like it's active in Brazil. For example, right now there's indigenous peoples being destroyed and land space is being taken and natural resources, resources being extracted to again, make a very small group of people very rich. How do you decolonize food? You know, for us, there's just like looking at like, what was, what was here before colonialism, what was here before, [00:06:00] outside influences, what were, what were indigenous peoples eating and all the different diverse regions and all the different diverse cultures.

So, you know, for us, our practices always been really understanding where we are, the land that we're on, the history of the land, the peoples that live there, understanding the foods that were utilized through both. You know, wild foods and agricultural foods, depending on the region, you are the types of animals and birds and fish and insects are a part of the food systems and how people were preserving the foods and cutting out foods that weren't from here.

So like we removed dairy, removed wheat flour, re removed cane sugar typically beef, pork, and chicken. And we were just really focused on where we are and making food tastes like that. So I'm in Minnesota. So we could be making a dish that has rabbits, sunchokes, blueberries, rose hips white cedar and things like that.

And they can literally just stand in one spot and glance around and see all those ingredients right there around you and your surroundings, you know? So it's just, you know, just reconnecting and understanding the importance of these ancestral foods, [00:07:00] but also not trying to recreate the past and, you know, kind of setting a path to evolve these foods into the future.



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And, you know, having this moment to define what are indigenous foods today, you know, what are modern indigenous foods and how do we hold onto indigenous values as we just be really conscious of the work that we're doing through foods.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah, in your book. I think you see it really well. And you had mentioned this, you know, where is the food of my people today?

How come you don't see you know, a tribal restaurant or indigenous restaurant in North America? And you say this in your book, you say, why isn't the original indigenous diet, all the rage today. It's hyper-local ultra seasonal, uber healthy, no processed foods, no sugar, no wheat or gluten, no dairy, no high cholesterol animal products. And it does seem to be that it is really the diet that everybody claims to be looking for, it's so clean and beyond that you also have elevated it. So let's talk about your approach to this food and how it's become, I guess, so [00:08:00] popular and so well received,

**Sean Sherman:** I feel like we could probably, if we really wanted to go the route of trying to make a fad and try it to like, you know go with that, but that didn't seem right.

You know, cause we're not even touting ourselves as like a health food restaurant, even though all we serve as healthy food and you feel it when you sit down and eat, because you just were serving things like just wild rice and some different kinds of beans and some nixtamalized corns, and some, you know, healthy proteins and, you know, and it's very plant centric, you know?

So like my over half, the menu is completely plant-based when it comes down to it, you know, and it's just really good. So you, you can eat and you can feel full, but you get up and walk away and you don't feel overburdened with what you just ate. Now, your stomach's not hating you. Like your body feels good.

And that's how people should be feeling when they eat. And so we just really wanted to put it out there and we just really wanted to, you know, we're trying to normalize food, but we're trying to be very intentional. So we're very intentional about how we purchase products and who we purchase them from and which foods we're highlighting. So we try and purchase foods from indigenous peoples and producers [00:09:00] first, locally, and then nationally. And then we just support our local food scene as much as possible. And we really think about privilege a lot. So we try to purchase foods from a lot of underprivileged. Groups when it comes down to people that just had the struggle really hard, because maybe they didn't have a rich uncle to give them a couple million dollars to start a business, you know, and we just really think about that.

So we usually prioritize, you know, BIPOC in general, but, you know, with that emphasis on indigenous, because that's just the world in the realm that we're in but there's just, you know, I think that we should be a lot more intentional with our food ways and a lot more choosy and definitely supporting our local food systems as we move forward as much as possible and



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supporting those who don't come from privileged backgrounds, but it really have the passion to do something different.

And just highlighting, you know, so there's a lot of work to do. And again, we're just using the restaurant Owamni in Minneapolis, it's just kind of a proof of concept that we can have a modern you know, decolonized focused indigenous restaurant that really features the food of where we are.[00:10:00]

**Nick Hylla:** You know, that's one thing that, that really struck me about what you do is that it's very educational and the book is also not only about as you say, the food pathways but about the food itself. And you don't just run a restaurant you also have worked with a network of tribal members to found a nonprofit organization called the North American Traditional Indigenous food systems and you're promoting food pathways and food access. Can you tell me about some of that work?

**Sean Sherman:** Yeah, so it developed other than on our non-profit natives, which is the shortened word for that acronym, which is north American traditional indigenous food systems. And we're a 501 C3 and we formed in 2018 I believe officially, and then in 2019 where trying to find a home for ourselves and we had this plan under the, under the nonprofit we were trying to build out an indigenous kind of research and development support, training kitchen. And called it the indigenous food lab, [00:11:00] which is up and running right now in Minneapolis also.

And it was, you know, quite the journey for us. Cause we, we finally found a home in south Minneapolis in this building called the Midtown global market. Natural is this old Sears building. So it's this big towering building in the middle of south Minneapolis, kind of the tallest structure down there.

And then we were about ready to sign the leases on this kitchen space. And we had a restaurant space and all the things, all the plans that we had for the nonprofit and then the pandemic hit in 2020, and then we just had to pause like everybody else did because who could have foreseen the entire food business, food industry, just come to a screeching halt, right. So we got all of our staff on unemployment and we just kind of waited for a moment and realized it was really the worst time to even consider opening a restaurant. Cause that was always part of the plan with the nonprofit that indigenous food lab would carry a restaurant with it, to be kind of like an on the job, live training space in a place where the public to come and try what we're doing.

And then just a few weeks later you know, cause I think we shut everything down by the end of [00:12:00] March. And then by the end of May that's when George Floyd happens in Minnesota, Minneapolis, just a few blocks from where we were and the street that we're on just got completely hit during the riots, so everything around us was just burned down to the ground so that's when we just kind of got our staff back together during the middle of the pandemic, in the middle of the social uprising and started doing food relief because there was so much need for it. And so we started doing, 400 meals a day taking these healthy



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indigenous food largely to the homeless encampments that exploded around Minneapolis at that time period.

And then as the winter kind of came around, we started doing food relief and setting food directly to tribal communities around Minnesota. So we're working with nine out of the 11 tribes in Minnesota, and we're sending 10,000 healthy indigenous meals a week out of our kitchen during that time period. And then, you know, as that winter kind of winded down and food relief started, started becoming a little bit less intense we started just reforming our, starting to form ourselves of what our original intention was, was to create a space where we can do research and development [00:13:00] around indigenous food waste to help us grow our own knowledge base of indigenous food and helped to steward it basically for future generations and record it and keep it in a space that will be accessible and to create a community classroom where people can come and take classes on indigenous food ways, everything from cooking to language to, crafting to, you know seeds and farming and whatever it might be just really focusing on indigenous focused curriculum. And then also just becoming an incubator space where we can help develop more indigenous food producers and get more indigenous food products out there on the market right now we're under construction.

We're building out a native food market where people will be able to come and purchase indigenous food products which, you know, just are fairly unattainable out there right now and then creating an online presence for that to happen. And then our goal is to working directly with tribal communities, helping them to develop their own healthy, indigenous food operations for their community and just being a support role so we can help train and develop and then just support those [00:14:00] operations as they go outward.

And just hopefully creating a lot more indigenous food projects out there, all around us. And then this year we're also working on our first couple extensions, cause it was also our plan to replicate the indigenous food lab and move it to different regions. So this year we're actively looking at possibly creating an extension of indigenous food lab in Anchorage, Alaska one in Bozeman, Montana, and one in Rapid City, South Dakota.

And then food labs will become a center point for more production development, incubation, and support from just more indigenous and just access in each one of those food labs will carry with it, the large processing kitchen, the community classroom, the food market, which has the ability to be a small cafe, if it needs to be also just depending on where we land and just, you know, doing everything we can to help create system, to develop more indigenous food operations at the same time, helping to create a space for indigenous education to continuously grow that and steward it and just you know, put that into an [00:15:00] online space where digitally people can just access at any time and just growing that out.

So we have this really large plan, but we have a very clear path of how to accomplish it.

**Nick Hylla:** As you referenced in Minneapolis, it was, you know, crisis on crisis that was not only disruptive to the entire restaurant industry and food, but also to the city and your space.



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But you know, there is that adage with crisis comes opportunity. It sounds like, that some of your ideas have actually crystallized and even grown since then. How did the pandemic, and kind of this renewed focus on social justice, nationally and globally kind of help to highlight your, your efforts and or change what you were.

**Sean Sherman:** Yeah. I mean, our staff just felt so empowered to be able to do something, you know, cause we just felt so helpless during the pandemic. Like a lot of people did and you know, I remember back then we were all definitely like eight feet apart from each other or six feet apart or whatever it was and everybody's masked.

And, [00:16:00] but we worked in a pretty safe space cause we just worked under this giant hood in this big kitchen and we did a pretty good job.

**Nick Hylla:** So you were saying that kind of the food assistance work that you and your team were doing help to relieve kind of like bringing. And brief focused during the pandemic.

**Sean Sherman:** Yeah, I think it just helped us really see what was important and not only did we see all these restaurants just disappear and we saw all the destruction around us with all these small businesses and small restaurants and small grocery stores and all these things too, that really impacted our direct community, but also just a lot of our producers, a lot of the local producers that we utilize around us were struggling too, because all of a sudden they had more that nobody to sell anything to, you know, there was no restaurants buying anything but then, you know, we started a being able to, because we had the nonprofit status, we're able to bring some funding in to be able to support a small staff and to build. You know, purchase products out there. And we were able to move lots of food, you know, because there was just people just [00:17:00] stuck with a lot of stuff and we're able just to use those dollars to purchase all those foods from these local producers and then keep everything going around us basically.

And at that felt really good. You know, one producer we, I think we removed two semi-trailers of duck product through, through us, you know, for example, like a semi-trailer and we even, we typically don't use beef, pork or chicken, but we were working with a friends, some friends that have a large beef company and were able to process through a lot of beef, you know and just, you know, we're and just all the farm products, you know, cause all these different little cooperative farms around us that we utilize and just being able to push a ton of stuff when everything else just came to a screeching halt.

So that just felt really good to be able to do that. Also just continuously normalize what we were doing, which was just putting healthy indigenous foods out there. Except first people would be like, what is this? You know, like we just give them this healthy grain bowl with some fresh native nixtamal and wild rice and some berry sauce and maybe some duck [00:18:00] or something.

And it just didn't, you know, people weren't used to seeing what that was and we put the native names on it and everything too. And but you know, after a few times of just pushing



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those meals out there, people were super excited to get those meals, you know, and just cause they make you feel good and they, and they taste good.

And especially for a lot of our indigenous communities, they were very proud to see some of their foods out there and same with those when we were doing the food relief with the tribal communities and we were sending the food out in the separate languages of where they were going. So in Minnesota we have two, two main groups, the Anishinaabe and the Dakota.

So depending on where the food was going and we'd put it either in Dakota or Anishinaabe. The, when, you know, some of the elders were getting some of that food, they'd be really surprised to see their language on it. And it'd be very, you know, proud and happy to have that. Yeah.

**Nick Hylla:** That's a good opening, I guess, to talk a little bit about some of the indigenous history in the U.S. You did a Ted talk, which will link to this podcast for those who haven't seen it, it's really [00:19:00] excellent. There's one part of your presentation, and it shows a slide of a man in the mid 1800s standing atop top a mountain of bison skulls that were intentionally slaughtered to disrupt the indigenous food system. And you know, even though you know, most of us are familiar with the history, that image is just really shocking and profoundly disturbing. And it kind of demonstrates that crystallizes kind of the disruption that was intentional in the indigenous food system. And I guess with that, you know, can you talk a little bit about the difference between, you know, you say healthy indigenous food and redeveloping these food pathways, the difference between that and is typically kind of like served in the reservation system or what indigenous people have come to accept as, or what even we have come to accept as normal.

**Sean Sherman:** Yeah. I mean, cause you know, you just look at the history of, and it's a lot of this history happens in the 1800s. Of [00:20:00] course, you know, there's obviously history before that, but we see a lot of damage because if you look at the year 1800, the United States is isn't much more than the original 13 colonies at that point. Still, even though we're states now, but we're still at war with Great Britain, we're still fighting over that status of being its own country, you know? But the, that young country also discovers that by every time it's able to acquire more indigenous land space, it's able to commodify it and sell it on a massive scale. And the United States becomes extremely rich selling a lot of indigenous land space that they're constantly taking over.

And at the same time in that part of history, they're still utilizing a lot of indigenous peoples from Africa to build everything and do all the heavy work too. So they're using a lot of free labor basically when it comes down to it and enslaved labor, I should say but it's a really awful history, you know, and it's really damaging.

And just seeing what happens in the 1800s is just really intense, you know? So you see the intentional dismantling of like the [00:21:00] ecosystems, you know, cause you see the colonial machine coming through and just mowing down forests and all these various regions and just extracting so much and then placing settlers all over the place and you know, for a





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territory to become a state, the white population has to outweigh the indigenous population, which becomes very dangerous for the indigenous population.

Also on top of that. There's just all this stuff. So at the turn of the century, after the reservation systems are formed and then we have lost a lot of land our entire environments have changed completely. A lot of game as eliminated. You know, the bison is a great example. You can find a whole bunch of just parts of people talking back and forth in Congress of what to do and coming on that decision to pay for the complete destruction of that animal.

And just spending a ton of money for hunters, you know, in the late 1860s to just be out there. And they're, they're just wiping out tens of thousands of them, you know, over a few month period. And it's very small groups and there's multiple there's thousands of groups out there doing that.

So to see [00:22:00] racing, hundreds of millions of those animals out there for the sole intention from the U S government to hurt the indigenous communities that were thriving throughout the Midwest and especially like a tribe, like where I come from with the Oglala Lakota who had been such a power force on that region, And there's just so much history.

So by the time I'm born, you know, we're completely removed from our food ways. I'm born in the early seventies. And, you know, I'm raised with the commodity food program, which was there too, as part of the government's agreement to supply food products, you know, and there's obviously buying a lot of the, you know, cheap foods and you look at the commodity food programs still today.

And it still is, is it's a rough one to be able to survive off of because there's very little nutrition when it comes through those programs, you see a lot of carbs, you see a lot of you know, vegetables and heavy sodium or fruits and heavy sugars and it's just so much carbs and sodium when it comes down to this, because I grew up with, you know, powdered milk [00:23:00] and government, corn flakes and government can beef and government can pork and you know, all the different things, just like super syrupy, vegetable fruits, and canned fruits and things like that. And it's just not a good food product and it doesn't even come close to replacing indigenous foods, you know, and then just, you know, having generations of us growing up with that and creating family recipes and comfort foods out of those food sources and becoming really connected to those foods because they can become a part of us of how we grew up in the foods that we ate, you know, And what we were able to create with it. Looking past that and looking what what's possible for the future, you know, what's possible by really, truly understanding and embracing indigenous food ways and evolving it into a new generation and setting it up for constant adaptation and evolution as, more creativity can come into it. Allowing the time and space for indigenous peoples to reclaim that and to be able to define their own food ways, you know, I think that's where we're at right now, where we're able to actually take [00:24:00] this time to do this. And we're just trying to be role models of what's possible, you know? And what does a modern day indigenous full-scale colonized restaurant look like in today's world?



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That was the attempt of what we tried to do with Owamni.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah. And by all measures, at least from an outside perspective, you know, incredibly successful and you know, you, you, as in particular, it seems to me, you know, you spend a lot of time, at least from what I can gather.

You know, you've talked about the time that you've spent like building relationships with different tribes. I talked about the nine tribes in Minnesota. You've been working with where you've come, but you also spend a lot of time in communities that are predominantly European descendant doing education. Which is, I think, equally important. So, you know, you carry this history with you you know, and I think the same food issues exist. You know, most people are addicted to the wrong food. And so what experiences are you having? You're talking about, you know, it takes a couple of times, [00:25:00] but then pretty soon people are begging you for more.

So is that what you're finding?

**Sean Sherman:** We're just trying to normalize it. We're just trying to create access to it. You know, our whole two goal points for a nonprofit is creating access to indigenous foods and creating access to indigenous education. You know, and it's really pushing back with the United States government took away from us as indigenous peoples by removing us from our own educational systems and, you know, defining what is indigenous education in general.

But just knowing that those are thousands of generations of knowledge bases being wiped off and replaced with westernized education. And then also just, you know, with the destruction of food ways, like making that a point to of what we're trying to return is just get our foods back basically in a, an understanding of our foods.

And I think for non-indigenous peoples, it's just showcasing what's possible because, you know, if you just identify what is an indigenous food system and how did community survive for thousands of generations? You know, it's just a localized food system that's typically done with [00:26:00] a lot of. Community support you like it takes an entire community to harvest and process and to create pantry items for the entire community utilize throughout the rest of the year.

But it's also just looking at the vast knowledge of just the wild plants around us and understanding how both agriculture and permaculture diversity works with all the different ways. People figured out how to do things in different regions. And if we're able to pull together like all of these indigenous knowledge bases together and really utilize them in today's world and learn from learn from them, instead of destroying them, like we could just be living in a much better world and it would be much better connected.

We have so much more plant diversity in our diets. We'd be utilizing our land space so much better instead of just growing dumb lawns everywhere. You know, we could just be putting



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food out all over the place and, you know, we could. There's so much for us to benefit from, by helping to preserve indigenous food ways on a global scale when it comes down to it.

So that's, our hopes is waking people up to see that the colonial [00:27:00] machine has just been nothing but extraction and devastation. And we should really be focused on the, the peoples who have had so much history and culture built around very specific land spaces and how we can work to reclaim a lot of those knowledge bases and activate them in today's world to strive, to work towards a better future.

**Nick Hylla:** Right. All is not lost. You know, I think in your book and then your presence, you demonstrate that and you know, there's something incredibly focusing and grounding about becoming involved in local indigenous food processed. Finding wild mushrooms and picking them and eating them hunting. And so maybe let's just talk a little bit about the next few months here and get somewhat specific about some of the foods you have so many beautiful, amazing foods laid out in your book here. And some that I think most people would typically recognize as indigenous, like wild rice and, all the different kind of [00:28:00] like races of corn and bean. But here we are, it's we're we're right there the days are getting longer. It's warming up, what are, what are we looking forward to? What's the most people you have in your book here too? Like most people think they're weeds. You said too, but what are those things that we're about to see?

**Sean Sherman:** I mean, we're here in Minnesota, I'm in here in Minnesota and you know, maybe.

And the trees are thawing right now. So everybody's gathering all the sap and a lot of people are cooking everything down into syrup, and some people are pushing it further and creating sugars out of it too. And there's just a lot of that happening. And then pretty soon the, the forest floors are going to start to wake up a little bit.

We're going to see watercress starting to sprout up everywhere and all in, the waterways, we're going to see the ramps and the fiddleheads start to pop out first, you know, and just a lot of the spring, all, a lot of those little spring things. And then we're going to start to see blossoms right after that.

Then we utilize all those blossoms too. So elderflower blossoms, choke cherry blossoms, apple blossoms, you know, and just, you try to gather all those as we can also. [00:29:00] And then pretty much it's just going to be summer. And like, it's just gonna be everything's just awake. Can do so much bounty, you know, and then we go through all the various bury seasons and things, and then we finally get to the, you know, and everybody's grown all their gardens with all the things that kind of comes through over the summer months and then, then we hit the fall season where, you know, we start harvesting everything and, you know, the, the way I like tree nuts and just all of the, all of the, all the winter foods, starting to be harvested, all the squash and pumpkins and things like that. And then it's that preservation time, you know, we're just like trying to preserve everything that we can as we go through the year.



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And we try to do that anyways throughout the whole year. Cause like ramps are a good example. Like we just typically just pick a lot of the tops of the ramps off cause we want to keep those bulbs in the ground. So they continue to grow and continue to. And instead of pulling them all up but then, you know, taking the time to like just dry out all those wrap tops, and then we're able to just to create like, you know, dried ramp onion powder and, you know, have that as a staple to utilize and cooking for the rest of the year.[00:30:00] As examples, you know, and just, you know, thinking about all the different food preservation methods, but I just, I really love dehydration just cause it holds onto a lot of the nutritional value and it just keeps it so much better. You know, pickling is great and jarring and canning and can be creative, but a lot of times there's just a lot of recipes, so there's just way too much salt and sugar in those recipes to, you know, and highest high acidity.

And, and I think it's just, it's so nice to have a big pantry filled with all these dried herbs and flowers and onions and gingers and garlics and all the things that just grow around us, you know? And it's just, there's a lot of stuff we can do.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah, well, I mean, you're, there are tastes in your book that I don't know that I've ever experienced before.

I'm excited to, one thing that you do is like Cedar braising can you talk about that? Like, how do you, do you get young Cedar or how does that work?

**Sean Sherman:** You know, picking out someplace that's clean, usually not by a highway obviously, and looking for Cedar brow bowels that are really vibrant green, especially in the springtime, but you can harvest Cedar throughout the whole [00:31:00] year.

Cause they're evergreen too, you know? And a lot of the conifers. So we use a lot of white Cedar. We use a lot of Balsam for here. We use a lot of spruce and pine and we make a lot of teas out of those kinds of things too, but they're also just good seasoning. So we'll just throw it in. So things like you know, some elk roast and we'll slow cook it with a bunch of Cedar boughs and a little bit of onion, a little bit of salt, a little bit of maple, and that's kind of it.

And then we'll just let it slow cook until it's falling apart tender. And it just absorbs all of that flavor and you can smell like you can smell, it just smells like the forest, you know, and again, it's just making food tastes like where you are and it's just, you know, so good.

**Nick Hylla:** Well, you've elevated so much of this food I just, I want to read some, some of this just sounds so good. I have yet to make any of this yet, but especially in your dessert section, sunflower milk sorbet, sweet corn sorbet, Hazel nut maple sorbet, wild rice sorbet, maple squash sorbet with cranberries blueberry, raspberry, bergamot [00:32:00] spoon sweet. So you've really and you know, all of this is, like you said, it's not sugar. You use honey or maple syrup or maple sugar. And a lot of it is wild harvested it's absolutely, just beautiful. Is there any particular thing that I've said or any particular product you're you want people that try?



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I sure want to try some of this.

**Sean Sherman:** I think just the simplicity of it, you know, we’ve, because now that we have the restaurant, we're able to just experiment and create a whole bunch of recipes and we've been doing a tasting menu all winter. We just came up with a whole bunch of new stuff, and this has been a lot of fun to see where our creativity lies and what our team can do.

And we've just got some really great creative minds on, on our staff there. And there's just a lot of fun and they know, even though some people might think it's super difficult to do the style food we're doing by removing some of these ingredients, like dairy flour and sugar, which is typically a dessert recipe anywhere, you know, and coming up with a bunch of new stuff, you know?

And I think it's just fun cause it's just, you [00:33:00] know, there's just endless amounts of creativity that we can have and, and still be healthy, like alive. We're still making these foods and they still happen to be healthy because.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah. So Sean, maybe to wrap up your, can you talk a little bit about your restaurant? Where is it so people just show up or do you need a reservation?

**Sean Sherman:** It's been busy. So we opened up in July last year and we've been, we haven't had a single night that we haven't been completely sold out since we've started. So it's just..

**Nick Hylla:** Congratulations!

**Sean Sherman:** Thanks! And it's, you know, it's a good, busy, cause we know exactly what to expect since we're just capacity all the time.

But the restaurants called Owamni within the name comes from the feature that became downtown Minneapolis, which was this beautiful waterfall on the Mississippi river and as people came in, they named it St. Anthony Falls but the true and original name of it by the Dakota people that lived there was Owamni-Yomni meant place of the falling and swirling water.

And it was such a dynamic waterfall because it was about 300 feet across and [00:34:00] about 40 feet down. And it was the only waterfall in the entire Mississippi. So the name for the Mississippi and Dakota language is Haha Wakpa, which meant river of the falls, which meant that space. So our restaurant overlooks, basically, what is the heart of the Mississippi for the Dakota people.

And there was a village on the side of the river. We're a restaurant sits and it was a place where people could portage and there was a lot of trade going on there there's a lot of farming going on around it, of course. And there's a lot of islands that had special meeting meanings.



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Like there is one island just for women and some islands for gathering and meeting with other groups and things like that and there's just a lot of, there's just a lot of stuff going on. It was a really culturally important space and we feel really lucky, but almost like it was meant to be that our first big brick and mortar restaurant concept is on this very sacred land space and that we're able to, you know, use the name of that space and basically just reclaim that namespace.

So, you know, if you're going to Owamni, that's just what the space was. That's just the short name that people use for [00:35:00] that area so it's just a, it's a really cool restaurant and you know, it's not very big inside. We have about a 90 seats, which is decent size. But outside, we have a couple hundred seats cause it's, it's a brand new park and it's owned by the Minneapolis Park Board, the planned space in the building.

And we're just there to provide food for the park and it's just been really great, you know, so we have kind of a family style menu where people can just order and try a bunch of stuff and share with their table and we, again, you know, we're using lots of proteins, like elk and bison and turkey and duck and venison and rabbit.

We have a lot of lake fish we do some recipes that represent the coastal regions, whether it's east coast or west coast and we're just having a lot of fun, you know, and we use the indigenous food lab to do a lot of, kind of some of our bulk stuff. So we buy a lot of we've nixtamalized native American corn at the food lab and process that into masa and tamales and tortillas that we sell to the restaurant.

And that way the restaurants always purchasing from the nonprofit and pushing money into the nonprofit and helping our, our culinary [00:36:00] staff be a lot more sustainable when it comes to that. So we've been working really hard on trying to create that symbiotic relationship between the nonprofit and for-profit and just working towards a more sustainable nonprofit vision when it comes down to it.

**Nick Hylla:** Well, it's super exciting. We're really looking forward to meeting you in person and hosting you at The Energy Fair you'll be talking on the 25th, Saturday, June 25th of this year we'll also be hosting Bob Blake, who is also a tribal member located in Minnesota. Who's doing solar training and has amazing ideas about renewable energy transition for tribes.

And then Dr. Kyle White, who's been working on indigenous issues related to climate change, and he has a concept called kinship time, how we're going to reconcile how all is not lost. Well, thank you so much, Sean, and good luck and please enjoy all of the wonderful bounty that's about to happen in spring and help everybody else enjoy it as well.

**Sean Sherman:** All right. Well, I appreciate it. Thanks for having me.

**Kyle Galloway:** We'll be right back with our interview with MREA events [00:37:00] manager, Celia Sweet. We would first like to take a moment to thank some of our Energy



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**Nick Hylla:** Podcast.

Celia. Welcome to the rise of podcast. How are you doing?

**Celia Sweet:** Nick. Thanks for asking. I'm doing great. Happy to be here at my home, but with you all at once. Thanks for having me.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah, it's a continuation of our, the screen new deal. At one point, though, we will all be at The Energy Fair together. And that's what we're here to talk about today because you have [00:38:00] the burden and the honor of leading the organization of The Energy Fair, which we haven't had for two years, Celia, how's it going so far?

**Celia Sweet:** It's going great. A wise man named Nick Hylla once said to me that at this point you should feel minorly behind and that's how you know it's going well. So I responded, I think things are going really well. The excitement is absolutely building from both our attendees. And I think the staff, as much as we're all, you know, busy from day to day so things are going well.

I can't wait to be at the Fair.

**Nick Hylla:** Good me, me also, well, you know, a wise person once told me you know, the only way to make a diamond out of coal is a lot of pressure. So definitely need you probably feeling the pressure here. It's March. So we only have a few months but we're not here to talk about the stress of managing the.

We're here to talk about the Fair itself. So I guess I'll start with a relatively open-ended question you're booking bands, you're booking speakers. You have a full workshop schedule, just [00:39:00] kind of at a high level what has you excited about what you're seeing so far?

**Celia Sweet:** Mm that's a really lovely question and I feel like I could touch on almost any aspect of the Fair and pull out things that are exciting I mean, as always, I think the joy of live music and entertainment is a really special thing and that's something that I think almost anyone who's interested in any part of, maybe the fare could really connect on our entertainment and that live experience.

So I can't wait to see people dancing together.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah. So tell us who were the bands that you have booked so far?



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**Celia Sweet:** Yeah, absolutely so our Friday night closer is going to be Gold and they're returning to the Fair they were with us, I believe in 2017. And they put on quite a show.

**Sean Sherman:** I was thoroughly impressed. Yeah. Somebody, somebody said, somebody said, it's like watching Blondie play for the first time. So..

**Celia Sweet:** So we can't wait they're going to be absolutely incredible. And they've been really great to work with, with which I think just like shows how wonderful of a group they really are. [00:40:00] So that's our Friday night closer.

Our Saturday night closer is a kind of bluegrass jam band, which I know we've seen a lot at the Fair, but this group just has a very specific and wonderful energy. It's Armchair Boogie they'll be playing on Saturday night and then Sunday, we have an 11 piece band that features a rapper as the main part.

And then some horns in the background, backup singers at drum it's all very family friendly. And just like if there's a way for a group to be goofy and also very culturally relevant and present, this is them and they come from Minneapolis, so happy to welcome a really local group as well.

**Nick Hylla:** Great. And you had to have another local group which is TAE and she has a band now TAE...

**Celia Sweet:** TAE & The Neighborly band. Right? You got it. Yeah. So we have TAE joining us she's local from Wisconsin. She came to us through, well from word of mouth we've. I think all of us have been really big fans of her for a while, but I've also been working with someone named Alex Grant from Homemade Music. He started [00:41:00] this really beautiful project during COVID, where he goes to an artist's homes and records them live, and Tae was one of those. So he was able to connect us with her and that Sunday band Nur-D and on top of that, we also have two more acts, actually. It's crazy how much we're fitting in within the weekend. Also we have returning Patchouli & Terra Guitarra which they've been at The Energy Fair for years and years in the past few. And then we have Genevieve Heyward also returning to the forest stage.

**Nick Hylla:** Well, that's really exciting, lots of great talent. And you know, the Fair is, you were a big tent organization and the Fair is all tents. So it's outside, it's "in-tents" as they say intense and so entertainment starts Friday evening or Friday, late afternoon,

**Celia Sweet:** Friday, late afternoon don't quote me on this. I want to say around 2:00 PM is when Patchouli is going to kick us off and then Gold will be finishing out Friday night.

So a really big way to start the weekend. I recommend people pace themselves Friday night in preparation for the rest of what is to come. [00:42:00]





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**Nick Hylla:** We burn the candle at both ends during The Energy Fair. It only happens once a year. So we're an edutainment event, right? So we started with the fun stuff.

Well, it's all fun and exciting but maybe now we could talk about some of the keynote speakers and so who have you been working with?

**Celia Sweet:** Absolutely so Sean Sherman, who I believe you've just interviewed we're very excited to have him. You may know of his organization, The Sioux Chef including some restaurant, books. He really seems to be involved in kind of like a food revolution in a bunch of different ways. So we're excited to have him talking about indigenous food systems and all that comes along with that within community.

We have Kyle White, who I know will also be featured on the podcast he's going to be speaking on kinship time, which I'll let him really dig into what that means cause he does it beautifully, but just a lot of understanding of community and why that is an important step, especially related to native tribes within our country as well.

And then we a little more locally have [00:43:00] Shimekia Nichols from Soulardarity in Highland Park and she'll again, be talking about community involvement and activism. And really what's needed. And what I really like about Shimekia I love all of our keynotes, but that she's really delivering a message of a possible action.

So it doesn't really just feel like a broken up topic about like, oh, I'm really excited, but I'm not sure what to do. She really is going to give you like her full story on what they did to make change within their area.

Let's see, beyond that, we also have Robert Blake who is one of the MREA board members, owner of Solar Bear in, I believe Minneapolis, if I'm not mistaken. He is incredible. He was featured on season two of the rise up podcast, and he speaks a lot about workforce development specifically within tribes and he's also the most energetic person I've ever heard talk in my life. You know that as well.

And then we have John Farrell who is a returning keynote. He'll be speaking about energy democracy. And he's just a really incredible kind of industry voice that I think will really speak [00:44:00] to maybe a slightly different audience than the majority of our other keynotes. But, I mean, even just within those general descriptions, I think it's easy to see. We have such a variety that could be of interest to every attendee who comes.

But also I think we're, we're really trying to focus on pulling in new messages from new communities. And I think that will hopefully speak to a wider audience as well.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah. And in that summary, you're kind of giving some context to this, like the just energy transition or The Energy Fair for all concept, which if you think about Sean Sherman and Kyle Whyte and Shimekia, you know, they're all working to expand access to healthy food to create, as Sean says, re-established food pathways and kind of build local



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food wealth and food sovereignty, and Shimekia from Highland Park and Soulardarity you know, their backstory is that group Soulardarity started because during kind of the I guess, I can't remember the technical term, Michigan went [00:45:00] through like a bankruptcy process and Highland Park had a closed a Ford plant, I believe, and was economically struggling in the utility, took all the light poles out of the community, so they started just community organizing to establish solar powered, LED lights, to like relight their community. And it's grown from there and we're working with them on solar training and then to John Farrell. So, you know, helping include more people in the transition. And then John Farrell really addressing that energy democracy piece of how can we all be part of this?

So, yeah, it's really exciting. And, you know, just congratulations on getting all those great speakers. Obviously, really excited to share it with everybody that shows up and I, you just shared the workshop's submission spreadsheet with me, which is hundreds of hundreds of of workshops that we're sorting through, and anything really standing out to you, anything that you think would be interesting, even for you to see?

**Celia Sweet:** [00:46:00] Oh yeah. Oh, man, it's hard to choose. Like you said, a hundreds of workshops, submissions, and I mean, there's just, there's an incredible amount of knowledge in so many different aspects of clean energy and sustainability.

I will say, you know, we, I think we always have a lot of really wonderful industry focused workshops, be it you know, putting solar on your own home or battery storage, whatever that looks like for the people who are interested. But I think something that I'm extra excited about being able to offer attendees is that mindfulness aspect coming out of COVID.

Everyone is in a different place than they were two years ago people's mindsets are different and really you know, coming back and focusing on connecting, not just with the people around you and your communities, but also yourself in the midst of everything that we've gone through in the last two years that we continue to go through that we continue to work for.

So I'm not sure if you've read through all of them, but I think there are a few, I put little notes on them that are just really. I think [00:47:00] a really great way to just like bring people back to themselves while they're coming back to the Fair as well.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah. I, I agree that, you know, the variety is from the technically specific to, you know, solar and energy storage and energy, energy efficiency, and electrifying your heating and deep energy retrofits and all of the ways that we can better use more wisely, use energy to more wisely, manage our own affairs and be more kind and be more optimistic and engaged and more organized.

And so it was great to see, you know, the, the, for anybody listening out there, we just asked for proposals and and people come for free to share. And and so it's a tremendous opportunity how many do you know Celia based on the number of proposals and the Fair layouts, kind of how many workshops we'll have running at the same time?



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**Celia Sweet:** Great question we do have, I believe we have restructured the physical layout of the Fair, just a bit to accommodate some new traits of the Fair I believe we're going to have nine workshop tents that are [00:48:00] fully functioning from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM with workshops. So there will be at least nine going on, and that doesn't include things like keynotes. So it will be probably a little tough to pick what you're going to spend your time doing if you attend the Fair and then we'll also have a tent that is set aside for a clean energy career fair, and that we'll be holding some workshops throughout the day in between some other events as well.

**Nick Hylla:** Okay thanks for bringing that up. Let's talk about the community career fair. What is what's going on there?

**Celia Sweet:** Absolutely I mean, it's an idea that came from 2020 at the intended Fair of 2020 with the whole focus of bringing more clean energy jobs to people, bringing opportunities to people creating pathways for people to get into the industry.

And honestly, Nick, this is one of those times where I think you might be able to give an even better summary, but as far as the Fair for this year, what it really looks like the logistics for hosting it on Friday and Saturday night of the Fair we're going to have some exhibitors within the tent itself.

So within this structure, which will be some technical colleges that we partner with and then some, just some hiring [00:49:00] companies within the industry as well and then within that time, people who are looking for jobs or who are curious about getting into this industry are going to be able to come in.

And it's really a great networking opportunity along with the workshops that we're going to provide that are focused on career enhancement. People will be able to meet and chat and who knows get hired or see pathways of what they can do to move forward and then there will be a social hour within that tent as well.

So really, really just pushing, networking, making things accessible for people and kind of giving like, like I said, clearer pathways and how you would move forward.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah. So let's just review. So if you want to just come out and have a good. There's plenty of awesome entertainment. If you want to learn something in a 50 minute or hour long workshop session, there'll be eight to nine of them happening from Friday in the morning on a, of all different topics.

And if you're looking for a job because it's an all hands on deck moment, we have a career Fair with not only [00:50:00] employers participating but training organizations. I just saw today, for example, in the news, a Generac, Wisconsin based company has 700 positions open in Wisconsin right now actively hiring.



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So now is the time to get a job. One thing we haven't talked about yet, Celia is family friendly events. You've been working on stacking up the we're very family friendly events. So what, what are we offering?

**Celia Sweet:** Absolutely. I think depending on what your family is interested in, depending on if you have children, their ages, technically you could say the whole fare is a family-friendly, but we've really wanted to put a focus on things that really have a calling to the younger children.

So we have the rainbows end kids' tent that's in a new location this year to kind of give a little bit more like privacy, but also spaciousness for the kids to play. So aside from things like a natural playscape that we'll be putting into place for the kids to enjoy and really just get to be kids again, you know, who knows what these kids have been going through in the last two years. So along with that, we have things like family dance and [00:51:00] yoga classes for the full family to move together. We have workshops for kids to learn about sustainability, but things they can really get their hands on and then we're also doing things like aerial dance classes where kids can fly in the air a little bit if they want to, parents can do it too.

The snakes and frogs will be returning to the Fair. So some, so some old favorites, some new things to come. And then we're also still in progress at putting things together, like physical activities for all attendees to do, but I'm afraid to say anything.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah, don't jinx it. And the rainbow's end kids tent is run by a local public charter school called the Tomorrow River Community Charter School. And they have been with us for, since they, since they first came around a number of years ago and do an amazing job and, oh my goodness. I'm so excited for the snakes and frogs. Wait, w- what's his name?

**Celia Sweet:** David Stokes!

**Nick Hylla:** David Stokes! David Stokes!. He is [00:52:00] absolutely wonderful. Okay. So now we have families to o but we haven't talked about solar professionals. We have a whole week of solar professional, continuing education workshops. You want to talk about that?

**Celia Sweet:** Well, the full week, again, you might know a little bit more about the week of it that leads up to the Fair, but within the fare itself, we do have three full days of energy, professional CE workshops, and that's all sponsored by different manufacturers and distributors. So really a great opportunity for people probably already within the industry to come in and get some continuing education credits and it's also a wonderful time for people to really get to know more about the manufacturers and distributors that they might want to be involved in or involved with and having done so already.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah. And that, you know, it's hundreds of professionals from all over the Midwest that are learning about solar and getting into an industry or maintaining their certification, or just building their knowledge.



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It has a tremendous professional networking opportunity. And so between the career [00:53:00] fair and the exhibit opportunities and the workshop presentations and the continuing education workshops you know, there's just a ton of opportunity for professionals in the industry, which I just brought up exhibits.

What about the exhibit this year? What's exciting?

**Celia Sweet:** The fact that people have. Businesses and they want to share their stories and their products and their services with the community. It's really great to see a lot of groups returning, and we're really happy to have those like old partners back. And then also bringing in completely new groups that have maybe formed within the last few years while the Fair has been gone, or just have never heard of the Fair.

So it's great to know that we're reaching new audiences, whether they be industry focused or a sustainable living focused. And this year, a change that we did put in was changing up our tents a little bit. So if you've been a long time attendee of the Fair, this will probably sound familiar to you, but we typically have just let exhibitors go wherever they like, just to [00:54:00] kind of mingle throughout the Fair this year, we're keeping all of our clean energy industry folks in one side, and then all of our sustainable living on the other, just so that new attendees have a little bit better understanding of if you're looking for this thing, here's where you go. So a mildly new structure, but like I said, primarily just excited to.

See the friends we haven't seen in a long time in our exhibit, our tents, and then also welcome in completely new groups that bring something new to the two. Yeah.

**Nick Hylla:** We have such a great network of nonprofit education exhibitors, and then also products and service suppliers. We're really working this year to reach out to kind of this growing industry of energy storage, including like mobile electric generators and solar power applications and electric vehicles and electric lawn equipment, electric bicycles everything electric, right? The future is electric!

**Celia Sweet:** Our intended theme from 2020. And in fact, thank you for mentioning electric bicycles. We're really seeing a huge push for e-bikes to be at the Fair.

So we're working with quite a few different either [00:55:00] nonprofits or just like local bike shops to have a presence at the Fair and bring kind of a hands-on exploration of that. Along with those exhibitors as well, kind of cycling back to workshops, we have a lot of groups who we'll be talking about making your communities more bike friendly and how you engage with your local governments to do these things.

So a lot of like really action-based clean transportation focused things.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah, it's very exciting. We also have camping. So there's camping at the Fair we're organizing buses for transportation and what about getting into the fare? How much does it cost? I hear members get in free?



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**Celia Sweet:** So something that we're pushing this year, specifically is tickets go on sale April 1st, the cost for adults say for a full weekend would be \$35. That's the same price as a membership to the MREA. So what we're really trying to promote here is becoming a member of the MREA serves you not just to get into the Fair, but it really serves along with benefits for the full year. So [00:56:00] we're recommending checking out the memberships for the MREA.

You can purchase those at any time, or you can take advantage of the early bird pricing, which like I said, starts on April 1st.

**Nick Hylla:** Great and there are kind of like day pricing, student pricing, senior pricing, all weekend pricing. So go to the pinch site become a member it's worth it we're a great organization.

You can support our work year round and get into the Fair for free there's another way you can get into the Fair for free though. What is it? What is it?

**Celia Sweet:** It's called volunteering at the fair and there are literally hundreds of opportunities to do it do you want me to get into the weeds a little bit?

Let's do it so lots of different ways to do it you can simply volunteer for two hours at the Fair and get in for one full day. So two hours of volunteer time would equal a full day at the Fair we have a lot of other options. We have hardcore volunteers who work up to 12 hours and then get in to the full Fair for free.

We have working members who put in about 24 hours, I believe throughout a [00:57:00] year. And then they are able to get in and they have a full blown membership just from those volunteer hours. There's so much, we have a lot of local nonprofits who will be volunteering as groups within the Fair. So also great opportunities to mingle with local nonprofits as they volunteer.

We could go even deeper, but the, the best way to view that would also be by going to the website, making sure you're signed up for the energy fair newsletter and we'll have information on that in our pre-fair guide, which comes out in about mid April.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah. I think most of the people that work here started volunteering here and probably at the Fair, when we, we had it in a little while, the last few years, we haven't been able to have it.

And that brings me to our beautiful site, which is this lovely rolling hills of Custer Wisconsin, and paint a picture for me Celia.

**Celia Sweet:** Well picture it, it makes it very easy to sell the beauty of the Fair. I think just by seeing a single picture of the fairgrounds, if you have ever been to central [00:58:00] Wisconsin, you know, that there may be, isn't a lot, maybe not a ton of elevation, but the



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beauty of the hills and Custer are very they're very welcoming and maybe I'm a little bit biased because I'm a fan of the Fair and of our site and Custer itself.

But we have big, large tents scattered throughout the fairgrounds this year specifically being mindful of the spacing of things. We're really excited and thankful that this has always been an outdoor event but I think there are, there are places to kind of get lost within the fairgrounds in a great way to take a little time for yourself if it's a hot day. Like for example, we have a nursing station for any caregivers who are in need of it man, painting a picture is almost impossible. My first recommendation. Oh, great. Well, I was going to say my first recommended. To come to the Fair.

**Nick Hylla:** Yeah you can only see it for yourself we also have done a lot of work to our main building.

It's covered in solar. We have an energy storage system tech center, and there'll be tours of that all weekend led by our resident [00:59:00] expert, Nick Mathis so if you're interested in energy storage, we also have a large solar canopy and electric vehicle charging. So there'll be electric vehicle charging at the Fair all weekend.

How do people sign up for them? I imagine they must sign up because we get hundreds and hundreds of cars.

**Celia Sweet:** Yes, you got it. So with most things I always recommend head to the website it's very, I like to think it's well organized. I organized it there will be options as we get a bit closer to the Fair to sign up for those.

For the EVs charging things like workshops, you do not need to sign up for ahead of time. So there are some portions of the fare that such as camping, like you mentioned, that you'll want to sign up for ahead of time. That will be very clearly laid out in the prefare guide and then on the website as well.

But much of the Fair, I would say you don't need to prepare for it. You can just wander in from the front gate and head to where you're going.

**Nick Hylla:** Yes. Please bring a water bottle. If not, you can buy one at The Energy Fair marketplace. We are going to have some really nice stainless steel, [01:00:00] insulated water bottles and other goods.

**Celia Sweet:** That's right. And the MREA branded colors. So you'll fit in. Perfect.

**Nick Hylla:** Oh, Kyle Kyle says we have to talk about the zero waste event, which I can't believe I forgot about. So tell me what is a zero waste event?



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**Celia Sweet:** So I will clearly define, we are a near zero waste event. I'm doing any kind of event planning and having absolutely zero waste is an incredible goal that we continue to work towards this year. We have an official partnership with recycling connections, which is a local nonprofit focusing on waste management in the Steven's Point area.

They are helping us pilot a reusable dishware program. So as you know, if you think back to events that we used to go to having a bunch of like styrofoam containers and plastic spoons, stuff like that, not excellent. The Energy Fair has been really great at having compostable dishes like that. But what we're gonna try out with recycling connections for the very first event to try it with them is a [01:01:00] reusable dishware program.

So they'll be doing that within the food court we've done it in the past, but recycling connections is going to help us with it as well, which is doing composting. So we'll have a lot of volunteers scattered around all the waste stations, making sure that we're getting all the right things into the right places.

And then we're working with a local composter to take care of that. Anywhere that we can start to improve this year, even beyond what we've already been doing in the years past recycling connections is going to be helping us with them.

**Nick Hylla:** Great and which reminds me about food and beverage, right. What kinds of food and beverage what's what's happening with our food and beverage?

**Celia Sweet:** Yeah, so full, false, so much. So our food vendors, you're going to see some returning from the past, and then we are in communications with a lot of new ones. And that, that's another thing that I kind of like to keep secret until we get closer to kind of draw the excitement out. So yeah, I mean, a big push as with anything, for the Fair, from our exhibitors to workshop presenters, we're trying to bring in new communities of people that haven't always felt represented at the Fair or that we've noticed there's [01:02:00] been potentially a lack of. So while Wisconsin is incredible for our cheese curds, we're looking to maybe bring in a little bit more in terms of a food experience and shed light on some other ways of eating. So speaking of Wisconsin beer, we'll also be serving beer as always but something that we also are pushing to highlight, not just for the family friendly aspect, but for, for all people of all interests is non-alcoholic happy hours.

So we're working with Siren Shrub, which is a local beverage company owned by two women in Stevens Point and out of the cafe on Friday and Saturday, they're going to be doing some happy hours, but that do not include alcohol. So all people have a little chance to have a little extra celebration.

**Nick Hylla:** Great. Okay. Can we talk about the spirit animal?

**Celia Sweet:** I don't know, what can we, Kyle, I've been ready. Maybe I'm overthinking it now.





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**Nick Hylla:** What is the spirit animal?

**Celia Sweet:** So I think an obvious answer for the Fair spirit animal would be a rooster. We've used it a lot in marketing in the past and it's, you know, very [01:03:00] reflective of the, the phrase we've used in the past, which is the answer rises every morning, rooster crows the sun comes up. There's a lot of beauty in that, and that is almost where I left it. But then I thought of the rainbow shrimp. Are you familiar with rainbow shrimp at all? Oh, okay. I only know one fact, I know one thing about them, so I'm glad I can

**Nick Hylla:** I do know about tardigrades, are they the same?

**Celia Sweet:** I know nothing maybe.

Oh no, I don't know. Well, let me tell you what I know about rainbow shrimp. They have it's like, they're able to see like five times more colors than humans can, and that might sound like a little strange, but. When I think of the Fair, especially from a staff perspective, there is so much that we plan, you know, we've talked about workshops and food and family friendly there.

You could say maybe we have, you know, our three colors of what happens at the Fair, but there is so much more that happens at the Fair, beyond what we even plan from people, networking, making [01:04:00] connections, making life changes. You know, we provide this space, the infrastructure and the structure itself of what the Fair will be.

And that remains similar from year to year. We keep it systematic structure. But what happens is like in between all these events and as people get to know each other and attend workshops, I think is it's all those colors we can't even see. And that is why the rainbow shrimp is a spirit animal.

**Nick Hylla:** Well, that's really beautiful and thoughtful, but I think we're going to have to send the rainbow shrimp to committee because the rooster has been here a while. I mean, there are anti-rooster people, but I have to see a picture of rainbow fish too, because ...

**Celia Sweet:** They're not cute.

**Nick Hylla:** Well..

Okay.

**Celia Sweet:** We can keep the rooster, but just emotionally, we will all know that it's the shrimp it's all about.

**Nick Hylla:** That you think it's rainbow shrimp. Okay. I see



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**Celia Sweet:** I'll push for that that in my second year.

**Nick Hylla:** Well, that sounds great. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us today?

**Celia Sweet:** You know, we're going to share it all as the Fair [01:05:00] approaches. So there, there is a lot that I would love to say about the Fair, but primarily just the thing that I hold on to and what I like to remind people of I'm new into the clean energy world.

This is my first job really in the industry, and I'm very thankful to be doing it. I learned something new absolutely every day. And I think that it can feel a little bit intimidating when you don't know something, especially about clean energy and sustainability and I think sometimes there may be as like a small amount of shame that people might feel or embarrassment, but what is absolutely fantastic about the Fair is if it's the first sustainable event you've ever been to, or the first time you're learning or focusing on products or services or non-profits, it's absolutely the right place to be.

And of course that extends if you've been to every single Fair or you're an exhibitor, or you are already in the industry, there's absolutely a place for everyone. I think, you know, if you're, if you're not sure if the fare is right for you, it is. So please, please come. [01:06:00]

**Nick Hylla:** Great. You know, and the people that come to the Fair or the kind of people that you want to meet in person, really, if you're going to meet people in person, these are the people you want to meet.

It's the largest collection of nice people in Wisconsin during that time of year,

**Celia Sweet:** You know, I performed, I performed at the Fair a few years ago and it was kind of a weird dance performance and we weren't really sure how it would go and people were crying and clapping and hugging us. And I've never performed for a group like that in my life.

And I mean, there are everywhere. That's just, that was a small group of them. So yeah, if you want to make a hundred new friends in a day, the Fair is for you.

**Nick Hylla:** You never know. You never know. So alright. June 24th to the 26th. Our beautiful campus in Custer, Wisconsin we're going to be there. You'll be there, right? I'll be.

**Celia Sweet:** I think I'll be there.

**Nick Hylla:** You're going to be there for sure. All right. Well, I will see you there and the rest of you. Thanks so much. Thanks again for joining us today. Make sure you subscribe. Leave [01:07:00] us a review and for more info on The Energy Fair, go to the energy fair.org. That's the energy fair.o-r-g. And we will see you there.