



Indigenous cookbook's mix of food, culture proves winning recipe

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Josephine Shangin cleaning seal intestine in Unalaska. (Qawalangin Tribal Council for the Qawalangin from the book “EALLU – Food, Knowledge and How We Have Thrived on the Margins”)

There are several ways to judge the significance of [EALLU](#), a food book compiled by young indigenous people from throughout the Arctic.

The first is by its content. Part cookbook, it contains recipes for traditional dishes from 14 of the region’s indigenous cultures. Part culture book, it also includes descriptions of the cultural significance of the dishes and the ingredients that go into them.

Take, for example, reindeer in Sápmi, the homeland of the Sámi.

If you are looking for love, the book suggests, try eating the nose. According to legend, it will make you popular with the opposite sex. On the other hand, if you are an unmarried woman and someone offers you the chin, you’d be best off politely declining. Doing so means you will never get married.

Another way to judge the significance of *EALLU* (whose full name is *EALLU – Food, Knowledge and How We Have Thrived on the Margins*) is by the award that the authors can now place on its cover. On Saturday, the book was named as the best food book of 2018 by Gourmand International, a Spain-based group.

Selected from a field of 16 nominees, *EALLU*, according to Edouard Cointreau, the organization’s president, won as much for the recipes it included as for its illustration of the culture that surrounded them.

“This book should be required reading in schools, universities, public institutions. It is a clear, simple, clean Arctic work of art,” he said. “For anyone interested in the Arctic culture, it is fundamental but simple.”



World Reindeer Herders secretary general, Anders Oskal, addresses the Gourmand International award ceremony where *EALLU* was named this year’s winner. Mikhail Pogodaev stands at the far left. (Gourmand International)

An Arctic Council project co-ordinated by the Association of World Reindeer Herders, *EALLU* was compiled by a team of 50 young authors, who, according to Anders Oskal, its secretary general,

“bridged generations and distances” to preserve their culinary heritage during a time of rapid change.

According to the authors, this is the first time that such a project has been undertaken, and, Cointreau reckoned that, for this reason, the book would be “a life changer” for its authors and for the communities they represent.

Eallu is a Sámi word that means “a herd of reindeer.” Tellingly, it is closely related to the word for “life.” This, according to Mikhail Pogodaev, the chair of the Association of World Reindeer Herders, suggests the point of the project.

“This is much more than just a book of recipes,” he said. “It’s about our food traditions, our nomadic lifestyles, our local economies and our worldviews.”

Receiving what Pogodaev termed a “mainstream” award, was, he felt, “a powerful recognition of the richness and depth of a focal point of our cultures.”

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1. Arctic Economy
2. Community
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1. cookbook
2. cooking
3. culture
4. food
5. indigenous
6. recipes
7. reindeer
8. reindeer herding

Date Created

2018/05/30

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