

THE FRY BREAD HOUSE HISTORY

The Fry Bread House was established in October 1992 by Cecelia Miller, a Tohono O'odham woman and a native of Arizona. After moving from the Tohono O'odham Nation in Sells, Arizona to Phoenix, Cecelia eventually settled in central Phoenix raising seven children with her husband, the late Reverend Joedd Miller. Tiring of having no public restaurant for Indian people to gather and eat as they would at home, she refined her cooking and recipes, took a small business class and started The Fry Bread House. Cecelia believed that many Native people displaced from ancestral homes to find and locate job and housing opportunities, like herself, in Phoenix would now be able to sit down to good home cooking just like they would at home with mom, grandma or auntie in the kitchen.



Tohono O'odham people are known throughout the Southwest for their Red Chili Beef, large hand-stretched flour tortillas (chumuth) and frybread (popovers), among their basket-making and various other skills and trades. Due to the location of the Tohono O'odham's native lands that encompass lands both south of the Mexico border and up into nearly central Arizona, traditional recipes have seen influence from our Southern neighbors in Mexico. This is why you see tortillas (chuchumuth), menudo, and tamales on our menu. Cecelia felt it important to stick with foods that were known to her and her culture and is the reason that she maintains these items on the menu rather than trying to incorporate native cuisine from other tribal communities and cultures.

The Fry Bread House (FBH) began in a tiny, two-room space on 8th Street & Indian School in a small strip mall. The sons renovated the space into a commercial kitchen with a bathroom and a small dining area. Cecelia and her daughter worked the kitchen as well as a long-time family friend with the original menu consisting of frybread with beans, red chili beef and an Indian taco and a cooler full of canned soda. As business picked up, and Cecelia realized that there was a market for her cooking and traditional recipes, she continually added dishes common to the Tohono O'odham people and began hiring other Native people from the urban Indian Community. FBH soon outgrew the cramped location at 7th street and closed that address permanently after settling into a newly, remodeled residential-turned-commercial house structure at 4140 N. 7th Avenue. Cecelia, Joedd and their family were able to create a larger space to accommodate more cooking, more indoor seating and hosting local artwork from local and regional Native artists.

In April 2009, the family suffered a huge loss when husband and father, Joedd Miller passed away unexpectedly. Joedd worked tirelessly in the urban Indian Community and in surrounding tribal jurisdictions serving both Native and non-Native people as a Presbyterian pastor, mentor, friend and brother for over thirty (30) years. His work on social justice issues, homelessness, the sanctuary movement, Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, Presbytery, native social issues and many more are missed. Joedd rallied the family 18 years ago to serve the urban homeless every Thanksgiving a traditional native meal just as they would get at home as they struggle on the streets. The Fry Bread House continue that tradition every year as well as remembering & honoring Joedd every day since his passing. †

In November 2009, Cecelia fulfilled a dream long shared by her and Joedd, by opening The Fry Bread House Mesa location at 1916 W. Baseline Rd, #10 at the northeast corner of Baseline & Dobson! While the Phoenix FBH remains the flagship location, FBH Mesa is larger, roomier and accommodates patrons from the east valley.



Today, not much has changed except the location and the new, Mesa addition. Cecelia and her family still maintain oversight of both restaurants with our family managing daily and catering operations. The FBH continues to cater both to the urban Indian and non-Indian community in Phoenix and beyond believing strongly in continuing to introduce traditional Tohono O'odham food to the people of Arizona and those traveling through from afar.

Thank you for visiting our restaurant and for supporting us throughout the years. We look forward to a shared future of continuous quality food, service and goodness!

Sape', The Miller-Perry Family *

