

CHEYENNE BELIEFS ABOUT LIGHTENING AND GREEN GOURDS

Like I think one of them found a gourd. We Cheyennes call them "ghost melons." That's these round green gourds (Missouri melon or stink gourd - cucurbita foetidissima). And I think Agnes went and told those white girls that those were ghost melons. And they didn't know what to think. I said, "You've got to understand--you've got to know--we are Indians. We think different from the white people," I said. "And we call things in a different way. You mustn't use these words or the way we talk here at home. Just like at night," I said. "When it's storming--an electrical storm. Don't never lay on your back. Lay sideways." They teach us like that. And if a gun is standing somewhere with the barrel up, they said, lay it down. They said Thunder don't want that gun to be pointing at him, I guess. It's their belief. And never cook when it's storming.

(Why don't you lie on your back--?)

All the people that's been hit by lightning, they used to face up.

(Why not cook during a storm?)

You'll draw lightning. Maybe because you handle forks and knives and like that, you know.

(Why do they call those green gourds ghost melons?)

I don't know. I don't know. I never did ask why they were called that. My son's oldest boy, John, we found this gourd vine that was just beginning to spread. He started to chop it off and I said, "Don't chop it," I said. "Dig it." I said, "That's a big root under there." So he started digging it. He turn his spade too soon and he cut that thing in two. It was a great big -- you know, the root. That was the first one he ever saw. He was so excited about it, you know--"Look, mama, what I found! Look, grandma--just look at this!" It looked like a big sweet potato. And he