I started my journalism career on the women’s pages of the local newspaper writing about food and fashion. I left that life in 1968 to try the counter-culture lifestyle, for a while in Northern California. I learned to gather some edible wild plants from a Native American neighbor. After another brief stint in traditional journalism (more cooking articles), I ended up for a winter season in Taos during the heyday of communes such as New Buffalo and Morningstar where I was a frequent visitor.

 At that point I got the opportunity to write what was called “an Indian cookbook.” A month of research taught me that early Native American cooking was mainly wild plants. So I, who studied zoology in college, started a crash course in ethnobotany guided by a compassionate librarian and lots of ethnobotany texts written in the early 1900s. I traveled through the Southwest in a rattletrap car talking to Native American women, asking them to take me on plant walks and teach me their recipes. That book ended up *American Indian Food* *and Lore* which has been republished as *American Indian Cooking: Recipes from the Southwest.*

During those years I met so many interesting women, the next book focused on them. In order to detail customs in the various tribes or nations, which varied greatly, I again hit the museum library, reading early texts that reported Native American life before they had been changed by White contact. That book became *Daughters of the Earth, the Life and Legends of Native American Women.*

For the next book, I returned to wild food with *The Tumbleweed Gourmet, modern recipes for Southwestern Wild Plants.*  Next it was a toggle back to Native American women with a biography of Navajo politician, Annie Dodge Wauneka called *I’ll Go and Do More,* followed by a young reader version of the story called *Keeping the Rope* straight.

With interest in natural food increasing in in the new millennium, I concentrated on the most popular wild plant in the Southwest with *The Prickly Pear Cookbook* followed by *The New Southwest Cookbook,* with recipes from top resort and restaurant chefs. *Cooking the Wild Southwest* includes recipes from 23 edible wild plants that are easy to recognize, easy to gather, and taste good.

When Tucson was named the United States’ first UNESCO City of Gastronomy, I immediately thought “that’s my book.” There was much new material to research, but because of my long years writing about the food scene in the Southwest, when I didn’t know something, I generally knew who did know and so many experts were generous with their time. I tramped over local farms, read countless archeological papers, and visited all sorts of kitchens. The result was *A Desert Feast: Celebrating Tucson’s Culinary History.*

Somewhere in the middle of all that, I had spent time researching the life of Nellie Cashman, an Irish immigrant, renowned for running cafes and boarding houses throughout the West from the 1870s through the early 1900s. When I couldn’t compile all the facts, I turned it into a novel, making Nellie a secondary protagonist in The Piano Player, set in Tombstone and Dawson City, Alaska.

My latest book, *Everything We Thought We Knew,* also a novel, relies on my experiences in those early days in the late 1960s and early 1970s when I visited communes and lived in an intentional community in Oracle, Arizona. The story and characters are pure fiction, but the setting and a minor scene here or there and a trait here or there are plucked from that long-ago reality. It’s sex, drugs, and rock ‘n roll, but it is also war protests, the anguish of veterans returned from VietNam, and the struggle to remake society in a less corporate more collaborative mode.