



**Marjorie Abbey Battise**  
**Pinestraw Basket Maker**

Marjorie Abbey Battise was born October 26, 1942, in Elton, Louisiana to Bel and Nora Abbey, elders in the Koasati Indian tribe. The Koasati or Coushatta Indians have lived in Louisiana since the 18th century, having migrated across the Mississippi river from their ancestral lands in present-day Alabama in an effort to avoid English, and later American, expansionism. Being born into a tribe which seeks to maintain very strong traditions with the community, Marjorie was destined to practice, retain, and share her heritage with others. Because of this, Marjorie began learning the art of basket making and making traditional Indian fry bread from her mother at the age of eight.

Ms. Battise has participated in many festivals by sharing her foodways and crafts, including the 1985 Festival of American Folklife in Washington D.C., the Louisiana Native Crafts Festival in Lafayette, Louisiana, the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival in Natchitoches, Louisiana, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and the annual "Basket Day" held in the Williamson Museum in Natchitoches. At these festivals, Marjorie uses sewing needles, raffia, and pine needles to construct the fifteen to twenty coiled pine-straw baskets she makes each year. She also makes her fry bread. Marjorie takes great pride in her basketry, which she usually practices with her sisters, Myrna Wilson and Joyce Poncho, as the finished products are firm and tightly woven. Her first creation was a wall basket made from pine needles, which is unique, as The Bayou Blue Coushatta have always made their baskets from wire grass in the past.

Today, Marjorie, a third generation Koasati in Louisiana, still makes baskets with her sisters, at home and for public presentations in festivals. She has passed down her foodways and crafts to another proud generation of Koasati people. Because of this strong tradition and influence, Ms. Battise was inducted into the Louisiana Folklife Center's Hall of Master Folk Artists in 1982.

Research done and written by Samantha Sullivan.

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