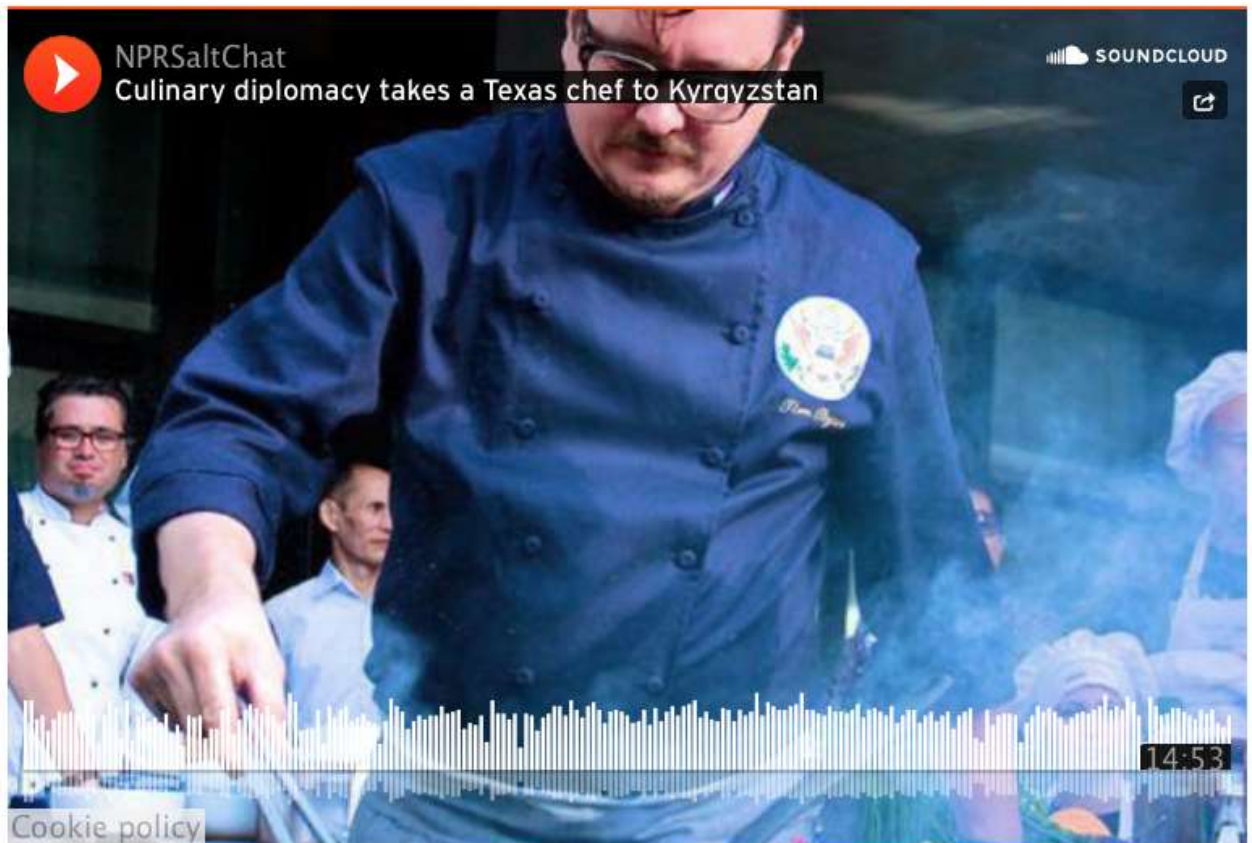




# Culinary Diplomacy Takes Texan Chef To The Land Of Grilled Yak



As you may have heard, America's diplomats are struggling these days with a few distracting and unpleasant events in far-off parts of the world. But they're rising to the challenge: They're sending in the chefs.

The U.S. State Department launched a [Diplomatic Culinary Partnership](#) two years ago in order to "elevate the role of culinary engagement in America's formal and public diplomacy efforts." Some of the country's most renowned chefs have volunteered to help out, joining the department's "Chef Corps."

[Tim Byres](#), founder of a restaurant called Smoke in Dallas, joined the Chef Corps, and a few weeks ago he found himself flying to one of the most remote corners of the world: Kyrgyzstan, a land of stupendous mountain peaks in central Asia, just west of China and north of Afghanistan.



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Byres was on a mission of cultural exchange, focused on cooking and eating. He expected Kyrgyzstan to be remote and exotic, and indeed, he got to sample the cooked eye of a sheep, fermented mare's milk, and yak meat, which turned out to be surprisingly good.

But he also found some remarkable common ground. He and his Kyrgyz hosts had a common devotion to down-home food and the art of cooking with firewood.

And Byres discovered that restaurant owners in central Asia also fret over "trying to keep a good hostess and trying to keep fingerprints off the glass door. That was the coolest thing; the further you go away from home, the smaller the world is."

Click on the link above to hear our chat with Tim Byres.

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