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WHEN SOUTHERN WOMEN COOK

HISTORY, LORE, AND 300 RECIPES
with Contributions from 70 Women Writers

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN



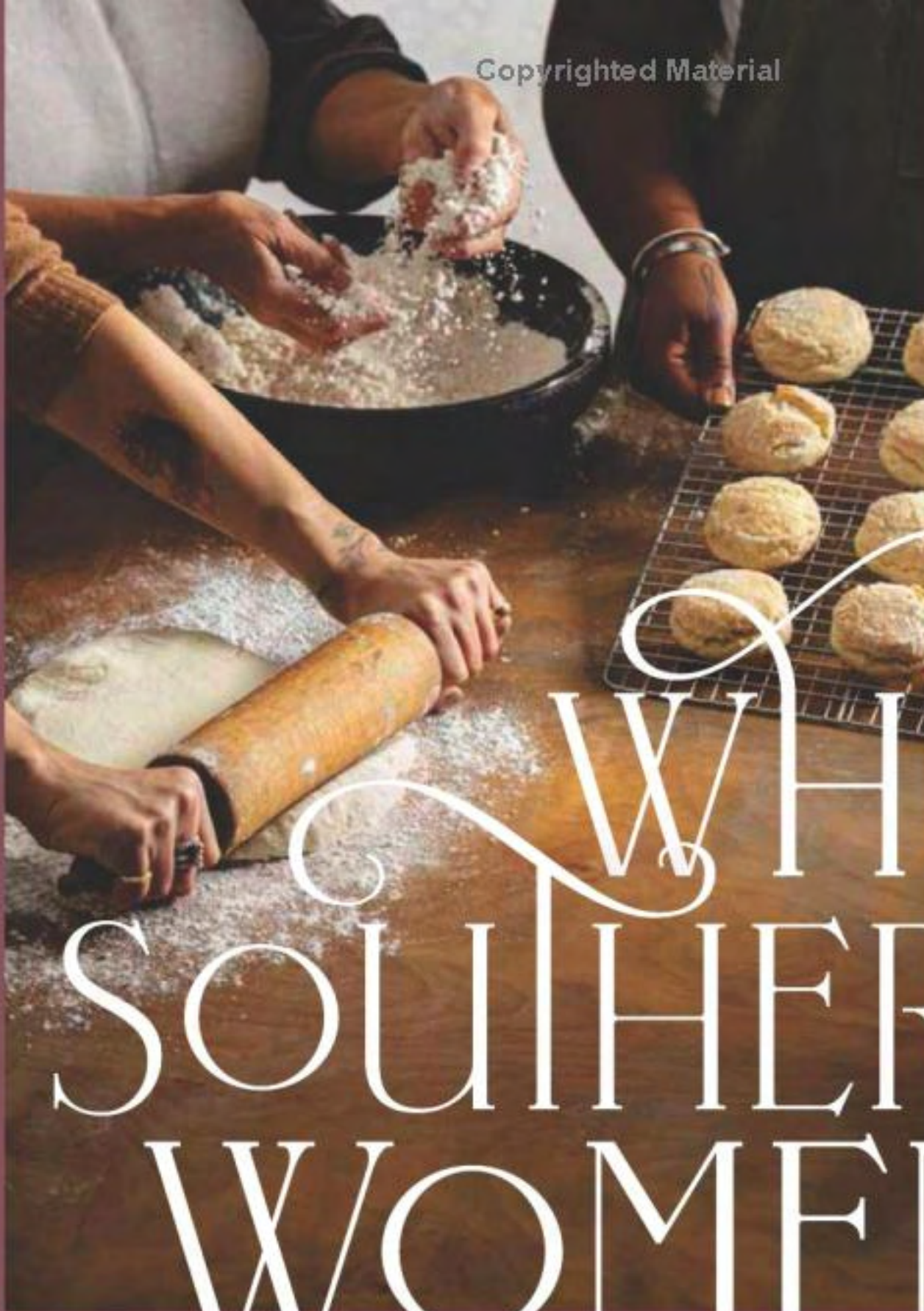
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WHEN SOUTHERN WOMEN COOK

History, Lore, and 300 Recipes with Contributions from 70 Women Writers

AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN
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Jalapeños (page 353)

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WELCOME TO AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

This book has been tested, written, and edited by the folks at America's Test Kitchen, where curious cooks become confident cooks. Located in Boston's Seaport District in the historic Innovation and Design Building, it features 15,000 square feet of kitchen space including multiple photography and video studios. It is the home of *Cook's Illustrated* magazine and *Cook's Country* magazine and is the workday destination for more than 60 test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to empower and inspire confidence, community, and creativity in the kitchen.

All of our books are a collaborative effort, but this one, shepherded by *Cook's Country* Editor in Chief Toni Tipton-Martin and conceived by Executive Editor of Creative Content Morgan Bolling, came to life thanks to the invested care of a small all-woman editorial and design team. The manuscript arose through the tandem efforts of Morgan—who organized recipes, wrote stories, and tied in the many contributors—and Senior Editor Sacha Madadian, who shaped the content and oversaw the book's every element. Design Director Lindsey Timko Chandler's artistic vision

and layout bring Southern stories and dishes to brilliant life. Production and Imaging Specialist Tricia Neumyer made an enormous volume of images, modern and historical, of faces and of food, look their best. Debra Hudak, Julia Arwine, and Katie Kimmerer provided invaluable editorial support.

We also thank food historian KC Hysmith for her thoughtful contributions to the team and support of our mission. And, although the ATK editorial team was small, the number of Southern women voices was grand; you can find bios for the contributing essay authors on page 509. Every word (of many) was copyedited by Elizabeth Wray Emery and proofread by Karen Wise, with support from Ann-Marie Imbornoni, Cheryl Redmond, and Rachel Schowalter. Senior Print Production Specialist Lauren Robbins guided us in selecting the paper and case, and delivered the book to the printer, so we could share it with you all.

Of course, our plates would be empty without the editors and test cooks of *Cook's Country*, whose tireless efforts in the kitchen over 20 years have flavored the more than 300 Southern

recipes in this book. Additional recipes were researched, tested, and perfected by the ATK book team test cooks and editors. Steve Klise captured them with his stunning photography (find our recipe inspired by his mother's crab cakes on page 300). Special thanks is always due to Jack Bishop and Adam Kowitz for their guidance overseeing the entire editorial process. Thank you also to Senior Director of Book Sales Emily Logan for her enthusiastic sales (and moral) support for this project.

To see what goes on behind the scenes at America's Test Kitchen, check out our social media channels for kitchen snapshots, exclusive content, video tips, and much more. You can watch us work (in our actual test kitchen) by tuning in to *America's Test Kitchen* or *Cook's Country* on public television or on our websites. Listen to *Proof* (AmericasTestKitchen.com/podcasts) to hear engaging, complex stories about people and food. Want to hone your cooking skills or finally learn how to bake—with an America's Test Kitchen test cook? Enroll in one of our online cooking classes.





MORGAN BOLLING, Executive Editor of Creative Content for *Cook's Country*, spearheaded *When Southern Women Cook* with a mission to highlight the unique ways food has sustained all kinds of Southern women through history and continues to feed them today. A Southern woman herself, born and raised in North Carolina, she is also a cast member of the *Cook's Country* TV show. In her 10 years at ATK, she has developed more than 100 recipes, with a specialty in barbecue and grilling. Previously, she cooked at restaurants in New York and her home state. When not developing a new recipe, there's a good chance Morgan is working with the Cambridge Women's Center, running a 5K, or planning her next pig roast.

TONI TIPTON-MARTIN, Editor in Chief of *Cook's Country* magazine, guided this project and team with her vast knowledge of Southern women's food history and her journalistic approach to sharing the stories behind America's favorite dishes. She is an award-winning food and nutrition journalist who uses cultural heritage and cooking for social change.

Toni is the author of several important books that celebrate African American cookbook history: *Juke Joints, Jazz Clubs, and Juice: Cocktails from Two Centuries of African American Cookbooks*; *Jubilee: Recipes from Two Centuries of African American Cooking*, and *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African American Cookbooks*. For her work, she has received the Julia Child Foundation Award, which is given to an individual (or team) who has made a profound and significant difference in the way America cooks, eats, and drinks. She is also a three-time James Beard Book Award winner, and she has earned the International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP) Trailblazer Award, its Book of the Year Award, and Member of the Year Award. She is also the proud keeper of an incredible collection of rare cookbooks.

KC HYSMITH, PHD, served as consulting historian on the book, opening it to countless women's food stories. A Texas-bred, North Carolina-based writer, food historian, recipe developer, and photographer, KC is interested in the intersection between food, gender, and the digital landscape. She was associate editor for *Edible North Carolina: A Journey Across a State of Flavor* and co-author of Ricky Moore's *Saltbox Seafood Joint Cookbook*.

join our community of recipe testers

Our recipe testers provide valuable feedback on recipes under development by ensuring that they are foolproof in home kitchens. Help the America's Test Kitchen book team investigate the how and why behind successful recipes from your home kitchen.



Foreword

IN THE SUMMER
OF 1999,

I received an invitation to a weekend meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, from the Southern sage and award-winning journalist John Egerton, who cleverly Southernized his signature with these words: “on behalf of the add hock organizers.”

Egerton’s fiddling with the term *ad hoc* intrigued me. I looked up the definition: “A group organized for a specific purpose; a temporary opportunity to accomplish something great.”

I was awed by the way that he substituted the spelling of “hoc” with the word for a fatty pig bone that spends most of its time in the mud. As a Southern California native, I reasoned that my participation would be like seasoning a kettle of simmering greens with a piece of smoky pork. I accepted the invitation to get into a little hot water by stirring the pot of Southern food history.

This call to action was anything but spontaneous. Years earlier, both author Edna Lewis and food editor Jeanne Voltz had led efforts to “establish an organization that would bring together people from all over the region and beyond who grow, process, prepare, write about, study, or organize around the distinctive foods of the South.” The women failed.

Egerton, the author of the acclaimed book *Southern Food: At Home, On the Road, in History*, knew that I also shared this belief in the power of food to unify people, because he helped cultivate it. Since our chance meeting in Atlanta five years earlier, he and I bonded over our desire to untangle the knotty history and mixed messages ingrained in American race, gender, class, and food conversations.

A month after his letter arrived, I joined nearly 50 other invitees at *Southern Living* magazine’s offices; by the end of the weekend we had founded the Southern Foodways Alliance, an organization dedicated to preserving, celebrating, and promoting the diverse food culture of the American South.

We gathered annually in Oxford, Mississippi, after that, listening to scholars and folks with lived experience as they challenged established notions about the region. Attendees came as strangers from all over the country and between bites of barbecued quail, corn pudding, and slaw, we grieved together about prejudice and bias. And yet, come Sunday morning, everyone departed with a sense of hope. We believed that eventually these honest conversations would bring about a kind of equity that politicians, educators, historians, and others had failed to achieve.

I reveled in the strength and power of the women I met each fall. While shopping in one of Oxford’s secondhand stores, author and anthropologist Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor taught me to trust my cultural impulses, while Marcie Cohen Ferris helped me value my journalistic instincts as we crunched on North Carolina peanuts. From novelist and cookbook author Dori Sanders I learned the important art of storytelling while pondering the sweet, nuanced flavor of freshly picked South Carolina peaches. Mildred Council (aka Mama Dip) taught me to value examples of culinary excellence hidden in a pot of green beans. Ronni Lundy and I became friends while debating whether sugar belongs in cornbread. And Nathalie Dupree’s “pork chop theory” of mentorship became the foundation of my passionate pursuit of culinary sisterhood.

Once I became president of the organization, one woman after another confided her frustrations about the ways Southern women were still being portrayed, in history generally, but also by SFA, specifically. The whispers turned into open criticism in 2020

when former founders, board members, alliance staff members, and others called for SFA to change its structure and programming.

When Southern Women Cook is a child of these experiences.

Written, edited, and designed by a diverse group of female changemakers, this curated collection of recipes and stories became a reality shortly after I became editor in chief of *Cook's Country*, the same month that SFA was responding to demands for progress. With past as present, we invited more than 70 bold, bright women contributors to explore the womanish side of Southern food through their particular lens. The book is by no means a complete story, but it could be the starting point for a movement.

For as long as I can remember, I have fantasized about restoring a Victorian house in the South as a place where women would come together, cook for one another, and exchange cultural stories. With this book, and my own nonprofit organization, I am reimaging that goal.

We will still want to learn more about Pardis Stitt and Subrina Collier, women who masterfully operate iconic restaurants alongside their chef husbands. More must be said about the women thriving in the beverage world—women like Ann Marshall, co-founder of High Wire Distilling; Susan Auler, a pioneer in Texas winemaking; master sommelier and award-winning hospitality group leader June Rodil; and Tahira Habibi, founder of the Hue Society, a group that provides uplifting cultural wine experiences. We want to dig deeper into the history- and science-based baking lessons taught by Stella Parks, Kentucky pastry chef and award-winning author of *Bravetart: Iconic*

American Desserts. And we are eagerly looking forward to the day when articles describing the mouthwatering cooking of successful American men, such as James Villas and Craig Claiborne, also consider the mothers, aunties, and grandmothers who inspired them to greatness.

In the meantime, this collection, written by scholars, journalists, chefs, restaurateurs, farmers, and poets, brings you authentic truths shared by women who are resisting marginalization with determination and supporting each other with tales of female perseverance. They do so while making amazing food.

To describe this book more simply, I adapted a quote from the French feminist writer Hélène Cixous:

“We [are learning] to speak the language women speak when there is no one there to correct us.”

by Toni-Tipton Martin



Introduction

THROUGHOUT
HISTORY,

food and cooking have sustained women as they have carved out a place for themselves in society and their communities. This is particularly poignant when you listen to women's stories in the American South; in this book, we highlight those stories, exploring how food has enabled women to overcome adversity, provide for themselves and their families, advance society, exercise their creativity, and claim their identities. It certainly has done those things for me.

I moved to Boston from North Carolina in 2014 to work on the *Cook's Country* team at America's Test Kitchen. When I first started, the brand published regional American cuisine, with a focus on what we considered (from our Northeast, coastal, mostly white perspective) country cooking. The recipes were interesting to learn about, developed with care, and delicious, but over the years, our approach evolved. We shifted from defining "American food" to exploring "how Americans eat"—a subtle but important change that broadened our storytelling and allowed us to embrace a broader narrative of what it means to be American.

In 2014, I also started volunteering at the Cambridge Women's Center, a community support space for women of all backgrounds and identities in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I come from a line of women who gave me a crash course in feminism through their lived, sometimes difficult, experiences. My mom, who wanted to be an artist, became a doctor after learning from her mother a hard lesson about the importance of creating economic independence. Their resilience inspired me, at a time when I was defining my own feminism to do something to empower women in need. I started answering a helpline (some called looking for advice; many were lonely and just looking for someone to listen) and eventually co-facilitated a support group

for women and nonbinary trauma survivors, which I still do today. I learned that, like me, so many turned to art, writing, and, notably, food to navigate life's trials.

My work at *Cook's Country* and at the Women's Center fueled me, but the idea of melding my culinary career with my passion for supporting women seemed improbable. That was until Toni Tipton-Martin became *Cook's Country* editor in chief, and we began to explore this intersection of food and empowerment. It turns out, both Toni and I had been thinking a lot about how to give women space in a world that tells us to be smaller.

When Southern Women Cook is the outcome of many meaningful conversations. With Toni's journalistic approach to telling stories in *Cook's Country* magazine, we were positioned to make the book of our dreams. To start, we already had a deep archive of well-tested recipes. As I learned more than 10 years ago, we start recipe development with research, from reading cookbooks to interviewing experts. From there we cook five versions to cover different ways people make a dish. Then it all gets kind of scientific: We facilitate side-by-side taste tests until we are satisfied that a recipe is foolproof. And while this creates a recipe that is reliable, flavorful, and accessible to as many cooks as possible, it can also obscure a recipe's origins. With this book, we would bring the people and traditions that inspired us to recreate these recipes in the first place to the front.

We studied the archives to pull out the recipes that were both distinctly Southern but also windows into women's culinary experiences. And we brought on food historian KC Hysmith to help us put the recipes into context: The South is a place, as the U.S. Census Bureau defines it, but it's also, as KC taught us, well, a feeling. And so, the South in this book is vast. It includes Florida and Texas (even though each is so diverse, it could carry its own book). Within these Southern borders, we tour many corners—from the multinational Latinx communities in Miami baking festive pan de jamón and pouring out coquito to the Gullah Geechee women

of the South Carolina Lowcountry celebrating their ancestral ingredients in brilliant rice dishes and deeply flavored gumbo stews.

We go back in time to capture those who built the foundations of Southern food—unnamed women firing the flames of stew stoves at Monticello; enslaved women like Marie Jean, who carried on Black and Indigenous tradition through the outdoor barbecue; chefs like Zephyr Wright, who cooked for presidents while changing history; entrepreneurial women selling handmade fried chicken to hungry railroad travelers, piping-hot fried calas or sweet pralines in New Orleans, or bowls of chili in San Antonio. And we highlight women innovating the cuisine today. These are women like Teresa Finney and Chanel Watson with cottage businesses baking Mexican conchas of every shape, flavor, and color. Like Alba Huerta, who captures the global flavors of Houston in each updated julep variation on the menu of her chic cocktail bar of the same name. Like Jordan Rainbolt, who amplifies the South's Indigenous roots through outdoor dinners and dishes like her Grit Cakes with Beans and Summer Squash, a creative take on the Three Sisters.

To tell a fuller story, we opened the writing to more than 70 Southern women—food writers, authors, journalists, historians, chefs, aficionados, and culture keepers—to cover topics close to them and their stitch in the tapestry of Southern food history. Find my fellow North Carolinian, chef Vivian Howard, writing on the painful challenges of cooking in a male-dominated world, and poet Crystal Wilkinson honoring her ancestors through her hands, through baking blackberry jam cake. Read Virginia Willis's piece on the complexities of weight management for women raised in traditional Southern society—on a traditional Southern food diet. Or learn from Carlynn Crosby about the Prohibition-era women who ruled the sea with their lucrative rum enterprises. Their stories season the recipes they appear alongside for a cookbook that, while not exhaustive, shares the tastemakers as much as it does the tastes.

Although I spent the majority of my life in the South, this book gave me a new view of what Southern food means. While it does have its fair share of recipes for fried chicken (we've included eight) and biscuits (also eight), it has so much more than that. The stories in this book show that food can be a lens through which to learn about our shared history, to pay homage to those who came before us, and to help build a better, tastier future.

Cooks like Fannie Lou Hamer and Georgia Gilmore pushed the Civil Rights Movement forward through pork and slices of pound cake. Queen Maggie Bailey sent kids to school through bootlegging. Today, another queen, Dolly Parton, raises money for children's literacy through her cookbooks, and chefs like Maneet Chauhan and Asha Gomez broaden the definition of Southern food through what it means to be "Brown in the South." From them, I learned that melding a food career with women's empowerment was never improbable; food is and always has been a tool for women's empowerment. So whether it's baking messages for social justice into pies like Arley Bell or just getting the grits on the table to fuel another long day, Southern recipes represent a part of our place in a world where we increasingly take up more space.

In the trauma support group, we end each session asking women to share one way they're planning to take care of themselves in the upcoming week. Without fail, someone mentions food, whether it's to cook something healthy, enjoy ice cream, or just force themselves to eat anything at all. I hope this book gives you a little sustenance in this complex world. Yes, it can be hard, but it can also be damn delicious.

by Morgan Bolling



No.1 THE BREAD BASKET



Left to right: A worker at Flo's Kitchen shaping the famous biscuits (see page 31), Alabama Orange Rolls (page 42), Dollywood Cinnamon Bread (page 40), White Sandwich Bread (page 34), Pan de Campo (page 18).

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No.1 THE
BREAD
BASKET

STAFFS OF LIFE

BREADS OF CORN AND WHEAT

When you think about bread, “portability” is probably not the first word that pops into your head. We think of bread as fragile: It crumbles or it smushes, and it gets stale and moldy. But to our ancestors, baked grain was a lot easier to deal with than its predecessors, porridge and gruel. You can’t exactly put gruel in your pocket and go hunting for the day. So when humans discovered that they could mix raw grain and liquid, put it near (not in) their fire, and create something edible that they could take with them, they must have thought it was pretty great. People around the world discovered this process separately, and over the millennia bread has provided sustenance for almost everyone.

With enough determination, you can make bread out of pretty much any type of seed or grain, even acorns. The materials work best if they’re a bit dry and ground into powder. Whoever we are, almost all of us descend from dozens of generations of women who spent most of their days on their knees, grinding seeds or grain for their families’ bread. It was a slow, laborious process, but it was essential for humanity to thrive.

In the American South, Native American women made bread from all kinds of materials—amaranth and sunflower seeds, for example—before corn made its way north from Mexico. Corn arrived sporadically in the present-day South, but it was widespread by 800 CE. Corn is amazing: It will grow almost anywhere, it’s easy to plant and to harvest, and it’s nutritious. Almost everywhere in the Americas, natives grew and stored corn, and they used a lot of it to make bread. They ground each day’s supply fresh, as corn turns rancid quickly. Women often worked in unison, their wooden pestles keeping time in mortars made from tree stumps. They usually cooked their cakes on earthen hearths, fired hard over time.

The simplest cornbread is just ground corn and water. It’s perfectly edible, if not particularly tasty. Native cooks, like good cooks everywhere, learned to improvise. Some animal fat—maybe from a bear—added tenderness. Dried fruit lent sweetness. And so on.

When Europeans arrived in the Americas after 1492, they ate corn by necessity. Spaniards learned to make tortillas, small, flat breads, from corn rather than wheat. Columbus took some back to Spain, and while Europeans never developed much taste for it, Portuguese slave traders took it with them to Africa. Corn became one of the staple foods on the Middle Passage that brought enslaved Africans to the Western Hemisphere.

Europeans craved wheat flour, the soft white powder that cooks up tender and, with some help, tall. Wheat, unlike corn, is finicky. It thrives in cool, dry climates—not exactly the situation in the South. It's difficult to harvest and process. But people loved it and were willing to sacrifice for it. The Spanish and the French on the Gulf Coast tried, without success, to grow wheat in the warm humidity. The English in the Mid-Atlantic fared much better, and soon flour mills began popping up across Virginia. Cooks—home cooks, indentured servants, and enslaved Native Americans and Africans—leavened their bread with homemade yeast or starter, sometimes left over from brewing beer.

Wheat flour became fairly common for white Southerners, particularly those with money. For enslaved people, corn remained the staple, and they received wheat flour mainly as gifts, mostly at Christmas. Enslaved women ground their families' supplies of cornmeal every day after they finished their work in the fields.

After the Civil War, industrialization changed bread baking in the South. As Linda Civitello points out on page 19, baking powder made quick breads such as biscuits possible. Standardized yeast came from companies like Fleischmann's in Cincinnati. Flour and sugar became cheaper—still a luxury for the many poor people in the region, but not so dear as before. People measured their affluence by how often they were able to have biscuits: just on Sundays, just for breakfast, or twice a day, every day.

While some Southerners made loaf bread, small breads with individual portions, such as biscuits or rolls, were more common. At their best, they came to the table hot and fresh from the oven. By the 1920s, commercial bakeries made much of the loaf bread in towns and cities, and by World War II, homemade loaf bread had almost disappeared.

As the South has become home to a population of immigrants, breads have become more diverse. Breads from Latin America, China, Vietnam, and Nigeria can all be found in Southern cities. In the 21st century, Southerners happily still eat cornbread as an accompaniment to certain dishes. But mostly they enjoy goods from wheat flour, whether it be bacon and cheese biscuits (see page 23) or conchas (see page 44). The old ways have become new, and the new ways have become standard.

by Rebecca Sharpless, PhD

professor of history at Texas Christian University and author of Grain and Fire: A History of Baking in the American South

Hoecakes

Makes 12 hoecakes • Total Time: 40 minutes

Hoecakes, as they're popularly called in the South, are kin to hot water cornbread, fried cornbread, and johnnycakes—all versions of earthy, naturally sweet, ever-so-slightly gritty cornmeal pancakes. There is a legend that enslaved people would cook these cakes on the hoes in the field under the hot sun; that's one explanation for how hoecakes got their name. However, food historian Rod Cofield asserts in his essay "How the Hoe Cake (Most Likely) Got Its Name" that evidence for this is limited; it's more likely that the name came from a piece of cooking equipment akin to a griddle called a "hoe."

While enslaved people certainly did make hoecakes, hoecakes are referenced in recipe collections in Virginia as early as the 17th century, which points to Native American roots. Now these cornmeal cakes are commonly found as a side dish alongside breakfast or dinner in the South. It's also traditional to serve the golden bread for New Year's, often with collard greens, to symbolize wealth for the coming year.

Some recipes for hoecakes or cornmeal cakes call for all cornmeal (no flour) and don't include leavener, so they have a denser texture. For this multipurpose recipe we were after cakes with crisp exteriors surrounding light, fluffy interiors that are delicious on their own with butter or alongside (or dipped or crumbled into) collard greens (see page 140) or straight buttermilk. To achieve this textural contrast we cut the cornmeal with a little flour and add baking powder. Pan-frying the cakes in bacon fat gives them lightly crisp edges and infuses them with plenty of smoky pork flavor (but you can substitute vegetable oil for the bacon fat, if desired). The batter will thicken slightly after sitting in step 1.

- 1½ cups (7½ ounces) cornmeal
- ½ cup (2½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2¼ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 1½ cups whole milk
- 3 tablespoons bacon fat, divided

1 Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Whisk cornmeal, flour, baking powder, and salt together in large bowl. Whisk in milk until no lumps remain. Let sit for 5 minutes.

2 Heat 1 tablespoon bacon fat in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Using ¼-cup dry measuring cup, portion 4 scant scoops of batter, evenly spaced, in skillet.

3 Cook until edges of cakes are set and first side is deep golden brown, about 1½ minutes. Flip and continue to cook until second side is golden brown, about 1 minute longer. Transfer hoecakes to prepared rack. Repeat with remaining bacon fat and batter in 2 batches. Serve.



Q&A: MALINDA MAYNOR LOWERY ON INDIGENOUS FOODWAYS

From the cornbread in our skillets to the unique agricultural methods that set the South apart from the rest of the United States, Southern food as we know it exists thanks, in large part, to Indigenous foodways. To learn more about the important place corn holds in both Indigenous and Southern food traditions, we spoke with Dr. Malinda Maynor Lowery, historian, filmmaker, and member of the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina, the largest Native American tribe east of the Mississippi River.

What are Indigenous foodways and Lumbee foodways?

I would describe [them] as a very seasonally driven, vegetable-centered journey. I use that word because I can't help but think about it as a journey—of a place and a people—over time. Our food is a product of particular cultural encounters that evolve: deprivation, starvation, but also celebration. There are important ingredients, like the sweet potatoes my late husband, Willy Lowery, loved—his father built the sweet potato hill, and that's what they had to eat. There [are] also elaborate celebratory dishes that come along with coming together: chicken and pastry, chicken bog, and whole hog barbecue.

What role did corn play in these food traditions?

Corn has a similar journey. At times, it was just what was available. For example, in the wintertime in the 1950s, some Indigenous families only ate cornmeal mixed with water; not heated up, not grits, not slow cooked. [It was] similar to

what soldiers ate during the Civil War, but this was in the 20th century. And we were glad to have it. Lumbee cornbread is fried, flat, and fritter-like [and uses] relatively few ingredients. Throughout the South, corn was also used by Indigenous peoples to make whiskey. Lumbee women would trade with enslaved women, cloth for corn, likely to turn into whiskey to sell and trade for the benefit of themselves, their families, and the community. There are numerous records of Lumbee women being arrested for illegal whiskey production, which gestures towards their overall independence and their agency to produce and provide in a male-dominated white world.

Could you explain food sovereignty and its importance?

Indigenous food sovereignty boils down to representation and how our contributions are given credit in American foodways. Sovereignty is asserted when a native person steps forward and self-determines how we share our culture and how we're represented. I have heard food-related memories from Lumbee born under segregation that were a combination of deprivation and joy; food sovereignty makes the latter possible despite the former. The pre-colonial foods, the origins of frybread, the fried cornbread, these *are* our foodways and these *are not* our foodways. There was and is food insecurity even in the 21st century, but people also [had] a degree of agency over what they ate, because they were growing it. That is food sovereignty.

Quick Cornbread

Serves 12 ~ Total Time: 45 minutes, plus 30 minutes cooling

Although invented in Michigan, Jiffy Corn Muffin Mix is a ubiquitous ingredient in Southern cooking. It owes its origin to a woman named Mabel White Holmes. According to the Jiffy website, Holmes's twin boys brought a friend over to their house to play, and when Holmes offered them lunch, the friend insisted on eating what his father had sent, including some unappealing biscuits. "She knew that light, flaky biscuits weren't easy to make, but these were exceptionally sad looking." So Holmes went on to create Jiffy biscuit mix, which debuted in 1930 and was marketed as "so easy even a man could do it." She was president of Jiffy until 1940 and remained invested her whole life.

Thankfully times and marketing slogans have changed. But even still, Jiffy occupies an important place in Southern food culture; the cornbread mix is used for everything from baking bread and muffins to thickening chili or making corn pudding. If you'd like to try making your own cornbread mix, this recipe is an easy way to make a big batch of dry mix to which you can add liquid ingredients anytime you want a batch of cornbread. The mix makes a nice gift.

- 1 cup milk
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter,
melted and cooled
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups (17 ounces) Cornbread Mix
(recipe follows)

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Spray 8-inch square baking pan with vegetable oil spray.

2 Whisk milk, melted butter, and eggs in large bowl until combined. Add cornbread mix and stir with rubber spatula until just combined and no dry mix is visible. Transfer batter to prepared pan and spread into even layer.

3 Bake until golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cornbread cool in pan on wire rack for 20 minutes.

4 Remove cornbread from pan and let cool on wire rack for 10 minutes. Cut into squares and serve.

Cornbread Mix

Makes 8 cups ~ Total Time: 10 minutes

Whisk the cornbread mix inside the container well each time before using to ensure that the ingredients are evenly distributed. This mix makes enough for four batches of cornbread. Do not use coarse cornmeal in this recipe.

- 6 cups (30 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 4 cups (20 ounces) cornmeal
- 2½ cups (18¾ ounces) sugar
- 1 tablespoon table salt
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons
baking powder

Whisk flour, cornmeal, sugar, and salt in extra-large bowl until well combined. Sift baking powder through fine-mesh strainer over bowl. Whisk until very well combined, about 1 minute. Transfer cornbread mix to large airtight container. (Cornbread mix can be stored at room temperature for up to 2 months.)



UNDERSTANDING CORNMEAL

If you were making cornbread in the South in the 1800s, you could expect the meal to be whole-grain with big corn flavor. But as the area industrialized, finer grinds, including what we consider “standard” cornmeal today (i.e., steel-cut) became much more common in everyday baking. Still, there are producers making whole-grain and stone-ground cornmeals that have great flavor. For our baking recipes, we use regular cornmeal (steel-cut) or fine stone-ground cornmeal (regular or whole-grain). You can use either; the choice comes down to the grind size. You should avoid coarse stone-ground cornmeal—or coarse cornmeal of any label. As for color, we have tested recipes with white and yellow cornmeals and haven’t noticed a significant flavor difference.

Steel-cut: Processed between steel rollers. This breaks the kernels, resulting in a sharper-textured meal. Major brands, such as Martha White, are processed in this way.

Stone-ground: Ground between stones, resulting in a softer-textured meal. We love the flavor of meals processed in this way, but stone-ground cornmeals of the coarse variety can make baked goods gritty.

Whole-grain: Ground whole, resulting in a meal made up of the bran, germ, and endosperm. Since the germ and bran contain the oil, this meal is more flavorful and more perishable than degerminated meal. It should be refrigerated or even frozen. Stone-ground cornmeal can often be whole-grain; look for the labeling on the package.

Degerminated: Stripped of its germ and bran before milling, so it is drier and less flavorful than whole-grain. Steel-cut and stone-ground cornmeals can come degerminated.

Organic: Milled from corn grown in a certified organic field.



Sweet Potato Cornbread

Serves 10 to 12 ~ Total Time: 1 hour, plus 1 hour cooling

The idea of adding ingredients such as chestnuts and potatoes to cornbread is likely as old as cornbread's history. It's thought that Native tribes did so for flavor, sure, but also to stretch the cornmeal. Chef Stephanie Tyson adds sweet potatoes to her cornbread to showcase the spuds at Sweet Potatoes (Well Shut My Mouth!!) in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Tyson and her partner Vivian Joiner first opened their restaurant in 2003. Tyson had spent years working as an actress before moving toward the food she watched her grandmother Ora Porter cook. "Everything I saw my grandmother do, I do," Tyson says in a 2017 article in *Our State* magazine. Tyson now has two cookbooks under her belt and has twice been named a semifinalist for the James Beard Award for Best Chef Southeast. She later opened a second restaurant called Miss Ora's Kitchen in honor of her grandmother.

To speed up the cooking time in our version of sweet potato cornbread, we microwave the sweet potatoes to get them nice and soft. Cutting the cornmeal with a little bit of flour keeps the bread light, and brown sugar underscores the caramel notes of the sweet potatoes. Tyson adds a small amount of cinnamon and nutmeg to her cornbread, so feel free to do that if you'd like. At Sweet Potatoes, Tyson serves her cornbread with spicy-sweet ginger honey butter, so we follow suit. You can make this cornbread in a 10-inch cast-iron skillet or oven-safe nonstick skillet. Note that the cornbread needs to cool for 1 hour before being removed from the pan.



Chef Stephanie Tyson (right) with her partner, Vivian Joiner (left), co-owners of Sweet Potatoes (Well Shut My Mouth!!).

Angie Webb

- 1½ pounds sweet potatoes, unpeeled
- ½ cup milk
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 4 large eggs
- 1½ cups (7½ ounces) cornmeal
- ½ cup (2½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup packed (1¾ ounces) brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1¼ teaspoons table salt

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Prick potatoes all over with fork. Microwave on large plate until potatoes are very soft and surfaces are slightly wet, 10 to 15 minutes, flipping every 5 minutes. Immediately slice potatoes in half carefully to release steam.

2 When potatoes are cool enough to handle, scoop flesh into bowl and mash until smooth (you should have about 1½ cups); discard skins. Whisk in milk, melted butter, and eggs. Whisk cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in separate large bowl. Stir potato mixture into cornmeal mixture until combined.

3 Melt remaining 1 tablespoon butter in 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat until bubbling, about 3 minutes. Swirl butter to coat bottom and sides. Pour batter into hot skillet and smooth top with rubber spatula. Bake until cornbread is golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cornbread cool in skillet on wire rack for 1 hour. Loosen edges of cornbread from skillet with spatula and slide out onto cutting board. Cut into wedges and serve.

Ginger Honey Butter

Makes about ½ cup

Total Time: 20 minutes

This honey butter also tastes great on roasted root vegetables, boiled corn, pork chops, pancakes, muffins, biscuits, and dinner rolls.

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- ¼ teaspoon table salt

Using fork, mash all ingredients in bowl until combined. (Butter can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.)

SUGAR IN CORNBREAD

How does the South make cornbread? This question takes me back to a common-ground experiment I devised that invited friends to whip up their favorite recipe—in a plastic bag. The idea flowed from a conversation I had a long time ago with my friend and award-winning Appalachian food writer Ronni Lundy (see page 416) about whether sugar belonged in the mix. Ronni emphatically believed it did not. I argued that cornbread took on all kinds of new personality traits in the hands of enterprising cooks. My ancestors, for instance, developed a taste for sweet cornbread that we still call cornbread. Ronni called it cake.

I shared my experiment during a workshop for TerraVita Food & Drink Festival's Sustainable Classroom. The festival was founded by Colleen Minton in 2010, with a mission of "spreading the gospel of sustainable food and drink." For 10 years, the annual event featured chef demos and dinners, tasting events, and educational experiences. In addition to the cornbread activity, a diverse panel of women talked about Latinx, Native American, and New Southern cornbread traditions, about recipes as family heirlooms and as markers of identity.

Sharing your recipe for delicious cornbread with people you love comes with a bonus: It preserves your kitchen legacy. The instructions delivered by volunteers at the event went as such: "For this workshop, you are invited to re-create your favorite recipe for cornbread to share with the group. The first step is to choose a plastic bag as your 'cooking vessel' and then select a colored sticker to identify whether your bag/vessel is a cast-iron skillet, a metal or glass baking pan, or a muffin tin. Write the recipe title and baking temperature on your bag. Next, assemble your recipe. There is a wide assortment of wet and dry ingredients, leavenings, and add-ins from which you may choose, including optional ingredients such as chiles, corn, cheese, blueberries, chili powder, cinnamon, and various herbs, printed on small cards. When you're done, take your recipe with you and find a seat ... Be creative and have fun!"

To complete the exercise, the audience members discussed their unique recipes and tasted delicious cornbread, still warm from the oven, made according to cultural recipes from the panelists. It was a wonderful lesson in diversity—one that honored the new creations devised when cooks tinker according to their own tastes and what's in the pantry while respecting original formulas. And these days, when discussions of recipe origins focus on authenticity, appropriation, and erasure, this activity provides a compassionate place to start the conversation.

by Toni Tipton-Martin

Fresh Corn Muffins

Makes 12 muffins ~ Total Time: 55 minutes, plus 20 minutes cooling

One of the best things about summer in the South is the bushels of corn at the farmers' market. Of course, fresh corn is delightful straight off a boiled cob with butter or in a number of garden-fresh vegetable dishes, but if you're lucky enough to have a surplus, making sweet corn muffins packed with fresh corn is a great way to showcase the vegetable. Using equal parts flour and cornmeal gives these muffins a tender crumb that's more cakey and less crumbly than traditional versions of large-scale cornbread, which often have a higher ratio of cornmeal to flour. Microwaving cornmeal with milk until the mixture thickens to a paste-like consistency blooms the meal's flavor and softens the grain for an ultracorny muffin with a plush, not gritty, texture. When it comes to sugar, we lean toward the sweeter side here to enhance the fresh corn. Two cups of fresh corn kernels, which you should be able to get from three ears of corn, add nice pops of sweetness in each bite without weighing down the muffins. Be sure to avoid using coarse-ground cornmeals in this recipe, as they can make the muffins gritty. If you don't own a microwave, the cornmeal paste can be made in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Just be sure to whisk it constantly so that the ingredients don't scorch on the bottom of the saucepan. Try spreading warm muffins with Cardamom Brown Sugar Butter.

- 1½ cups (7½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups (7½ ounces) cornmeal, divided
- 1 cup (7 ounces) sugar
- 1½ teaspoons table salt
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup sour cream
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups corn (2 to 3 ears corn)

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Generously spray 12-cup muffin tin, including top, with vegetable oil spray. Whisk flour, 1 cup cornmeal, sugar, salt, baking powder, and baking soda together in large bowl; set aside.

2 Whisk milk and remaining ½ cup cornmeal together in medium bowl. Microwave until mixture begins to thicken to paste-like consistency, 1 to 3 minutes, whisking frequently. Whisk sour cream and melted butter into cornmeal paste. Whisk in eggs. Stir cornmeal mixture and corn kernels into flour mixture until just combined.

3 Using greased ⅓-cup dry measuring cup or #12 portion scoop, divide batter equally among prepared muffin cups; evenly distribute any remaining batter among cups (cups will be full).

4 Bake until muffins are golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out with few crumbs attached, 20 to 24 minutes. Let muffins cool in muffin tin on wire rack for 5 minutes. Remove muffins from muffin tin and let cool on rack for 15 minutes. Serve warm.





Cardamom Brown Sugar Butter

Makes about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ~ Total Time: 20 minutes

We love this butter slathered on our Fresh Corn Muffins, but it's also good spread on toast, salmon, or chicken. We got the idea to pair cornbread with cardamom from cookbook author and restaurateur Asha Gomez. Her recipe for cardamom cornbread is in her 2016 cookbook *My Two Souths: Blending the Flavors of India into a Southern Kitchen*. In the book's introduction, Gomez says, "I call my style of cuisine 'two Souths cooking.' Its flavors and dishes are characterized and rooted in my deep affection for the resourcefulness and soulfulness of cooking both in my mother country India, in the far southern state of Kerala, and my chosen home in America's Southern culinary-savvy city of Atlanta, Georgia." Pairing cardamom with cornbread is a lovely example of how Gomez blends the food of Kerala with that of the American South.

- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup packed (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces) light brown sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground cardamom
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon table salt

Using fork, mash all ingredients in bowl until fully combined. (Butter can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.)

Corn Spoonbread

Serves 6 ~ Total Time: 1½ hours, plus 35 minutes resting and cooling

Spoonbread is a fluffy soufflé-like dish with a golden crust and a silky interior. It is rich and custardy from a high ratio of eggs and milk to cornmeal. The recipe was first published in Mary Randolph's 1824 cookbook, *The Virginia House-Wife*, which happens to be the first known regional cookbook in the Southern United States (see "Who Created the First Southern Spoon Bread?"). We admit, our version is a bit more complicated than that one: This airy spoonbread is made by cooking cornmeal in milk, cooling the mixture, stirring in egg yolks, and then folding in beaten egg whites and baking.

Soaking the cornmeal in milk for a few minutes before simmering eliminates any grittiness, and beating the egg whites with cream of tartar makes for a more stable foam and higher rise. Sautéing the fresh kernels in butter, steeping the cooked corn in milk, and then pureeing the mixture before combining it with the cornmeal intensifies the corn flavor. The silky mixture that comes out of the blender tastes like cream of corn soup—it's good enough to eat on its own! This "corn milk" creates a light, creamy texture and amazing corn taste that builds on the spoonbread of its ancestors. The resulting spoonbread has the flavors of cornbread, made from peak-season sweet corn married with something as airy and delicate as a soufflé. You can substitute frozen corn, thawed and patted dry, for fresh.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 cup (5 ounces) cornmeal | 1 teaspoon table salt |
| 2½ cups whole milk, divided | ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper |
| 4 tablespoons unsalted butter | 3 large eggs, separated |
| 2 cups corn (2 to 3 ears corn) | ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar |
| 1 teaspoon sugar | |

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Grease 1½-quart soufflé dish or 8-inch square baking dish. Whisk cornmeal and ¼ cup milk together in bowl; set aside.

2 Melt butter in Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add corn and cook until beginning to brown, about 3 minutes. Stir in sugar, salt, cayenne, and remaining 2 cups milk and bring to boil. Cover pot and let sit off heat for 15 minutes.

3 Transfer warm corn mixture to blender and process until smooth, about 2 minutes. Return to pot and bring to boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low; add cornmeal mixture; and cook, whisking constantly, until thickened, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to large bowl and let cool completely, about 20 minutes. Once mixture is cool, whisk in egg yolks until combined.

4 Using stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment, whip egg whites and cream of tartar on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to medium-high and whip until stiff peaks form, 3 to 4 minutes. Whisk one-third of whites into corn mixture, then, using rubber spatula, gently fold in remaining whites until combined. Transfer batter to prepared dish and place in oven. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees and bake until spoonbread is golden brown and has risen above rim of dish, about 45 minutes. Serve immediately.

Individual Spoonbreads

In step 4, divide batter among 6 greased 7-ounce ramekins. Arrange ramekins on rimmed baking sheet and bake as directed, reducing cooking time to 30 to 35 minutes.

WHO CREATED THE FIRST SOUTHERN SPOONBREAD?

Culinary historian and food writer Debra Freeman (see page 290) says spoonbread always had ties to Virginia. The first codified version can be found in Mary Randolph's 1824 cookbook *The Virginia House-Wife* under the name "Batter Bread." (The recipe in its entirety: "Take six spoonfuls of flour and three of corn meal, with a little salt; sift them and make a thin batter with flour, eggs, and a sufficient quantity of rich milk; bake it in little tin moulds in a quick oven.") Randolph's cookbook is considered one of the most influential books on American cookery and domestic life of the 19th century. Randolph, who was related to Thomas Jefferson by marriage, had much of her kitchen labor performed by enslaved people working at Monticello, and many of her recipes appear to have taken influence from Jefferson's staff.

This particular recipe sounds much like a French soufflé. And it isn't the only dish of the time with a French connection. In the book *Thomas Jefferson's Crème Brûlée: How a Founding Father and His Slave James Hemings Introduced French Cuisine to America*, author Thomas J. Craughwell reminds us that "There were no French chefs in eighteenth century Virginia," and "the mainstays of American colonial cooking were primarily meats (boiled, roasted, baked, or stewed), breads, heavily sweetened desserts, and generally overcooked vegetables." Thomas Jefferson aimed to change that.

When Thomas Jefferson was appointed U.S. minister to France, enslaved chef James Hemings accompanied Jefferson to Paris, and from 1784 to 1787, Hemings became trained in classic French gastronomy. Upon their return to Monticello, they brought back standards of French cooking, and they created new American dishes by blending French techniques with native American ingredients (eight of the formulas were written in Hemings's own hand, while others were recorded by Jefferson and Randolph but not directly attributed to any cooks). By the time Jefferson was elected president, he had earned a reputation as a culinary innovator, creating new kitchen equipment and serving lavish dinners that featured exquisite dishes and fine wines.

Jefferson did something else rare for the time: He added female cooks to the kitchen staff. "Edith Fossett was fifteen years old when she began her apprenticeship, and her sister Fanny Hern was eighteen. They would become the French chefs during Jefferson's final years," Craughwell explains. Fossett passed her skills on to her son Peter, who eventually opened a catering business in Cincinnati. And yet, we know little else about the sisters, their recipes, or their contributions to the Jefferson/Randolph culinary legacy. But we can be thankful that from France to Monticello to early cookbooks to our modern table, spoonbread survived the delicious journey.



A portrait of Mary Randolph and her book *The Virginia House-Wife*, which includes the first known published spoonbread recipe (titled *Batter Bread*).

Library of Congress



Pan de Campo

Serves 8 to 10 ~ Total Time: 1 hour, plus 30 minutes cooling

In 2005 the Texas state legislature declared pan de campo (known as cowboy bread) the official state bread of Texas. But it wasn't a quick decision for the sprawling state. Pan de campo has Tejano origins and was largely made in the southwest regions of the state. Throughout most of the state, it was more common to make sour-dough bread or biscuits. Ultimately, the house resolution passed with the statement, "The colorful history of the Lone Star State is inextricably associated with the romance of cowboy culture, and among the many legacies of this proud heritage is the delicious flat bread known as pan de campo, or cowboy bread."

In its original form, pan de campo embodied, as the resolution called it, "elegant simplicity," and was made with only flour, salt, leavener, and lard or shortening in cast-iron Dutch ovens by early settlers and vaqueros while traveling through the state. Most recipes produce breads that look like thick, flat rounds and eat like biscuits. But over the years a second type of cowboy bread has emerged that we've recreated here. It is much more akin to a coffee cake, with plenty of sugar, cinnamon, and butter. While certainly not something that would have been made on a chuck wagon, this cake-like version of cowboy bread makes a great treat for lunch boxes or an after-school snack.

Cake

- 2½ cups (12½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2½ cups packed (17½ ounces) brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon table salt

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces and chilled
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten

Topping

- ¼ cup packed (1¼ ounces) brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces and chilled

1 For the cake Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease and flour 13 by 9-inch baking dish. Process flour, sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking soda, and salt in food processor until combined, about 3 seconds. Add butter and pulse until mixture resembles wet sand, about 8 pulses. Transfer to large bowl.

2 For the topping Return ¼ cup cake mixture to now-empty processor. Add sugar and butter and pulse until mixture resembles wet sand, about 4 pulses.

3 Whisk buttermilk and eggs into remaining cake mixture until smooth. Pour into prepared dish and sprinkle with topping. Bake until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cake cool in dish on wire rack for at least 30 minutes. Slice and serve.



BAKING POWDER AND ADVERTISING

Baking powder is the common ingredient in all the recipes submitted at the International Biscuit Festival in Knoxville, Tennessee. It's also the rising agent in self-rising soft wheat flour, such as products from White Lily and Martha White, prized by Southern bakers. But baking powder wasn't always so common in the South. In the antebellum (and later Jim Crow) South, enslaved women beat biscuit dough with an axe handle for 2 hours to leaven it.

Meanwhile, in the North, housewives used homemade yeast to make baked goods grow, but they were desperate to find a shortcut. And they did. The first recipes with the chemical leavener pearl ash appeared in Connecticut in 1796, in the first cookbook published in the United States, *American Cookery* by Amelia Simmons. The pearl ash made things taste a bit bitter, but it created a sensation, and in 1856, a Harvard chemistry professor patented an improvement, the first baking powder, Rumford.

Hundreds of baking powder companies sprang up in the years that followed. So did cutthroat wars for the millions of dollars at stake. Companies pumped the market with advertisements to win out the competition. Fake news was the weapon of choice for Royal, which printed thousands of articles that "proved" its competition was "poison," and bribed the Missouri legislature to pass a law saying the same.

The false advertising war ran out of steam in the 1920s. But the catchphrase "double acting" used by another brand, Calumet, stuck because it's true. Baking powder first gets to work when it combines with wet ingredients in a batter or dough, but it's that second action that keeps us mesmerized in front of the oven window, watching baked goods continue to rise after their initial puff in the oven. That puff was particularly welcome in cornmeal items that have no gluten so cannot rise via yeast. Baking powder provided the fluff that defined quick breads as we know them today.

by Linda Civitello, PhD

historian and author of *Baking Powder Wars: The Cutthroat Food Fight that Revolutionized Cooking*



The patent for the first baking powder, Rumford (top). An ad for Royal baking powder that implied other baking powders were tainted (bottom).

Library of Congress (top) and Jet Set (bottom).

ALL ABOUT

BISCUITS

Biscuits are probably the most beloved quick bread in the South. They commonly grace breakfast tables but can be served at any meal of the day. In their book *Southern Biscuits*, Cynthia Graubart (see page 217) and Nathalie Dupree (see page 295) explain that the first biscuits were made using just flour and water; they were essentially a form of hardtack crackers meant to hold up during traveling. Lard made its way into the mix and gave way to beaten biscuits—dough pounded with a mallet, skillet, or other heavy instrument and folded to create layers that allowed the dough to slightly rise. Once baking powder became available, biscuits began to transform into something more akin to what most Southerners know today.

The ingredient list for biscuits is often simple: flour, salt, baking powder and/or soda, buttermilk, and fat. With such a short ingredient list, a lot comes down to technique. Dupree says, “I learned that biscuit making takes knowledge and technique because no one is born knowing how to make them, and few still have the joy of watching another—a mother or grandmother once upon a time—making biscuits day after day.”

A baker is worth their salt only if the biscuits are light and fluffy, something that typically comes from keeping ingredients cold and avoiding handling the dough too much, which can develop gluten, leading to tough, not tender, biscuits. The study of biscuit making is worth it. “Learning to cook Southern biscuits enables freedom from commercial fast food and frozen biscuits, inferior biscuits to homemade. And it satisfies the soul,” Dupree says.

Types of Biscuits

There are biscuit styles regional to every corner of the South: angel, rolled and stamped, sweetened, and layered, not to mention the many unique biscuit varieties tied to individual bakers. We focus on five important biscuits in this book: drop biscuits (objectively easy, objectively satisfying), baking powder biscuits (flaky, inspired by Edna Lewis), pat-in-the-pan buttermilk biscuits (biscuits baked in a cake pan, inspired by Virginia Willis), angel biscuits (as light and fluffy as you’ll find), and cathead biscuits (our version is North Carolina Cheese Biscuits on page 30). Below we break down the ingredients and techniques that achieve these biscuit models.

Drop Biscuits

Light and fluffy interior; golden, crusty, craggy exterior

Difficulty level: ★

Shaping method: Dropped from a measuring cup

Technique: Adding melted butter to buttermilk makes the butter clump; in the oven, these clumps create steam pockets within the dough for extra fluffiness.

Baking Powder Biscuits

Hearty texture; flaky layers

Difficulty level: ★★

Shaping method: Rolled, stamped (can be dropped too)

Technique: Lard is cut into dry ingredients before liquid is added.

Pat-in-the-Pan Buttermilk Biscuits

Fluffy biscuit; high rise

Difficulty level: ★

Shaping Method: Pat in a cake pan and scored

Technique: Baking the biscuits together in a cake pan causes them to push on each other as they bake for a higher rise.

Angel Biscuits

Fluffy, cloudlike texture; shaped as angel wings

Difficulty level: ★★★

Shaping method: Rolled, stamped, shaped into wings

Technique: Using Southern biscuit flour makes them ultralight.

Cathead Biscuits

Supersize, extra-craggy, room for fillings

Difficulty level: ★

Shaping method: Dropped from a measuring cup

Technique: Fat (originally lard) is cut into dry ingredients before liquid is added. Then, the biscuits are formed quite large.

Buttermilk or Bust

For many of our recipes that call for buttermilk, we offer a substitution: clabbered (or acidulated) milk. Curious if that would work for biscuits, we tested clabbered whole, low-fat, skim, and soy milks in our biscuits—and none of them worked. Either the dough was too wet to pat into the pan and cut, or the flavor of the biscuits wasn't up to snuff. Buy buttermilk—these biscuits are worth it (if you have any left over, you can freeze it).

It's Supposed to Clump

In our recipe for Drop Biscuits (page 22), we call for stirring melted butter into buttermilk. This creates little butter clumps. They look funny, but these small butter balls melt and release steam in the oven to create light, fluffy biscuits.



Do You Really Need Biscuit Cutters?

Crafty home cooks punch out biscuits with old aluminum cans, overturned glasses, and even Mason jar rings. But using a makeshift cutter with blunt edges can compress the sides of the dough, leading to misshapen biscuits. We prefer to use biscuit cutters, round cutting tools with sharp edges that make even cuts and thus produce tall, symmetrical biscuits. Our favorite is the Ateco 5357 11-Piece Plain Round Cutter Set.

Flouring Your Biscuit Cutter

When stamping out biscuits, dip the cutter in flour as needed to prevent the dough from sticking.

Stamp but Don't Twist

We use a biscuit cutter to portion our Angel Biscuits (page 28). Twisting the cutter when stamping out biscuits pinches the dough, resulting in an uneven rise. Using a well-floured biscuit cutter and pressing down with equal pressure on both sides of the cutter (without twisting) ensures that the biscuits will rise evenly and emerge from the oven tall and fluffy.



Easy Ways to Flavor Biscuits

Dress up any biscuit recipe by adding flavorful stir-ins along with the rest of your dry ingredients. Here are some guidelines for how much to use:

¼ to ½ cup total of shredded, grated, or crumbled cheese; crumbled bacon; sliced scallions; chopped, toasted nuts; and/or dried fruit

1 tablespoon minced fresh herbs or ¼ teaspoon dried herbs

½ to ¾ teaspoon ground spices

Drop Biscuits

Makes 12 biscuits ~ Total Time: 45 minutes

One of the best starting recipes for new biscuit bakers is drop biscuits—and they're just as soul satisfying as any. Unlike rolled and stamped biscuits that typically call for carefully cutting cold fat into flour before liquid is added, drop biscuits are simply stirred together, dropped onto the baking sheet, and baked. For a drop biscuit with buttery flakes, stir together warm melted butter and cold buttermilk before incorporating the dry ingredients. This causes the butter to clump up; it looks like a mistake, but it produces pockets of steam in the oven for light, fluffy—and easy—stir-and-drop biscuits. The flavor variations here are inspired by flavors at Erika Council's Bomb Biscuits restaurant in Atlanta (see "Generations of Bomb Biscuits").

- 2 cups (10 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon table salt
- 1 cup buttermilk, chilled
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted,
plus 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 475 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Whisk flour, baking powder, baking soda, sugar, and salt together in large bowl. Stir buttermilk and melted butter together in 2-cup liquid measuring cup until butter forms clumps.

2 Add buttermilk mixture to flour mixture and stir with rubber spatula until just incorporated. Using greased $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup dry measuring cup, drop level scoops of batter $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart on prepared sheet. Bake until tops are golden brown, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking.

3 Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter and brush on biscuit tops. Transfer biscuits to wire rack and let cool for 5 minutes before serving.





*Erika Council
rolling out
biscuit dough.*

*Peter Frank Edwards
/ Redux 2019*

GENERATIONS OF BOMB BISCUITS

Restaurant owner and writer Erika Council comes from a line of women chefs. Her grandmother on her father's side was Mildred Cotton Council, the Mama behind Mama Dip's Kitchen, a beloved meat-and-three restaurant in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Her maternal grandmother, Geraldine Dortch, cooked Sunday suppers in the 1960s and donated the proceeds to the civil rights movement.

Erika went to school for computer science but started hosting Sunday suppers of her own in Atlanta to build community and give her city a small-town feel. At one of these suppers she met Bryan Furman of B's Cracklin' BBQ, who convinced her to start doing a breakfast pop-up because her biscuits were so good. This gave way to biscuit boxes (to-go boxes of biscuits she sold to fulfill orders) and eventually a brick-and-mortar location for Bomb Biscuits, Erika's restaurant in Atlanta. Employees at the restaurant wear shirts that display the shop's slogan (and the name of Erika's cookbook), "Still We Rise," a nod to both of her grandmothers, who helped build community and acknowledge the Black presence in Southern cooking—and, of course, to biscuits themselves. (It's also hard to ignore the allusion to Maya Angelou's poem "Still I Rise.")

Most of the biscuits Erika serves are standard rolled and stamped baking powder biscuits. She offers vegan and gluten-free options so all customers can enjoy tasty biscuits. We wanted to include a drop biscuit in this book since it's such an easy starting point for biscuit bakers. But we were inspired by Erika to dress them up in two of our flavor variations. The black pepper-bacon version is inspired by her top seller, while the chocolate chip is a rotating flavor on her ever-changing menu.

by Morgan Bolling

Bacon, Cheese, and Black Pepper Biscuits

Add 4 slices cooked, crumbled bacon, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese, 2 tablespoons minced fresh chives, and 1 teaspoon pepper to flour mixture and stir to combine in step 1 before adding buttermilk mixture.

Chocolate Chip Biscuits

Increase sugar to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup semisweet chocolate chips to flour mixture and stir to combine in step 1 before adding buttermilk mixture.



Baking Powder Biscuits

Makes 12 biscuits ~ Total Time: 45 minutes

These baking powder biscuits are an ode to one of the most famous recipes by Edna Lewis (page 215), an icon of Southern cooking. Baking powder helps biscuits rise and become flaky; to many, baking powder-risen biscuits are the standard of Southern biscuits. But baking powder is an extra-special ingredient in Lewis's biscuits, as she was known to make her own baking powder using baking soda and cream of tartar—she thought store-bought baking powder imparted a tinny taste to baked goods. She also used lard, which was traditional at the time and gives the biscuits savoriness. And, like many Southern chefs, Lewis used Southern flour such as White Lily (see page 32) for an extra-tender biscuit.

For this version we took some liberties, such as leaving larger chunks of lard while mixing, which results in flakier biscuits. And we skip the prefab baking powder in favor of Lewis's formula. We use White Lily or Martha White flour for light, fluffy biscuits. Both White Lily and Martha White make bleached all-purpose flour, which is a lower-protein flour that develops less gluten when you work with it. If you can't find these flours, you can substitute an equal weight of cake flour. Lard is traditional, but you can substitute an equal amount of vegetable shortening. It is important to sift the flour, as it tends to clump in storage.

- 3 cups (13½ ounces) White Lily or Martha White flour
- 1 tablespoon cream of tartar
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- ¾ teaspoon table salt
- 10 tablespoons lard, cut into ½-inch pieces and chilled
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons buttermilk

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Sift flour into large bowl. Whisk in cream of tartar, baking soda, and salt. Scatter lard evenly over flour mixture and use fingertips to pinch lard into flour until all pieces are flattened. Using stiff wooden spoon, stir in buttermilk until very shaggy dough forms (some bits of dry flour will remain; do not overmix).

2 Turn dough onto floured counter and, using your lightly floured hands, gently knead until dough comes together, about 30 seconds. Gently press dough into rough 6-inch round.

3 Using floured rolling pin, roll dough into 9-inch round (about ¾ inch thick). Using 2½-inch round cutter dipped in flour, stamp out 8 to 9 biscuits, making sure not to twist cutter while pressing down and dipping cutter in flour after each cut. Transfer biscuits to prepared sheet. Gather remaining dough scraps and reroll into ¾-inch-thick round. Stamp out another 3 to 4 biscuits and transfer to sheet.

4 Bake until biscuits are golden brown, about 10 minutes. Transfer sheet to wire rack and let cool for 5 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Pat-in-the-Pan Buttermilk Biscuits

Makes 9 biscuits ~ Total Time: 1½ hours

When chef Virginia Willis (see page 249) did a demonstration at Cook's Country in August 2018, the Southern cookbook queen left us with characteristically beautiful words: "Biscuits are like people; they are better when they rise together." More than poetry, though, this sentiment referred to her preferred technique of baking biscuits touching each other on a baking sheet so they physically push each other up in the oven for a higher rise. Her demo inspired our own recipe for pat-in-the-pan biscuits. Following Willis's lead, we use low-protein cake flour for tenderness, and baking powder and baking soda for lightness and lift. We pinch bits of cold butter into these dry ingredients; the butter pieces melt in the dough during baking, producing steam that creates a fluffy interior crumb. We follow a tried-and-true Southern method for patting biscuit dough in a pan and scoring it so these biscuits can also rise together. We developed this recipe using Softasilk cake flour and a metal baking pan. This recipe can easily be doubled to yield 15 biscuits: Use a 13 by 9-inch baking pan and extend the baking time by about 15 minutes.



*In the kitchen with
Virginia Willis.*

Angie Mosier





- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 4 cups (16 ounces) cake flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons table salt
- 2 cups buttermilk, chilled

1 Cut 10 tablespoons butter into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces and freeze until chilled, about 15 minutes. Let 1 tablespoon butter sit at room temperature to soften. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Grease 8-inch square baking pan with remaining 1 tablespoon butter.

2 Whisk flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in bowl. Add chilled butter to flour mixture and smash butter between your fingertips into pea-size pieces. Gently stir in buttermilk until no dry pockets of flour remain. Using rubber spatula, transfer dough to prepared pan.

3 Lightly sprinkle extra flour evenly over dough to prevent sticking. Using your floured hands, pat dough into even layer and into corners of pan. Using bench scraper sprayed with vegetable oil spray, cut dough into 9 equal squares (2 cuts by 2 cuts), but do not separate. Bake until golden brown on top, about 30 minutes.

4 Let biscuits cool in pan for 5 minutes. Using thin metal spatula, slide biscuits onto wire rack. Brush tops with softened butter. Let cool for 10 minutes. Pull biscuits apart at cuts and serve warm.

Angel Biscuits

Makes 16 biscuits ~ Total Time: 1¼ hours, plus 30 minutes rising

Though modest in height, angel biscuits are unbelievably light and fluffy and have the hearty yeast flavor of a dinner roll. The source of their cloudlike texture? They're made with yeast, baking powder, and baking soda—three powerful ingredients that combine to create a triple-forced lift. The biscuits are sometimes called “bride’s biscuits” due to the use of three rising agents; the idea is that even a novice cook (or a new bride) can make light and fluffy biscuits on the first attempt. The dough is cut into rounds and folded in half before baking, causing the ethereally light biscuits to puff into “angel’s wings” in the oven.

Angel biscuits may have been born as a use for leftover scraps of sour bread dough. In her 1846 book *Miss Beecher’s Domestic Receipt-Book*, Catharine Beecher instructed cooks to “sweeten” (or neutralize) soured yeast-dough scraps with saleratus (a crude, obsolete chemical leavener similar to today’s baking soda), knead in shortening, and cut the “new” dough into biscuits.

There are also theories that angel biscuits were created by White Lily or Martha White as a recipe to market their biscuit flour. Both White Lily and Martha White make bleached all-purpose flour, which is a lower-protein flour that develops less gluten when you work with it, often leading to extra-tender baked goods. If you can’t find these flours, you can substitute an equal weight of cake flour.

- 1 cup warm buttermilk (110 degrees)
- 2¼ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 2¼ cups (12½ ounces) White Lily or Martha White flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1½ teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 8 tablespoons vegetable shortening, cut into ½-inch pieces and chilled
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1 Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 200 degrees. Maintain temperature for 10 minutes, then turn off oven. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper.

2 Stir buttermilk and yeast until yeast is dissolved. Using stand mixer fitted with paddle, mix flour, baking powder, baking soda, sugar, and salt on low speed until combined. Add shortening and mix until just incorporated, about 1 minute. Slowly mix in buttermilk mixture until dough comes together, about 30 seconds. Fit mixer with dough hook and mix on low speed until dough is shiny and smooth, about 2 minutes.

3 Knead dough briefly on lightly floured counter to form smooth ball. Roll dough into 10-inch circle, about ½ inch thick. Using 2½-inch round cutter dipped in flour, stamp out biscuits, making sure not to twist cutter while pressing down and dipping cutter in flour after each cut. Transfer biscuits to prepared sheets. Gather dough scraps and pat into ½-inch-thick round. Stamp out biscuits and transfer to sheets. Using ruler, make indentation through center of each round. Lightly brush half of each dough round with water. Fold each round in half and press lightly to adhere. Cover dough with kitchen towels and place in warm oven. Let rise until doubled in size, about 30 minutes.

4 Remove baking sheets from oven and heat oven to 350 degrees. Once oven is fully heated, remove kitchen towels and bake until biscuits are golden brown, 12 to 14 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Remove from oven and brush tops with melted butter. Serve.



SHAPED BY AN ANGEL

Here's how we create Angel Biscuits' signature puffed wing shape.



1 Using ruler, make indentation through center of each round.



2 Lightly brush half of each dough round with water.



3 Fold each round of dough in half; press lightly to adhere.

North Carolina Cheese Biscuits

Makes 6 biscuits ~ Total Time: 1 hour

Cathead biscuits were born out of Appalachian frugality in a place and era (early 20th century) when butter—and free time—was an extravagance. Cooks rubbed lard into flour and leaveners, stirred in sour milk to make a wet dough, pinched off large blobs, nestled them in a cast-iron skillet, and baked them. Modern recipes typically replace the lard with shortening or now-ubiquitous butter. The resulting giant buttermilk biscuits, said to be “as big as a cat’s head,” are fluffy rather than flaky, with a pleasingly craggy exterior. Cooks in eastern North Carolina, like Linda Brewer of Flo’s Kitchen in Wilson, North Carolina (see “#1 Biscuit Maker”), have taken to stuffing these huge biscuits with molten, gooey yellow hoop cheese, a local favorite. We love this delightfully cheesy variation.

To achieve a fluffy biscuit texture that is sturdy enough to hold a lot of cheese, we pulse chilled lard (though butter also works well) and flour in the food processor until the mixture resembles crumbly cornmeal. Next we add a generous amount of buttermilk for a wet dough; the liquid produces steam during baking for a high rise and a fluffy crumb. Hoop cheese, which is available online or in select stores in the South, is definitely worth ordering, but you can use sharp yellow cheddar. To get the cheese into the center of each biscuit, we squeeze shredded cheese into a ball, place the ball in the center of a slightly flattened circle of dough, and gently pull the circle’s edges up and around the cheese to seal it inside. Since the dough is sticky, keep your hands well floured and don’t be afraid to sprinkle extra flour on the biscuits to keep them from sticking. Use a light-colored cake pan.

- 8 ounces hoop cheese, shredded (2 cups)
- 2½ cups (12½ ounces) all-purpose flour, plus extra for shaping
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 4 tablespoons lard or unsalted butter, cut into ¼-inch pieces and chilled, plus 2 tablespoons melted
- 1½ cups buttermilk

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 500 degrees. Grease light-colored 9-inch round cake pan. Working with ⅓ cup cheese, use your hands to squeeze cheese tightly into firm ball. Repeat with remaining cheese to form 5 more balls; set cheese balls aside.

2 Pulse flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in food processor until combined, about 6 pulses. Add chilled lard and pulse until mixture resembles pebbly, coarse cornmeal, 8 to 10 pulses. Transfer mixture to large bowl. Stir in buttermilk until just combined. (Dough will be very wet and slightly lumpy.)

3 Spread 1 cup flour in rimmed baking sheet. Using greased ⅓-cup dry measuring cup, transfer 6 portions of dough to prepared sheet. Dust top of each portion with flour from sheet. Using your well-floured hands, gently flatten 1 portion of dough into 3½-inch circle and coat with flour. Pick up dough and place 1 cheese ball in center. Gently pull edges of dough over cheese to enclose and pinch together to seal. Shake off excess flour and transfer, pinched side up, to prepared pan. Repeat with remaining dough and cheese, placing 5 biscuits around edge of pan and one in center. (Biscuits will be soft and will spread slightly as they sit.)

4 Brush biscuit tops with melted lard. Bake for 5 minutes, then reduce oven temperature to 450 degrees. Continue to bake until biscuits are deep golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes longer. Let biscuits cool in pan for 2 minutes, then invert onto plate. Break biscuits apart and turn right side up. Let cool for 5 minutes; serve warm.

#1 BISCUIT MAKER

Flo's Kitchen in Wilson, North Carolina, got its name from Florence Williams, a woman who knew a thing or two about cheese biscuits. She passed the recipe and restaurant down to her daughter, Linda Brewer, who now runs Flo's with a warmth that emanates like the melty cheese from her cathead biscuits. Flo's is known for their massive biscuits stuffed with warm local hoop cheese—a cheese that has some of the tanginess of cheddar but with the superb melting properties of American. If the cheese doesn't do enough for you, you can get the biscuit sandwiching slivers of country ham, bacon, fatback, fried chicken, or pork tenderloin or with a side of molasses. Whichever you pick, the biscuit will ring in under three dollars.

A staff of mostly women start making the biscuits at 3 a.m. and they're on nonstop biscuit duty: Shape, fill, bake, and repeat. It's good they start in those wee morning hours. Flo's opens its to-go window at 4 a.m. most days of the week so that anyone who is working an early shift can still power their day with biscuits.

An unmissable fixture of the restaurant is a stack of 5-gallon buckets of lard. Brewer uses it in her biscuits to give them a savory flavor and a texture firm enough to hold the copious amounts of cheese. Decorating the wall is a photo of the restaurant's matriarch, Florence Williams, who passed away at age 80. Under it reads the caption, “#1 Biscuit Maker.”



The to-go window at Flo's Kitchen, open for early-morning business.

32 When Southern Women Cook

food editor, baker, and author of *Biscuits: A Savor the South Cookbook* from the University of North Carolina Press



Courtesy Hometown Food Company (top and center)

IT'S ALL GRAVY

In her article "The Seven Essential Southern Dishes" for *The Bitter Southerner*, cookbook author Sheri Castle (see page 150) writes, "Gravy is the apex of our sauce making. Anybody ought to be able to make an exquisite sauce with cream and butter. A cook can make exquisite gravy out of nothing." Southern cooks smother meat or biscuits with their standout gravies. Here are two very different versions for biscuit gravy, plus three additional variations.

Sawmill Gravy

Serves 6

Total Time: 25 minutes

Many food historians point to biscuits and gravy being combined for the first time in the late 1800s in southern Appalachia. Lumber was one of the main industries at the time. The theory goes that the sawmill workers would eat biscuits smothered in a calorie-dense sausage-based gravy to power them through the workday, hence the name sawmill gravy. This was before the time of commercial leaveners, so the biscuits of that era were less tender—the gravy was doing double duty in terms of flavor and texture. Nowadays this quick sausage gravy is popular at home and on brunch menus. A pile of buttery biscuits smothered with a cloak of sausage gravy is known to be the elixir for the Southerner who had a little too much bourbon the night before.

- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon ground fennel seed
- 1 teaspoon ground sage
- 1½ teaspoons pepper
- 1½ pounds bulk pork sausage
- 3 cups whole milk

Combine flour, fennel, sage, and pepper in small bowl. Cook sausage in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat, breaking up meat with wooden spoon, until no longer pink, about 8 minutes. Sprinkle flour mixture over sausage and cook, stirring constantly,

until flour has been absorbed, about 1 minute. Slowly stir in milk and simmer until sauce has thickened, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

Chocolate Gravy

Serves 6 to 8

Total Time: 30 minutes

Particularly beloved in Arkansas, chocolate—yes, chocolate—gravy should be thick, rich, and sweet enough to complement a tangy biscuit. This recipe works best with natural unsweetened cocoa powder; Dutch-processed cocoa powder will result in a slightly thinner gravy. This recipe can easily be doubled; increase simmering time to 25 minutes.

- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup natural unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- 1½ cups water
- 1 cup whole milk
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces and chilled
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Whisk sugar, cocoa, flour, and salt together in large saucepan, then whisk in water and milk until combined. Bring to simmer over medium heat and cook, whisking frequently, until thickened and small bubbles slowly break at surface, about 15 minutes. Off heat,

whisk in butter and vanilla. Serve. (Gravy can be refrigerated for up to 1 week; bring to brief simmer over medium-low heat, adjusting consistency with extra milk as needed and whisking vigorously if gravy appears broken.)

Browned Butter Chocolate Gravy

Heat butter in large saucepan over medium heat until melted, about 2 minutes. Continue cooking, stirring constantly, until butter is dark golden brown and has nutty aroma, 1 to 3 minutes; transfer butter to small heat-proof bowl. Proceed with recipe as directed in now-empty saucepan.

Orange-Rose Chocolate Gravy

Substitute ½ teaspoon rose water for vanilla. Add four 3-inch strips orange zest with milk and water. Discard zest before whisking in butter and rose water.

Spiced Chocolate Gravy

Whisk ½ teaspoon ancho chile powder, ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon, and ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper into sugar mixture before adding water and milk.

White Sandwich Bread

Makes 1 loaf ~ Total Time: 1½ hours, plus 5¼ to 6¾ hours rising and cooling

In the South, moist, fluffy slices of sandwich bread are used for far more than their namesake. Sure, you'll find the ubiquitous white bread sandwiching juicy-ripe summer tomatoes and a slathering of Duke's mayonnaise, but you'll also see it served alongside Eastern North Carolina Fish Stew (page 207) for mopping. And it's not Texas barbecue without some slices of white bread served on your plate alongside the juicy slabs of brisket. Since our sandwich bread needs to serve so many purposes, we made sure it was tender, easily sliceable, and equally good fresh or toasted. Higher-protein bread flour gives this loaf the structure it needs to rise high and just enough chew. Good white bread has a subtle richness, which we achieve with a couple tablespoons of butter. A touch of honey provides the requisite sweetness while helping the outer crust to brown. This loaf is sure to be a staple in your bread box, whether you're in the South or not.

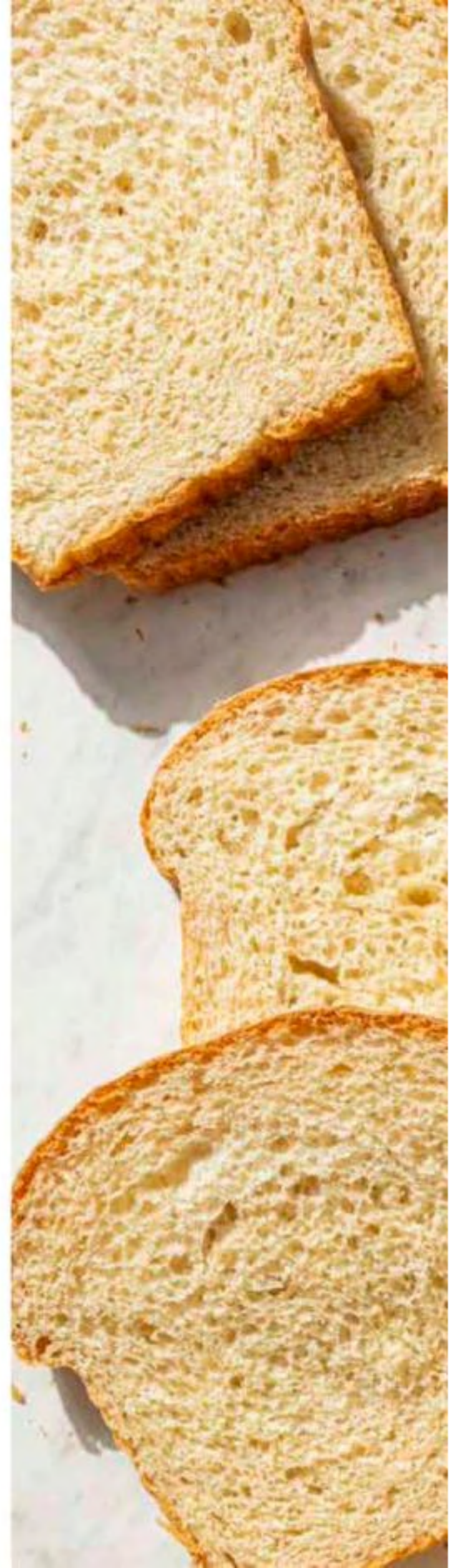
- 2½ cups (13¼ ounces) bread flour
- 2 teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 1½ teaspoons table salt
- ¼ cup whole milk, room temperature
- ½ cup water, room temperature
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons honey

1 Whisk flour, yeast, and salt together in bowl of stand mixer. Whisk milk, water, melted butter, and honey in 4-cup liquid measuring cup until honey has dissolved. Using dough hook on low speed, slowly add milk mixture to flour mixture and mix until cohesive dough starts to form and no dry flour remains, about 2 minutes, scraping down bowl as needed. Increase speed to medium-low and knead until dough is smooth and elastic and clears sides of bowl, about 8 minutes.

2 Transfer dough to lightly floured counter and knead by hand to form smooth, round ball, about 30 seconds. Place dough seam side down in lightly greased large bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and let rise until doubled in volume, 1½ to 2 hours.

3 Grease 8½ by 4½-inch loaf pan. Press down on dough to deflate. Turn dough out onto lightly floured counter (side of dough that was against bowl should now be facing up). Press and stretch dough into 8 by 6-inch rectangle, with long side parallel to counter edge. Roll dough away from you into firm cylinder, keeping roll taut by tucking it under itself as you go. Pinch seam closed and place loaf seam side down in prepared pan, tucking ends as needed to match size of pan and pressing dough gently into corners. Cover loosely with greased plastic and let rise until loaf reaches 1 inch above lip of pan and dough springs back minimally when poked gently with your finger, 1 to 1½ hours.

4 Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Mist loaf with water and bake until deep golden brown and loaf registers at least 205 degrees, 35 to 40 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Let loaf cool in pan for 15 minutes. Remove loaf from pan and let cool completely on wire rack, about 3 hours, before serving.



SHAPING SANDWICH BREAD

This supple dough is easy to shape into an even loaf.

- 1 Press and stretch dough into 8 by 6-inch rectangle, with long side parallel to counter edge.
- 2 Roll dough into firm cylinder.
- 3 Pinch seam closed.
- 4 Place dough in pan, tucking as needed.



SHARING SALT-RISING BREAD

For the early settlers, who didn't have access to commercial yeast, white bread wasn't tall and fluffy like modern classic sandwich bread. The dense, yeastless, slow-rising, naturally leavened bread they made is known as salt-rising bread. The earliest known recipe is from 1778 West Virginia. The bread spread to surrounding states and eventually north to Pennsylvania and New York. As Southerners moved westward, it was even made in the Midwest and as far away as California. Despite the name, there's little to no salt in this bread. Historians don't know how it got that name; one theory is that the starter was often nestled into salt barrels to keep it warm.

Salt-rising bread was long sold in grocery stores and baked at home. But with the rise of commercial baking and modern busy schedules, it has almost disappeared entirely. Amy Dawson, farm manager and baker at Lost Creek Farm in West Virginia, is on a mission to continue this endangered baking tradition. Dawson

learned to make the bread with Jenny Bardwell and Susan Ray Brown of Rising Creek Bakery in Mount Morris, Pennsylvania, which specializes in salt-rising bread. Dawson is passionate about West Virginia regional cuisine, and she bakes salt-rising bread for farm dinners. Through her commitment to baking it, she advocates for the importance of preserving culinary history.

The flavor of and process for making salt-rising bread are different from those of typical sandwich bread. Unlike sourdough starter, the salt-rising starter that makes the bread grow is made anew each time, then fermented overnight. Salt-rising bread has a flat top and dense crumb, so it's good for toast. It's cheesy, funky, and slightly sweet.

by Julia Skinner, PhD

food historian and author of Our Fermented Lives: A History of How Fermented Foods Have Shaped Cultures and Communities

Easy Crescent Rolls

Makes 16 rolls ~ Total Time: 1¼ hours, plus 2½ to 3½ hours rising

Most recipes for buttery, flaky crescent rolls call for repeated rolling and folding to layer softened butter into the dough. But as a nod to Lucille Bishop Smith, an entrepreneur who created a hot roll mix that allowed people to bake bread more easily at home (see “Business on a Roll”), we turned to an easy-to-make at-home version called butter horn rolls. These rolls are softer than traditional crescents, but they’re just as rich and buttery and get some flakiness from stirring melted butter into the liquid ingredients before combining with the dry ingredients in a stand mixer. And these rolls get an extra hit of buttery flavor from a brush with softened butter, as well as a sprinkling of salt while shaping. Sure, they’re not quite as easy as using hot roll mix (it’s unfortunately no longer available for purchase), but they do come together relatively quickly for a crescent roll. A pizza cutter makes quick work of cutting the dough into wedges; alternatively, you can use a chef’s knife or bench scraper.

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| <p>2½ cups (12½ ounces) all-purpose flour</p> <p>1 teaspoon instant or rapid-rise yeast</p> <p>1 teaspoon table salt</p> <p>½ cup half-and-half, room temperature</p> <p>7 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly</p> <p>1 large egg plus 1 large yolk, room temperature</p> <p>¼ cup (1¼ ounces) sugar</p> <p>1 large egg, beaten with 1 tablespoon water and pinch table salt</p> | <p>1 Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper and spray with vegetable oil spray.</p> <p>2 Whisk flour, yeast, and salt together in bowl of stand mixer. Whisk half-and-half, melted butter, egg and yolk, and sugar in 4-cup liquid measuring cup until sugar has dissolved.</p> <p>3 Using dough hook on low speed, slowly add half-and-half mixture to flour mixture and mix until cohesive dough starts to form and no dry flour remains, about 2 minutes, scraping down bowl as needed. Increase speed to medium-low and knead until dough is smooth and elastic and clears sides of bowl (it will stick to bottom), about 8 minutes.</p> <p>4 Transfer dough to lightly floured counter and divide in half. Knead each dough half by hand to form smooth, round ball, about 30 seconds each. Place dough balls seam side down on prepared sheet, spaced about 6 inches apart. Cover loosely with greased plastic wrap and let rise until doubled in volume, 1½ to 2 hours.</p> <p>5 Line second sheet with parchment. Working with 1 dough ball at a time (keep remaining dough ball covered), press down on dough to deflate and transfer to clean counter. Press and roll dough into 12-inch circle. Using pizza cutter or chef’s knife, cut circle into 8 even wedges. Starting at wide end, gently roll up each dough wedge, ending with pointed tip on bottom. Push ends toward each other to form crescent shape. Arrange crescent rolls evenly on prepared sheets (line baking sheet for rising with fresh parchment before adding crescent rolls) and reshape as needed. Cover loosely with greased plastic. Let rolls rise until nearly doubled in size and dough springs back minimally when poked gently with your finger, 1 to 1½ hours.</p> <p>6 Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 350 degrees. Gently brush rolls with egg mixture and bake until golden brown, about 20 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Let rolls cool on sheet on wire rack for 15 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.</p> |
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BUSINESS ON A ROLL

Lucille Bishop Smith could have claimed many titles: seamstress, chef, teacher, food editor, corporation president, and, as many have called her, Texas's first African American businesswoman. She was born in Texas in 1892 and graduated from Samuel Huston College (which is now Huston-Tillotson University). After college she went to work as a seamstress and cook before she took her first role lifting up her community as the teacher-coordinator for a vocational education program that was geared to train Black students in domestic service jobs.

In 1941, Smith published a box set of recipes called "Lucille's Treasure Chest of Fine Foods" to help educate people who wanted to improve their culinary skills. In the mid-1940s she created and marketed Lucille's All Purpose Hot Roll Mix, a convenience baking mix that could be used to bake pizza dough, bread, or rolls, to raise money for her church. It sold out, raising \$800 (a huge amount at the time) for the church. Grocery stores began placing orders for it since this was the first all-purpose hot roll mix on the market. An article in the *Cleburne Times-Review* in 2004 stated, "The product paved the way for the convenience cooking we know today."

One of Smith's signature recipes was for chili biscuits: a biscuit stuffed with chili and topped with American cheese. They were so good, they were served at both the White House and on American Airlines flights.

Bishop-Smith served as the first food editor for *Sepia* magazine, a photo-journalistic magazine similar to *Life* that focused on Black Americans. At age 82, she assumed the role of president of her co-owned corporation, Lucille B. Smith's Fine Foods, Inc.

During a time of Jim Crow laws (which existed in Texas until 1965), Smith forged a path out of poverty for women and people of color who didn't have many opportunities. Food was her avenue for raising people up.

by Morgan Bolling

Page 38 is not included in this sample.

Pan de Jamón

Makes 1 loaf ~ Total Time: 1½ hours, plus 1 hour 40 minutes rising and resting

Medium to thick slices of deli ham are ideal for this recipe, providing a satisfying filling. To enhance the festive appeal, Magaly trims the dough edges before assembling and places them on top of the loaf in decorative patterns—crafting ribbons, braids, and shapes by hand or using cookie cutters.

- 4 slices bacon
- ½ cup warm milk (110 degrees)
- 1½ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1½ tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 2 large eggs
- 2½ cups (13¼ ounces) sifted bread flour
- 10 ounces deli ham
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup pimento-stuffed olives, patted dry
- 1 large egg beaten with 2 tablespoons water

1 Cook bacon in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until beginning to crisp, about 5 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer bacon to paper towel-lined plate. Reserve 2 tablespoons fat and set aside; chop bacon into 2- to 3-inch pieces; set aside.

2 Whisk milk and yeast together in bowl of stand mixer and let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes. Whisk in melted butter, 1 tablespoon reserved bacon fat, sugar, and salt. Using dough hook on medium-low speed, mix in eggs until fully incorporated. Add flour, 1 cup at a time, until cohesive dough forms and no dry flour remains, 2 to 4 minutes, scraping down bowl as needed. Increase speed to medium-high and knead

until dough begins to pull away from sides of bowl, about 10 minutes, scraping down bowl as needed. Transfer dough to lightly greased large bowl. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and let rise until doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

3 Press down on dough to deflate and let rest for 10 minutes. Transfer dough to lightly floured counter and press and roll into 16 by 14-inch rectangle, about ¾ inch thick, with short side parallel to counter edge. Save trimmings for decorating, if desired. Brush top of dough with remaining 1 tablespoon bacon fat. Arrange ham in even layer over dough, leaving ¼ inch border. Place bacon pieces evenly over ham, then sprinkle evenly with raisins and olives. Brush edge of dough with water. Roll dough away from you into firm cylinder and pinch seam and ends closed, using additional water as needed. Press loaf gently to flatten slightly (loaf should measure about 14 inches long by 4 inches wide by 2 inches high).

4 Transfer loaf to lightly greased rimmed baking sheet seam side down. Cover loosely with plastic and let rest for 40 minutes.

5 While dough rests, adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Just before baking, brush loaf with egg-water mixture. Bake until golden brown and loaf registers at least 200 degrees, 35 to 45 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking. Let cool for at least 10 minutes. Slice and serve warm or at room temperature. (Pan de jamón can be refrigerated, wrapped tightly in plastic, for up to 2 days. Serve at room temperature.)

Dollywood Cinnamon Bread

Makes 1 loaf ~ Total Time: 2 hours, plus 2 hours rising

At Dollywood, a real attraction is the bread. Park patrons line up for hours at the gristmill to get freshly baked loaves of their famous yeasted bread coated in lavish amounts of butter and cinnamon sugar. They grind the flour for the bread on location. It's so good, the mill serves about 350 loaves of bread every hour! The bread is offered glazed or dusted with powdered sugar, served with apple butter, or enjoyed all by itself.

Dolly Parton herself offers a recipe for this bread in her 2006 cookbook, *Dolly's Dixie Fixin's*. (Money from sales of the cookbook went to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a program that gifts books to children every month.) In her recipe, she suggests using pizza dough to make it easier. And you certainly could swap in pizza dough for the bread dough in our version (simply skip steps 1 and 2), but we suggest making your own, which gives you control over the flavor and texture of the dough.





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Dough

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, softened, plus 2 tablespoons melted
- 1½ cups (8½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1¼ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- ½ cup plus 3 tablespoons warm water (110 degrees)
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon table salt

Sugar Coating

- ½ cup packed (3½ ounces) light brown sugar
- ¼ cup (1¼ ounces) granulated sugar
- 4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, divided

Glaze (Optional)

- ½ cup (2 ounces) confectioners' sugar
- 1 tablespoon milk

1 **For the dough** Grease 8½ by 4½-inch loaf pan with softened butter. Whisk flour and yeast together in bowl of stand mixer. Add water. Fit mixer with dough hook and mix on low speed until dough comes together and no dry flour remains, about 2 minutes, scraping down bowl and dough hook frequently. Turn off mixer, cover bowl with plastic wrap, and let dough rest for 15 minutes.

2 Add sugar, salt, and melted butter to dough and knead on medium-low speed until incorporated, about 30 seconds. Increase speed to medium and knead until dough is elastic and pulls away cleanly from sides of bowl, 6 to 8 minutes longer. Transfer dough to greased large bowl. Cover tightly with plastic and let rise until doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

3 **For the sugar coating** Meanwhile, mix brown sugar, granulated sugar, cinnamon, and salt together in shallow dish, breaking up any clumps of brown sugar. Set aside 6 tablespoons cinnamon sugar mixture. Place 4 tablespoons melted butter in second shallow dish.

4 Press dough into rough 8 by 4-inch rectangle on lightly floured counter, with long side parallel to counter edge. Using bench scraper or sharp knife, cut dough crosswise into 5 equal rectangles (about 1½ by 4 inches each). Working with 1 rectangle at a time, coat rectangles in melted butter, then coat in cinnamon sugar mixture in shallow dish. Lay crosswise in prepared pan, arranging in single layer. Cover pan loosely with greased plastic and let rise until puffy, about 1 hour (cinnamon sugar may crack during this time).

5 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Bake until top is deep brown and center of bread registers 205 to 210 degrees, about 30 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking.

6 Meanwhile, whisk reserved 6 tablespoons cinnamon sugar mixture and remaining 4 tablespoons melted butter together. Remove loaf from oven and immediately brush with butter mixture (use all of it). Let loaf cool in pan for 15 minutes.

7 **For the glaze** If desired, whisk sugar and milk together until smooth.

8 Carefully transfer bread to platter. Let cool for 15 minutes longer. Drizzle with glaze, if using. Serve warm.

Alabama Orange Rolls

Makes 8 rolls ~ Total Time: 1½ hours, plus 3 to 4 hours rising and cooling

You can find pillowy, yeasted rolls filled with orange and sugar served in the bread basket alongside savory foods in many spots in Birmingham, Alabama. It's likely this trend was sparked by Mrs. Ewing Steele. Steele was hired as the baker of Vestavia Roman Rooms, an elegant Birmingham restaurant that opened in the late 1940s in a former mayor's Roman temple-inspired home. She brought her recipe from her past roles working as kitchen manager at an Episcopal church in Texas and at the Officers' Club at Fort McClellan in Alabama. Steele went on to write two cookbooks, *Secrets of Cooking* in 1970 and a follow-up, *More Secrets of Cooking* in 1980.

While they look a lot like sticky buns or cinnamon rolls, orange rolls weren't served for breakfast or dessert but rather alongside soups, salads, steaks, and the other hearty mains offered at the Vestavia Roman Rooms. The rolls became a staple at multiple clubs and restaurants around Birmingham. In our version, inspired by the ones served at All Steak Restaurant in Cullman, Alabama, we pack orange into the dough (fresh juice), filling (zest), and glaze (fresh juice). Be sure to zest the oranges before juicing them. We bake these rolls in a dark-colored cake pan to encourage better browning. If you have only a light-colored pan, increase the baking time to 45 to 50 minutes.

Dough

- 3 cups (15 ounces) all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup (1½ ounces) sugar
- 2¼ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- ½ cup warm orange juice (110 degrees)
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 6 pieces and softened
- 1 large egg plus 1 large yolk
- ¼ cup heavy cream

Filling

- ½ cup (3½ ounces) sugar
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

Glaze

- ¼ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup (1½ ounces) sugar
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ teaspoon table salt

1 For the dough Whisk flour, sugar, yeast, and salt together in bowl of stand mixer. Add orange juice, butter, egg and yolk, and cream. Knead with dough hook on medium speed until dough comes together, about 2 minutes. Increase speed to medium-high and continue to knead until dough is smooth and elastic, about 8 minutes longer (dough will be soft).

2 Transfer dough to lightly floured counter and knead until smooth ball forms, about 30 seconds. Place dough in greased large bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and let rise until doubled in volume, 1½ to 2 hours.

3 For the filling Combine sugar and orange zest in small bowl. Transfer dough to lightly floured counter. Roll dough into 16 by 8-inch rectangle with long side parallel to counter edge. Spread butter over surface of dough using small offset spatula, then sprinkle evenly with sugar mixture. Roll dough away from you into tight, even log and pinch seam to seal.

4 Grease dark-colored 9-inch cake pan, line with parchment paper, and grease parchment. Roll log seam side down. Using serrated knife, cut log into eight 2-inch-thick rolls. Place 1 roll in center of prepared pan and remaining rolls around perimeter of pan, seam side facing center. Cover with plastic and let rise until doubled in size, 1 to 1½ hours.

5 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Bake rolls until golden brown on top and interior of center roll registers 195 degrees, 40 to 45 minutes. Let rolls cool in pan on wire rack for 30 minutes.

6 For the glaze Once rolls have cooled for 30 minutes, combine all ingredients in small saucepan and bring to boil over medium heat. Cook, stirring frequently, until large, slow bubbles appear and mixture is syrupy, about 4 minutes.

7 Using spatula, loosen rolls from sides of pan and slide onto platter; discard parchment. Brush glaze over tops of rolls and serve warm.

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7 While rolls rise, place reserved cut bag marked side down on counter. Place $\frac{1}{3}$ cup flour in small bowl; gently toss 1 ball of sugar crust in flour to generously coat, then open bag and place ball in center of circle. Fold other side of bag over ball and, using glass pie plate or baking dish, gently press crust to 4-inch diameter, using circle drawn on bag as guide. Carefully peel bag away from crust to remove, then place crust on top of 1 ball of concha dough, pressing gently to mold crust to dough. Repeat with remaining balls of crust and concha dough, wiping bag clean as needed. (Don't wait until after dough rises to top dough balls with crust.)

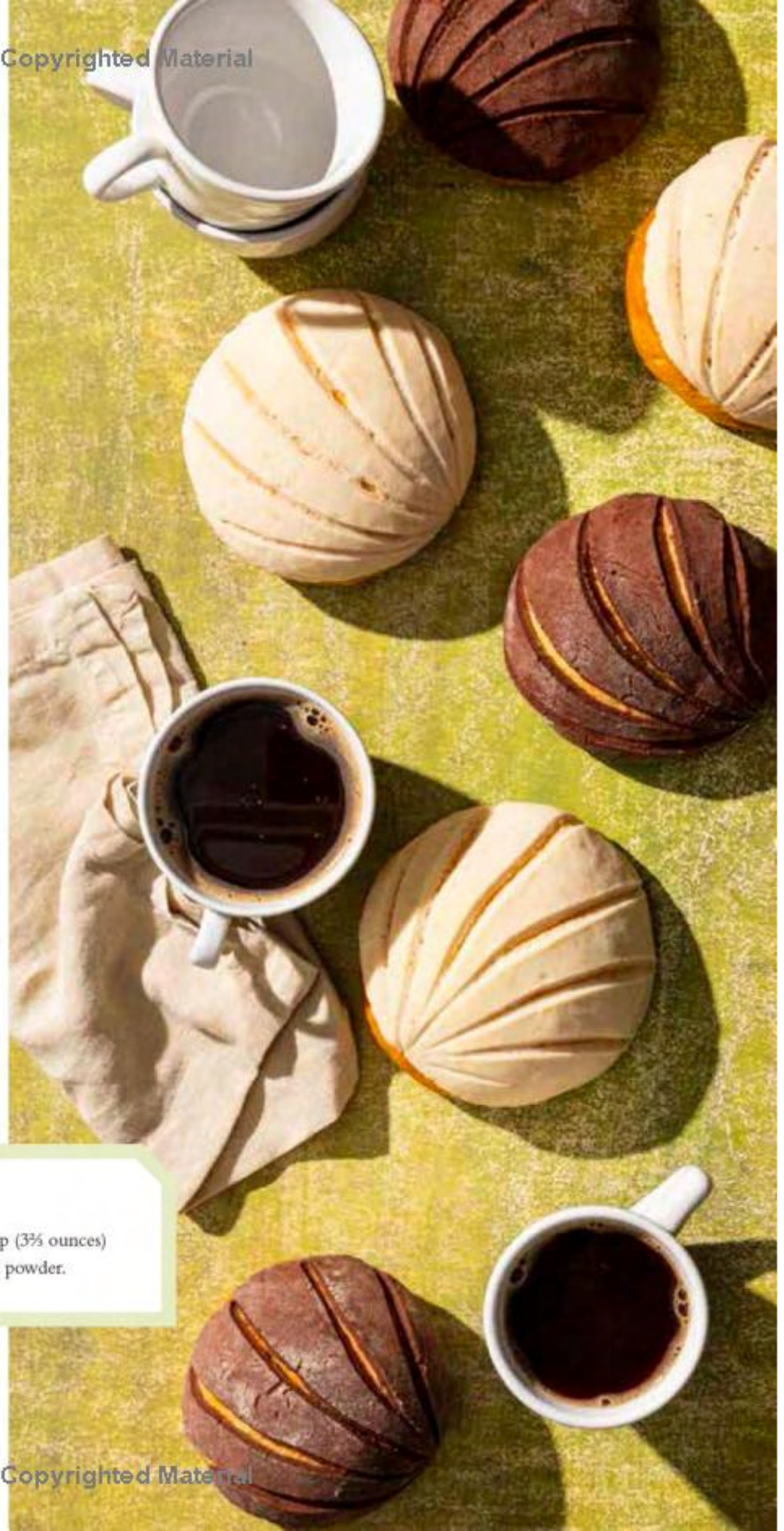
8 Using butter knife and pressing gently, score crust of each roll with series of concentric curved lines emanating from single point to create seashell pattern, being careful not to cut through topping completely.

9 Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 350 degrees. Bake until buns are golden brown and register at least 205 degrees, 20 to 25 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Transfer sheets to wire racks and let cool for 15 minutes. Serve.

Chocolate Conchas

Reduce bread flour in sugar crust to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces) and add 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder.

continued >



CONCHAS

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> more about



TOPPING THE CONCHAS

The sugar crust is a malleable dough that you can decorate with a knife for the trademark design.

- 1 Working with 1 ball of sugar crust dough at a time, toss in flour to generously coat.
- 2 Press dough ball to 4-inch diameter using circle on zipper-lock bag as guide.
- 3 Place crust on top of 1 concha, pressing crust gently to mold to dough.
- 4 Using butter knife and pressing gently, score crust of each roll with series of concentric curved lines emanating from single point.

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CONNECTING WITH CONCHAS

When Vice President Kamala Harris visited Raleigh, North Carolina, in January 2023, she stopped into Panadería Artesenal for Mexican pan dulce (translated as “sweet bread”). On a tray piled high with treats, a fluffy concha beamed front and center.

Conchas are a round, slightly sweet bread with a cookie-like topping, sometimes brightly colored, designed to resemble a shell. Traditionally dipped into coffee, they have become a ubiquitous modern symbol of Mexican American kitsch, fashioned into dangly earrings, fluffy slippers and even a playful Spanglish meme: “Don’t be self-conchas.”

“I think the concha seems impressive to people, especially people who don’t bake,” says Teresa Finney of At Heart Panadería, the Atlanta microbakery. Finney draws from her maternal Mexican lineage and seasonal Southern ingredients. For the conchas, she experiments with both. Flavor combinations include pumpkin brown butter tangerine and hibiscus strawberry.

She uses the umbrella term “enriched dough” to categorize the concha, though admits that isn’t exact. “I love to see pan dulce being a part of the conversation. When a lot of people think about breads and pastries, the first thing that comes to mind is croissant and brioche. French foods,” Finney says.

Waves of European migration to Mexico—from Spanish colonization to the late 19th century—influenced locals’ adoption of nonindigenous ingredients and, eventually, baking techniques. European immigrants’ panaderías helped make wheat a staple ingredient. Introduced to enriched breads like brioche, Mexican bakers made pan dulce their own, with treats like conchas.

Chanel Watson remembers visiting Mexico City with her mother, and walking to California panaderías with her Mexican abuelo for a concha as a kid. She could not get the taste of the “mesmerizing pastry” out of her head. She now makes 10 dozen a week at her Dallas home bakery, Cakelamb, perfecting the recipe over five years. The first detour she ever took: a filling of mascarpone and lemon chantilly cream. It’s still her favorite. Watson’s advice for making conchas at home: “They are not a perfect pastry. Focus on the process, not the end result. It’s process art.”

by Victoria Bouloubasis

freelance journalist, food writer, and filmmaker



Teresa Finney (top) and the creative conchas she offers through her business At Heart Panadería (bottom).

Teresa Finney



Beignets

Makes 24 beignets ~ Total Time: 1 hour, plus 1 hour rising

Louisiana's official state doughnut, the beignet, is known for its airy, crisp texture and tangy yeast flavor. In 1927 the *Times-Picayune*, a New Orleans newspaper, hyped the tasty fritters: "There aren't any holes in them, [and] they are not round like in the conventional doughnut ... They aren't anything that an ordinary doughnut is. The reason is that they are better."

If you can't travel to Louisiana to tear into a beignet alongside a chicory coffee, try making them at home. They take a little time but are quite easy to make. You need to use plenty of yeast and prompt it with warm water and sugar to start developing flavor right off the bat. A super-hydrated dough means lots of steam, which creates an open, honeycombed structure as soon as the beignets hit the hot oil. Since wet dough is tricky to roll out, it's helpful to let it firm up in the refrigerator and then flour the counter and baking sheet generously. After a few minutes of frying and a dusting of powdered sugar, these beignets are ready to enjoy Big Easy-style. Use a Dutch oven that holds 6 quarts or more.

- 1 cup warm water (110 degrees)
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided
- 1 tablespoon instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 3 cups (15 ounces) all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons plus 2 quarts vegetable oil, divided
- Confectioners' sugar

1 Combine water, 1 tablespoon granulated sugar, and yeast in large bowl and let sit until foamy, about 5 minutes. Combine flour, salt, and remaining 2 tablespoons granulated sugar in second bowl. Whisk eggs and 2 tablespoons oil into yeast mixture. Add flour mixture and stir vigorously with spatula until dough comes together. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate until doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

2 Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Line second sheet with parchment paper and dust heavily with flour. Place half of dough on well-floured counter and pat into rectangle with your floured hands, flipping dough to coat with flour. Roll into ¼-inch-thick rectangle (roughly 12 by 9 inches). Using pizza wheel, cut dough into twelve 3-inch squares and transfer to floured sheet. Repeat with remaining dough.

3 Add remaining oil to large Dutch oven until it measures about 1½ inches deep and heat over medium-high heat to 350 degrees. Place 6 dough squares in oil and fry until golden brown, about 3 minutes, flipping halfway through frying. Adjust burner, if necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 325 and 350 degrees. Using slotted spoon or spider skimmer, transfer beignets to prepared rack. Return oil to 350 degrees and repeat with remaining dough squares. Dust beignets with confectioners' sugar. Serve immediately.



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S O U L -
SATISFYING
BREAKFASTS

THE BREAKFAST TABLE

Sunrise in the rural South is an event everyone should experience at least once. There are no mosquitoes out that early, the gnats are still sleeping, and the birds are often all you hear. If you're lucky to be near the coast, you'll notice the way the Spanish moss filters the new sunlight like an old porch screen. The stillness outside welcomes the meal that the South does best.

When I was a child growing up in a small South Georgia town, there was never a special spot in the pantry for cereal boxes and granola bars. We had no such thing. Breakfast consisted of hot grits, crispy bacon, and scrambled eggs, even on the busiest of school days. My father cooked a hot meal for my sister and me every single day, and we never went to school without being stuffed to the brim. On big test days, my mom, a second-grade teacher, would add orange juice to our repertoire to make our test scores higher. When my report card was less than impressive, I could never use a lack of morning fuel as an excuse.

The first meal of the day is different in the South, in all of the very best ways. It's the first chance to sit at the table, center yourself around the one piece of furniture that holds the whole house together, and

start the day with a sense of home. Breakfast is what Southern women do to take care of those they raise and to sustain themselves.

This love affair with the first meal of the day is not mine alone. I inherited the table that my grandmother grew up around. This piece of furniture holds the women of our family together across four generations. My grandmother ate breakfast as a child on the very same stripy tiger oak that my daughter does today, over 100 years later. It's at this table that breakfast was served during defining moments in my family long before I was born.

My grandmother's brother took a train from Atlanta after coming home from World War I, arriving in Madison, Georgia, in the middle of the night. He walked ten miles to their home with just a glow from the moon to light the way. He stunned his parents and 10 brothers and sisters by strolling up the long farm driveway as the sun rose. They had no idea he was alive, much less back from war. The dogs announced his arrival and quickly awakened the entire household. I've heard countless stories of the unexpected and bountiful breakfast that my great-grandmother prepared. It was, quite possibly, the greatest meal my grandmother and her siblings ever

enjoyed. It was filled with the salted pork that was being saved for the most special of occasions, eggs from the coop, and biscuits made with the creamiest of buttermilk. It was an early morning meal where dinner plates were sprinkled with the happiest of tears as they fell in overwhelming joy and gratefulness. My table was the center of this morning rapture and held them all together as a complete family once again.

I said “I do” to my husband of 23 years at 10:30 in the morning on a mild December Saturday on a Georgia island. The decision to marry before noon was an easy one to make. We liked that eggs, mounds of bacon, scuppernong jelly, and silver dollar pancakes would outshine our wedding cake at the reception. Unlike in other parts of the country, it’s not unusual for breakfast to be the highlight of just about any occasion.

Hunt breakfasts, affectionately called the Dine after the Dash, in Virginia are over-the-top ways to fill up hungry riders after their mornings of chasing fox. Breakfasts are held after the hunt, even if that falls well into the afternoon. Huge, lavish spreads filled with linens, sterling silver, breakfast casseroles, tiered cakes, stiff drinks, corn muffins, deviled eggs, and ham biscuits greet hunters with the utmost of lavish Southern hospitality.

When kickoff in Oxford, Mississippi, is before noon, breakfast takes over the most famous college tailgating locale, the Grove. Football fans do an early morning meal with sausage balls and fried chicken biscuits along with bourbon and Cokes between shouts of “Hotty Toddy” from an endless sea of red and blue.

The South’s most famous golf tournament wouldn’t leave patrons hungry until their pimento cheese and egg salad sandwiches are ready for lunch. A tradition of green waxed paper-wrapped breakfast sandwiches sustains devotees of the gentleman’s game and those that admire azaleas nearly hypnotized to bloom on time.

No matter where in the South, or for what momentous occasion, gathering over breakfast lives on. It’s a comforting and filling start that saturates the soul with a connection to the past and a craving for the day to come.

by Rebecca Lang

ninth-generation Southerner, cooking instructor, and author of eight cookbooks, including her most recent, Y’all Come Over: Charming Your Guests with New Recipes, Heirloom Treasures, and True Southern Hospitality

Buttermilk Pancakes

Makes sixteen 4-inch pancakes ~ Total Time: 50 minutes

Whether the result is called pancakes, flapjacks, griddlecakes, hotcakes, or batty cakes, it's a common scene to find batter bubbling in a greased skillet on any given morning in a Southern kitchen. The quintessential wheat flour griddlecake in the South is made with buttermilk and, according to Edna Lewis, it's the buttermilk that makes Southern baking so good. In her book *In Pursuit of Flavor*, she states, "The South has long been famous for its great hot breads and pancakes. I think the rich buttermilk or naturally soured milk, home-rendered lard, and single-acting baking powder Southern cooks always baked with have given our bread this deserved reputation." And indeed, the buttermilk in these pancakes provides a tangy flavor as well as a fluffy texture. We add a small amount of sour cream to the mix to enhance that flavor and texture further. The baking soda in these pancakes reacts with the buttermilk and sour cream to provide the perfect lift. In the early 1900s, it was common to find dark corn syrup or sorghum syrup passed around the table for topping stacks of the hot cakes. These fluffy pancakes will soak up whatever syrup you choose to drizzle them with. If you want, the pancakes can be cooked on an electric griddle. Set the griddle temperature to 350 degrees and cook as directed. If you use an all-purpose flour with a high protein content, such as King Arthur, you will need to add an extra tablespoon or two of buttermilk.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 cups (10 ounces) all-purpose flour | 1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Spray wire rack set inside rimmed baking sheet with vegetable oil spray; place in oven. |
| 2 tablespoons sugar | |
| 1 teaspoon baking powder | |
| ½ teaspoon baking soda | 2 Whisk flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in medium bowl. In second medium bowl, whisk buttermilk, sour cream, eggs, and melted butter together. Make well in center of dry ingredients and pour in wet ingredients; gently stir until just combined (batter should remain lumpy with few streaks of flour; do not overmix). Let batter sit for 10 minutes before cooking. |
| ½ teaspoon table salt | |
| 2 cups buttermilk | |
| ¼ cup sour cream | 3 Heat 1 teaspoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Using paper towels, carefully wipe out oil, leaving thin film on bottom and sides of pan. |
| 2 large eggs | |
| 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly | 4 Using ¼-cup dry measuring cup, portion batter into pan in 4 places. Cook until edges are set, first side is golden brown, and bubbles on surface are just beginning to break, 2 to 3 minutes. Using thin, wide spatula, flip pancakes and continue to cook until second side is golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes longer. Serve pancakes immediately, or transfer to wire rack in preheated oven. Repeat with remaining batter, using remaining oil as necessary. |
| 1–2 teaspoons vegetable oil | |



Blueberry Pancakes

You can use frozen berries: Thaw and rinse the berries and spread them out on paper towels to dry.

Sprinkle 1 tablespoon fresh blueberries over each pancake before flipping.

Chocolate Chip–Coconut Pancakes

Sprinkle 1 tablespoon semisweet chocolate chips and 1½ tablespoons sweetened shredded coconut over each pancake before flipping.

Strawberry Vanilla Pancakes

Combine 10 ounces (2 cups) finely chopped, hulled strawberries; ½ teaspoon vanilla extract; and 1 tablespoon sugar in small bowl. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon strawberry mixture over each pancake before flipping.



THE WOMAN BEHIND AUNT JEMIMA

With one of the most successful supermarket trademarks in history, Aunt Jemima brand pancake mix fed generations of American families. But who was Aunt Jemima?

The character was fictional, based on a racist mammy archetype meant to appeal to a persistent nostalgia, particularly among white consumers, for the stereotypical image of a Black woman at the stove, working for and nourishing white families. With tethers to antebellum mythology, early vaudeville revues, and other cultural touchstones of the late 19th century, the iconic image was just what the R.T. Davis Milling company wanted in 1893 to sell their new boxed pancake “ready mix.” But who would play the part?

Nancy Green (1834–1923) was a Black woman from Montgomery County, Kentucky. During her early life, Green was enslaved by the wealthy Walker family, for whom she worked as a cook and housekeeper. In the years following Emancipation, she continued to work for the Walkers, eventually relocating with them to Chicago. There, the Walkers introduced Green to the marketers at Davis Milling, who tapped her to promote their pancake mix by performing cooking demonstrations—in clichéd mammy costume—at the 1893 World’s Fair.

For many years, Green made appearances across the country to support the ready mix (renamed “Aunt Jemima’s Pancake Flour”), while continuing to work as a housekeeper. Her portrayal of Aunt Jemima launched the brand into mainstream popularity. While Green had to act in a way that romanticized the “Old South” and the power roles that came with it, it allowed her to travel and make a decent living for decades, something that was not afforded to many Black women at the time. She was a businesswoman who used cooking skills to support herself and her career. She went on to help establish the Olivet Baptist Church and participate in fraternal organizations and charities. Nancy Green exemplifies the perseverance and tenacity that many formerly enslaved women encompassed, and her story, while unique, is representative of many. She died in 1923, at the age of 89.

Over the decades that followed, many women—including Agnes Moody, Lillian Richard, Artie Belle McGinty, and others—portrayed the fictional Aunt Jemima, before the trademark was finally retired in 2021.

by Kelley Fanto Deetz, PhD

public historian dedicated to elevating the stories of enslaved Africans and African Americans, and author of Bound to the Fire: How Virginia’s Enslaved Cooks Helped Invent American Cuisine

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Pain Perdu

- 14 ounces brioche, ends discarded, cut into eight 1-inch-thick slices
- 3 cups warm half-and-half (80 degrees)
- 6 large egg yolks
- 6 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon table salt

Chantilly Crème

- 1 cup heavy cream, chilled
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch table salt

1 **For the pain perdu** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 300 degrees. Place bread on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet. Bake bread until almost dry throughout (center should remain slightly moist), about 20 minutes, flipping slices halfway through baking. Remove bread from rack and let cool for 5 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 200 degrees and return sheet with wire rack to oven.

2 Whisk warm half-and-half, egg yolks, sugar, melted butter, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt in large bowl until well combined. Transfer custard to 13 by 9-inch baking dish. Working with 2 slices at a time, soak bread in custard until saturated but not falling apart, 15 seconds per side. Using firm slotted spatula, transfer bread to second sheet or large platter, allowing excess custard to drip back into dish. Repeat with remaining 6 slices.

3 Melt 1 tablespoon butter in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Using slotted spatula, transfer 4 slices soaked bread to skillet and cook until golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes per side (if bread is browning too quickly, reduce temperature slightly). Transfer pain perdu to prepared rack in oven to keep warm. Wipe skillet clean with paper towels. Repeat with remaining 1 tablespoon butter and remaining 4 slices soaked bread.

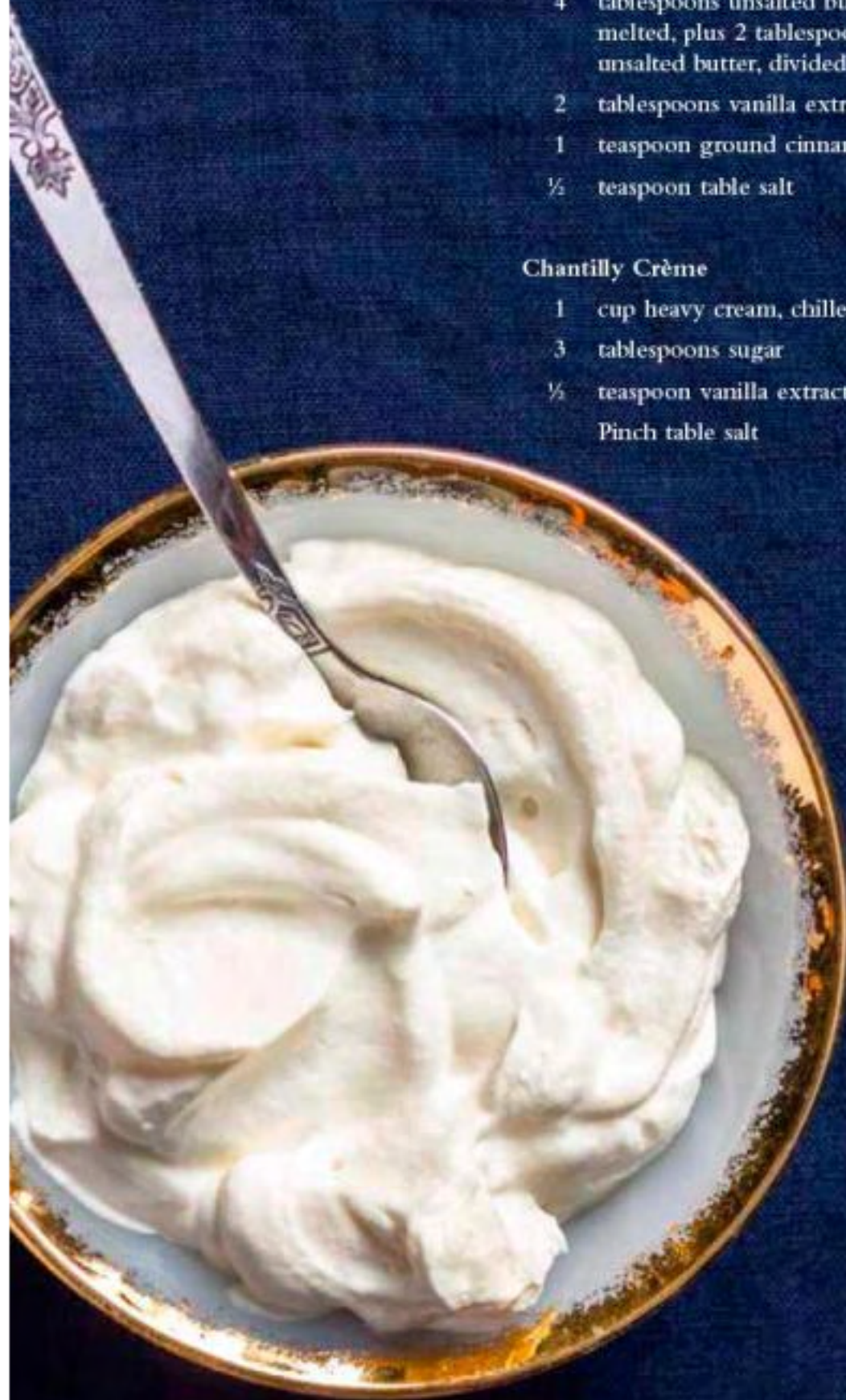
4 **For the chantilly crème** Using stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment, whip cream, sugar, vanilla, and salt on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to high and whip until soft peaks form, 1 to 3 minutes. (Chantilly crème can be refrigerated in fine-mesh strainer set over small bowl and covered with plastic wrap for up to 8 hours.) Serve pain perdu with chantilly crème.

Pain Perdu with Brown Sugar and Bourbon Chantilly Crème

Substitute light brown sugar for granulated sugar. Add 1 tablespoon bourbon to mixer with cream. Stir up to 1 additional tablespoon bourbon into chantilly crème to taste.

Pain Perdu with Lemon Chantilly Crème

Add 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 1 teaspoon juice to mixer with cream.





Quick Yeasted Waffles

Serves 4 to 6 ~ Total Time: 40 minutes

Waffle House's signature light-as-air, cooked-to-order waffles are made from their proprietary "sweet cream" batter. Their packaged waffle mix gives some insight into the formula: It instructs home cooks to incorporate eggs and half-and-half, a much richer combination of liquid ingredients than the standard water or milk most packaged mixes call for.

While Waffle House (see page 79) is open 24/7, you may not be lucky enough to live

close to one—or you may simply want to make waffles without leaving the house. So here we offer an all-purpose waffle recipe that's good to have in your repertoire—and almost as quick as a mix.

Our recipe doesn't call for half-and-half; we found we were able to achieve a rich waffle using a combination of whole milk, melted butter, and eggs. In another deviation from the Waffle House recipe, this waffle develops deep flavor from the addition of

yeast. We found that using a combination of yeast and baking powder and letting the batter rise for just 10 minutes results in superrairy waffles. One envelope of instant yeast is $2\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons. Even if your waffle maker has an indicator light or audio alert to let you know when the waffles are supposed to be done, we suggest following the visual cues in the recipe to determine doneness.

- 1¼ cups whole milk
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2¼ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 2 cups (10 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet and place sheet in oven.

2 Microwave milk in bowl until it reaches 110 degrees, 1 to 2 minutes, stirring halfway through microwaving. Whisk sugar and yeast into milk until yeast dissolves; let sit until bubbly, about 5 minutes.

3 Whisk flour, salt, and baking powder together in large bowl. Add melted butter, eggs, vanilla, and milk mixture to flour mixture and whisk until mostly smooth. Let batter

sit for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, heat waffle iron according to manufacturer's instructions.

4 Whisk batter gently to deflate. Lightly coat cooking surface of waffle iron with vegetable oil spray. Cook waffles according to manufacturer's instructions until crisp, firm, and golden, 3 to 6 minutes (use about ¼ cup batter for 7-inch round Belgian waffle iron; adjust batter amount slightly as needed to spread batter to within ¼ inch of edge of iron), whisking batter between batches. Serve waffles immediately or transfer to prepared rack in oven until ready to serve.

Buttery Blueberry Maple Syrup

Serves 4 to 6 (Makes 1½ cups) ~ Total Time: 20 minutes

Waffle House used to offer “blueberry” waffles (that is, waffles with a blueberry-like mix-in that delivered a punch of flavor). When the waffles were removed from the menu, patrons petitioned to bring them back, lamenting that those blueberries were unlike anything else: “That sweet little dehydrated blueberry nugget is far better than its fresh counterpart. There is nowhere else in the world to find that sweet artificial blueberry, trust us we have tried. Waffle House brought back the original blueberry waffle for a limited time in 2018. What a blissful but short-lived dream it was . . . Waffle House, we miss the blueberry Waffles and we implore you to bring back America’s greatest blueberry waffle,” the petition read. We can’t source those elusive “blueberries”—but we can offer a buttery fresh blueberry maple syrup. You can substitute thawed frozen blueberries for fresh, if desired.

- 7½ ounces (1½ cups) blueberries, divided
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon table salt
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 1 teaspoon juice

1 Combine 1 cup blueberries, maple syrup, cinnamon, and salt in small saucepan. Bring to boil over medium-high heat. Mash blueberries with potato masher and cook, stirring frequently, until blueberries have broken down and mixture is reduced and slightly thickened, about 5 minutes.

2 Off heat, stir in butter, lemon zest and juice, and remaining ½ cup blueberries until butter is melted and blueberries are softened, about 1 minute. Serve.





Fried Boneless Chicken Thighs

Serves 4 to 6 ~ Total Time: 1¼ hours, plus 1½ hours refrigerating

Fried chicken is the star of many Southern breakfasts: chicken and waffles, chicken biscuits, light rolls (see page 64) stuffed with fried chicken. You'll find fried chicken in the Fried and True chapter (see pages 222–233), but we wanted to offer an all-purpose savory chicken recipe tailor-made for breakfast. We use boneless, skinless chicken thighs which stay moist through cooking and are easy to cut through, so you get the perfect bite. To achieve a crispy fried coating that stands up to a pour of syrup, we call for nearly as much cornstarch as all-purpose flour in the breading. Working a small amount of liquid into the seasoned flour mix creates little hunks of breading that are rendered crunchy by the hot oil. A bit of baking powder ensures that these craggy bits are light and crispy. Use a Dutch oven that holds 6 quarts or more. We offer a recipe for Spicy Lime Honey (page 63) to cut through the richness of the chicken.

Marinade and Chicken

- 1 cup buttermilk
- 5 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 1 tablespoon table salt
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed
- 2 quarts peanut or vegetable oil for frying

Coating

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups cornstarch
- 2 teaspoons celery salt
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 2 teaspoons granulated garlic
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons table salt
- 2 teaspoons pepper
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 3 tablespoons buttermilk

continued >



HOW TO CHICKEN YOUR WAFFLES

Chicken plus waffles plus sweet syrup will always please, but many Southern chefs are playing with this adaptable equation on their brunch menus.

Karen Carrier and Shay Widmer are the chefs of Beauty Shop in Memphis, Tennessee, a restaurant constructed in the building that was formerly Priscilla Presley's hair salon and fittingly styled like a '50s beauty shop—hair-drying chairs and all. They serve their fried chicken over a pecan waffle and switch in a sweet chile lime sauce for the syrup to perk up additions of sausage milk gravy and a sunny-side up egg.

In Nashville, Tennessee, chef and TV personality Maneet Chauhan (see page 243) features a sweet-and-spiced pakora fried chicken over a dosa waffle with mango slaw and masala syrup on her brunch menu at Chauhan Ale & Masala House.

And in New Orleans, Renee "Chef Reero" Guzman makes the meal extra-fun with a choose-your-own-adventure chicken and waffle option at Ma Momma's House of Cornbread, Chicken & Waffles. You can pick wings and/or tenders over banana nut, rum, strawberry, or even Fruity Pebbles or Cocoa Puff waffles. Drizzling decisions come down to a bourbon-spiked syrup or Ma Momma's house syrup.

For at-home chicken and waffles, start with a batch of Quick Yeasted Waffles (page 58). We suggest making the waffles first and holding them in a 200-degree oven to stay warm while you fry the chicken. Then, choose your own adventure, as they do at Ma Momma's House: Top them with Buttery Blueberry Maple Syrup (page 59), Ginger Honey Butter (page 13), Spicy Lime Honey (page 63), or whatever toppings you can conjure up on a Sunday morning.



Chefs Karen Carrier and Shay Widmer of Beauty Shop restaurant in Memphis (top), chef and TV personality Maneet Chauhan of Chauhan Ale and Masala House in Nashville (left), Renee "Chef Reero" Guzman of Ma Momma's House in New Orleans (right).

Mark Weber / The Daily Memphian (top), Brett Carlsen / The New York Times / Redux (left), and Ryan Hodgson-Rigsbee (right)

Page 62 is not included in this sample.

1 **For the marinade and chicken** Combine buttermilk, garlic, salt, and pepper flakes in large bowl. Add chicken to marinade and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.

2 **For the coating** Whisk flour, cornstarch, celery salt, ginger, Italian seasoning, granulated garlic, coriander, baking powder, salt, pepper, and cayenne together in second large bowl. Add buttermilk and, using your fingers, rub flour mixture and buttermilk together until craggy bits form throughout.

3 Working with 1 piece of chicken at a time, remove from marinade, allowing excess to drip off, then drop into flour mixture, turning to thoroughly coat and pressing to adhere. Transfer to rimmed baking sheet. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours.

4 Set wire rack in second rimmed baking sheet and line half of rack with triple layer of paper towels. Add oil to large Dutch oven and heat over medium-high heat to 350 degrees. Add half of chicken to oil and fry until golden brown and registering at least 175 degrees, about 7 minutes. Adjust burner, if necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 325 and 350 degrees.

5 Transfer chicken to paper towel-lined side of rack and let drain on each side for 30 seconds, then move to unlined side of rack. Return oil to 350 degrees and repeat with remaining chicken. Transfer chicken to platter. Serve.

Spicy Lime Honey

Makes $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

Total Time: 15 minutes

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey
- 2 tablespoons hot sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon grated lime zest

Stir all ingredients together in 2-cup liquid measuring cup. Microwave until sauce comes to boil, about 1 minute. Continue to microwave in 20-second intervals until sauce is reduced to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, about 1 minute. Let cool for at least 10 minutes before serving.

SOUTHERN ROOTS, HARLEM FAME

The Wells Supper Club in Harlem, New York, which opened in 1938, is commonly credited with first concocting the dish fried chicken and waffles, serving the dinner-breakfast combo to jazz musicians in the wee hours after they'd finished their gigs. However, even though the restaurant—which has served the likes of Nat King Cole and Sammy Davis Jr.—propelled chicken and waffles into the mainstream, Wells didn't invent the pairing. Nor is chicken and waffles an exclusively Southern combination; a Pennsylvania Dutch version featuring stewed chicken dates back to the 1600s.

But the version of fried chicken and waffles that we know today is most definitely a Southern dish. According to culinary historian Adrian Miller in his book *Soul Food: The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine, One Plate at a Time*, fried chicken and waffles originated in the South on antebellum plantations: "By the early 1800s, a 'Virginia Breakfast,' a combination of fried or baked meats with any sort of hot quick bread, was the gold standard of plantation hospitality. At these meals fried chicken was a regular star, just as likely to be paired with a biscuit, cornbread, pancakes, or rolls as it was with a waffle."

Waffles themselves have a storied past. Introduced to America by English settlers and European immigrants, they gained high-society status thanks in large part to Thomas Jefferson's "waffle frolics," parties where guests would make their own waffles. At the time, waffle irons were two rigid plates attached to long handles. They were heavy, weighing in at 10 to 12 pounds, and needed to be held carefully by the cook over an open flame—not an easy task. So most of these waffle frolics moved to more heavily emphasize the frolicking (that is, eating) than the waffle making, which may have been relegated to enslaved cooks.

Over the next half century, both chicken and waffles became ways for enslaved people to participate in the economy of the antebellum South. At that time chicken was far less popular and affordable in the United States than it is today. However, it was common in the South, due at least in part to chicken's status among enslaved Black people as the only livestock permissible to cultivate. Tending chickens and selling eggs became a way to make external money. Alongside these egg vendors, "waffle women" occupied spots at markets. According to the *Atlantic Educational Journal*, these women made and sold homemade waffles, still a hard labor in the 1860s with those hefty waffle makers.

Miller says that after Emancipation, the rigorously trained and highly skilled Black cooks who would have prepared many of those "Virginia breakfasts" went on to become professional cooks for elite clientele in hotels and restaurants not only in the South, but also in the North. This presented a pathway to commercial success for Black people and propelled fried chicken and waffles into the mainstream, where they still are today.

Light Rolls

Makes 15 rolls ~ Total Time: 1½ hours, plus 2 hours 50 minutes to 3 hours 50 minutes rising and cooling

Along the coast of North Carolina, light rolls are as iconic as biscuits are in the rest of the South. According to Liz Biro for Coastal Review, these rolls, also known as lightnin' (or loitin') rolls or sometimes just hot rolls, likely trace their roots to England, as they bear similarities to the Cornish splits of Cornwall.

Typically these yeasted rolls are made without eggs and include a good amount of lard, which gives them a supple texture and savory flavor. While they're delicious straight out of the oven (especially with a schmear of butter), some people split them open and stuff them with country ham, fried chicken, or a fried pork chop for a more substantial breakfast. While the basic recipe is simple, you can find cooks in the area who fold in cheese or even make a cracklin' version, embedding fried pork skin into the dough.

This take yields tender, salty-sweet rolls that are delicious on a breakfast table or as a snack. We suggest melting the lard on the stovetop. The dough will be sticky in step 3, but the hydration will make for supersoft rolls after baking. Brushing the baked rolls with melted butter gives them a shiny coating and rich flavor.

- 5 cups (25 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2¼ teaspoons instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 2 teaspoons table salt
- 1½ cups whole milk, room temperature
- 8 tablespoons lard, melted
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1 Whisk flour, yeast, and salt together in bowl of stand mixer. Whisk milk, melted lard, and sugar in 4-cup liquid measuring cup until sugar has dissolved.

2 Using dough hook on low speed, slowly add milk mixture to flour mixture and mix until cohesive dough starts to form and no dry flour remains, about 2 minutes, scraping down bowl as needed. Increase speed to medium-low and knead until dough is smooth and elastic and clears sides of bowl, about 5 minutes.

3 Transfer dough to lightly floured counter and knead by hand to form smooth, round ball, about 30 seconds. Place dough seam side down in lightly greased large bowl or container, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise until doubled in volume, 1½ to 2 hours.

4 Make foil sling for 13 by 9-inch baking pan by folding 2 long sheets of aluminum foil; first sheet should be 13 inches wide and second sheet should be 9 inches wide. Lay sheets of foil in pan perpendicular to each

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