



# Southern Cuisine

*Sample the delights of Dixie*

Among people who love to cook, and even those who just love to eat, almost every conversation eventually turns to food. Mention down-home, Southern cooking and, invariably, the room will light up and a vibrant din of conversation will erupt, with all present sharing a favorite recipe or Southern dining experience. Someone is likely to share, “My grandmother made the best biscuits in the South,” or “My mouth waters even at the thought of homemade peach cobbler and home-made ice cream.” For years we have listened to family and friends, neighbors and restaurateurs who shared their Southern cooking traditions. We have tested them, refined them and been inspired to just enjoy them.

True Southern food is based on a heritage of skilled cooking with an abundant variety of fresh ingredients. Many of the “new” food trends such as wild baby greens and root veggie casseroles are mainstays of traditional Southern cooking. Most homes in days gone by had beautiful large vegetable gardens. Fruits and vegetables were stored, dried, canned

or picked daily for consumption. Many families employed cooks whose primary job was to provide both delicious and nourishing food – soul food – as we know it today for the family. Recipes were handed down from generation to generation, documented orally or written down on anything from a scrape of paper to a burlap bag of flour.

As hired family cooks left Southern families and as many women went into the work force during WWII, the preparation of meals became a function of time and ease. Women who had never been trained to cook were being called upon to prepare meals, and tend to the gardens. Time was at a premium. Simultaneously frozen vegetables and grocery store chains began to emerge, eliminating the need for the family garden and afforded the family cook a quick and easy way to get produce and supplies for preparation of meals. Fast food chains quickly emerged behind the modern conveniences of grocery stores and we know how the rest of the story goes.

Perhaps we have now come full circle. A renaissance in Southern cook-

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