

Gravy

“Our steroids were white beans, cornbread, and pig’s feet.”
—former Negro Leagues star Sidney Bunch to the *Nashville Tennessean*

NUMBER 18, SPRING 2005

NEWS FROM THE SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE

From the President

Dear SFA Members,

2005 has begun as an exciting year for our organization. Following our January board meeting and benefit dinner hosted by board member John Flear at Blackberry Farm, we heard from several folks who offered to do an SFA dinner in their communities.

We participated in one such event in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, under the guidance of Chef Brian Stapleton and president-elect Marcie Ferris. The dinner, staged at the Carolina Inn, was a remembrance of Bill Neal and featured several SFA kitchen masters including Stapleton, Magnolia Grill’s Ben and Karen Barker, City Grocery’s John Currence, Hominy Grill’s Robert Stehling, and Crook’s Corner’s Bill Smith. A panel discussion about Neal, with participation from David Perry, John Currence, Robert Stehling, Gene Hamer, and Moreton Neal, gave context to the great food.

On September 16 we’ll stage another dinner, hosted by our friends in Louisville at the Brown Hotel. Look for details and reservation information soon on the SFA Web site. And speaking of the Web site, we have recently revised it. Take a look.

You will also notice a freshly redesigned SFA brochure, which is available in printed form and as a PDF file on the Web. The piece has updated information about our mission, our goals and objectives, and ways in which folks can support us. We’ve also begun recording a radio show, tentatively scheduled for distribution on public radio stations, and Ronni Lundy is hard at work on *Cornbread Nation 3*.

We’ve also seen SFA in the news this year. I hope you were able to watch John T’s appearance on CBS *Sunday Morning*—in search of perfect fried chicken. And we were used as a resource for NPR’s Kitchen Sisters’ segment on *Morning Edition* about Georgia Gilmore. Additionally, North Carolina’s *Our State* magazine—and a plethora of other publications—published profiles of our organization.

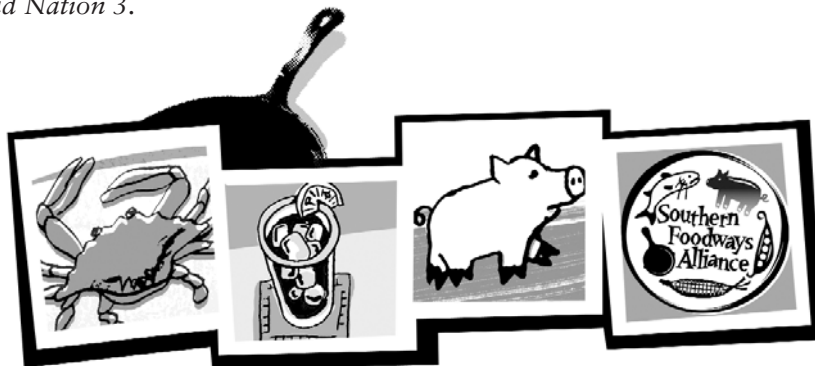
Our oral history initiative has also been very active the first few months of 2005. Amy Evans has spearheaded an oral history project around SFA’s founding members, and many of you have volunteered in helping us gather this important information.

Remember we continue to need your financial help in moving this important work ahead.

We’re also working on New Orleans bartender oral histories—a group I’ll bet has quite a few interesting tales to tell. And, speaking of New Orleans, our contingent there has put together a great program. It sold out in record time.

Finally, board member Adrian Miller is hard at work on our sugar symposium for October, and we should be getting details on this effort soon. Stay tuned and hope to see you in New Orleans, Louisville, and Oxford.

Best wishes and good eating,
Elizabeth Sims



SFA Needs Your Help

We are in the middle of our sponsorship drive to support 2005/2006 programming and ask you to think about companies and organizations that would benefit from a partnership with SFA. We are looking for partners who identify with good Southern eating and strong Southern roots. Please e-mail your ideas and contacts to our new sponsorship development person, Jamie Estes, at Jamie@estespr.com, or give her a call at 502-244-5313. It's not too late to participate as a sponsor in the fall symposium or regional dinners. She is also looking for sponsors to help fund our oral history project. Just give your ideas and contact information to Jamie, and she will follow up.

SFA GEAR

www.cafepress.com/southernfood

Excited about New Orleans this summer? Buy the new official T-shirt for the field trip. Want to share news of SFA with the world? Buy a bumper sticker for your car. Want to be on the cutting edge of fashion? Well, maybe a T-shirt won't do it. But you can be on the cutting edge of what's cool with the SFA. Visit our online store to get great SFA gear now, and know that proceeds benefit our organization!



➤ GRAVY ◀

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A FINE ROMANCE

The former Ann Segrest writes from Athens, Georgia:

The field trip to Birmingham was my first SFA experience, and I had a ball. I had been working very hard in my catering business for two years, and it was a treat to be away. On Saturday morning we boarded three Greyhounds for Aliceville and the Willie King Freedom Creek Blues Festival. The buses pulled up in Willie's cornfield under a perfectly blue sky. We piled out and as our group dispersed, I was mesmerized by the music and the day—and I desperately wanted a beer.

Out of nowhere I heard a voice asking, "What are you doing here?" I turned around, and this man in sunglasses and a Panama hat is standing there with a Crown Royal bag in hand.

I said, "If you'll give me some of what's in that bag, I'll tell you."

He opened the bag and said, "Take your pick, darling." It was full of harmonicas—he plays blues harmonica on the side. (He's a chemical engineer by day.) We spent the rest of the day together, talking and drinking beer.

I knew he was the man I was to marry. On Monday, back in Athens, I called him. We proceeded to talk twice a day for an hour every day until meeting again in Birmingham two weeks later. Two weeks after that, he came to Athens and asked me to marry him. Of course, I said yes! We were married on January 15 here in Athens at a fun, elegant wedding. A postreception party was held at the locally famous 40 Watt Club with a blues band from Mississippi, Big Jim and the Hot Shots. The town is still talking about it! His name, by the way, is Terry Freeze, and I'm trying to avoid being known as AnniFreeze.

SFA Thanks Its Corporate Sponsors

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Virginia Wine: Jefferson's Dream Becomes Reality

By Jeff Siegel

Every mention of Virginia wine includes Thomas Jefferson and his failed attempt to grow quality wine grapes and produce quality wine. Well, it's time to put that reference to rest.

Virginia wine has come into its own. It may not be the equal of California, Bordeaux, or Burgundy, but the idea that the state is fated to follow in Jefferson's footsteps just isn't true anymore. Consider the results from this spring's *Dallas Morning News* wine competition, where Virginia wines won 10 medals, including two golds—for a Cabernet Franc from Charlottesville's White Hall Vineyards and for a Norton from Chrysalis Vineyards in Middleburg.

"I don't think, 20 years ago, that anyone would have defended Virginia wine," says Dave McIntrye, a Washington-area wine critic who publishes the *WineLine* e-letter and has judged Virginia wine competitions. "But that's all changed. The best wineries have figured out which grapes to grow to make the best wine, and their vineyard management techniques have gone a long way toward overcoming problems—higher humidity, frost—that they don't have in France or California."

Virginia, since Jefferson, has had difficulty producing quality wine because the best wine grapes—*vitis vinifera*, the species that includes Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and the like—don't tolerate heat, humidity, and cold weather especially

well and are susceptible to a variety of diseases under those conditions. So Virginia winemakers were forced to make wine from native grapes like the Norton or from hybrid grapes like the Chambourcin, which tolerate the conditions better. But those grapes are oftentimes more difficult to work with and may require more skill in the making of quality wine.



In fact, Virginia winemakers—and there are almost seven dozen wineries today—have made two grapes their own. Producers like White Hall and Pearmund (near Broad Run) have taken Cabernet Franc, used mostly in blends in California and Bordeaux, and turned it into a quality wine. Chrysalis and Horton Cellars (in Gordonsville), among others, are bringing about a renaissance in the Norton, one of the most underappreciated grape varieties in the world. Chrysalis Norton is particularly interesting; owner Jennifer

McCloud is blending it with Cabernet to make a complex wine.

Virginia still has some problems to overcome, of course. Its wines' price-value ratio is still too high (Chrysalis charges \$35 retail for its top-end Norton, and there are few drinkable inexpensive wines). In addition, it's difficult, but not impossible, to get Virginia wine in much of the country—because of the antiquated U.S. distribution system. But given the state's success so far, it's worth trying.

Oral History Project at Child Nutrition Archives Spotlights School Lunch in the South

What is your earliest memory of school lunch? Interviewers at the Child Nutrition Archives posed this question to individuals whose careers focused on feeding children. Brenda Hawkins of Gainesboro, Tennessee, thought back to the 1950s and the ladies in her school cafeteria serving "those huge lima beans." Mary Nix of Kennesaw, Georgia, recalled attending a split-session school in the late 1930s and early 1940s in a rural farming area where "farmers would bring their excess fresh produce to school to serve, and if somebody brought in turnip greens and green beans, they'd have to be fixed that day."

The oral history project is one of many undertaken by the Child Nutrition Archives at the National Food Service Management Institute at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. Established in 2003, through the support of U.S. Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi, the Child Nutrition Archives collects, preserves, and makes available to researchers, collections concerning the federal Child Nutrition Programs.

The Mary Thompson Collection contains photos that provide rare glimpses of early lunch programs in segregated South Carolina during the 1940s and 1950s. The Earnestine Camp Collection chronicles the development of school lunch programs in Arkansas from the 1930s onward by way of correspondence, newsletters, photographs, and hundreds of school recipes. In addition to describing school lunch programs in the South, these collections and oral history interviews document how Southern school food service leaders participated in the development of the National School Lunch Program.

To read transcripts of interviews or browse through guides to the collections, please visit www.nfsmi.org/Archives/index.htm. If you have any questions or have information of interest to the archives, please contact Meredith Johnston at mwjohnst@olemiss.edu.

KITCHEN PROJECT ALABAMA

Check out the Kitchen Project from Project Alabama, an organization operating out of Florence. They are doing terrific work employing local workers to create hand-made haute couture clothing. Working with SFA member Angie Mosier, they built an online exhibit of oral history and photography, inspired in part by the SFA oral history project.

Visit the organization's Web site at:
www.projectalabama.com/Catalogue.htm

TET BOILED PINDERS

Tom Hanchett, historian at the Levine Museum of the New South, writes from Charlotte, North Carolina:

We went to the huge Tet celebration yesterday at Asian Corner Mall yesterday. Along with the firecrackers and dragon dance and speeches, there were a dozen or more church and civic tables selling food. One table featured bags of boiled peanuts. Turns out these are an old Vietnamese tradition! (Peanuts in Vietnamese are *dau phong*.) They taste just like Carolina boiled peanuts—no special spices I could detect. No wonder so many thousands of Vietnamese have chosen to settle in the South.

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