

Cornbread Nation

Number 2 ~ 2000

The Newsletter of the Southern Foodways Alliance

2001 looks to be a banner year for the SFA. Our financial outlook is improving. Our membership is increasing. And the positive press keeps rolling in. Thank you for all the support and hard work. And be on the lookout for invitations to a number of SFA events, including gatherings in Kentucky and perhaps North Carolina.

John T Edge

The Times They Are A Changin'

"I heard more open discussion about race in one weekend than I ever did growing up here," said Jimmy Kennedy, a Mississippi-born chef and Ole Miss graduate now cooking in Vermont."

— *Wall Street Journal*,
November 28, 2000

Audiotapes of Symposium Available.

Audiotapes of the 2000 symposium proceedings are available. You may purchase tapes of individual sessions or, for a discounted price, the entire package. Please call 504-892-1157 to request an order form.

Board and Committee Nominations Sought

Nominations for service on the board and on various committees — fundraising, symposium programming, membership, public relations — are being sought. Please contact SFA director John T Edge at john@olemiss.edu. The deadline for nominations is January 12, 2001.

2000 Southern Foodways Symposium a Resounding Success

The third annual Southern Foodways Symposium was held October 20-22. Thanks to the strong support of sponsors Southern Comfort, The Catfish Institute, and Viking Range as well as Bottletree Bakery, Fat Possum Records, and the Oxford Tourism Council, the gathering was a financial and critical success, drawing yet another sell-out crowd to The University of Mississippi campus and garnering positive coverage in a wide variety of publications including *Cooking Light*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

This year's theme was *Travelin' On*, an examination of what happens when Southerners and Southern foods travel north, and west, and across the Atlantic. Among the highlights were author Joe Dabney's ruminations on the Hillbilly Highway; Nathalie Dupree's observations on how the media has marketed the idea of Southern food; cultural geographer Richard Pillsbury's talk, "Grits Lines, Barbecue Belts, and Authentic Chicago-Style Delta Ribs: Geography and Southern Foodways"; Seattle attorney Peter McKee's rumination, "It's the 'Cue: The Life-Altering Impact of Southern Food on One Unsuspecting Yankee"; writer Roy Blount, Jr.'s take on eating Southern in the Big Apple; and SFA president Toni Tipton-Martin's thought-provoking examination of the black culinary diaspora as viewed from a West Coast remove.

In addition, two awards were presented. Leah Chase of the fabled Dooky Chase's restaurant in New Orleans, Louisiana, received the SFA's second Lifetime Achievement Award, while venerated pitmaster J. C. Hardaway of the Big S Grill in Memphis, Tennessee, received the first Keeper of the Flame Award.

Lunch and dinner offerings expanded this year. Neal Langerman of Georgia Brown's in Washington, D.C., wowed

Friday luncheon guests with rack of lamb and rice flour-crusting shrimp, while pitmaster J. C. Hardaway, with assistance from Randy Yates of Oxford's Ajax Diner and our own Lolis Eric Elie, served pluperfect barbecue sandwiches to an appreciative crowd that same evening. Saturday lunch, served from the splendid Viking kitchen erected under a tent in the Grove, featured Creole gumbo from Leah Chase; pepperpot gumbo from Fritz Blank of Deux Cheminées in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Cajun gumbo from Johnny Faulk, bass player for the Hackberry Ramblers band.

The Saturday evening meal, held in the bucolic village of Taylor nine miles south of Oxford, offered registrants a taste of catfish past, present, and future, with dishes from Karen Blockman Carrier of Automatic Slim's Tonga Club in Memphis, Tennessee; Jimmy Kennedy of the River Run Café in Plainfield, Vermont; and Louis Osteen of Louis's in Charleston, South Carolina. Afterward, Lynn Storey of Taylor Catfish served up fiddler catfish rolled in spiced meal and fried to a turn. Sunday lunch marked the close of the conference with a Dinner on the Grounds featuring duck hash piled atop a homemade biscuit served by Paige Osborne of Oxford's Yocona River Inn.

New this year were a variety of musical performances from bluesman Robert Belfour, who played songs from his new album, *What's Wrong with You*, and the Grammy-nominated Hackberry Ramblers, who brought down the house on Saturday night with their Western Swing-inflected Cajun music.

Plans are already taking shape for the 2001 symposium, slated for October. Conference-goers will be invited to explore the historical connections between the farm and the table in the South.



Introducing Toni Tipton-Martin

This year's gathering marked the symposium speaking debut of Toni Tipton-Martin. Since the initial selection of SFA officers in February 2000, Toni has been serving as vice president of the organization. She is coauthor, along with the SFA's Joe Randall, of *A Taste of Heritage: The New African American Cuisine*. Toni also enjoys the distinction of having been the first African

American food editor of a daily metropolitan newspaper, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

For 2001, Toni will move into the position of board president while Leah Chase will become chairman of the board. Toni can be reached at luv2eat6@aol.com. John T. Edge will continue to serve as director. His e-mail address is john@olemiss.edu.

Sad News

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the death of Ned Shank. Along with his wife, Crescent Dragonwagon, he was one of the 50 founders of the SFA. Raised in Iowa, Ned moved to Arkansas in 1977. He married Crescent in 1978. Four years later, they opened a bed and breakfast, Dairy Hollow House. Untold accolades followed.

1999 was a good year for Ned. Under his direction, Dairy Hollow House was converted to a writer's colony, and his first children's book, *The Sanyasin's First Day*, was published to critical acclaim.

He will be missed. Greatly. Our prayers are with Crescent.



How To Get Involved

The mission of the SFA is to celebrate, teach, preserve, and promote the diverse food cultures of the American South. If you have not yet joined us, yearly dues are \$25 for students, \$50 for individuals, \$75 for families, \$200 for nonprofit entities, and \$500 for corporations. Please call 662-915-5993 for an application, or better yet, visit our web site at www.southernfoodways.com.

Food for the Soul by Monique Y. Wells

When *Food for the Soul* was originally published in France under the title *La Cuisine Noire Américaine*, it caused a bit of a stir, in part because French super-chef Alain Ducasse was enlisted to write a brief preface wherein he praised "the initiative taken in this publication to pay tribute not only to the generations of blacks who suffered slavery, but also to the evolution of the mentality that allowed their descendants to ennoble a cuisine initially created to permit people to survive." It also helped that the international press deemed novel the idea of a cookbook written by a black Southerner now living in Paris.

That was back in 1999. Late this summer, Elton-Wolf Publishing of Seattle, Washington, released an English translation of the original. More

Books of Note

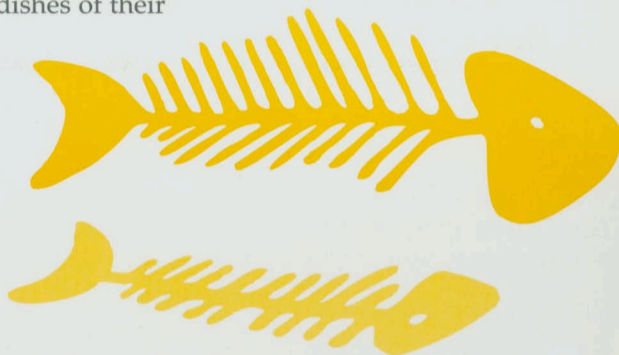
than just a curiosity, *Food for the Soul* explores the role that foodways play in group identity and in reconstructing the idea of home far from one's place of birth.

The recipes ring true. The prose is direct and well written. But most interesting of all for those of us on this side of the Atlantic may well be the sidebars chockfull of advice on how expatriate Southerners replicate the dishes of their youth while on a sojourn in France.

With Wells as our guide, we learn that, though collards are

rarely if ever available in Paris, *chou nouveau* or *chou vert pointu* – a cabbage found in late winter and early spring — will do in a pinch. What's more, Wells recommends that if you wish to make Theda Holmes Wilson's macaroni and cheese casserole, topped with crumbled Ritz crackers and are confronted with a paucity of genuine Ritz, the best possible substitute for those golden wafers is a French snack cracker called TUC.

Wells was one of the featured speakers at the third annual Southern Foodways Symposium.



Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow Debuts

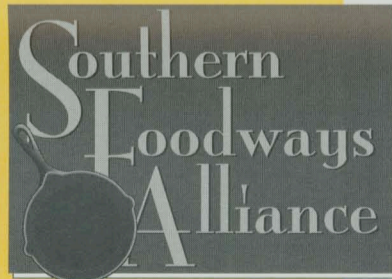
The Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow (WCDH) in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, is quickly becoming a literary and creative haven for Southern culinary writers. The only such colony within 26 states, WCDH welcomes writers in any genre and from all geographic locations while maintaining a strong interest in Southern food culture.

Several dedicated fellowships stress regional writing and scholarship. These include the Tyson Foods Residency Fellowship in Traditional American Home or Regional Cooking. The first such fellowship was awarded to a California writer, Terri Wuerthner, who will work on a memoir of life and cuisine in the Louisiana area where she was raised.

WCDH is the first to recognize culinary writing as a legitimate genre, offering, in addition to the Tyson Fellowship, the Stephens-Weber Grill Fellowship for Outdoor Cooking. Authors and former innkeepers and – SFA founders – Ned Shank and Crescent Dragonwagon, conceived the idea of turning their award-winning Dairy Hollow House Country Inn and Restaurant over to more literary pursuits in 1997. The husband-wife team opened The Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow on June 5, 2000.

For more information, contact the WCDH by e-mail at director@writerscolony.org or telephone 501-253-7444. The web site is www.writerscolony.org.

The University complies with all applicable laws regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity in all its activities and programs and does not discriminate against anyone by law because of age, creed, color, national origin, race, religion, sex, handicap, veteran, or other status.



Center for the Study
of Southern Culture

The University of Mississippi
P. O. Box 1848
University, MS 38677-1848