

**DORI SANDERS**  
**SFA Founding Member - York, SC**

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Date: May 31, 2010  
Location: Ms. Sanders's home, York, SC  
Interviewer: Dan Huntley  
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs  
Length: 39 minutes  
Project: SFA Founders Oral History Project

**[Begin Dori Sanders-1 Interview]**

**00:00:01**

**Dan Huntley:** Hello; this is Dan Huntley. We are in the illustrious home of Dori Sanders in York, South Carolina. It is May 31, 2010, and we're sitting down on a rainy day. And are you ready, Ms. Sanders?

**00:00:22**

**Dori Sanders:** I am ready.

**00:00:24**

**DH:** All right; how did you come to be involved in the Southern Foodways Alliance?

**00:00:28**

**DS:** I—maybe because at the outset I did write a cookbook. My cookbook entitled *Dori Sanders' Country Cooking, with Stories and Recipes from the Farm Stand*, fortunately did take off to a pretty roaring start. And I guess because of that, Dan, I happened to become noticed as a presence in the world of food.

**00:01:01**

Maybe because not only did I present recipes, but I offered stories and sources—sources behind the recipes. And in addition to that I offered my little healthy tidbits, because in real life I grow most of the foods that are listed in my cookbook.

**00:01:26**

**DH:** Hmm; and did—was it John T that first approached you with this idea about Southern Foodways and serving on the Board?

**00:01:36**

**DS:** I tend to think it was John T Edge. And perhaps yes; because right off-hand that is the name I'm most—

**00:01:45**

**DH:** Sure; and is it—was it something that when you understood the—the concept behind Southern Foodways that it was to celebrate Southern cooks and Southern foods and to, you know, get—like this—an oral history, a record before it gets gone?

**00:02:06**

**DS:** Absolutely; and I guess coupled with John T Edge would have been John Edgerton. Because I think I've known both of them perhaps equally in the—in the timeframe. And because of that, I feel that it's sort of a dying art that many, many people do not really, really understand a lot about our foods, about our life; why is it that we gravitate so readily to certain foods? What is the history, the story behind those foods? And fortunately I happened to meet up with two people that were so dearly interested in that—along with other writers—that it was something I truly wanted to be a part of.

**00:02:50**

**DH:** Hmm; okay. Let's see; were you involved with either of the Southern food organizations that pre-dated the Southern Foodways? One was called the Society for the Preservation and Revitalization of Southern Food or the American Southern Food Institute?

**00:03:07**

**DS:** No; I was not.

**00:03:09**

**DH:** Okay; and did you go to the organizational meeting they—they held in Birmingham in the summer of 1999? And if so, do you recall anything about it?

**00:03:20**

**DS:** You mean the one with Southern—?

**00:03:23**

**DH:** With the Southern Foodways when they first got started?

**00:03:25**

**DS:** Unfortunately, I was unable to attend because the dates for that so conflicted with something that was so—my presence was so dreadfully needed on the farm, and I was unfortunately unable to attend. But through information from that, I think I was almost present, because I think I was able to glean from the information that everyone did give me almost everything—almost down verbatim to what really went on there.

00:03:53

**DH:** Oh yeah; uh-hm. When John T and John Egerton explained to you about what Southern Foodways was about and they wanted you to serve on the Board, what—what was your vision when they first told you about it? Did you see this as a way to preserve and celebrate the—the Southern kitchen traditions that you learned you know in your family growing up? I mean, was that your vision that—that this would be preserved?

00:04:26

**DS:** Truthfully, I couldn't imagine—I'm going to start with ideas that they were presenting—they would ever come actually to the stage that it did become. Today I am in awe of what really did happen, because to be truthful I did not believe that anything such a grand scope could ever come about like it did, and far beyond my wildest dreams this happened. I had no idea. I had no idea from the onset of it all that it would ever come to this, because it started out with the meetings and with the programs and with the conferences and with the small little things that finally evolved into something truly gigantic and overwhelming.

00:05:13

**DH:** Uh-hm; from—from—that was, god, ten—eleven years ago. Has your vision evolved from what that was to begin with? Do you see other things you know the—the—you know, the Southern Foodways now are doing the oral histories where they go out, you know, on the Gulf Coast? They're down there now with the [2010 BP-Deepwater Horizon] oil spill; they're talking to fishermen and how things are going. How has your vision of Southern Foodways—at that time nobody really knew about it, but now every time you turn around there's some sort of—you see John T or Edgerton on television or in the *New York Times*; do you see that there are more things

possible? I mean has your vision evolved to—to I mean are there other things specifically that you would like to see them do?

**00:06:14**

**DS:** Perhaps given time there might be some areas. As I go about thinking of the life and of the food and from the days of how it really was, “back in the day,” as we say, I perhaps might think of some areas that we might need in time to explore more thoroughly. But presently and right now, I think that it’s being addressed pretty much the way anyone with the organization and the way this one is going I think they’re getting a handle—a hold on it all. And I think it’s very diverse in that it’s just not catered to one area of food, but it’s beginning to extend to all the areas.

**00:07:00**

I am so pleased with what they’re doing with things like grains and those kinds of things.

**00:07:05**

**DH:** Sure.

**00:07:06**

**DS:** And they come into the—not just collard greens, and those little small things, and sweet potatoes, but they’re going beyond that to get into all the foods that make up our Southern food and our heritage and our way of life. It’s just that I need to think back—perhaps to think maybe what there might be after the next meeting—which hopefully I’ll be able to attend when we’re talking [*Laughs*]*—*there will be something that we might just look into to say, “maybe we’ll go

into that to see if there's a little gate opening there that we might explore and learn more about that aspect of it all.”

**00:07:38**

**DH:** Right; right.

**00:07:39**

**DS:** But right now, it's so many things opening up like you mentioned with the fish, and all of that. And do you know we no longer have frogs on our farm? And it's just so many things today that's rapidly becoming so different. I think in time, we'll want to see what we're doing in our environment and with our—that system that's causing—for this demise of so many things.

**00:08:01**

**DH:** Sure; one of the things that I tell people about—and correct me if I'm wrong, Dori—that your family farm has been—is one of the few African-American farms that has been in your family for in excess of 100 years.

**00:08:19**

**DS:** Well [*Laughs*] almost, but I only count from the time we owned it.

**00:08:24**

**DH:** Right; right.

**00:08:27**

**DS:** And that is the difference. My father's family did not own it from the 100-year time, but we have owned the land, the farm where we live, since 1916. So that's the time we count from; that's pretty good, because this is—this is 2010, so we're getting there. But I only count from ownership—not from the time the family was presently and physically located there, but from the time we were fortunate enough for my daddy to start walking the land and owning a piece of the land, of the ground, that he farmed for some—some years.

**00:09:01**

**DH:** Sure; sure, uh-hm. The next question is, did you attend the first Symposium in '98?

**00:09:08**

**DS:** Oh yes.

**00:09:09**

**DH:** And what do you recall about it? Or are there particular moments from that gathering or others that stand out in your mind? I would imagine that—that at that time there were a number of people like John Egerton in the food world that perhaps you hadn't met before—

**00:09:26**

**DS:** Absolutely.

**00:09:26**

**DH:** —and they were all gathered in one place at one time.



**00:09:28**

**DS:** Absolutely; absolutely. So what was—well, first of all I want to say about that particular one which I did attend it was masterfully handled but what I guess stood out in my mind most prominently, more—over and above anything else was the fact that there were young people who were so involved.

**00:09:51**

**DH:** Oh wow.

**00:09:53**

**DS:** Young men going into food! Oh, I was just overwhelmed with that. And that I think was the one single thing—the one defining moment that made me think, “This is going to go places.” Because we have interest from a source of young people, people who are willing to get out there and dig and find out the necessary things that we need to know. And most importantly of all, it was a heartfelt interest that I saw there from those young men and the young people that were there.

**00:10:23**

And fortunately a lot of them were young. I was among the older few.

**00:10:31**

**DH:** Hmm; and was it—a gathering where people would, you know, have serious discussions about, you know, beaten biscuits? You know, winter wheat? You know—?

**00:10:42**

**DS:** Absolutely.

**00:10:44**

**DH:** Martha White, all the—all the stuff—?

**00:10:46**

**DS:** Absolutely.

**00:10:47**

**DH:** And that was the thing that just knocked me out first.

**00:10:49**

**DS:** Sugar. Raw sugar.

**00:10:51**

**DH:** I went the second year; yeah, exactly, and talked—

**00:10:54**

**DS:** To see all of those kinds of things that we just always put aside as not giving any thought to. Those things were fleshed out and discussed, and oh, I have notebooks still—[inaudible]—  
[Laughs] from the things that went on from that—. And from the ones that followed as well; very, very interesting.

**00:11:12**

**DH:** And I would also imagine that the relationships you formed with other food people—you were able—you know, when you needed some research here or there—able to call on these people, and vice versa.

**00:11:30**

**DS:** Absolutely.

**00:11:30**

**DH:** To get your feet into that food world. Tell me, it says here, tell us about your role in developing the Southern Foodways mission and vision and programming?

**00:11:47**

**DS:** Perhaps, as you just mentioned, the wonderful foundation I had for information, my role to promote not just personally, but to offer to others, was the fact that I had sources—to be able when I was working at various—various campuses and programs that had to deal with food, I had—I had the proper background to be authentic at what I was offering because I had someone to go back to—to offer that. And whenever I was able to, for example, submit a paper, or they were calling for papers that had to do with food, I qualified because I had my group around me that I could present a knowledgeable explanation of whatever area of food that was dealing with.

**00:12:33**

So I found it very helpful for me personally, for my own being but mainly for my—the role I played in presenting various workshop programs on it, and I've done a lot.

**00:12:48**

**DH:** Right; uh-hm, the Southern Foodways focuses upon food as culture.

**00:12:55**

**DS:** Yes.

**00:12:56**

**DH:** And what does that mean to you, both intellectually and personally, to be able to relate—I mean, growing up on a farm—obviously, I mean, it was a way of life. It was your whole culture. And you know, I—I could see where you could look at your writing career and how much of a reflection that is of—of peaches, of food, of growing up on a farm, and so—so again, the question is, what does that mean to you both intellectually and personally to see food as culture?

**00:13:34**

**DS:** As culture—intellectually, I guess it enables me to be more informed about people and food and tastes and interests from different cultures. Because I live in a “New South,” as we tend to want to call it today. And in a work that a group of writers and historians did concerning the South, we wrote concerning *The Southern State of Mind* [editor’s note: ed. Jan Gretlund, University of South Carolina Press, 2010]. And in that we did address how the culture, food, diversity—all had its own particular role here. And do you know I often sometimes define a person—which perhaps is wrong, but it’s just a Southern thing—by the foods they eat and the ones they like. **[Laughs]** And then I begin to form my own opinion of them just from the subject of food—their likes and their dislikes, and the way things are prepared or not prepared.

**00:14:34**

So intellectually and culturally, I think it's been an eye-opener for me to see that food *does* so define us. But yet, at the same time, I find that no matter what the differences may be, there is that universality there or that commonality of—of mind, of spirit, of soul that comes down to the simple feel of, “Let's break bread.” It all boils down to that. So it's a wonderful, wonderful take on what food is, what it does, and how it fuels each one of our private lives. And then when you get down to the nitty-gritty, it all boils down to a sameness. And to me, that is quite amazing; quite an eye-opener.

**00:15:20**

**DH:** Sure, sure; when you think about food as culture from a personal standpoint do you—you know, when you're fixing chicken and dumplings, I mean do you associate that, you know, with, you know, an aunt that prepared this?

**00:15:38**

**DS:** Yes.

**00:15:39**

**DH:** I always think about, you know, the French expression where they say if you put love and energy into a food—the food that you're preparing—then you put that on the table and that's what your guests are eating. Do you have that personal connection—

**00:15:55**

**DS:** Always; always with food. For example, today it's rainy. It's dreary. So if I was going to make something—even if it was something as simple as a pie, just the aroma of a baking pie,

apple pie or peach pie would come—bring back all of those old familiar things from when we shared that common table of food. And you always dredge up—your mind would dig into the memory of some relative where that was maybe her prize food. Maybe she did it better than any other relative. And then you would struggle in your mind to try—in your own way to bring about the same comfort food—comfort that—that food had brought about, by simply becoming a little bit innovative, I should say. Putting in a trace of this flavoring, or maybe she used a little bit of this, or maybe she didn't use this. And in the end it all comes down to comfort food that couples so much with memories.

**00:16:54**

**DH:** Oh yeah; yeah, when you talk about grandparents and—

**00:16:57**

**DS:** Absolutely.

**00:16:57**

**DH:** —and you know, there was—I think about you know I mean I never saw saffron [*Laughs*] you know when I was a kid.

**00:17:03**

**DS:** Me neither.

**00:17:04**

**DH:** I never even had pasta, you know.

00:17:06

**DS:** I didn't either.

00:17:07

**DH:** I didn't know what basil was; I didn't know what oregano and—. And, you know, now—I mean, you know—I mean, last night my—my granddaughter wanted the—what she calls “peck”: pecorino, you know, this cheese that they like. And you know, it's like, “Goodness, gracious.”

**[Laughs]** But this is the last question on the—the origins of the—the Southern Foodways; it says, do you have ideas for the future of the organization, projects you'd like to see happen or topics you'd like to study?

00:17:46

**DS:** Topics I'd like to study; yes, absolutely. Because I am keenly interested and would like to learn a little more about the sources of foods. I must admit that through my association with Southern Foodways, there—I have learned more about the source of some foods that I've always just taken for granted, like okra and some of those other foods. And because of who I am, I realized that—as an African American—that a lot of my foods today, I had no idea for the source of them, and now I'm beginning to learn that. So yes; I would like to delve a little more deeply into some of those topics to learn more and also to do my own take on what I already know.

00:18:33

My father was a man who was so taken with what happened in the world around him and the world about him, and so because of that we—I was always a person that wanted to know more—.

00:18:49

**DH:** Right; uh-hm, hmm, okay. Now we're getting onto six questions about your personal life.

**[Laughs]**

00:18:56

**DS:** Good.

00:18:57

**DH:** Great.

00:18:57

**DS:** That should be fascinating.

00:18:59

**DH:** Well I wish we had cameras in here now.

00:18:59

**DS:** That should be—. **[Laughs]**

00:19:02

**DH:** Okay; here's—here's a good one to get started with. Where were you born and when were you born?

00:19:08



**DS:** I was born in York County, South Carolina in a tiny little place called Filbert—F-i-l-b-e-r-t. I was born by—I was born in the manner of most of the people around me by a wonderful midwife who could not spell and could not remember, so age—my life and some of my family has always been questionable. When was she born? Number one, the woman couldn't write either. **[Laughs]** Do you know I did not have a birth certificate until I was grown?

**00:19:45**

**DH:** Oh really? Oh wow; wow.

**00:19:47**

**DS:** Absolutely; because in South Carolina, from my area, I did find that the statisticians had very few records on birth of the children. Well number one, the midwives oftentimes forgot to turn them in. And if a midwife delivered you and she didn't remember to turn you in, because maybe the neighbor across the yard was having a baby the same date—and so she did that, so maybe she got it lost in the shuffle. So what we had to do—a birth certificate was required, and when I did need one—in order to get a passport, fortunately—they had to go to relatives and records to prove how old I really was. Isn't that fascinating?

**00:20:26**

**DH:** Oh wow; wow that is.

**00:20:27**

**DS:** And here I am an old lady! But all this time I just assumed—

00:20:32

**DH:** And it goes back to like when you went to Denmark, I mean you had—

00:20:37

**DS:** Yes, exactly—I had to have that. So here, everyone around me was saying, “Well how old is she really?” So then you take a record from here—our family home burned, so the records that were in the old family Bible were burned up. And the people who would have known me back then were too old to remember that it even existed. And so then different ones got together and they said, “well she’s number this and number that and number this and number that.” So most people have it down as ’34.

00:21:04

**DH:** Nineteen thirty-four?

00:21:06

**DS:** Uh-hm.

00:21:07

**DH:** And what was the date?

00:21:06

**DS:** The date they have—there’s two dates; that’s another reason—one person thought it was August 16<sup>th</sup> and the other person was June 8<sup>th</sup>. [*Laughs*]

00:21:19

**DH:** Oh wow. [*Laughs*]

**00:21:21**

**DS:** So you *learn* culture! You learn things.

**00:21:23**

**DH:** Right; wow. Wow; well that's—

**00:21:23**

**DS:** And some are—and then another source had me even younger! But I think we zeroed in and settled in—some Social Security number or different way. [*Laughs*]

**00:21:34**

**DH:** Yeah; yeah okay.

**00:21:34**

**DS:** Isn't it amazing how—but now that's rural farming country life. My father was a rural elementary school principal. But my father I'm sure would have had no idea that the records of his children were not turned in. Because he tried to be so great—meticulous—and he named his children personally, had a bunch of them. But he wanted to spell their names correctly. And I think only three or four children have their names spelled correctly on the birth certificates when they did go finally to check them out because of that. But for those who had the family Bible to go on, they were all intact there.

**00:22:13**

If I had known what I know now, I would have made sure that that book was out of our house. And maybe I would have liked being a little bit younger.

**00:22:20**

**DH:** Yeah; you know, there you go. I like that. Please tell us about the food of your childhood, who prepared it, what were some typical meals, and describe the ceremony of those meals.

**00:22:34**

**DS:** The first of my childhood with foods—I don't know what—will this laptop pick up on all this, or is it a good background?

**00:22:43**

**DH:** That's fine; that's fine. *[Laughs]*

**00:22:47**

**DS:** The—we mainly—our foods were mainly what we did grow. My father—because of a wonderful man named Julius Rosenwald—made sure that we had, along with the other farmers what was called then the “Rosenwald Patch.” Mr. Rosenwald in his day—in order to encourage not only better schools and more books—encouraged that the people had food. Because we sold food, the older people did, from those Rosenwald fields in order to fund the Rosenwald training schools.

**00:23:20**

So in addition to the Rosenwald Patches, which included every kind of vegetable that I could—that would ever grow in our area, we really did eat those foods that we did not—that we

*did* grow. My father, early on, had his first wholesale account with one of the biggest sweet potato vendors in the country and that was Biggers Brothers out of Charlotte, North Carolina. And one year in the '30s we raised 3,900 bushels of sweet potatoes. So we grew up with sweet potatoes on the farm. We grew up with greens. And because we were like surrounded by small lakes and creeks, we grew up eating fish. Because it was teeming with catfish, brim, and the other fish that was good for the time in the area.

**00:24:07**

My father grew his own wheat, and when he would do his bread, he would make part of it white bread—white flour, but the—most of it was bran, because whole wheat—because he decided that it was better for his children to eat whole-wheat bread. We made our own molasses; we made molasses in the community for every family around here. He did it on the third, and that was how he did it—for pay. So I grew up on that, and from the molasses we made our own brown sugar. It was easy; all you had to do was put it in galvanized cans and put gauze over it, and leave the air there so the flies don't get in, and let it air so many days, and then you turn it around and let the air come through it, and in the end you have brown sugar, all raw sugar.

**00:24:54**

So I grew up with that kind of background with foods and we had corn, never ever any corn other than “field corn,” as we called it, and today we call it mule corn—or that kind of corn. We didn't have a modern-day corn, so we had yellow and white and we had—we made our own meal. And we had corn that we set aside for hominy, grew it for hominy, corn that would be set aside for the mills in Bowling Green, South Carolina, to make the grits, and to make our cornmeal, and to do our hominy.

**00:25:23**

So I grew up with a very, very healthy taste in food, and my famous—my favorite food for the farm—for the spring was “English peas,” as we called them then; they’re sugar peas, the ones that you shell, the stringed peas. With little tiny red and white potatoes, and swimming in butter—because we had milk and butter—and that was my favorite food from the spring. And my favorite food from the summer was corn on the cob and fried okra.

**00:25:51**

**DH:** Oh wow; great.

**00:25:51**

**DS:** And I love chicken. We always had—we raised our own chickens, everything. We even raised our own hogs. We raised everything, we—we had our own beef. And right, now if you look through that photo over there you’ll find out where my father wrote that in the year 1934, he canned 34 quarts of beef. We had our own canning house.

**00:26:11**

**DH:** Wow; wow.

**00:26:11**

**DS:** Sure did; it was all in writing.

**00:26:13**

**DH:** Fascinating; wow.

00:26:14

**DS:** And kind of an unusual start for a person for our area, but there were a lot of children and my father was a multi—he wore many hats; at least four. *[Laughs]*

00:26:23

**DH:** Yeah; wow, wow. Tell me how the chicken of your youth differs from the chicken that we have today in the grocery store.

00:26:29

**DS:** Oh, what a wonderful taste. Oh, just wonderful; they tasted like real chickens and they had to be—

00:26:38

**DH:** Yeah; they didn't have the huge breasts that they have today?

00:26:40

**DS:** No, no, no; because they were really not that fat. And they had little or hardly any fat, because you let them roam at their own—on their own. They had their eggs to lay, and then before you were getting ready to have chicken for dinner—which was only on Sunday, unless you were having company—the chickens were put up and penned to be fed and fattened for slaughter.

00:27:03

Number one, you fattened them for a twofold reason. You wanted them to be a little fatter than they were running around picking in your bed once a day, because you fed them more

thoroughly. And also you didn't want them to get into your wild onions, because they would have that taste.

**00:27:16**

**DH:** Oh wow.

**00:27:17**

**DS:** A chicken will eat a wild onion and if it strays out into the yard, into the front, and eats the wild onion, and that taste will come through that, but you penned them up for at least eight days and that gets all of that out of that, and the taste is wonderful.

**00:27:31**

**DH:** Hmm; wow. You're making me hungry. What did—when did you first cultivate an interest in food and what or who were—was the catalyst for that interest in food?

**00:27:49**

**DS:** My interest in food, I guess—other than eating? Or writing about it?

**00:27:54**

**DH:** I guess writing about it.

**00:27:56**

**DS:** Writing about it, uh-hm. When I first started out as a novelist, my publishers in New York said—and see, I said New York, so—



00:28:06

**DH:** Yeah.

00:28:07

**DS:** That was pretty good wasn't it? [*Laughs- she had been exaggerating a Northern accent when she said "New York"*] My publisher said that you literally—a reader literally will eat their way through my cookbook—I mean my novel. Not one, but two of them—through my first novel and my second novel. They said, “You literally eat your way through the novel.”

00:28:23

And so one—one of my editors asked me, why did I write so much about food? I said, because in my neck of the woods, and the country life that I live, selling food—produce and peaches—it's a given to write about it, because that's all we talk about. It's a given. We get up in the morning and talk about what we're going to eat. We go to bed talking about what we're going to have the next day. I said so even into the world of fiction [*Beeps*] it's only natural that I would write about food. And that's when my publishers asked me, had I ever considered writing a cookbook? And I said, “A cookbook?” I really had never given it any thought, but then that was my introduction to it.

00:29:02

**DH:** Oh wow; wow. Okay; this is the end of tape one. [*Laughs*] We got a couple more questions here; wait a second.

00:29:10

**[End Dori Sanders-1 Interview]**

**[Begin Dori Sanders-2 Interview]**

**00:00:00**

**Dori Sanders:** Well, it's all right.

**00:00:03**

**Dan Huntley:** Okay; now we're at tape two, and how did you get your first job working, writing, dealing with food?

**00:00:13**

**DS:** Well, it was through my publishers. I think—didn't we mentioned that; yes?

**00:00:17**

**DH:** [*Beeps*] Yeah; but didn't you—when I first met you, you were working as—up in Maryland—

**00:00:27**

**[End Dori Sanders-2 Interview]**

**[Begin Dori Sanders-3 Interview]**

**00:00:00**

**Dan Huntley:** Okay; part two—interview with Dori Sanders. Dori, how did you get your first job working or writing or dealing with food?

**00:00:14**

**Dori Sanders:** Well, I guess you couldn't consider growing up working in the kitchen with my mama, because that wasn't a job. But I got my first official job working at a—I guess you'd call it sort of like a motel, just outside of Andrews Air Force Base. I worked out there with them in their department of food, for banquet Facilities and catering, and I worked with that—I was paid for that job.

**00:00:37**

And then I left that, of course, and returned back to the farm, where I did work with food again. But I did work out as a writer. And as a novelist, I started writing in fiction about food. And then from my wonderful publishers I got the wonderful question, had I ever thought about doing a cookbook? And I thought, “How wonderful!” I really thought it was easy, so from them I got the invitation to do a cookbook, and that's how I got my start into writing a cookbook.

**00:01:07**

**DH:** Hmm; hmm, how have you see Southern food evolve over the course of your lifetime? I mean we were talking about it earlier today, about how you know when you grow up on the farm, and then certainly with—with you, with me as well, how, you know, everything was fried; you know the pigs weighed 400 pounds; there was no such thing as lean pork.

**00:01:34**

**DS:** Exactly; nope.

00:01:35

**DH:** But tell me about how Southern food has changed, you know, in—you know in the level that it's been processed versus what you were getting right off the farm and things like that, when you think about Southern food as a whole.

00:01:50

**DS:** It—the change has been phenomenal. I must say that has been—that kind of change. And the reason for that is, I think the reading public has become more sophisticated in that vein. Or either it's simply—maybe television. And with the food shows, and food talk shows, and different things to food—different—. And newspapers offer now—used to, in those days—they started offering wonderful recipes. And magazines; *Everyday Woman*, *Southern Living*, all the great big magazines, offered all these wonderful displays of food, so people started—even [inaudible] Southern plain—becoming more innovative.

00:02:27

So now, if you go to a cookout you'll find something a lot different from the old days. Instead of just a standard everything packed the way it was, I think Southern cooks are becoming more into herbs, using fresh herbs and seasonings and various different sorts of seasonings that we perhaps wouldn't have used before.

00:02:48

But it used to be so basic; it was onions, salt, garlic, pepper, sage—and then beyond that it was nothing. But today it's a total—total different change.

00:03:00

**DH:** Uh-hm; how about the thing that we've also talked about is the, you know the use of frying? I mean you know vegetables, chicken, you know you name it, and I mean you know when is the last time you fried in your house here?

**00:03:18**

**DS:** Very—a long time ago. Aand I think basically—I don't know if it's true about everybody, else but I'm getting lazier, and it's so much easier not to fry. It's easier to bake or to broil or to do something other than frying. So I think simply because some of the older ones like me that are getting—well, not able to stand up on that—before that stove and turning and frying things, so I think age causes us to hold back. And I think young people, they're becoming so conscious, they're tired of fried foods and they don't want to come home and—I think you work more out of the home now than you did when I was growing up. And they're not going to come home and start frying and doing things like that. But I still think they like it.

**00:03:59**

**DH:** Sure; Michael Pollan said something to me that was really funny the other day. He said that, “You know, I'm not opposed to fried foods. I say that if you want to have fried food, you prepare it yourself. You want French fries, and you cut them and you fry them—” and he says the reality is, nobody wants to spend two hours.

**00:04:21**

**DS:** Wants to spend two hours; that's the problem.

**00:04:23**

**DH:** But if you can get fast-food—

**00:04:25**

**DS:** You'll do it.

**00:04:25**

**DH:** —you can buy it in 30 seconds. But he says every six months or so it's okay to have French fries if you make them from scratch yourself.

**00:04:33**

**DS:** If you make them from scratch; yes.

**00:04:34**

**DH:** And I thought that was a—a really good way of looking at it.

**00:04:36**

**DS:** That's the best approach. That's exactly what I said. If this—

**00:04:40**

**DH:** Oil is the best.

**00:04:40**

**DS:** We just hate to stand there to do it. I love pan-fried chicken, especially with a—a cast-iron skillet. But am I going to take the time to do all of that? No. [*Emphasis Added*] That's what it is.

00:04:52

**DH:** Right, right; much talk about Southern food is talk of continuity of tradition. In this age, is such talk merely romantic or is it accurate? That sounds like a John T question right there.

[Laughs]

00:05:08

**DS:** [Laughs] I think it's both. And the reason I do believe it's both is because there's this sort of feel of old Southern food, sweet tea, [inaudible], Southern fried chicken, and all—sweet potato custard pie, and all of those things, so that's how I think the romantic side of it fits in. But then on the other side, too, I think for the purists who may want to try to taste the Southern food, I think they find it remarkably good. And I think that then pulls them into the world of Southern cooking, because I think they put aside all this hype that they may have that “Oh, it's so floating in grease,” “Oh it's so sweet,” and I think that—it's all in their heads, perhaps. But if they ever bring themselves—and a lot of them do now—to try it, the same thing with Southern soul, they find that it's amazingly good. And I think a part of them is really, really beginning to like it.

00:06:11

**DH:** Uh-hm; hmm, hmm that's a—a great way of summing it up there. Last question Dori; please describe a meal that you would characterize as totemic(ally) Southern.

00:06:25

**DS:** Do you have the time?

00:06:26

**DH:** Yeah; right, right, exactly, right, right, right.

**00:06:29**

**DS:** Oh, my. Let's get—

**00:06:31**

**DH:** If you were to have a Yankee editor down to York, South Carolina, tomorrow night, and they had never been to the South, and you wanted to lay it on them thick what would you—what would you put on your table?

**00:06:46**

**DS:** All right. I probably would be good enough to have only one—one meat; one thing. I would probably have fried chicken, but coupled with the fried chicken would be potato salad, candied sweet potatoes—I don't care if it is summertime; I'd be comfortable [*inaudible*] them fresh, candied sweet potatoes—because those things go together with the fried chicken. Creamed corn and—and a fresh corn off the cob in—in a cream sauce, fried okra—definitely fried okra. Because you cannot have corn in the summertime and not have fried okra, if you're going to have fried chicken because they go together. And definitely a homemade biscuit. And a homemade biscuit, and—so I got those things. Wait; I don't have anything green yet, so I'd have some green beans. [*Laughs*] So I would have to have me some green beans but in the green beans I would have to throw in there a couple of pieces of streak-o-lean: that's pork with a little bit of lean coming through it. It's not bacon; it's salt pork with a little streak of lean that runs through it. And I'd have my string beans—and I'm missing my macaroni and cheese! Oh, I got



to have macaroni and cheese. There is no way *[Laughs]* you can have a Southern dish without macaroni and cheese.

**00:08:01**

And then for dessert, I probably would have a banana pudding and maybe a peach cobbler. And then some sweet tea.

**00:08:07**

**DH:** Oh wow; that sounds perfect and a perfect way to end your interview at 2:30 on May 31, 2010. This is Dan Huntley with his good friend Dori Sanders in York, South Carolina—not in Filbert, not in Bowling Green, but in York, South Carolina.

**00:08:29**

**DS:** Not in Clover. *[Laughs]*

**00:08:30**

**DH:** Yeah; not in Clover, so I've had a good time with this, Dori. Let's eat some barbecue.

**00:08:36**

**DS:** Thank you.

**00:08:38**

**DH:** Yeah; bye. *[Laughs]*

**00:08:39**

**DS:** Great; bye. *[Laughs]*

**00:08:39**

**[End Dori Sanders-3 Interview]**