

# GRAVY

FALL 2017 • A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FROM THE SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE • \$7

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# GRAVY

**THE SFA SERVES YOU...**

## ISSUE NO. 65

FALL 2017

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**ESTEBAN CASTILLO**



# First Helpings

## SNEAKY PEACH

HOW ATLANTA SNUCK UP ON US

**O**SAYI AND I DIDN'T SET out to make this edition of *Gravy* the Greater Metropolitan Atlanta-Athens Issue. But the geographic ties kept popping up, and eventually, half of the issue's writers, photographers, and story subjects claimed a connection with the area. We're calling ourselves out, dear reader, so that you don't have to.

In our SFA work, from oral history to film to print and podcast *Gravy*, we tell stories from across our region. We are imperfect. Over the years we've returned to some places time and again (looking at you, North Carolina and New Orleans) while leaving others virtually unexplored (we're working on it, Arkansas!).

Atlanta, one of the most populous metro areas in the South, bursts with stories, with writers and photographers to tell them, and with curious eaters and readers to devour them. Atlanta has always been a stronghold of SFA membership, website visitors, and podcast listeners.

Whether you're from Atlanta,



Asheville, or Austin, we hope the stories in this issue will resonate with you. Clustered in Georgia, they reach across the region and beyond in topics, themes, and contributors. Meet Esteban Castillo, whose photography graces this cover and accompanies Gustavo Arellano's "Good Ol' Chico" column. Reconnect with familiar voices, like poet Sandra Beasley and erstwhile restaurant critic John Kessler. And be assured: Atlanta is officially banned from our winter issue. It's nothing personal—we've got a lot of ground to cover.

—Sara Camp Milam

## FEATURED CONTRIBUTOR

## ROSALIND BENTLEY



my cousin Brenda—about a project I was working on about the contributions of women to the civil rights movement. Brenda said, "Well, you know Mama used to let people stay at the house during the movement." The more Brenda talked, naming some of the leading lights of the era who'd stayed in her mother's house, the more I realized Aunt Lucy's story was essential. It was my duty to her memory and as her niece to tell the tale of her Freedom House.

**Tell us about the film footage you discovered in the UGA archives as you were wrapping up the story.**

For the podcast version of this story, I'd wanted audio from the period. The University of Georgia, where I was finishing my MFA, had archival newsreel footage from Albany. I looked, hopeful we might find some great sound, but the video citation summary said the footage was silent. I left it on the shelf.

The day the podcast aired, my cousin Clennon King emailed me. He'd pulled that same footage for a documentary film he's making about his father, C.B. King Sr., and another Georgia attorney of the civil rights movement. Toward the end of the six-minute tape, he saw Aunt Lucy. She had been misidentified in the citation summary as Coretta Scott King. When he sent me the link to the video, I nearly burst into tears. There she was, going to court to support Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Ralph Abernathy. To see her alive again in that black-and-white video was golden.

**A FLORIDA PANHANDLE NATIVE, ROSALIND BENTLEY** grew up spending weekends on her family farm, where she learned rural foodways from her many great-aunts. Her stories have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Essence*, and *Ebony*. Her work has been anthologized in *Best American Newspaper Narratives* and she has been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

**How did you begin to learn about your family's history in the Albany movement?**

One reason I moved back home to the South after seventeen years in Minneapolis-St. Paul is because I had missed several family funerals during my time on the tundra. That included my great Aunt Lucy's in 2002. Had I been there, I would have seen a one-sentence reference in her funeral program about her work during the civil rights movement in Albany, Georgia. Fast forward fifteen years and I'm living in Atlanta. I told Aunt Lucy's daughter—



# A Nab Is a Nab Is a Nab

Ask (almost) anyone BY SHERI CASTLE

I AM FROM WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, AND I WAS RAISED on Nabs. When my family visited Charlotte, the scent of Nabs wafting from the Lance factory was a navigational beacon. There are Nabs in my purse and in the center console of my car. Many North Carolinians share my affinity. Earlier this year, when a speaker at SFA's Summer Symposium in Charlotte admitted he'd never heard of Nabs, audible gasps spread through the audience.

What are Nabs? It depends on who you ask.

The straight answer is that they are the nickname given to a rectangular package of four to six cracker sandwiches sealed in cellophane. Some people use the word for all types of sandwich crackers (like calling all soft drinks a Coke), while others reserve the term for the square-shaped, orange variety filled with peanut butter.

## KNOW YOUR NABS

**1** The word Nabs derives from a National Biscuit Company (Nabisco) product called "Peanut Sandwich Pack-et" that hit the market in 1924. The sleeve of snack crackers—priced at five cents and sealed for portability—became ubiquitous at filling stations, check-out counters, milk bars, lunch rooms, and newsstands. In 1928, the company updated the name to NAB.

**2** Nabs aren't sold anymore. What most people call "Nabs" is technically ToastChee, the flagship cracker-sandwich of the Charlotte-based Lance Inc. brand.

**3** Here's how Lance Inc. came to develop

ToastChee: Due to a business deal snafu, the company was stuck with five hundred pounds of Virginia peanuts. Rather than waste them, food distributor Philip Lance roasted the peanuts at home and sold them on the streets of Charlotte for pennies per bag. They were so popular that he set up a commercial roasting operation, which led to making peanut butter. The big bang came when Philip's wife, Mary, and their two daughters, spread peanut butter on saltines and packaged them for sale.

**4** With ToastChee in demand, Nabisco opened a regional bakery in Charlotte and started producing packaged crackers.

Given the similarity of the two items, people began to adopt the shorter nickname, Nabs, for both.

**5** The original Lance peanut butter crackers were popular with WWI soldiers who trained at Camp Greene in Charlotte.

**6** Peanut butter snack crackers were an essential offering on the vending carts or wagons pulled through the textile mills of the Carolina Piedmont. These mobile vending stations, known as dope carts or dope wagons, fueled loom workers with sandwiches, crackers, and soft drinks, nicknamed dopes.



Illustration by Emily Wallace

Sheri Castle is a writer, recipe developer, and culinary educator based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.



A quest for inventive dining yields close, but not quite

BY OSAYI ENDOLYN

HOW DOES A CITY BECOME KNOWN FOR GOOD FOOD? IS THERE an instruction manual lying about in a hospitality group office or urban planning bureau somewhere? I ask because I've been dining in Gainesville, Florida, where I've lived for two years. I accompanied my fiancé, Bruce, who's in a PhD program at the University of Florida (UF). Upon news of his acceptance, my food-oriented friends from major cities looked at me with mitigated grimaces—where would I eat? Friends and colleagues bid me good luck with wistful smiles.

Their trepidation wasn't entirely about Gainesville, a city whose service industry relies heavily on the ebbs and flows of the fifty-some-odd thousand students who flow onto UF's campus each year. They were concerned about Florida. The place where my ecologist friend watched her conference RSVPs plummet, because state scientists told her they weren't allowed to attend events that reference climate change. The land where the Everglades are so

overrun by pythons that rabbits, deer, and even bobcats are dwindling in number. The state where the shooting deaths of young black boys like Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis caused some of my black friends to invoke near-spiritual cautionary missives. And don't get non-Floridians started on the alligator stories, which on social media, always work their way back to a guy on meth.

Still, Gainesville has its charm. You've gotta be where you're at—how can you

Photos by Osayi Endolyn





not? It's fine here. *It's fine.* That's what I say when my food friends—people like you, cherished reader, who explore often, eat generously, and are interested in what food can teach them—ask how I'm finding my way.

I reconnected with a writer who introduced me to her kindred spirits over wine and treats from Upper crust, a

## YOU'VE GOTTA BE WHERE *you're at—how can you not?*

French-inspired artisanal bakery. We tore into éclairs, tartes, croissants, and mini-cakes and no one talked about calories, so I knew I'd found my people. A serendipitous wrong turn led me to La Pasadita, a cheery strip-mall Mexican restaurant. There, I order "Mexican style" lengua, campechano, and barbacoa tacos because I prefer corn tortillas, cilantro, and onion to their default Americanized variety: flour, cheese, lettuce, and tomato. Their red mole is rich and fulfilling and their flan—oh man, it kills.

Bruce found a place called Hong Kong Deli, a bright yellow building with inept ventilation, where we became obsessed with their mala dry hot wok. The item was not listed on their takeout menu, but handwritten on paper taped to the check-out counter. Pick your own ingredients: woodsy mushrooms, bean sprouts, bean curd, tofu, zucchini, carrots, chicken, tempeh. Georgia, the petite Chinese proprietor, managed phone orders and a grill station. To make the dish, she'd mix your selections with whole chilies, onion,

fennel, and garlic over high heat. Bruce placed a large order for us every Friday night and Georgia quickly learned his kind, inquisitive voice. Beef tendon Mala salad. Sichuan boiled fish. Tofu black egg. "You eat like Chinese boy!" she'd gush to him. (She never gave me any credit.)

We found other gems. Caribbean Queen is our Jamaican spot. If you request a dish that's sold out, like brown stew chicken, they say, "It is finished!" Public & General, a casual pub, offers fun draft beer selections and a market-driven menu with daily specials. Recent visits served up a runny egg sandwich with dill fries, braised short rib over green lentils, and fried triggerfish with pickled slaw. Embers grills a solid steak and their sister business, Spark, mixes a fine Martinez. Garlic & Ginger, a Korean restaurant on the edge of town, serves a refreshing hwe naeng myun (spicy raw fish on cold buckwheat noodles). So, I'm not starving. But I'm not satisfied either.

When Gainesville residents direct me to the "best" meal in the city, they point me to a place where dishes have five too many ingredients. I call it the "count-down to rotten." Purging the walk-in of death-row produce is the only way burdening a small salad with nine elements makes sense.

Garlic & Ginger is never busy. I convince myself the rush just ended, rather than worry too few locals are willing to leave the downtown scene. At Public & General one day, a woman recapped her visit to Crane Ramen. It's a modern setup where they serve sake in tiny glasses, which overflow into mini wooden boxes, Japanese style. She complained to a friend that her noodles were "OK, but expensive for chicken soup." Yes: This is why we can't have nice things. I note

empty buildings with for-lease signs, or abandoned spaces with no apparent commercial interest. Carcasses, waiting for a shot of life. Why can't Gainesville capitalize on these opportunities?

Hong Kong Deli closed last year. We called for a couple of weeks, and when no one answered, we drove by. Another handwritten sign was posted, this time, in the window of the locked front door. CLOSED FOR FAMILY MEDICAL EMERGENCY, the scrawl read. We randomly stalked the property, hoping to catch someone. Eventually, we saw the eviction notice, also taped to the window. I called the number on the letterhead and a bewildered property manager listened as I pleaded. We were regulars. We missed Georgia. Did she need help? He didn't know, he was sorry. Today, the renovated building is painted a dull gray and hosts a women's resale apparel shop. I've kept Hong Kong Deli's menu and sometimes google Georgia or the Chinese name listed on the eviction. But I don't drive that way anymore.

I ask my well-traveled Gainesville friends and local restaurateurs why a community with nicely compensated professionals can't attract and sustain a kind-of-fine dining scene. Think of places like Asheville, Durham, or Athens. Why not, Gainesville? Farmers live here and nearby, like Congaree and Penn in Jacksonville. They mill purple rice grits that made me euphoric, even patio-side on a humid St. Augustine night. If a Florida man like chef Edouardo

Jordan can shine with Congaree's midlins at Junebaby in Seattle, can't a chef find a loyal audience here?

My makeshift focus group blames UF students who are mighty in number, but mostly looking for two-for-ones. They reference uneven development, as national chains and their big dollars seem to be concentrated in a single area. Another possibility: I'm manufacturing a problem. I travel often, so maybe my demands are unfair. Folks seem content to eat what they have, or they spend dining dollars on vacation trips to Charleston, New York, or even the Caribbean. A server at a Vietnamese spot not far from me nodded when I said my bún thit nư'ng was lousy. She told me



ABOVE: Fried egg sandwich with dill fries;  
PREVIOUS: Hwe naeng myun

to drive to Orlando where the options are better, then smiled and handed me my check. A homegrown friend says it is one thing and one thing only. "This is Gainesville," she says, shrugging. Just be where you're at. 🍷

Osayi Endolyn is deputy editor of Gravy.

# EPIC

After C. P. Cavafy's "Ithaka"

BY SANDRA BEASLEY



As you set out for home—  
back home to your apartment,  
to your vengeful cat, back home  
to a betrothed who never  
was one for textile arts—  
hope that the voyage is a long one.  
Hope that Homer finds you  
on your chosen journey,  
on a bar stool in Ocala  
one March Sunday at noon,  
though it occurs to you—  
after you are served  
the bowl of boiled peanuts—  
that your hunger, in this moment,

is not heroic. One by one  
you shell their bodies, warm  
and soft against your bottom teeth,  
tipping sweet meat into your mouth.  
Did they once have names?  
Did they once have daughters?  
How silly they look, in their little boat  
with its checkered placemat sail.  
You take a swig of a Bloody Mary,  
spiked with ocean and jalapeno,  
the one eye of your forehead pulsing.

You will get back in the car.  
You will drive another 800 miles  
with Aeolus's bagged breath  
stashed in your glove compartment.  
And if you find her poor, home  
won't have fooled you, you  
who have chosen a life

that consists of leaving your life.  
Recall you once sat at a bar  
wiping Cajun broth from your chin  
with a twelfth cocktail napkin.  
*Blame Nobody*, you sang,  
*Nobody—*  
*Nobody—*  
*Nobody did this to me.*

Illustrations by Sauda Mitchell

# RHYMES WITH

BY SANDRA BEASLEY

*Sporange*, promises the dictionary. Or *Blorenge*, a mountain  
in southeast of Wales. Except that I am off Route 301,

debating between two quarter-bushel bags of oranges  
and deciding to buy them both. Florida, I am a little in love

with your strange: how you match pastel blue to forest green;  
how your north is more Southern than your south;

how alligators and crocodiles share the same nine-mile pond,  
brackish on one shore and fresh on the other.

Navel & Page; Page & Orlando; Orlando & Honeybell;  
Honeybell & Murcott. I bring Temples and Ortaniques back  
to a man who has hand-scrubbed his grandmother's juicer.  
*Wear-Ever*, promises the stamped metal.

He works for an hour, slicing and pressing. Sometimes  
I must pitch my stance so that I don't fall down the mountain,  
into a valley, into the river of Usk. What two bodies  
couldn't make music, within such an embrace of aluminum?



Sandra Beasley's  
latest collection of  
poetry is *Count the  
Waves*, published  
by W.W. Norton.



# IT'S NOT EVEN PAST

Día de los Muertos, at home in el Sur

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

THE MOST MEXICAN THING William Faulkner ever wrote is his famous passage from *Requiem for a Nun*: “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” I came across the quote when I was a teen, though I can’t remember where. Finally, I thought, I had discovered an American culture that approached death the way we Mexicans did: with ease, joy, and respect.

I’ll confess I never read the book, so I don’t know the context of Faulkner’s observation. What I get from it is that even though people leave this Earth, their actions resonate for generations. The living must deal with those legacies, for better or worse. The dead and their lives, then, are never really gone.

Did I get it right? Research tells me Faulkner’s novel deals with a former prostitute’s futile attempt to accept responsibility for her child’s murder, so maybe. But the past is never *pasado* during Día de los Muertos—the Day of the Dead. You might have heard about this Mexican holiday, a syncretism of the Catholic All Souls’ Day and indigenous traditions that commemorate the deceased. You’ve probably seen its iconography, which has bubbled up in American popular culture this century. Colorful and vibrant skeletons exultant in death. *Papel picado*—tissue paper cut into intricate silhouettes. Marigold flowers strewn around huge altars dedicated to individuals or groups—

military veterans, AIDS victims, or gang-violence fatalities.

Over the past twenty-five years, Día de los Muertos has become a staple of Mexican neighborhoods in the United States. Celebrations culminate in family-friendly block parties. The festivities are slowly spreading across the South, as Mexicans more confidently express their culture.

Outside of the Southwest, I can’t imagine a better home for Día de los Muertos than el Sur Latino. The way many people celebrate Day of the Dead in the South right now is how it should be: a teachable moment open to all.

At the Centro Hispano in Jonesboro, Arkansas, they present art workshops and musical performances and serve tamales. A history professor at Florida State in Tallahassee reports that local Catholic churches offer a mass where names of the departed are read aloud. Latino student groups at colleges from the University of the South in Sevanee to Tulane showcase Mexican culture to their non-Latino classmates. The Living Arts and Science Center in Lexington collaborates with the Foundation for Latin American and Latin@ Culture and Arts (FLACA—“skinny” in Spanish) to hold a festival with *mariachis*, tacos, and *baile folklórico*. A few blocks away, there’s a candle-lit evening procession near Transylvania University, where face-painted participants leave graveside offerings.

Photos by Esteban Castillo







Many Generation X Mexican Americans, myself included, didn't celebrate Día de los Muertos growing up. Even in Mexico, my mom says her family simply picnicked at *el campo santo* (the cemetery) and hung out at the tombs of our *antepasados* for a couple of hours. My mom and her sisters cleaned the gravesite while my grandma placed flowers, candied skulls, and pan

de muerto—"bread of the dead." The latter is an eggy, anise-scented loaf usually influenced by the shape of skulls or crossbones and baked only during Día de los Muertos. Guaranteed, a Mexican panadería near you makes it, whether you live in Atlanta or a holler. It's one of the biggest days of their year.

I hope that as more of y'all dive in,

*ustedes* focus on the substantial and not the trendy. I'm happy that our holiday has widespread appeal, and it's cool to see non-Latinos show up to admire altars. (Even Disney knows what's up. In November, Pixar will release *Coco*, a film about a young boy who travels to the Land of the Dead and learns about his family's history with the mariachi music

now? Because the 2015 James Bond movie *Spectre* opened with a scene of an elaborate (and fictional) parade. Tourists demanded a real one, and city officials acquiesced.

I remember another hallmark of Southern death ceremonies that piqued my interest as a teen: a jazz funeral followed by a second line. To this day up here in *el Norte*, my family hires a brass band to play

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*with ease, joy, and respect.*

he aspires to play.) But, as with many immigrant customs in the United States, Día de los Muertos is both misunderstood and increasingly commercialized. You've seen Americans mistake this day of observance as the Mexican Halloween—much like they think Cinco de Mayo is Mexican Independence Day. Such ignorance has led people to attend Día de los Muertos events in full Halloween gear, which is distasteful. (Acceptable costumes are faces painted like skulls or Victorian-era clothes that pay tribute to the famous *calacas* of Mexican political cartoonist José Guadalupe Posada.) On my last visit to Tennessee, I saw a young Goth wearing a Marilyn Monroe T-shirt with the screen goddess' face painted like a skull. Some Like It...Dead?

Such superficial embraces threaten to turn Día de los Muertos into another de-racinated cultural tradition that earns a quick buck. In 2016, Mexico City held its first-ever Día de los Muertos parade. Why

at funerals for relatives and neighbors from my parents' home village, El Cargadero. Like New Orleans, our loud dirges, bone-rattling drumbeats, and exuberant dances are tokens of respect—a joyful sendoff for those who leave us. Yet tourists take the second line as an invitation to wantonly party, and have warped its definition in the American imagination as a bacchanal with no deep meaning.

Día de los Muertos is not a trend. Treat it as a solemn celebration, like the home-goings of African American Christian churches. Treat it as more proof that Mexicans are your brothers and sisters from another *madre*. Learn about your neighbors' family history at their loved ones' altars, and teach them about your family by making your own. The past isn't even past, sure—and with this holiday, our shared future looks more hopeful in the face of death. 🍷

Gustavo Arellano is editor of OC Weekly.



The Sheatses at the Learning Kitchen; OPPOSITE: Mike and crew plate the next course.

## SERVE IT UP

Shyretha and Mike Sheats build community in Atlanta

BY GRAY CHAPMAN

IT'S A RAINY MONDAY EVENING IN ATLANTA. INSIDE THE CENTURY-old Sweet Auburn Curb Market, Mike and Shyretha Sheats put finishing touches on sixteen plates of clams before send them to the dining room. Tonight, the dining room is a single communal table located approximately two yards from the tiny kitchen where Mike works. He has less elbow room here at the Learning Kitchen space inside the market than at Staplehouse, where he is a line cook. Shyretha deftly tops off diners' glasses with Athens-brewed cucumber gose beer from Creature Comforts. Luna, their wide-eyed, four-month-old baby is strapped to her hip. Mike emerges from his crowded prep space to shyly tell the group about the clams, smoked lettuce, and juiced asparagus on their plates. Diners, seated shoulder-to-shoulder, crane to hear him over the metallic racket of the Curb Market's ancient air conditioner.

Photos by Kate Blohm

Weeks later, at the Sheatses' dining table in southwest Atlanta's Capitol View neighborhood, Shyretha pours that same cucumber gose. She talks about Ma Ruby: a family elder, perhaps a distant cousin, who hosted fish fries every Friday when Shyretha was growing up in Carlton, Georgia, east of Athens. "You had a cooler, you dug out your drink," she recalls. "People would get off work and stop by to get a plate to bring home. That was dinner."

where Mike staged at McCrady's and Shyretha tended bar at the Gin Joint. They were ready to put down roots in Atlanta after a string of moves: from Athens to Atlanta while Mike attended Le Cordon Bleu in suburban Tucker; to Smyrna, where Mike worked in the kitchen at Muss & Turner's and first met Staplehouse cofounder Ryan Hidinger; and on to Charleston in 2012. No matter where they lived, they entertained and fed people in their home. The series



Ma Ruby's gatherings were plate sales: casual and slightly chaotic, bringing people together over Styrofoam plates of food. The scene at the Curb Market was the Plate Sale: Mike and Shyretha's roving Athens- and Atlanta-based pop-up dinner series takes inspiration, in name and aim, from those loose-knit socials in church parking lots and backyards.

The couple first developed the idea for the series while living in Charleston,

seemed like a natural progression.

The Sheatses' dinners are different from the fish and fixins that Ma Ruby served. A second course may feature cured egg yolk grated over turnips and a single fried onion ring, paired with a white Bordeaux blend handpicked by Shyretha in her living-room R&D sessions. But the ethos is very much the same. "It's more about engaging people, meeting new people, and being hospitable,"

Mike says. They see a need for people coming together now more than ever, even over something as simple as dinner.

Mike and Shyretha are now thirty-three. He grew up in Athens; she was raised nearby. They dated in their early twenties, and married in 2016. Food played a major role in their upbringing. But neither Mike nor Shyretha will feed you a romanticized, Norman Rockwell-esque origin story about spending hours in the kitchen learning family recipes from a wizened grandmother. Rather, they work backwards to sustain what came before them and share it with others. “We are rediscovering food in our families and are having conversations with family members to reconnect us,” Shyretha explains. “We dig deep in our memories to find our influences.”

Aunt Louise’s house. To Mike, food is a means for gathering. “Where I’m from, if you go to somebody’s house on the weekend, they’re cooking,” he says. “There are going to be people there, and they’re going to be eating. I feel like if you go anywhere in the South, that’s a thing.”

The word “community” comes up a lot in conversations with the Sheatses. These events demand a team effort by a rotating cast of collaborators. In February, at the Plate Sale dinner at B’s Cracklin’ BBQ, owner Bryan Furman cooked on the line and Erika Council of Southern Soufflé contributed dessert. “We grew up eating the kind of food that we served at the Plate Sale,” says Furman, a South Carolina-born pitmaster. (He recalls his surprise when Mike carefully garnished familiar dishes like chitterlings and cornbread. “I was

*No matter where they lived they entertained  
and fed people in their home.*

### THE SERIES SEEMED LIKE A NATURAL PROGRESSION.

Those influences are usually found among their families’ matriarchs: grandmothers who cultivated farmland, aunts who made sausage from freshly slaughtered hogs, family friends who regularly assembled spreads for twenty or thirty people. Meals like liver and gravy made en masse by Mike’s grandmother, Agnes, or his aunt Louise’s routine feasts after church. “She didn’t have to, but every single Sunday, she cooked a full-blown meal,” he says, adding that often his cousins would drive from south Atlanta, a hundred miles away, to fix a plate at

like, ‘What’s up with the tweezers?’ But the flowers were so delicate you really couldn’t touch them with your hands.”) Furman admires the work the Sheatses have done and the support network they’ve built. “It feels good to be young and black and able to run a business, and I also feel like I have a platform to help Erika and Mike and Shyretha,” he says. “You already have an audience, I already have an audience, so more people find out about all of us.”

Farmers are part of that collaborative vision, too. Mike drives around the state,



*The Sheatses want the Plate Sale series to create community for guests and collaborators.*

volunteering at farms for a day or so, to get familiar with area growers and seek out those who aren’t billed on farm-to-table menus. “One of our goals is to find others that deserve this sort of attention, or that maybe need it,” Shyretha says. She grew up next door to her grandmother’s farmstead and feels at home around manual labor. She trimmed branches and weeded at a handful of Georgia farms through Crop Mob, a volunteer organization, and helped to sow and harvest crops at McClellanville’s Thornhill Farm as an apprentice. Both she and Mike want to continue that tradition: They now work to develop Shyretha’s grandmother’s land, overgrown but rife with plums and wild shiso. Along with nascent plans for a community market and coffee shop in

southwest Atlanta (and, eventually, a restaurant to call their own), they keep their to-do list full.

That night of the Plate Sale pop-up inside the Curb Market, guests arrived in neat pairs. Bubbles and four courses concluded in a whimsical popcorn-studded dessert. Diners laughed and traded Instagram handles while polishing off the Rhone Valley muscat. Mike and Shyretha, exhausted after a near all-nighter of prep work, looked on. “The sixteen people who showed up, I felt that they were supposed to be in the house,” Mike says. The table of strangers transformed into something convivial, fraternal, communal. Over the chatter, you could hardly hear the sputter of the air conditioner. 🍷

*Gray Chapman’s writing has appeared in Atlanta magazine, Communication Arts, Architectural Record, and BUST.*





# THE CROSSROADS OF CHURCH AND PLATE

A critic ponders, do good deeds in dining absolve so-so food?

BY JOHN KESSLER

TRADE  
CHURCH



“WE’VE JUST RUN OUT of fried chicken,” the waiter says. “Also, our seafood shipment didn’t come in, so we don’t have any crab or oysters.”

This is not a welcome announcement at 7:30 on a Friday night. The waiter knows it, and his face seems geared to flinch in case my party goes postal at the news. People come from across Charlotte to eat Aunt Beaut’s pan-fried chicken at The King’s Kitchen. The restaurant has a reputation for cooking some of the best in the city. I had traveled nearly eight hundred miles.

My interest went beyond the house specialty. The King’s Kitchen has long intrigued. It functions as more than a mid-range venue for lightly tweaked but familiar Southern cooking. A bigger message is in play. The king in question

Illustrations by Natalie Nelson

here is not King George III of England, whose wife, Charlotte, gave the Queen City its name. Nor is it Elvis, but rather the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The space alternately serves as a place to eat chicken and a place of worship. Between lunch and dinner every weekday, pastors conduct Bible study for the Restoring Place Church, which takes over the dining room. The restaurant’s owner and executive chef, Jim Noble, shares this duty with another local pastor. Attendees leave with boxed meals, which might include some of Aunt Beaut’s finest. Afterward, the floor staff rearranges the chairs and sets the tables to prepare for dinner service. Worship and prayer services begin at 10 A.M. sharp every Sunday morning. Noble leads the non-denominational service. “I’m an ordained minister,” he reminds me when I phone him to discuss his food. He often steers the conversation toward faith. When he says The King’s Kitchen is “a beacon of light in downtown Charlotte,” he’s not describing the banana pudding.

NOBLE’S BALANCE between food and faith leaned toward the culinary side in the early 1990s. He and his wife, Karen, ran two upscale North Carolina restaurants in High Point and Winston-Salem, and they had named their first daughter, Margaux, for the vaunted Bordeaux wine. In 1993, after four miscarriages, their much-prayed-for second daughter, Olivia, arrived. But she contracted encephalitis and started her life in the neonatal ICU. It made Noble draw a distinction between being religious and questioning his connection with God. “It’s really more like a family relationship,” he concluded. “God has promises for all of us, but most are conditional.”

By the end of the decade, the Nobles had begun their ministry work.

The family relocated to Charlotte in 2004, where he opened Noble’s, with its upscale, Southern-inflected French cuisine. The Nobles focused their ministry on the city’s large homeless population, as much a part of uptown Charlotte as blue-suited bankers. After a few years in town, they worked to raise money for a nonprofit restaurant that could serve as

**THE SPACE  
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both a home base and a source of funding for the Restoring Place. The King’s Kitchen opened in 2010, joining what was by then a small restaurant empire.

King’s lies near the dead center of town at a perfectly named crossroads, the corner of Church and Trade. I walked northeast and found the markers of civic industry: the Bank of America Corporate Center tower, the swooping Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, the NASCAR Hall of Fame. A few blocks farther, I watched people sleep on benches while others milled around closed shelter doors. The promise of food and a bed awaited them. I walked southeast, past the 7th Street Public Market’s café cortados and free wifi, and the streets took a seedier turn. I noted the United Way office and the brutalist Mecklenburg County Jail hunkering on the horizon. Even though Charlotte has decreased its

homeless population since the spike that followed the financial crisis, the numbers hover around 1,400. Faith-based organizations offer what they can: clothes, showers, beds, counsel, chicken, salvation. Charlotte is the city of Billy Graham and banking, of faith and money, of church and trade. You can see whichever side of uptown Charlotte you choose. Unless you're inside The King's Kitchen, where both sides seem to smash up against each other.

During my first visit, I didn't once notice the enormous cross in the dining room. I observed the décor—wooden farmhouse furniture, striped brown-and-cream banquette fabric, potted silk sunflowers, and ESPN on the televisions. Instead of the *de rigueur* tribute to every farm on its to-table trajectory, a chalkboard wall lists donors to the ministry. I googled some of the names. They include a pediatric surgeon, a beverage distributor, and a corporate finance lawyer—the kinds of big-pocketbook folk typically listed as benefactors in the back of a symphony orchestra program. It's only after I review my snapshots of the interior that I see the giant cross, literally looming over my table like the Christ the Redeemer looms over Rio. I suppose I mistook it for a support beam.

The cooking here inhabits a secular world I know well, that of the urbane Southern restaurant. Craggy-creamy Anson Mills white grits ennoble Atlantic shrimp in a paprika-heavy gravy. Pimento cheese, sharp and lush, arrives on a long platter with a lineup of crostini baked on site. Southern stalwarts undergird the menu. We order a chunk of rich, salty pot roast and choose sides from an ample list. The collards have a little tang, the mac and cheese seduces with richness,

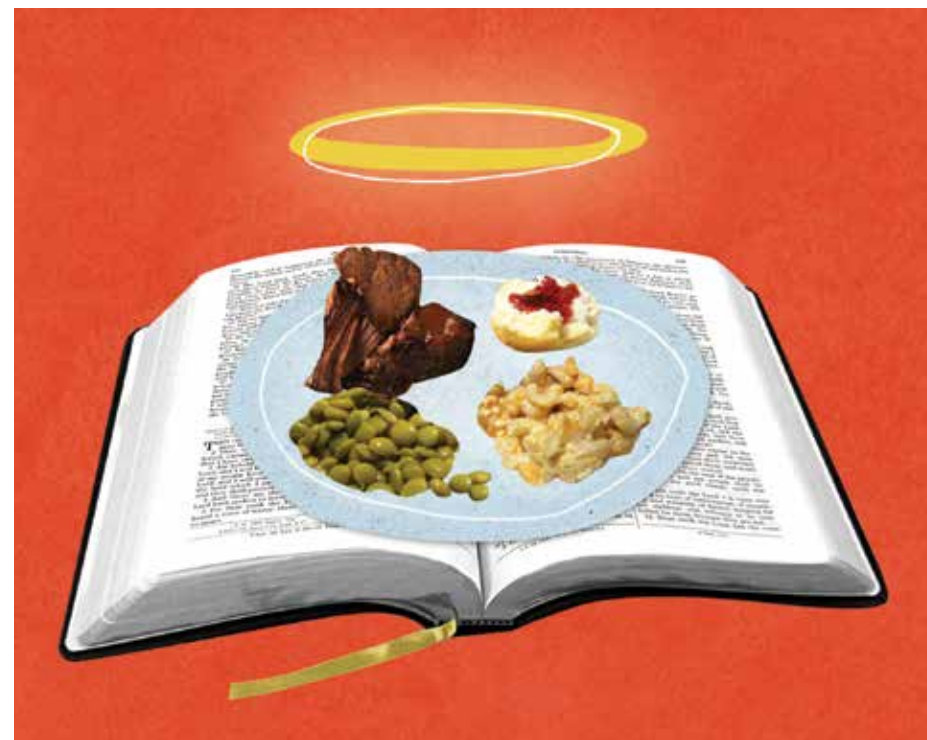
and the creamed fresh corn makes your eyes roll back in pleasure. It's all the more real for the occasional thread of silk.

The menu also wanders into upscale bistro territory, where it seems less assured. Overgrown and unmassaged kale, as stiff as packing material, fights its sweet blackberry vinaigrette. A special of pan-roasted tilefish arrives, bizarrely, over a slice of sweet zucchini quick bread.

I like the waiter, who gives me a standard pour of wine, looks at the bare inch remaining in the bottle, and says, "You should just finish this." I also admire the diversity of the diners, an even mix of races, ages, and types. There are families with little kids, and office drones who loosen their neckties. The restaurant serves beer and wine but not spirits, so the vibe is loose but not Friday-night rowdy.

If I don't take the restaurant's mission into account, it falls into the "pretty good" range. As much as I appreciate the pot roast, I suspect customers accustomed to meat-and-three lunches might balk at the \$18 price. I'd also send those in the market for a \$28 fish special elsewhere. At first blush, it doesn't strike me as destination-worthy like Noble's other restaurant, Rooster's Wood-Fired Kitchen.

Yet how can I ignore the mission? Some of the staffers I met have gone through the Restoring Place job training program. In a typical year, four or five out of ten people admitted will graduate from the program. Every dollar profit on that pot roast goes into the more than thirty thousand meals the Nobles donate in a year. This figure includes the meals served at Bible study, after church, and at adopt-a-block cookouts. The Restoring Place also delivers food to other ministries. Every Friday night, they pass out free chili-cheese dogs from a mobile delivery



service. Noble plans to expand his good works. He has joined the Dream Center network of faith-based missions, and he hopes to build a new facility for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Dream Center that will house the church, a shelter, and offer counseling services. Am I being churlish for moaning about kale salad?

ACCORDING TO A recent report by the National Restaurant Association, more than 90 percent of restaurants make charitable contributions of one sort or another, bringing in more than \$3 billion annually. Large restaurant groups raise most of the money. Darden Restaurants, which owns LongHorn Steakhouse and Olive Garden, forges partnerships with local food pantries. Arby's donates funds to children through Share Our Strength's

campaign, No Kid Hungry.

Small, local restaurants often participate in fundraisers by donating food and staffing for taste-around dining events. Restaurateurs the country over bemoan how often they get hit up for free food. But for many would-be patrons, a tasty bite and a smile from a local celebrity chef at a fundraiser may be their first exposure to a restaurant. These events can establish goodwill.

In recent years, a new kind of restaurant has emerged—one that attempts to combine destination-worthy cooking with a philanthropic calling. Some are for-profit businesses with a charitable arm. For instance, The Kitchen group (owned by Kimbal Musk, brother of Tesla's Elon) supplies garden starter kits to local schools. Others, like The King's





Kitchen, are fully nonprofit. Jon Bon Jovi's JBJ Soul Kitchen restaurants in New Jersey serve simple meals to paying customers and those in need. If someone can't pay, they can trade their family's meal for a work shift. Staplehouse in Atlanta serves gorgeous small plates and sells out every booking a month in advance; it has been labeled the best new restaurant in America by *Bon Appétit*. All of its profits go to The Giving Kitchen, a nonprofit foundation to help hospitality workers in need. No critic would subject JBJ Soul Kitchen to a review, while every ambitious critic in America jockeys for a table at Staplehouse. But what of the in-between restaurants? At what point do you applaud the mission rather than critique the food?

The issue arose early this year when Pete Wells of *The New York Times* wrote a zero-star critique of Locol, a California burger joint. Chefs Roy Choi and Daniel Patterson developed Locol with a laudable mission to bring high-quality fast

food. A second branch opened in Oakland. That's the one Wells visited. (It has since closed.)

Wells found little flavor in his burger, chicken nuggets, and chili. He stuck a pin in what he saw as a balloon of inflated praise. Four days later, the *Los Angeles Times* published a response from Jonathan Gold. He said the criticism was "un-generous" and wondered aloud if some restaurants simply are not reviewable.

Over twenty-five years working on and off as a restaurant reviewer, I've had a pretty easy time separating out the non-reviewable restaurants. When an educator asked me to review the offerings of a revamped middle school cafeteria, I politely declined. Maybe there was fodder for a feature article, but my job wasn't to validate noble efforts in institutional foodservice. When a cooking school asked me to review their open-to-the-public restaurant, I did write an honest, unflattering review that was as generous as I could make it.

**"I WOULD VENTURE TO SAY THIS IS THE BEST PAN-FRIED CHICKEN IN THE SOUTHEAST," HE SAYS.**

*"I would put it up against anyone's."*

food to neglected urban neighborhoods and turn a profit doing so. Choi and Patterson were aiming for the sweet spot—good ingredients, craveworthy, affordable, healthier than typical fast food. *Food & Wine* named the first location, in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, the best new restaurant of 2016. The blurb promoted the biographies of the chefs and their mission more than the actual

So, is The King's Kitchen reviewable? I asked Noble about his inspirations, his culinary philosophy, his cooks, and their ambitions. "I don't attract the James Beard-seeking chefs," he demurs, deflecting every opportunity to talk up the menu. "It's just Southern food."

He sees a distinction between the home cooking he serves at The King's Kitchen (gussied up though it may be) and the

more creative restaurant fare at Rooster's. The former feeds the people, whomever they may be. He calls the latter "a Southern interpretation of applied French principles of cuisine," and a destination for diners. Popular choices at Rooster's include rotisserie chicken, braised short ribs, and plentiful seasonal vegetables like fire-roasted beets.

In the early 1980s he opened Noble's in his hometown of High Point, North Carolina. It was an ambitious standard-bearer of fine dining which enjoyed a ten-year run. He found greater success with Rooster's, which anticipated the farm-to-table movement and the wood-fired oven trend. Every city has the chef who first marries local ingredients to classic technique; in Charlotte, that was Jim Noble.

By the time he opened The King's Kitchen, it was almost like his culinary path turned like a Möbius strip, leading him back from foie gras and high-concept cuisine to the kind of food he grew up with. (Yes, there was a real Aunt Beaut—she used to pan-fry chicken for Noble and his siblings whenever she babysat.) His path also led to different reasons for cooking: to raise money, help the community, and spread the gospel. Perhaps The King's Kitchen isn't reviewable.

That doesn't stop me. The next night I'm back with another posse. The chicken, in ample supply, is the kind of pan-fried exemplar that lives in your taste memory but too rarely shows up on the plate. It's neither juicier nor drier than you want; the crust goes dense in some places and delicate in others, with

just enough seasoning to prickle. Fried oysters, crisp and salty but wiggling with juice, have apparently spent ten fewer seconds in hot oil than they do at most restaurants. I love them so much I want a second order.

I don't particularly love a tri-tip steak, cut into thick, chewy, under-seasoned pieces. Grilled salmon with Carolina Gold rice tastes like a hotel banquet dish. Locals enthuse over the biscuits and cornbread here, but to me they're no better and no worse than adequate.

Many restaurateurs want to know what my thoughts are before the review comes out. Rather than discuss my impressions of the food, Noble prefers to talk about his ministry and the Friday nights he spends trying to get homeless people off the streets and into the warm embrace of his faith. He does want to know what I thought of the fried chicken, and he does digress into a moment of cheffy ego. *Charlotte* magazine—despite having nothing but nice things to say about The King's Kitchen—neglected to include Aunt Beaut's finest in a roundup of the best around the city. "I would venture to say this is the best pan-fried chicken in the Southeast," he says. "I would put it up against anyone's."

I agree. In fact I would send you, dear reader, to The King's Kitchen should business, or a visit to the NASCAR Hall of Fame, bring you to Charlotte. Your money will support a good cause, and a meal at this restaurant will make you consider this city, where a tidy downtown belies deep divisions. Just call ahead to make sure they have chicken. 🍗

*John Kessler is the former longtime restaurant critic for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. He is working on a book with The Giving Kitchen, Atlanta's lifeline to hospitality workers in need.*





**GRAVY**

FALL 2017

# *Hostesses of the Movement*

Everyday women fed a revolution

*by Rosalind Bentley*

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Photos by Bita Honarvar





*When I was maybe eleven or twelve, we took a trip to visit my great-aunt Lucille Burton in Albany, Georgia. We called her Aunt Lucy. Before my mother and I left Tallahassee, Florida, where I grew up, I got the talk. I was supposed to be on my best behavior, make my bed without being asked, and scrub the bathtub with Comet each and every time I got out. These were my mother's standard orders anytime we visited a relative. Especially at Aunt Lucy's.*

Aunt Lucy was the most sophisticated of my great-aunts. She had been a school teacher. Back then, that put her solidly in the black middle class. A black woman had few career opportunities and teaching in segregated schools was one of them. Aunt Lucy was built like a runway model, tall and slim. She was gorgeous. And so refined. I couldn't get enough of her. Her little white bungalow was a palace to me.

A visit to Aunt Lucy's meant crisp sheets on gleaming mahogany beds. It meant peeking through pristine lace curtains. It meant eating homemade lemon icebox cookies off of a china plate at the dining room table. Her starched linen tablecloth covered my knees.

This was in the 1970s. I was mostly worried about us getting to Aunt Lucy's before *Soul Train* and wrestling came on. What I had not learned in my integrated

Archival photos courtesy of Rosalind Bentley

*Nobody ever said that Aunt Lucy's house on West Lincoln Avenue had been a Freedom House.*

middle school was that Albany had been an early battleground in the civil rights movement. Nobody ever said that Aunt Lucy's house on West Lincoln Avenue had been a Freedom House. My favorite cousin, Brenda Webb, grew up in that house. She's Aunt Lucy's only child.

"Mama always made sure that her yards were in excellent order," Brenda told me. "You had a front porch. You had an outdoor garage. And when you walked into the front, you walked into the living room, and on the right, was the front bedroom. Then you had a fireplace in the living room, and of course she had bought me a piano when I was five years old."

Now Brenda lives in Atlanta. She and my cousin, Clennon King, met here to talk about the contributions of women like Aunt Lucy to the civil rights movement.

"Where I always felt most comfortable was not in her living room or her dining room, or even in the hallway," Clennon began.

"Where?" Brenda asked.

"It was in that kitchen," Clennon said.

Clennon's father, Chevene Bowers King, was an attorney for Martin Luther King, Jr. (Despite the shared surname, they weren't related.) Around Albany, people called Chevene C.B. He was a founder of the Albany movement. He helped recruit Aunt Lucy and several other women who became stealth partners in the Albany campaign. You could say they were hostesses of the movement.



COMPARED TO FAMOUS CIVIL RIGHTS battlegrounds like Selma, Alabama, Albany holds an unsettled place in the history of the movement. Some called the early 1960s struggle a failure. The truth is more complicated than that.

It helps to understand the town's past. For generations, agriculture made the seat of Dougherty County hum. Enslaved, and later, free blacks cultivated cotton,

**BELOW:** Lucille Burton in front of her home;  
**OPPOSITE:** With Sidney Poitier, who  
filmed in Albany in 1956.





pecans, and peanuts. For decades, Albany and its surrounding county were predominantly African American.

“When it came to lynchings, they didn’t happen in Albany,” Clennon explained. “They didn’t happen in Dougherty County, because there were so many black people there. There was safety in numbers.”

After black men got the right to vote during Reconstruction, Albany sent black representatives to the state legislature.

in Albany, so they sent her up the Flint River to live with our cousins, the Kings. They ran The Little Wonder Café in Bobs Candy Company, purveyor of those iconic, twisted, red-and-white candy canes and peanut butter crackers. They owned a couple of grocery stores, a dress shop, and a good bit of real estate.

C.W. King, the family patriarch, helped found the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

*Outside of a handful of black-owned restaurants, Albany's diners and hotels were off limits to civil rights workers.*

Jim Crow laws crushed their plans to help govern the land they built. By the 1920s, most black people who had been registered voters were purged from the rolls in Albany. If illegal poll taxes didn’t stop them from trying to vote, intimidation by whites in power did. With no vote, black people had no civic voice in a city where they were the majority.

Albany was a town of near-complete segregation: the schools, the neighborhoods, the hospital, the restaurants. If you were black, you couldn’t go into a white-owned store and try on a dress or hat. You couldn’t sit in the whites-only waiting room at the bus station.

“It wasn’t like there was an option for black folk to go check into the Holiday Inn,” Clennon said.

Aunt Lucy left our family farm in Jackson County, Florida, just before World War II. My great-grandparents wanted her to attend a historically black college

People (NAACP). The voter registration drive in Albany was just beginning to gain traction in 1961. For the newly formed Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), it seemed the perfect opportunity. Black and some white college students worked to register African Americans to vote. When SNCC activists descended on Albany that year, they needed a place to meet. C.B. King’s brother, Slater King, who was vice president of the Albany movement, let them use an empty house he owned. The students also needed cheap places to eat—SNCC workers only made about ten dollars a week. A call went out across the community. Who could help feed these kids?



RUTHA MAE HARRIS LIVES IN THE house her father built in the 1930s, just



*Aunt Lucy's cookbooks, reminders of her contributions, retain more than the recipes within.*

a few blocks away from Aunt Lucy’s. Her father was a minister; she was one of the original Freedom Singers, a quartet of young gospel vocalists who got their start at protest meetings in Albany. The Freedom Singers eventually traveled the country raising money for SNCC.

The Harris house is a pale-yellow bungalow with rust-colored shutters. It looks like a thick pat of butter dotted with cinnamon. Inside, family photos cover the walls. There are pictures of her with President Obama, and all kinds of certificates. It’s like a museum to Harris’ role in the movement.

“We housed a lot of workers here,” Ms. Harris said. “We slept them, we fed them. We would even sit out on that stoop out there. When we weren’t working, we just had fun.”

Before she hit the road with the Freedom

Singers, Ms. Harris helped register people to vote.

“What made me realize I wasn’t free is when I did a voter registration drive. We did a citizenship school where we would teach people how to write, so that they could become registered voters. There was this man, ninety years old. He did not know how to write his name. When I taught him how to write his name, he shouted. I just hugged him.”

Her mother, Katie B. Harris, stayed home to cook. Outside of a handful of black-owned restaurants, Albany’s diners and hotels were off limits to civil rights workers. Women like Ms. Harris’ mother stepped up. She knew how to set a welcome table. The house would be thick with the scent of candied yams and savory ham hocks in greens. When SNCC kids crowded the house at the end of the



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: A photo of Aunt Lucy alongside her china;  
The author and her cousin Brenda Webb.



day, they emptied the serving bowls.

"Collard greens, cabbages, neck bones, fried chicken, cornbread, broccoli, potato salad," Ms. Harris remembers. "Breakfast, it was bacon, grits, sausage, eggs, toast, milk, juice. Day in and day out until they were gone."

Ms. Harris' mother delighted in cooking for the SNCC workers. Her role wasn't a hardship; it was an honor. "We were not a poor family," Ms. Harris says. "My dad left us very well. My mother looked at it as her contribution because she knew that she was not gonna march. But she knew that her children would."

Those marchers were arrested by the hundreds. The jail in Albany couldn't hold them all. Neighboring counties locked up the overflow. Ms. Harris was jailed three times. By November 1961, many in black Albany were poking old

Jim Crow in the eye. Students tried to integrate the bus and train terminals by taking seats in whites-only waiting rooms. Police Chief Laurie Pritchett promptly arrested them.

The Albany group asked Martin Luther King Jr. to be the voice of their fight. Legions followed. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the NAACP, Congress of Racial Equality, and more SNCC volunteers descended on Albany.

The influx meant more mouths to feed. More souls to sleep. Families across black Albany pitched in. The Terrells, the Georges, the Gaines, the Carnegies, the Nobles. Koinonia Farm, an integrated commune some thirty miles north, sent homegrown string beans, peaches, peas, and corn.

"It is a major part of activism," says Maurice Hobson, a professor of African

American history at Georgia State University. He grew up in Selma, Alabama, years after the Bloody Sunday march. "One of the ways, particularly within Southern vernacular culture, in which you show love and support is you feed people."

Contributions of Albany women like Aunt Lucy, Aurelia Noble, Annette Jones, and Mardesque Shirley have been overlooked and underestimated. History has always focused on the men of the movement. Much of that history has been written by men. What women did in kitchens and gardens wasn't as obvious as what happened on the streets and in courtrooms.

"Women really put gas in the tank to support the civil rights movement and they're given very little credit behind this," says Hobson. "Many of the domestics and black women cooks took off their jobs to make sure that the food was prepared for these protesters. We're talking about the actual nuts and bolts of sustaining a movement based on food and rest."

She prepared meals in Montgomery during the bus boycott, and then in Atlanta, where her family (and the Kings) eventually moved.

"Everybody wanted to say Juanita was the cook," she recalled. "I said, 'Wait a minute. Don't classify me as the cook.'"

Dr. King knew their house well. "He would come by here almost every day, every night before he'd go home. Two or three nights a week. And whatever I had to eat, he'd eat," said Mrs. Abernathy. She's in her eighties now, and she still has the dark wooden dining set where they all ate. I wanted to know what was on those dinner plates. But she wanted me to be clear on one point.

"I had a bachelor's degree in business and was teaching school. I'm not a home ec major. I learned to cook like every other woman, by the cookbooks. So, don't relegate me to cooking"

Mrs. Abernathy was by her husband's side on many a march, and she was a

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It was noble work. Hard work, for sure, preparing all those meals, always wondering if you were being watched by people who wanted to crush progress. Yet, when you talk to some of those women today, you get the sense even they devalue the role of cooking.

Juanita Abernathy is the widow of Dr. King's chief partner and strategist, the Reverend Ralph David Abernathy.

strategist in her own right. She helped publicize the mass meetings in Montgomery that led to the integration of the city's buses. She is a long-serving board member of Atlanta's mass transit system, MARTA.

After some respectful prodding, and a little flattery on my part, she told me, "I make excellent rolls, but could not make biscuits. I still can't make biscuits." And I've eaten Mrs. Abernathy's seafood gumbo. I



can honestly say, she can burn.

Before the Albany movement was over, her husband and a few others would sketch their next assault on the system while sitting around Aunt Lucy's dining room table.

Unlike Mrs. Abernathy, Aunt Lucy had been a home economics major in college. Aunt Lucy entertained family and guests in a manner most high. Another cousin

older and more citified, she embraced new recipes.

Among the middle class, the farm-to-table cooking she'd grown up with was giving way to convenience foods. Concoctions like seafood au gratin casserole with noodles or shrimp salad in tomato aspic rings garnished with stuffed olives. My cousin Brenda said Aunt Lucy would cook carrot soufflé. She never offered soufflé to

return to Jackson County, Florida, to get fresh butter and eggs. Her old-fashioned Southern hospitality, her assertion of dignity and a pursuit of worldliness through new dishes, are why C.B. King chose her as a hostess. The way she entertained declared that she was a black woman worthy of respect. Because when she walked out her front door, indignities would be out there waiting for her.

mounted challenges and secured injunctions. They bailed protesters out of jail.

Attorneys Donald Hollowell, Constance Baker Motley, and Vernon Jordan had just won a major case. They forced the University of Georgia to integrate, admitting its first black students, Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Hamilton Holmes. Fresh off that victory, Hollowell, Motley, and Jordan, then a NAACP field



of mine remembers going to her house to eat a seven-course meal. Seven. On china. With stemware. Linen napkins across laps. She believed in putting her home ec degree to use. She also believed in progress, both in the law books and in the cookbooks.

Aunt Lucy had grown up on her family farm, eating off the land. As she got

me, but it fits. Making such dishes required skill—to take a humble vegetable and transform it into a delicate orange cloud. I have no doubt that soufflé rose in a ramekin with nary a chip nor hairline crack.

Brenda claims Aunt Lucy did cook turnip greens from time to time. When she got ready to bake her special coconut-pineapple Christmas cakes, she'd



DR. KING, REV. ABERNATHY, AND hundreds of fellow protesters were arrested in Albany for leading a march without a permit in December 1961. Renowned lawyers arrived to help. They

secretary, enlisted in Albany. Hollowell and Jordan often stayed at Aunt Lucy's.

My aunt was measured in what she said, at least around me and my cousins. She would ask us what college we wanted to go to or tell us to stand up straight. But Jordan, who went on to head the National Urban League and become a close advisor to President Bill Clinton,

saw a different side.

"She would talk to us and share thoughts and ideas with us. I always felt like I was at home," Jordan told me.

Aunt Lucy gave advice to the lawyers?

"Well, I'm not sure that they were as much about advice as they were about information. Sharing what was going on and what was being thought about. That there was going to be a march at eight o'clock, another march at twelve o'clock, and another at four o'clock. And what the police chief was likely to do to people being arrested."

Aunt Lucy? Miss Don't-Laugh-So-Loud and Cross-Your-Legs-at-Your-Ankles Aunt Lucy?

"By virtue of staying at Lucille's house, it made her a part of the movement because there was only one conversation," Jordan said.

I don't know if Aunt Lucy was ever afraid. During the peak years of the movement, Cousin Brenda was away at college in Baltimore. In the summer of 1962, she came back to Albany to visit friends. One afternoon, she walked across the porch, opened the front door, took a couple of steps, and froze.

"Sitting at the round dining room table was Martin Luther King," Brenda said. "I was shocked."

There's a joke among people of my generation that everybody of Brenda's generation has a Martin Luther King story. You know, *I marched with Dr. King. I did this with Dr. King. I did that with Dr. King.* Given what I've learned about my own family, maybe I shouldn't be so flip.

"He was talking when I came in," Brenda continued. "Martin Luther King was talking to them. I had never been that close to him before. And it was his voice and his eyes when he was talking that just amazed me. And I said, 'Oh my goodness! If he told me to go and march with him, I would.'"

True to form, Aunt Lucy served him. Brenda thinks pork chops and chicken might have been on the table. She's certain about the desserts. "They had pound cake and icebox cookies."

*Umph.* Those lemon icebox cookies. A little zest. Some chopped Dougherty County pecans. Lots and lots of butter. Cousin Peggy, C.B. King's daughter, remembers them well: "They would be rolled into these square-shaped tubes—almost logs. And she would keep them in the freezer. She could pull them out and they were very petite. Always ladylike."



The author and her cousin polish Aunt Lucy's silver.

FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT JUDGE Elbert Tuttle of Atlanta threw out the restraining order against the marches in late July 1962. Attorney Motley argued the case. (Four years later, Motley was named the first female African American federal judge in the nation.) The Albany movement as a formal entity was flagging. By 1963, Dr. King had moved on. Albany was still segregated.

But Jordan says the struggle there set the stage for Birmingham and Selma. "It was a very important round in the fight for civil rights. We learned the difference between saying, 'we want it all right now,' and taking two steps, because you couldn't get it all. So there were a lot of lessons. Albany was instructive."

C.B. continued to practice law in Albany. He defended the Americus Four, the Freedom Riders, and so many others. He kept the network of Freedom Houses in operation past 1962. Before she became a representative in the US House, Elizabeth Holtzman worked for C.B. in the summer of 1963. She was a Harvard Law student who'd found her way into the movement.

Rep. Holtzman stayed with two Albany families. She remembers how their warmth and grace made her hard work easier. "Every black family that took in civil rights workers took a risk. Their house could have been shot into, set on fire, bombed. All those things could have happened," Holtzman says.

Some people lost their jobs for putting up so-called outside agitators. Some gave up precious space in homes that were already too tight. "These are all unsung heroes, every one of them," Holtzman says. More recently, Albany has recognized some of those heroes.

Driving down West Broad Avenue in downtown Albany, you can't miss this one big sand-colored building. It's stately, elegant, and it commands the entire block. Across the front cornice is engraved in huge letters: C.B. KING UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE. They dedicated the new building in his name in 2002. He died in 1988. C.B.'s oldest son, and his namesake, Chevene, Jr., has followed in his dad's footsteps as a civil rights attorney.

There's another monument, a five-

minute drive away. It's weathered, but still white. In another city, in another neighborhood, this house might have been fixed up by now, or honored on the National Register of Historic Places. Aunt Lucy's old neighborhood has fallen on hard times. Brenda had to sell the house before Alzheimer's disease took Aunt Lucy away from us. It was just too much to keep up. My aunt died in 2002.



MY PARTNER AND I HAVE A WELL-stocked bar at home in Atlanta. Our cocktail napkins are cloth. I'll go ahead and say it: I'm a good cook. I can roast a chicken Edna Lewis style, fry and smother a pork chop Jackson County, Florida, style, and throw together a pasta for a weeknight dinner from what's in our backyard garden. That garden is scented with Thai basil and heavy with white eggplant, Cherokee Purple tomatoes, and okra in late summer. But I don't bake. Maybe it's time to change that. Maybe I'll start with Aunt Lucy's lemon icebox cookies.

A couple of Christmases ago, we hosted a family brunch. I spent a week polishing silver. One of Cousin C.B.'s grandsons and his great-granddaughter were there, along with C.B.'s brother, Preston. White blossoms spilled from vases. I bought cathedral-height candles for the center of the table. When Brenda's husband walked in, he took one look and said, "Lucille, Lucille, look at Lucille."

I had arrived. And yet, to truly earn that praise, I must follow Aunt Lucy's example and let our table be a place where resistance is not only welcomed, but nourished. 🍷

Rosalind Bentley is a writer at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. A version of this story, also titled "Hostesses of the Movement," aired on Gravy podcast.



# GROVES AND GRACE



*Fred Schwarz grows over two dozen types of citrus in his Braithwaite, Louisiana, grove and harvests it all by hand, with the occasional help of a friend or family member. His was one of the first organic citrus farms in the state.*



**Notes from a Louisiana citrus farm**

**by Rinne Allen**

**37**

southernfoodways.org  
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**FOR THE LAST THIRTY-FIVE YEARS,** citrus farmer Fred Schwarz has tended the six hundred-plus satsuma and navel orange trees on his family's land in low-lying Plaquemines Parish, ten miles downriver from New Orleans. As a child in New Orleans, Schwarz and his parents escaped the city on weekends to tend their small grove.



Eventually, Schwarz and his family relocated to the land full-time. He planted more trees and grew the farm into a vocation. He was an early leader in the Louisiana movement for organic citrus designations and supplied Whole Foods Market with satsumas for decades. The acreage got plenty of rain during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 but didn't flood, partly because it faces a strong bend in the Mississippi River where a deep swath of batture buffers the river and levee.

Seven years later, when Hurricane Isaac passed over, Schwarz watched as

floodwaters rose ten feet in just forty-five minutes. The water came not from the Mississippi River, but from the rear of his property, to the east, from the direction of the Gulf and Biloxi Bay.

Schwarz was here when the storm hit. He waded westward to the twenty-six-foot levee in search of higher ground. A modular home floated by at eye level, and he entered it for shelter. The corner of the structure lodged itself into the earthen levee, which stopped Schwarz's forward motion. He waited inside the floating home for hours, sitting atop the kitchen counter, until the storm passed.



*LEFT: A kumquat close-up.  
Schwarz's chickens roost in the trees.*





Schwarz has an open-air processing area where he runs his harvest through a rusty—but reliable—sorting machine, extracting blemished fruits by hand.



Over the next few days, the water receded. He surveyed the damage: The first floor of his house had flooded, and all of his trees had been fully submerged. That fall, his crop was rendered inedible due to saline contamination. The next year, as he worked around the clock to rebuild his home and business, a well-meaning parish-led patrol sprayed his organic grove with pesticide to stave off an invasive insect. Schwarz had declined the treatment, but the spray planes misidentified his land. His crops, while sellable, were quarantined from the organic label for the next three years. Revenue dropped, but he

persisted, selling his citrus on Saturdays from the back of his truck in the Garden District, a few blocks from where he grew up.

This year marks the end of the three-year quarantine, but Schwarz will likely not seek the organic certification due to the high cost and time-consuming application process. Salinity from Isaac still plagues some of the trees. He also predicts a smaller harvest because of recent unpredictable weather patterns: earlier blooms combined with late-season frosts. He says, “I would like to get out to the world how goddamn fragile this environment is, and how bountiful.” 🍊

*Rinne Allen is a photographer based in Athens, Georgia.*





*All of the citrus is rinsed and air-dried before being packaged in forty-pound waxed boxes.*

*Schwarz's home, shown mid-reconstruction, in late 2016. The family home was raised twenty-six feet post-Hurricane Isaac to avoid potential future floodwaters. Members of the Schwarz family now climb twenty-nine steps to reach the front door.*

*The harvest varies from year to year. Sometimes there is more fruit on the trees than manpower to harvest it. In a good year, Schwarz can harvest eight to ten cases per tree. It has been a while since he has seen a good year.*







*The only way to properly harvest the fruit is to carefully cut it away from the branch one by one, ensuring the stem isn't so long that it punctures the other fruit.*

*ABOVE: Schwarz's daughter, Stacy Schwarz, harvests satsumas for her dad. He will sell them off the back of his truck on Saturday morning in the Garden District of New Orleans.*

*In a just few hours, Schwarz can harvest sixty gallons of citrus with one or two helpers.*



*Satsuma season runs from mid-October to late December, but Schwarz says he often starts nibbling on them as early as September. As he harvests, he often takes a break to eat one. He says he never tires of their flavor, referring to them as "sunshine."*





*While Schwarz cuts the fruit away from the trees, he speaks of a deep reverence for this place. "It is all so precious," he says.*

*Schwarz is best known for his satsumas. He attributes their taste to the absence of chemicals or synthetic fertilizers. Native to Japan, satsumas arrived in the United States in the early 1800s and, by the late nineteenth century, were planted predominantly in Louisiana. They are juicy, easy to peel, and have few seeds.*

*Some of Schwarz's grapefruit and pomelo trees are so old that they tower overhead, up to forty feet in the sky.*

*On Saturdays from mid-October to late-December, Schwarz sells his fruit at the corner of St. Charles and Lowerline, across from the streetcar stop. He sells satsumas, and other citrus, by the bag, including grapefruit, navel oranges, kumquats, lemons, limes, and pomelos.*

*Schwarz says, "This is why I am here, on the land, because of the fruit."*







# THE SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE GUIDE TO COCKTAILS

A contemporary drink manifesto

BY SARA CAMP MILAM AND JERRY SLATER

**W**E CREATED *THE SOUTHERN Foodways Alliance Guide to Cocktails* because we believe that well-told stories complement well-mixed drinks. For two decades, the SFA has captured and shared narratives of barbecue, tamales, and gumbo. Of tacos, plate lunches, and boudin. The stories of these foods honor the men and women who grow, prepare, and serve them. We apply that same approach to cocktails. What we pour in our glasses, where we do the pouring, and with whom we do the drinking: Those matters reveal truths about our values and our identity in a diverse and changing region.

Jerry Slater and I gathered recipes both classic and contemporary from more than twenty bartenders. They are men and

women who span the region from Washington, DC, to Austin, Texas. Their tastes are as varied as their backgrounds. We added stories of spiritous lore to give you something to talk about at your next cocktail party. And recipes for bar snacks from Vishwesh Bhatt of Oxford's Snackbar, because we don't recommend drinking on an empty stomach.

What follows is a taste of the book, available from UGA Press. Cheers, and happy reading. —SCM

## Stocking the Bar

I MOVED TO OXFORD, Mississippi, in the summer of 2012. I spent the first month subletting a house from a young English professor who was out of state for the summer. I reminded myself that the

location of the house, just three blocks from the downtown Square, made up for the fact that the professor, an avid cyclist, had left his sweat-stained jersey hanging in the bathroom—a sort of reverse air freshener.

Soon enough my furniture arrived from North Carolina, and I began to settle in to my rental house. Meanwhile I had met and gone on two dates with Kirk. I wasn't sure how I felt about his being a decade my senior, but I was impressed when he called, not texted, to ask me out to dinner at Snackbar. Five weeks in Oxford, and I already knew it was my favorite restaurant.

"Of course," I said. "Why don't you come over to my house first for a drink. I've just moved in and I have to tell you, my bar is limited to vodka and bourbon. And Miller High Life in the fridge." Before moving to Oxford, I had learned to appreciate Manhattans, Old-Fashioneds, and craft beer in Chapel Hill. Prior to that, it was PBR in Little Rock. Those days were preceded by 4 P.M. Margaritas in Houston (before you judge, know that I was a middle-school teacher). But I rarely got fancy in the solitude of my own home.

That evening I heard Kirk's car pull into the driveway. I looked out the window to see him approaching the front door. In his arms he carried a large cardboard box that looked to be full of something heavy. Had UPS come without my noticing? I opened the door.

Kirk was smiling, pleased with himself. He put down the box. "You said you only had vodka and bourbon, so I decided to have a one-man stock-the-bar party." From the box he pulled fifths of gin, scotch, and rum, then two bottles of wine. I don't even remember what we fixed ourselves to drink before dinner. But I was smitten.

The stock-the-bar story rose to the status of legend in our relationship almost

as soon as it happened. As much as it came from a place of generosity, Kirk admits now that he was also stocking the bar for himself, hoping to be invited to my house again. In any case, it worked: Two and a half years later, we were married. And our shared cocktail exploration, at home and on the road, was just beginning. By then Kirk had adopted the Barbary Corsair, a rum Negroni, as his usual on our frequent dates to Snackbar. (In fact, it turned out that these Snackbar dates were a little too frequent. Once we began to track our shared finances, we scaled back to once a month. Okay, sometimes twice.) I favored sauvignon blanc, occasionally switching it up with a rye Manhattan or the Lurleen or a new cocktail from the seasonal menu.

Two nights before our wedding, Kirk discovered pine liqueur in a gin cocktail at the now-shuttered Bellocq in New Orleans. (Thanks to Mississippi's byzantine liquor laws, it took us more than a year to track down a similar product, Dolin G  n  py des Alpes, for our home bar.) After the wedding ceremony, I drank Puligny-Montrachet and Champagne on the third-floor balcony at Galatoire's. By the time we cut the cake, I knew I would be too exhausted to venture on Bourbon Street in my wedding dress, new husband in one hand and go-cup in the other.

There were more discoveries to come. Cynar at Zuni Caf   in San Francisco on our honeymoon, where we were intrigued by the artichoke on the bottle and asked the bartender to pour us a taste. (After more searching, it too earned a permanent place on our home bar.) There was a coveted taste of watermelon brandy in Charleston, and yellow-tomato Bloody Marys over the bridge in Mount Pleasant. (Three quarts of the mix came home with us.) A white Negroni in

Photos by Andrew Thomas Lee

Chicago, made with a melon amaro. The makings for Pimm's Cups, carried to college baseball games in a soft-sided cooler and mixed on a picnic table. A collection of bitters that multiplied beyond the confines of the bar proper (or "bar" not so proper, as it was, until recently, a shelf above the microwave.) Palomas and Greyhounds at home and in bars, to satisfy our healthy thirst for grapefruit juice. And, more often than not, a beer and a sandwich at a dim pub off the Square on Saturdays, followed by a nap for me and sports on television for Kirk. We even attempted to serve Chatham Artillery Punch at a tailgate one football weekend—an attempt that failed spectacularly when the glass jar of shrub fell to the ground and shattered on the bricks en route to the Grove.

Even if we both reach for a simple glass of wine most nights, we still have plenty of exploring ahead of us. I was on cocktail sabbatical as I wrote this, awaiting the arrival of our first child.<sup>1</sup> Kirk gallantly shouldered the responsibility of drinking for two, and I added at least a dozen drinks to my own bucket list. Love, it turns out, is a well-stocked bar.

### Bourbon and Gender

ORDERING A DRINK at a bar can be daunting. Maybe you only know of dubious highballs: rum and Coke, Jack and ginger, vodka and Red Bull. What tastes good? What's cool? What's affordable? What will allow you to clime out of bed the next morning? It's enough to keep you muttering "Miller Lite" when the bartender deigns to look your way.

Sooner or later, you mature. You evolve. And so do your tastes in booze. You learn



the names of a few cocktails, and you adopt one as your signature. Eventually you order with confidence, and maybe work in a request for a certain liquor or a stylistic preference: "I'll have a dry rye Manhattan." And boom, you've arrived as a grown-up drinker.

If only it were that simple. Ordering a drink in a bar is a performative act. Your preferences, your values, and your very identity are on display in front of your companions, the bartender, and the other patrons.

Perhaps no liquor carries more confounding and contradictory implications than whiskey, especially what it says about the gender of the person who orders it. Since its infancy around the turn of the nineteenth century, domestic whiskey distilling has associated itself with the archetypal American man. "Whiskey reflected the strong streak of independence ingrained in the character of the frontier South," Robert Moss writes. And that frontier ideal was inextricably tied to masculinity, valuing physical strength,

self-reliance, bravery, and rebellion. "If we need it, we'll make it ourselves" might have been the motto of early rural America. That extended to its first distillers of rye in the Mid-Atlantic states and bourbon in the Appalachian South. Men still buy into this frontier fantasy when they savor a sip of bourbon—even if they left an office job downtown and drove to the bar in a luxury SUV.

Bourbon aficionado and novelist Walker Percy spoke to a similar phenomenon in the 1970s. He wrote of bourbon's power to cut through the ennui that plagued the suburban office worker, husband, and father. He didn't mention the millions of American women who had entered the workforce by the mid-1970s, nor those who stayed at home with the children and might have appreciated a nip of bourbon at the end of a long day. Percy associated drinking bourbon with male socializing, going back to his days as an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (Before that, he enjoyed bourbon from a Coke bottle passed around the boys' room at high-school dances.) Often these social occasions involved flirting with or dating women, but it doesn't seem to have mattered much to Percy whether the woman would actually drink the bourbon.

More recently, another UNC graduate explored what drinking bourbon purports to say about one's gender, racial, regional, and class identity. Seán McKeithan's 2012 *Southern Cultures* article "Every Ounce a Man's Whiskey?" turned a 1950s *Early Times* bourbon advertising slogan into a question, examining what it meant for McKeithan—a young, gay, white Southern man—to drink a liquor that has long been marketed as a symbol of heterosexual white Southern masculinity. Inspired by

## RUBY SLIPPER

recipe by Jerry Slater

A gussied-up Joe Collins, or Vodka Collins, enhanced by grapefruit and rosemary. The redder the grapefruit, the better. Created at H. Harper Station in Atlanta, this is a fantastic brunch drink and a refreshing departure from the standard Bloody Mary or Mimosa. Try serving it by the pitcher for a breakfast or luncheon: Combine the grapefruit juice, vodka, and rosemary syrup in a single batch, then top each drink with soda water before serving.

**Garnish:** Rosemary sprig

**Service ice:** Cubed

**Glass:** Collins

*Yield: 1 (6½–7-ounce) cocktail*

### COCKTAIL:

- 2 ounces freshly squeezed ruby-red grapefruit juice**
- 1½ ounces vodka, such as Cathead**
- ½ ounce rosemary syrup (see recipe below)**
- 3 to 4 ounces soda water**

Pour grapefruit juice, vodka, and rosemary syrup into a shaker, add ice, and shake. Strain into ice-filled glass, top with soda water, and garnish with rosemary sprig.

### ROSEMARY SYRUP:

- 1 cup water**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 3 rosemary sprigs**

Place water and sugar in a small saucepan, set over high heat, and bring to a boil. Boil for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat, add rosemary, cover, and steep for 30 minutes. Strain and cool to room temperature. Refrigerate in a lidded container for up to 3 weeks.

*Yield: Approximately 1½ cups*

<sup>1</sup>Sally Milam was born in December 2016. This past spring, I began my cocktail re-education in earnest.



## NIHILIST SOUR

recipe by Greg Best



This drink is a refreshing and balanced fizz of whiskey and peach. “Even those who believe in nothing enjoy a sour,” says its creator, Greg Best, of Atlanta’s Ticonderoga Club. Shake until you achieve a foamy texture and a beautiful, creamy orange-yellow color.

**Garnish:** Orange peel  
**Service ice:** None  
**Glass:** Cocktail

*Yield: 1 (4-ounce) cocktail*

### COCKTAIL

- 2 ounces barrel-proof rye (100-proof or greater)
- ¾ ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ½ ounce peach liqueur
- ⅛ ounce simple syrup
- 4 dashes cardamom bitters
- 1 egg white

Place rye, lemon juice, peach liqueur, simple syrup, bitters, and egg white in a shaker and shake vigorously for 30 seconds to create a foamy mixture. Add ice and shake again. Strain into glass, squeeze orange peel over the drink, and float peel in drink.

## Drinkways

a college boyfriend’s taste for bourbon, McKeithan recalls, “I drank Bourbon in a spirit of transgression that I could not pin down but felt that, in so doing, I took some nebulous stand against the heterosexual assumption that women and queer men drink from glasses that came with umbrellas, instead of only with ice.”

While the twenty-first century bourbon market targets a range of consumers “from the gentleman to the good old boy,” McKeithan finds it still relies on tropes of traditional white Southern masculinity. “In today’s South,” McKeithan concludes, “Bourbon remains a piece of masculine identity that Southerners can ‘put on,’ much like overalls, a seersucker suit, or a North Carolina twang.”

What happens when women try on the identity that bourbon conveys? Things can get complicated—and, frankly, a little icky—Courtney Balestier writes, “Few drinks have inspired the fetishization of women that whiskey (and its brethren, bourbon and Scotch) has,” Balestier argues in *Punch*. “In the pages of men’s magazines, where ladies appear with swollen busts and shrunken thighs, the woman who loves whiskey has become such a common trope (seriously, take your pick) that she’s already a cliché.” Balestier explores this idealized woman, whom she terms a “bro-girl archetype,” a sexy badass who drinks like a man while suggesting an unmistakably female—er, prowess. Like her soul sister, the rail-thin-yet-busty dream girl who eats rare cheeseburgers and knows her fantasy football stats, the whiskey woman is a carefully curated persona behind a façade. In all likelihood, she went to a lot of trouble to give the impression that she goes to none at all.

Some of this is changing for the better. Women like Alba Huerta in Houston and

Steva Casey in Birmingham are gaining recognition for their work behind the bar. Their drinks aren’t known as “girly” or “masculine”—they’re recognized as smart, and good. In Kentucky, Marianne Barnes of Castle and Key, a chemical engineer with a learned papate, now works as the Bluegrass State’s first female master distiller since Prohibition. She’s not even thirty yet.

So what’s the drinker of any gender to do when trying to navigate the identity politics of the cocktail list? Order what you darn well please. If you enjoy bourbon, go for it. If you’re a burly gentleman with a thirst for vodka and cranberry, you do you. Life is too short to order a drink you don’t really love because you’re trying to be manly, womanly, cool, or “Southern”—whatever that means to you. ▼



*Excerpted from The Southern Foodways Alliance Guide to Cocktails by Sara Camp Milam and Jerry Slater, copyright 2017 by the University of Georgia Press.*

## BUFALA NEGRA

recipe by Jerry Slater

Jerry Slater created this drink in 2007, as the cocktail renaissance gathered steam. Some of his customers were initially put off by the idea of balsamic and basil in their bourbon. A decade later, shrubs and drinking vinegars are popular, and herbs of all kinds get to play with booze. Jerry’s network of tipsters has reported spotting this well-balanced drink on menus from Brooklyn to Oakland to Australia.

**Garnish:** Basil leaf  
**Service ice:** Cubed  
**Glass:** Old-fashioned

*Yield: 1 (5½-ounce) cocktail*

### COCKTAIL

- ½ ounce balsamic syrup (see recipe below)
- 5 basil leaves, divided
- 1 brown sugar cube
- 1½ ounces bourbon, such as Buffalo Trace (get it—“bufala”?)
- 2 ounces good-quality ginger beer, such as Blenheim’s hot (look for the red cap)

Place the balsamic syrup, 4 basil leaves, and the sugar cube in a shaker and muddle until sugar dissolves. Add bourbon and ice and shake. Strain into ice-filled glass, add ginger beer, and garnish with remaining basil leaf.

### BALSAMIC SYRUP

- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar

Place brown sugar, water, and balsamic vinegar in a small saucepan set over medium heat. Cook, stirring continually, until the sugar dissolves, 4 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a glass container and refrigerate, uncovered, until cool. Cover and refrigerate for up to 1 month.

*Yield: Approximately ½ cup*



# LONCHERA BY THE SEA

An Ocracoke Island food truck makes a stand

BY TINA VASQUEZ

**E**VEN DURING THE OFF-SEASON when most restaurants are closed, Eduardo's Taco Stand is usually slammed. Depending on the time of year, the food truck that Eduardo Chávez operates on the southern tip of Ocracoke Island, North Carolina, welcomes a markedly different population. In the fall, when the island is mostly devoid of tourists, Chávez's customers are often Latino construction workers on lunch break. In the height of summer, every person in line is likely white. Ocracoke has historically been a white beach town, but Latinos are the new locals. At Eduardo's, they've found a taste of home in his cooking.

The taco stand serves up seasonal dishes, like grilled tuna tacos and avocado gazpacho made with basil from his garden. Since opening in 2011, he says he can barely keep up with demand. During peak hours, a line wraps around his food truck.

When he first arrived on Ocracoke fifteen years ago, Chávez was one of just a few Latinos on the island. Back then, he didn't think there was enough Latino representation, nor enough white interest, to support his Mexican food endeavor. Even after launched his business, Chávez never imagined that his truck-based take on seafood—fresh, herbaceous, citrusy—could compete with the giant fried platters offered at every other brick-and-

mortar in the area. But two things happened in the last decade and change. First, the Latino population grew on Ocracoke Island. Latinos in the South are settling in areas previously atypical for immigrants, including rural places. Over the last dozen or so years, Ocracoke has gone from two percent Latino to twenty percent. Second, Chávez observed that his white customers are more open to his cuisine than he expected. Tastes have changed, he realized. So has the island.

CHÁVEZ WAS BORN in Hidalgo and raised in Mexico City, where his mother sold homemade quesadillas in a small café. The landlocked capital offered Chávez plenty of opportunities as a young job seeker. He worked for Frito-Lay and owned a small stationery business with his wife, which allowed them to comfortably pay for their two children's schooling. But their lifestyle changed dramatically when the Mexican economy went into a severe recession, spurred by the peso crisis and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Slowly, the Chávez family lost their business, their car, and their home. Soon after, the children's school came calling, inquiring about tuition. In 2002, Chávez joined his cousins who lived and worked in North Carolina. Before then, he had never heard of Ocracoke.

Chávez worked multiple jobs in those

Illustrations by Michael Guhl





early years on Ocracoke. He did carpentry in the mornings and manned a gas station at night. His afternoons were open, so he obtained a third job bussing tables at a restaurant called the Back Porch. “I was hungry to support my family and learn English—something I’m still learning,” Chávez said. “It was very difficult to jump into, but I thought: Let’s work hard.”

One night a Latino cook he had become friendly with asked Chávez to join his short-staffed kitchen crew. Chávez was shy and disliked interacting with customers while he was still learning English, so he was thrilled to transition into the solitary work of prepping vegetables behind the scenes. He made it work, despite some communication hiccups along the way. When Chávez told his boss at the construction site that he needed to leave early, he said he had a “chicken opportunity,” when he meant “kitchen opportunity.”

“Three big construction guys started laughing,” he remembers. “When they see me, they still say, ‘How’s the chicken opportunity?’”

He worked around the clock in other people’s kitchens for a decade. Then, in 2011, a friend made Chávez an offer: He had a food truck available for rent. Chávez had developed a passion for cooking, and he saw the truck as way to recreate the flavors of Mexico that he desperately missed. Loncheras have been popular in

predominantly Mexican neighborhoods of large metropolitan areas like Los Angeles since the 1970s. At the time on Ocracoke, they were a new phenomenon. Chávez was a pioneer.



DURING THE EARLY years, Chávez worked alone and offered Mexican fare typically seen throughout the United States—carne asada, burritos. Today, Eduardo’s Taco Stand is still parked in

the same location, next to the Ocracoke Variety Store. He oversees a small staff. His menu now focuses on locally caught seafood. Chávez took the food and recipes his mother made, combined them with the local seafood offerings, and added his own touch.

He makes fresh salsas daily. He grows herbs and chiles at home. What isn’t is sourced nearby, like the queso fresco he often picks up from Virginia Beach, a five-hour drive.

Amy Gaw is a food writer who has lived in the Outer Banks for thirty-two years.

an American flag instead. Chávez explained his reasoning. The man has since become a regular customer at the taco stand. Chávez admits that in spite of the stand’s success, he’s acutely aware of broad criticisms directed at Latino immigrants, especially in this political climate.

“Every four or eight years when there is a new president, there is a lot of pressure on us. It can feel like someone is pointing the finger at us,” Chávez says. “But we must work through these problems.”

Chávez is a problem solver. He raises money for neighbors who need financial

**CHÁVEZ HAS ACCEPTED HIS ROLE**  
*as quasi-cultural ambassador.*  
**HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE**  
**OCRACOKE COMMUNITY**  
**ILLUSTRATE HIS LARGER POINT:**  
*Immigrants like him offer*  
*this country more than just tacos.*

She admires Chávez for his role in the community, including how he stepped up to co-organize the island’s new Festival Latino, an annual celebration. “Chávez has become a community pillar,” Gaw says. “He’s acted as a bridge between white locals and newly arrived Latino immigrants.” Still, his efforts haven’t always been welcome.

When Chávez opened his taco stand, he placed a Mexican flag outside to signal that he was serving Mexican food. He says a white man uprooted the flag and threw it on the ground, then told him to put up

assistance. He provided food for locals after a particularly bad storm knocked out electricity island-wide.

“Eduardo is a part of the island, and his food is good eating,” Gaw says. “It’s that simple, but it’s also not.”

Chávez has accepted his role as quasi-cultural ambassador. His contributions to the Ocracoke community illustrate his larger point: Immigrants like him offer this country more than just tacos. “We have to give things back to each other; not just give, not just take,” Chávez says. “For me, this is the only way.” 🌮

*Tina Vasquez is an immigration reporter based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.*





Avva's dal, from memory.

## SOAK THE BEANS

India, Puerto Rico, and Austria mingle in a Georgia kitchen

BY ANJALI ENJETI

**T**HE POTATOES FOR GOULASH feel warm in my hands, like stones heated by a late-afternoon sun. I peel off their skins, dice. Five tomatoes follow, red, ripe, firm. Their juices and seeds leak over the cutting board. I scrape them into the pot. Sea salt sifts through my fingers. Paprika. Didn't Oma use lots of paprika? I grind black peppercorns over the pot. The flakes rain

down. A dash of cayenne, stir, taste. What's missing? Slivers of bell pepper the color of clovers. The pot simmers; the sauce thickens. The orange color deepens.

On another burner, dark red kidney beans blanch to the color of pink grapefruit flesh. I prefer black beans to red, but for the sake of my family, this time I make the red bean dish Opa loved most. I scoop in tomato paste. I hear his laughter, see the glint of his white teeth. He is with me again, warming the cushion of the banquette, chewing thoughtfully.

For the dal, I mimic my avva's routine from her Hyderabad kitchen. I pour dried yellow lentils into a sturdy saucepan. They chime and clink as they make contact. I add enough water to cover them, line spices along the counter. In my mind's eye, she is squatting, elbows resting on knees. Her gas stove sits only a few inches off the concrete floor. She sings as she waits for the water to boil,

spoons in cumin, turmeric. The gold bangles on her wrists reflect sunlight. Water evaporates; the dal becomes creamier, silkier—the perfect consistency to mash and mix with clouds of white steamed rice.

I'M LOSING MY family recipes—in part because I never fully learned them, and in part because the people who knew them best have died or are too ill to teach me. Opa's Puerto Rican family hailed from the Bronx. My maternal grandmother, Oma, emigrated from Austria after World War II. My father emigrated from India in the early 1970s. I spent my childhood in Michigan, Maryland, Texas, and Tennessee, and I never met another kid with as mixed a racial and ethnic background as mine. When Oma, my only surviving grandparent, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease a few years ago, I realized I had been enjoying the fruits

of my grandparents' labor without fully investing myself in them. By failing to learn my relative's dishes, I risked erasing the rich and varied food inheritance of our family. I risked failing to pass on this legacy to my children.

If there are downsides to the blending of genes in interracial, intercultural, or interethnic unions, it is that with each generation, traditions can become diluted. Children know less about their family's histories and origins than their parents or grandparents did. Over time, rituals are forgotten, authenticity compromised. Certainly, there is beauty inherent in the diaspora, in being a part of a family with roots that stretch across countries and continents. But there is also loss. Immigration unintentionally alters the fabric of a family's cultural identity.

From my kitchen in Johns Creek, just north of Atlanta, where I've lived with my husband and three children for ten



The author, mid-recipe.

Photos by Johnathon Kelso



years, I cling to memories instead of cookbooks. For many years, pride in my mixed heritage carried with it a kind of complacency. My parents and most of my aunts and uncles are still alive. As a result, I took for granted that they'd always be the ones cooking our traditional dishes while I placed china and silverware and poured wine into goblets. I figured if I needed a recipe or confirmation of an ingredient, they were only a phone call away. I didn't step up to the plate, so to speak. I hadn't learned how to cook the dishes that sustained my ancestors for generations, and until now, sustained me.

Under the tutelage of Avva, my paternal grandmother, my Austria-Rican mother mastered several South Indian

pepper were needed. Otherwise, I kept my distance. I vastly preferred burying my nose in a book or talking on the phone with my friends. I left home for college at age eighteen, barely knowing how to boil an egg, much less how to make the dishes of my multicultural family.

In my mid-twenties, when I outgrew my appetite for frozen and canned foods and acquired an apartment with a decent-sized kitchen, my mother would purchase the ingredients for rice and beans, potato goulash, and dal, and spend an entire afternoon chopping, mixing, stirring and tasting. She'd stack my freezer full of food in quart-sized plastic baggies so that between school and work and chasing after children, I could defrost a quick, healthy dinner. Even then, I re-

## THERE IS BEAUTY INHERENT IN THE DIASPORA, *in being part of a family with roots that stretch across countries and continents.* BUT THERE IS ALSO LOSS.

dishes during the summers we spent at my grandparents' home in Hyderabad. My mother excels at cooking Opa's favorite Spanish rice and beans and Oma's Hungarian potato goulash.

My childhood dinners were an international smorgasbord. The scents of these dishes beckoned me from my bedroom to the kitchen, where I'd watch my mother in the final stages of sprinkling garnish.

When pressed, I'd peel potatoes, taste a spoonful from a bubbling pot, and offer my opinions on whether more salt or

sisted. I was too busy.

I'm in my forties now, staring down midlife and empty-nesthood. I've settled into a rhythm, established a satisfying career, and with my children years out of diapers and strollers, I've had time more to reflect on the things that matter to me most, that make me who I am. I've had time to contemplate the legacy I wish to leave behind. Perhaps in the future, my children will have children who will long for the flavors that once satiated their grandmother's appetite. I owe it to them, to the generations that follow, to



*Avva's dal starts with orange lentils. The cooking process changes them to yellow.*

fully and actively educate myself in my family's food.

A new folder sits on the right-hand corner of my already crowded computer desktop entitled "Family Recipes." It lists ingredients with notes in parenthesis. *If you remember, soak the beans overnight. Or, tastes better with yellow onions. Or, stir frequently so the beans don't burn at the bottom of the pot. Add more water if too much evaporates.*

If I run into obstacles, I don't hesitate to phone my mother. *How do I thicken the sauce of potato goulash without losing too much flavor? Put a heaping teaspoon of flour in small bowl, add warm water, stir until it thickens into a paste, add it to the pot,* she replies. I record every suggestion or comment.

Over time, I've become proficient at

interpreting the ambiguities in these familial recipes, which more often than not lack exact measurements. The cupped palm of a hand measures salt for a vat of Opa's favorite red beans. A "pinch or two" quantifies the cumin for my avva's dal and a "tad" or "dollop" of sour cream provides the perfect creamy texture for Oma's potato goulash. With each session, I gain more confidence and skill. My taste buds have become more discerning. The thought of doubling a portion for a dinner party no longer causes me anxiety. Most importantly, as my memories of my grandparents fade, cooking their dishes connects me to them. I join my husband and daughters at the kitchen table, our wide, round plates filled to the brim with the foods that have nurtured my family for generations. 🍽️

*Anjali Enjeti's work has appeared in Longreads, Pacific Standard, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and elsewhere. She teaches creative writing in the Etowah Valley MFA program at Reinhardt University.*





# MÁS MANTECA, MORE LARD

A Kentucky supermarket display underscores shifts in Appalachian foodways

BY LORA SMITH



THE FLUORESCENT LIGHTS flicker overhead. I'm standing in my favorite aisle of IGA supermarket in Manchester, Kentucky. The wall of lard, as I affectionately call it, towers five shelves high. Fischer's, a Kentucky-based brand, dominates the shelf with one- to twenty-five-pound buckets. The cheerful tagline reads THE SMILE-MAKIN' PEOPLE SINCE 1904.

Fischer's products are full of nostalgia for me, and I'd reckon for many rural Kentuckians. Their brand shows up in many foods that working people eat with their hands. Apple and cherry hand pies fried in Fischer's lard, their sliced pickled bologna on white saltine crackers with a shot of hot sauce on top, or their signature briny pickled egg as a late-night snack. I've recognized Fischer's labels since I could sit up in the grocery buggy.

About a year ago, I noticed that the wall of lard had changed. The tubs and pails are branded identically—same Fischer's logo, same color palette, same lattice-topped pie illustration—but now

MANTECA is on one side and LARD is on the other. Bilingual tubs of rendered fat share space in what I'd previously thought of as the "hillbilly aisle," with its economy bags of dried pinto beans and cornmeal. Now aisle six includes bags of masa and frijoles pintos.



HENRY FISCHER, a German immigrant, established the Henry Fischer Packing Company in Louisville. It's no coincidence Fischer wound up in the meat-packing business. Port cities located in the Corn Belt drove a slaughterhouse boom along the Ohio River Valley in the early nineteenth century. Packing houses aggregated hogs from Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. After slaughter and packing, they floated down the Mississippi to New Orleans. There, the pork made its way to markets in the Deep South and overseas. Fischer's is now owned by Specialty

Photos by Ashley Meizer

Foods Group, a conglomerate that oversees seven meat-focused brands. They are headquartered in Owensboro, Kentucky, another historic river and meat-packing town.

Fischer's is still a regional brand. Each year, they sell approximately 400,000 pounds of lard in ten states that span the Ohio River Valley, central Appalachia, Michigan, North Carolina, and Alabama. Brooklyn Maple, a brand manager with Specialty Foods Group, says the company began marketing their lard with Spanish writing on one side in the late 1990s.

Kentucky has the fastest growing Latino population in the South and the second-fastest growing population in the country, with a 66 percent increase between 2007 and 2014. Most of that growth is in the central Bluegrass region. The growth is slower in Eastern Kentucky.

manager, Antonio Lopez, to sit down with me. Lopez is in his early thirties and has a shock of black spiky hair. He is originally from Chiapas, the mountainous southernmost part of Mexico. Lopez tells me he came to the United States a little over two years ago.

I ask why we don't have the great *tortillerias* or *taquerias* that Lexington has. "Not enough Mexicans live here to support those places," he says. "So, we're making the kind of Mexican food you like." On El Dorado's menu this includes items like jalapeño poppers, a "fiesta salad," and "The Azteca," a large flour tortilla filled with rice, refried beans, *pico de gallo*, and chicken or beef. He points to my corn tortillas. "Most people around here don't even order those. They want flour tortillas."

I wonder if my neighbors and I would

**MAYBE ONE DAY WE'LL SEE**  
*crook-fermented sour corn and huitlacoche*  
**AS EQUAL REPRESENTATIONS**  
**OF APPALACHIAN CUISINE.**

I don't have data to explain why, but my guess as a lifelong Eastern Kentuckian is that it's because our economy is one of the worst in the United States. More people move out than move in.

Almost every town in Eastern Kentucky, no matter how small, has at least one Mexican restaurant. In Manchester, El Dorado is part of a micro-chain with four locations in southeastern Kentucky, a couple of storefronts down from the IGA. I stop for dinner one night on my way home from work. I am the only customer in the restaurant. I invite the

order more off-menu dishes if we knew what they were and understood their complexity. Maybe then we'd see crook-fermented sour corn and huitlacoche as equal representations of Appalachian cuisine. Lopez tells me about the foods he eats at home. Like the best Appalachian dishes in Kentucky, the best Mexican fare in Appalachia is prepared in home kitchens, not at restaurants. Lopez does most of his personal grocery shopping at the IGA. "You can get everything there!" He adds that an entrepreneur with a truck makes weekly rounds



to help restaurants stock up on spices and ingredients not readily available.

Outside of brief interactions, I don't see Lopez or other members of the Latino community in my day to day. This is partly due to the geographic realities of a deeply rural place. I live in a holler with seven fingers. When explaining our farm to people, I use my hands to map the different drainages that come down the ridgeline, carving nooks and crannies. The land here is like origami. Hills fold in on themselves, creating creases that open up to small worlds.

I might not see my neighbors for days on end, but their labor surrounds me. The sound carries in peculiar ways, bouncing off the hills. I can be in one of our fields and all of a sudden, hear a muted conversation, the buzz of a chainsaw, or a

shotgun blast. I read the noises. Someone is cutting down a tree one ridge over. Someone else just shot a deer in the pasture beyond our fence.

Back at El Dorado, I think about this while listening to the men I don't see, the men who work in the back of the house. The clang of pots and pans and distant conversations in Spanish flow from behind closed kitchen doors into the dining room.



THE NATIONAL NEWS describes my Appalachia as a poor region with a displaced and angry all-white and all-male workforce. Men not able or willing to

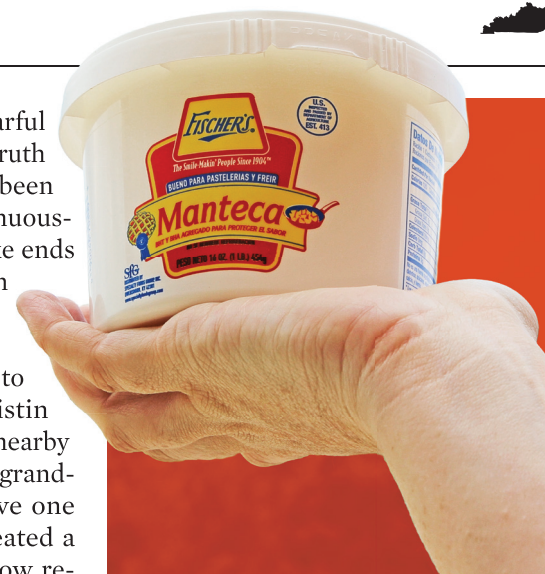
**BELOW:** Antonio Lopez, manager of El Dorado restaurant in Manchester, Kentucky;  
**OPPOSITE:** At the local IGA, lard is displayed in English and Spanish.



adapt to a changing nation and fearful of immigrants and outsiders. The truth is that our economy has always been in flux and our people have continuously innovated and adapted to make ends meet. Much of that labor is unseen and not performed by white men. Our culture, including our agriculture and foodways, continues to adapt and evolve, too. Chef Kristin Smith of the Wrigley Taproom in nearby Corbin remembers watching her grandmother cook. "If she didn't have one ingredient, she adapted and created a new family recipe. My chow-chow remoulade, cornmeal-crusted pork belly tacos, and chicken and dumplings ragu are all a spin on that tradition."

Carla Gover, a musician and arts educator, grew up in Whitesburg and majored in Appalachian studies and Spanish in college. She saw the connections early on. "I was struck by how much connection I felt between these various cultures," she says. She cites corn as a symbol of shared sustenance: moonshine, hominy, pozole, animal feed, tortillas, and cornbread. "In Mexico they have a saying, *Sin maiz, no hay pais*. Without corn, there is no country. The same is true in Appalachia."

Last year Gover and her partner Yani Vozos, a member of the musical group Appalatin, launched Cornbread & Tortillas, a bilingual traveling festival that includes theater, music and dance performances, food, crafts, and educational workshops. The idea is to connect Appalachian heritage with Central and South American cultures to build communal



understanding. For Gover, this is advocacy. "I could lecture, protest, and carry signs all day. Or I could throw a big party where we make food and play music and hearts are opened."

I don't know how Appalachian foodways will transform in the coming years as a result of our changing economy and demographics, but I hope it tastes like venison tamales made with Bloody Butcher cornmeal and fried Candy Roaster squash blossom tacos. What I do know is that the towns that embrace change and embrace new people, cultures, and stories, will be the communities that make it. I hope Manchester is one of those.

I linger on this thought wandering along the edges of the IGA until I'm back in aisle six, standing in front of my favorite bright wall of lard. I turn the Fischer's tubs around to the side that reads MANTECA, imagining that they'd always been just that way. 🍷

*Lora Smith is a founding member of the Appalachian Food Summit. In 2015, she accepted SFA's John Egerton Prize on behalf of the organization. Smith helps grow heirloom corn, beans, tomatoes, and squash at Big Switch Farm in Egypt, Kentucky.*





# CHARLOTTE'S CENTRAL AVENUE CORRIDOR

**C** HARLOTTE'S CENTRAL AVENUE reveals shifting demographics, from white working-class textile mill workers in the early twentieth century to a wave of immigration in the 1990s. These new Southerners revived abandoned storefronts and subdivisions, merging along this corridor to shape a new Charlotte.

*La Avenida Central de Charlotte revela una demografía cambiante de la ciudad, desde la clase de trabajadores de raza blanca de las fábricas textiles a principios del siglo veinte hasta una ola de inmigración en la década de los noventa. Estos nuevos sureños llenaron negocios abandonados y subdivisiones, uniéndose a lo largo de este pasillo, dando forma a una nueva Charlotte.*

**VICTOR SANTIAGO**  
*Tacos El Nevado*

We try to maintain the tradition, maintain the culture, and maintain our gastronomy. What we want to do is let people see, living around us in our city. We can talk a lot about what Oaxaca is but many people do not know it. Our idea is to let our people know what we Oaxacans are.

*Tratamos de mantener la tradición, mantener la cultura y mantener nuestra gastronomía. Lo que queremos hacer es dejar que la gente vea, viviendo alrededor de nosotros en nuestra ciudad. Podemos hablar mucho de lo que es Oaxaca pero muchas personas no lo saben. Nuestra idea es que nuestra gente sepa quienes somos los oaxaqueños.*

Illustrations by Lauren Beltramo

**DALTON ESPAILLAT**  
*Three Amigos | Sabor*

It's tough to sell Dominican food because nobody knows what that is. So I was swimming upstream. You think about Mexican food, you think about Italian, Chinese, it's part of the rotation. But Dominican food is really not there. We're a Latin restaurant. It's an amazing culture mixture that we have in here.

*Es difícil vender comida dominicana porque nadie sabe lo que es. Así que estaba contra la corriente. Cuando piensas en comida mexicana, piensas en lo italiano, lo chino, como parte del giro. Pero la comida dominicana no está ahí. Somos un restaurante latino. Es una mezcla increíble de culturas que tenemos aquí.*

**DINO MEHIC**  
*Euro Grill & Café*

There are so many differences. Different people, different cultures, and everybody stays together. My home is here. I built my life here. I'm so happy when the people come here and eat and leave happy and say to friends, *We were in some Bosnian place*—nobody says Euro Grill, just Bosnian place—and ate good Bosnian food. That's my business. I present my country. That's important.

**ZENIA MARTINEZ**  
*Las Delicias Bakery*

What started out as a Mexican bakery is now a Latin American bakery. I think what's happening in Charlotte, as we're growing so intertwined, we're seeing a lot more influx of other cultures and sharing with them. We're growing as a global culture and as a global business. Not tailoring to just one customer, but to everyone.

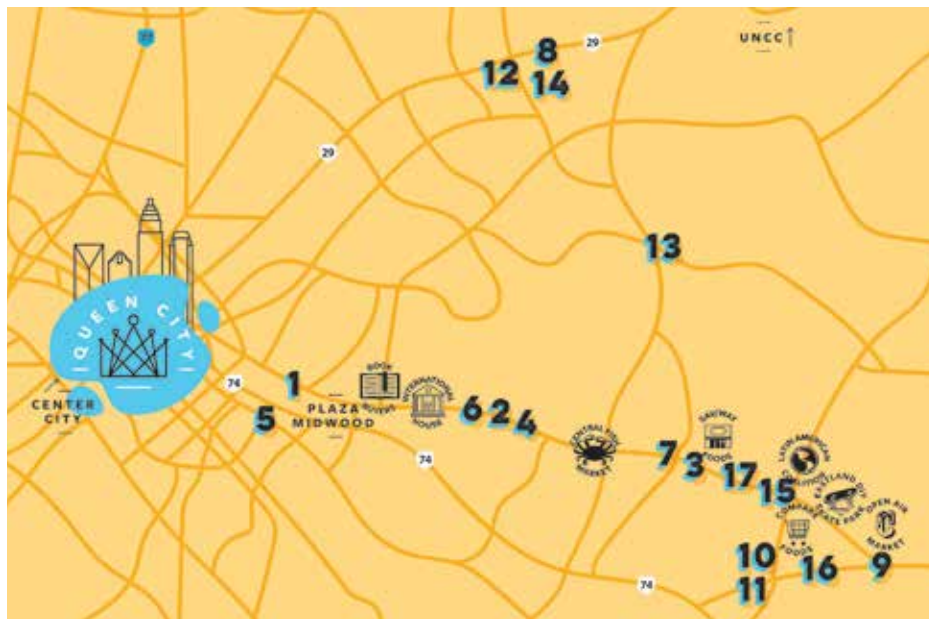
*Lo que empezó como una panadería mexicana es ahora una panadería latinoamericana. Creo que lo que está sucediendo en Charlotte, a medida que estamos creciendo tan entrelazados, estamos viendo mucha más afluencia de otras culturas y el compartir con ellos. Estamos creciendo como una cultura global y como un negocio global. No se hace a medida de un solo cliente, sino para todo el mundo.*

**REGINA ADAME GALAN**  
*Dai-Sing Restaurant Supply*

When someone doesn't know how to explain to me what they want, I have a few basic questions: What do you do with it? What material is it made out of? What color? And if they can answer me two out of those three questions, I can find it for them. I only speak English and Spanish,







## THIS IS CHARLOTTE

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 <b>Jimmy and Louisa Kleto</b><br><i>Central Coffee</i><br>719 Louise Avenue                     | 7 <b>Regina Adame Galan</b><br><i>Dai-Sing Restaurant Supply</i><br>4500 N. Tryon Street #5               | 13 <b>Le Thi Le Nguyen</b><br><i>Le's Sandwiches and Café</i><br>4520 N. Tryon Street #41   |
| 2 <b>David Ragoonath</b><br><i>Soul Central</i><br>2903 Central Avenue                            | 8 <b>Caroline Coke</b><br><i>Island Grocery &amp; Caribbean Restaurant</i><br>5861 Albemarle Road         | 14 <b>Hally Chirinos</b><br><i>El Pulgarcito de America</i><br>4816 Central Avenue  |
| 3 <b>Angelo Kaltsounis &amp; Larry Kaltsounis</b><br><i>Landmark Diner</i><br>4429 Central Avenue | 9 <b>Izzat Freitekh</b><br><i>La Shish Kabob</i><br>3117 N. Sharon Amity Road                             | 15 <b>Juan Sanchez Gonzalez</b><br><i>Carnitas Guanajuato</i><br>5534 Albemarle Road #101   |
| 4 <b>Dalton Espaillet</b><br><i>Three Amigos   Sabor</i><br>2917-A Central Avenue                 | 10 <b>Tsige Meshesha &amp; Zerabruk Abay</b><br><i>Nile Grocery and Café</i><br>3113 N. Sharon Amity Road | 16 <b>Nereyda Mali, Vianey Juarez, Victor Santiago, Christopher Santiago, Isela Juarez</b><br><i>Tacos El Nevado</i><br>4715 Central Avenue |
| 5 <b>Dino Mehic</b><br><i>Euro Grill &amp; Café   Bosna Market</i><br>2719 Central Avenue         | 11 <b>Swen Harmon</b><br><i>Zoewee's Restaurant</i><br>4112 N. Tryon Street                               | 17 <b>Nora Guerra</b><br><i>Guate-Linda</i><br>6016 The Plaza   |
| 6 <b>Zhenia Martinez</b><br><i>Las Delicias Bakery</i><br>4405-C Central Avenue                   | 12 <b>Dan Nguyen</b><br><i>Lang Van</i><br>3019 Shamrock Drive  |   |



REGINA ADAME GALAN  
DAI-SING RESTAURANT  
SUPPLY

IZZAT FREITEKH  
LA SHISH KABOB

### JIMMY & LOUISA KLETO *Central Coffee*

I think this place gives everybody that comes in a little special feeling like, *Oh, this is my place, too*. It's very much come here and be yourself. Everybody's just a little funky enough that it's a great place. Nobody's super weird. Nobody's not weird. They're just the right amount of kooky. —Louisa Kleto

### CAROLINE COKE *Island Grocery & Caribbean Restaurant*

Moving to Charlotte was a big difference, and we realized that there was a need. And we're striving every day to fill that need. You walk into the store, you hear the music, you hear the language, and you find camaraderie through that. You get to build relationships and even maintain some of your culture and some of the things that you're familiar with, the foods and the music or the smells.

### IZZAT FREITEKH *La Shish Kabob*

I have something special. Charlotte's becoming bigger and North Carolina is a big place, big state—there are no fresh eyes for Mediterranean in North Carolina. I need all the people coming. I need all the people. I need the world!

### TSIGE MESHESHA & ZERABRUK ABAY *Nile Grocery & Café*

There are many things that make you proud as an Ethiopian. One of them is the hospitality of the people. And this is a deeply rooted tradition. You don't feel like an outsider when you go to Ethiopia. —Zerabruk Abay

TSIGE  
MESHESHA  
& ZERABRUK  
ABAY



NILE GROCERY  
AND CAFE

## Oral History



### HALLY CHIRINOS *El Pulgarcito de America*

Salvadoran food is this beautiful piece of gold that's trapped within the quartz. Not a lot of people can find it. Not a lot of people will be able to appreciate it. But whoever has seen it, whoever lived through it, they cherish it so much. If it weren't for it, I would not have any of the things that I have today. I would not have any of the privileges that I have today.

*La comida salvadoreña es esta hermosa pieza de oro que está atrapada dentro del cuarzo. No mucha gente puede encontrarla. No mucha gente será capaz de apreciarla. Pero quienquiera que la haya visto, quien la vivió, la aprecia tanto. Si no fuera por eso, yo no tendría ninguna de las cosas que tengo hoy. No tendría ninguno de los privilegios que tengo hoy.*

### TUAN (JOHN) NGUYEN *Le's Sandwiches & Café*

When my parents took me to Vietnam for the first time, the culture, the hard work, the working people, it made me feel something. So when I came back, I

wanted to show that small part of Vietnam to the people of Charlotte, so it's a part of me now. It's a Charlotte thing. We brought something to Charlotte.

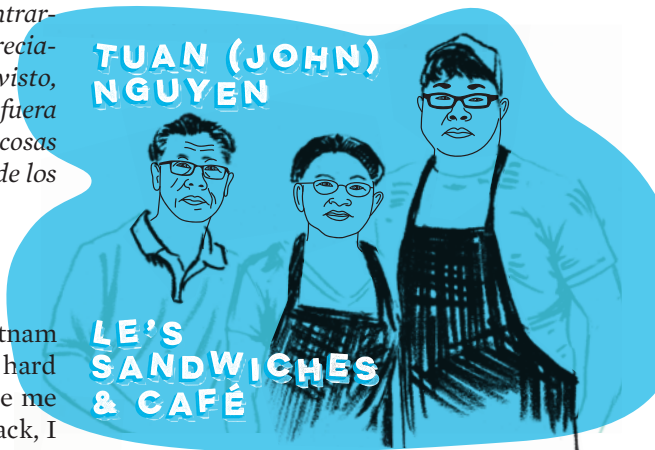
### NORA GUERRA *Guate-Linda*

It's different to work for someone than to be your own boss. There's a lot of difference. My brother is my partner. When he opened his bakery, he said, *Why don't you start doing tamales?* When I got here, I made tamales and I started selling them out of my house. And there, little by little, I started to say, I want to have a business, I want to have a restaurant. And then the day came. And here I am.

*Es diferente trabajar para alguien que ser tu propio jefe. Hay mucha diferencia. Mi hermano es mi socio. Cuando abrió su panadería, me dijo: ¿Por qué no empiezas a hacer tamales? Cuando llegué, hice tamales y empecé a venderlos de mi casa. Y allí, poco a poco, empecé a decir, quiero tener un negocio, quiero tener un restaurante. Y entonces llegó el día. Y aquí estoy yo.*

### TUAN (JOHN) NGUYEN

### LE'S SANDWICHES & CAFÉ



Visit the SFA oral history archive at [southernfoodways.org/oral-history](http://southernfoodways.org/oral-history).

## Recipe Box



## DIRTY PAGES

### Nelssy Toro's Colombian empanadas

AS TOLD TO JENNIFER JUSTUS BY NELSSY TORO

*Dirty Pages is an ongoing recipe exhibit based in Nashville, inspired by the time-worn recipe pages in home collections. In this installment, we hear from Nelssy Toro, an Atlantan by way of Colombia. She learned to make empanadas from her mother, who learned from her mother. One day, Toro hopes to teach her three grown children how to make them. Until then, the instructions remain, handwritten, in her kitchen. —Jennifer Justus*

Photos by Vanessa Toro

**W**HEN I WAS GROWING UP, I always wanted to do what my mother was doing. But when she made empanadas, she would say, "No, no. You're going to get burned or hurt." So I just watched, and that's how I learned to make them.

My mother made them once a week and when we had company. I remember making my first batch when I was maybe eleven years old.



These days, I save making them for special occasions like Christmas or birthdays. That's usually the only time I have for all that preparation. But I know the recipe in my head. I don't have to measure anything.

I also do it the same way every time, whether I'm making forty or one hundred. I always use beef for the filling. Some people use chicken or pork or vegetables. But I like the real thing.

One of my daughters says she doesn't even like empanadas. She has tried them from different countries, but she likes mine. They're the only empanadas she will eat.

I do make other folk dishes at the holidays, but empanadas get requested the most. It might be for my son's birthday or because cousins are coming in from out of town. It's usually when we're all getting together.

It's nice to be able to share that part of our culture with people. It brings me a lot of joy to make them, and people love them.

I say my daughter begged me to come to Atlanta so she doesn't have to come home for the empanadas. But really, we're just a very close family. We picked up and moved here about four years ago.

Now this is our home. Making empanadas, no matter where I am, makes me think of my childhood, happy times, and bringing the family together. 🍷

Toro's empanadas form a crisp outer layer that holds saffron-scented hunks of beef and potato. Find her recipe at [southernfoodways.org](http://southernfoodways.org).



Preparación del relleno:  
 Lavar las papas, colarlas, hervir en suficiente agua la sal. Cocer por 25 minutos a fuego mediano; cuando estén cocidas y dejen reposar. Luego cortarlas en pequeños pedacitos.  
 La carne se cocina, condimentar con sal, por unos 25 minutos. Lo mismo, reposar, enfriar, desmenuar a mano o con un tenedor.  
Preparación de la masa:  
 Coloque el agua tibia en un recipiente, agregue el almidón de yuca, el colorante, sal, y agua. La harina de maíz y defor el agua la absorba completamente. Revuelva y amase bien para todos los ingredientes.  
Preparar el guiso o paprito:  
 Añadiendo en un sartén a fuego la cebolla bien picada, por unos minutos, agregue el ajo, el tomate, el calor, el agua, restantes ingredientes. Cocinar este guiso por unos 10 minutos. Agregar la carne y defor cocinar.

Jennifer Justus is a Nashville-based writer and the author of Nashville Eats.

# GRAVY

Gravy is a publication of the Southern Foodways Alliance, a member-supported institute of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi.

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**THE MISSION** of the Southern Foodways Alliance is to document, study, and explore the diverse food cultures of the changing American South.

Our work sets a welcome table where all may consider our history and our future in a spirit of respect and reconciliation.

SFA membership is open to all. Not a member?

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