



THE SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE PRESENTS

The
STATE *of*
CATFISH

UNDERWRITTEN BY SIMMONS FARM RAISED CATFISH

Catfish means many things to different people. Siluriformes, freshwater stout-bodied scaleless bony fishes with long tactile barbels, play an important role in Southern identity and pastime. Talk about catfish and you get into a conversation about tradition (it's been caught, savored, and cooked in the South forever) and innovation (farm-raised catfish came to the fore in the 1980s.)

For such a traditional staple, catfish is remarkably versatile, serving as a canvas for kitchen innovation. This report takes all those factors into account. And lots more. What follows is *The State of Catfish*, circa 2013.

PEOPLE TALK ABOUT CATFISH

"Some little catfish is exactly what I need."—The Miracle of Catfish, Larry Brown

"Deep-fried catfish without ketchup is like a hot dog without mustard."—Craig Claiborne.

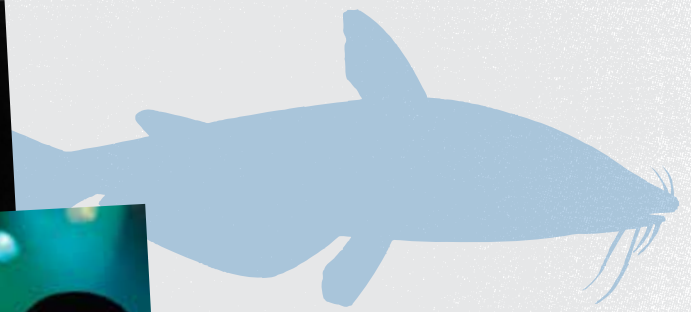
"I look around this big auditorium in Jackson, Mississippi, totally packed, and it looks to me as if you have the most distinguished assemblage of people together under one roof since Elvis dined alone on catfish. Southern catfish."—Willie Morris, *Conversations with Willie Morris*.

"Many cities and rivers in Mississippi were named using Indian words. The Mississippi is named the ancient waters because it is the land with many rivers. The Chunky river is named after a stickball game. Yalobusha means abounding in tadpoles and Yockanookany means catfish land. These are many of the reasons why Mississippi is important to me."—Michael Geruc, *Mississippi Middle School Anthology: Horn Lake*.

What food tradition in your life reflects time, place, and people, or evokes a specific memory? *A Spoken Dish* explores that question. The project captures the balance of tradition and innovation in the South, including stories of catfish. Visit aspokendish.com, where Katy Simmons Prosser tells us why catfish is so important.

"All Mississippi girls have a portable fryer"—Katy Simmons Prosser, *A Spoken Dish*





people
SING
about
CATFISH



CATFISH BLUES

WELL I WISH, I WAS A CATFISH
SWIMMIN' IN THE, THE DEEP BLUE SEA
I HAVE ALL YOU PRETTY WOMEN, FISHIN' AFTER ME
FISHIN' AFTER ME, FISHIN' AFTER ME
OH YEAH, OH YEAH

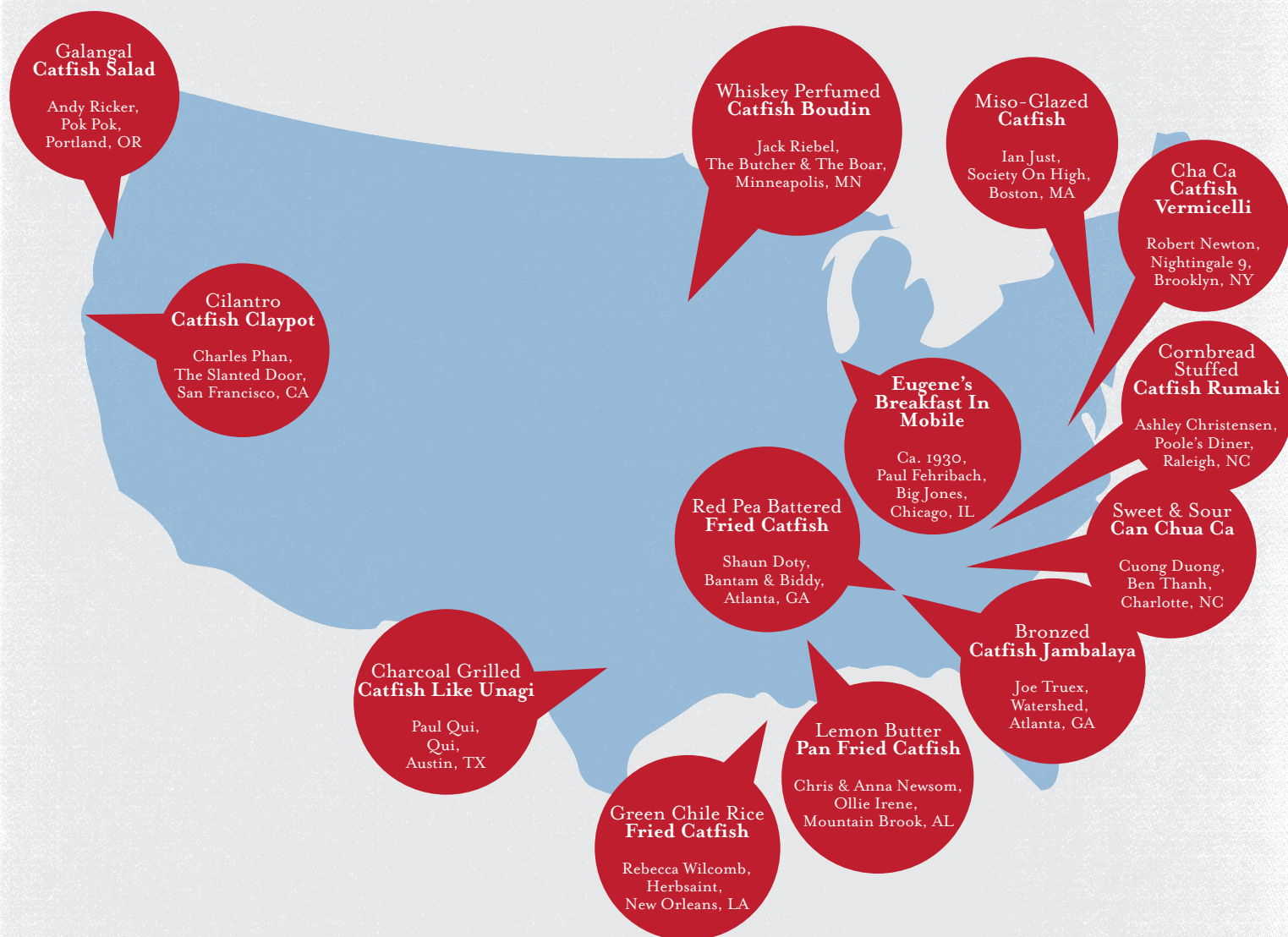


HONORABLE MENTIONS

Catfish - John Lee Hooker
Catfish Boogie - Tennessee Ernie Ford
Catfish for Supper - John Sholle
The Catfish Song - Townes Van Zandt
Catfish, Take a Look at that Worm - Smiley Burnette
Mississippi Catfish Time - David Hall

People COOK CATFISH

The best farm-raised catfish comes from the South. But not all preparations of catfish are Southern. Chefs across the nation now cook catfish in innovative ways that utilize techniques from around the world and showcase the changing American South.



ED LEE'S PANFRIED CATFISH

in bacon vinaigrette

Farmed catfish has come a long way, and it's far from being muddy or mealy. Today's catfish is clean and downright delicate. So I don't like to blacken catfish—a quick panfry is more than enough. Grapes and bacon are great paired with catfish; they're just assertive enough to make a statement but subtle enough not to overpower it.



1 To make the vinaigrette: Place the bacon in a medium skillet and cook over high heat until the fat is beginning to render, about 3 minutes. Add the shallots and continue to cook, stirring frequently, until the bacon and shallots are browned and crispy, another 5 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, place the grapes in a blender and pulse until they are crushed and juiced but still a coarse puree, 10 to 15 pulses.

3 Add the pureed grapes to the skillet and, using a wooden spoon, scrape up any browned bits on the bottom of the skillet. Add the thyme, vinegar, and mustard, turn the heat to low, stir gently, and simmer for 5 minutes. Take the pan off the heat and keep the vinaigrette warm until ready to serve.

4 Season the catfish fillets with a little salt and pepper. In a large skillet, heat the butter and oil over high heat. When the butter starts to smoke, add the catfish to the skillet. Cook on the first side for 3 minutes, then gently flip the catfish, lower the heat to medium, and cook the catfish for another 3 minutes, until crispy on the other side and cooked all the way through. Remove from the heat.

5 Ladle a few tablespoons of the bacon vinaigrette into the bottom of each of four warm shallow bowls. Place the catfish in the bowls, garnish with chopped thyme and a few slices of grapes, and serve immediately.

VINAIGRETTE

5 oz bacon, cut into 3 thick strips
1 shallot, minced
10 oz seedless red grapes, plus more for garnish
2 tsp chopped thyme, plus more for garnish
1 tsp sherry vinegar
1 tsp creole mustard
Salt and pepper, to taste

CATFISH

Four 4-oz fillets skinless catfish
1 tbsp butter
1 tsp olive oil
Salt and pepper, to taste

CREDITS

People Sing About Catfish



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Ed Lee's Panfried Catfish

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