

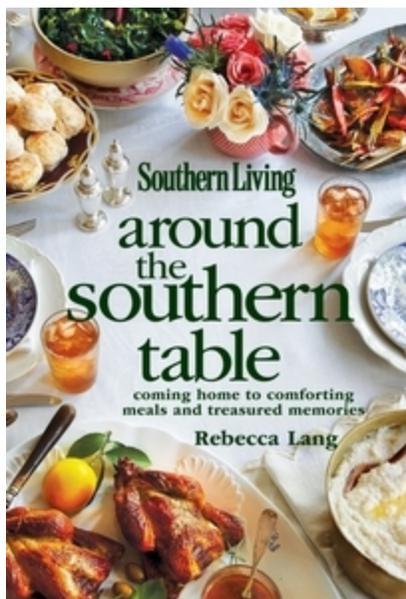
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The Post and Courier

UNC Press and other publishers latch on to popularity of Southern cooking

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“Buttermilk,” “Pecans,” “Biscuits,” “Okra,” “Peaches.” Those are just a few of the titles in, or coming up in, the University of North Carolina Press’ “Savor the South” cookbook collection.

“It’s a great time to be a food lover in the American South,” says Elaine Maisner, the UNC Press senior executive editor who commissioned the series. “Drawing on the region’s triple treasure of farming, cooking and writing, I came up with the idea.”

The books in the “Savor the South” collection are single-subject, 50-recipe cookbooks. At present, a dozen have been commissioned from “well-known cooks and food lovers,” says Maisner, and they intend to include about 24 volumes.

UNC Press also recently released a 20th-anniversary edition of John Martin Taylor’s “Hoppin’



John’s Lowcountry Cooking,” and Fred Thompson’s “Southern Sides” in addition to “Buttermilk” and “Pecans.”

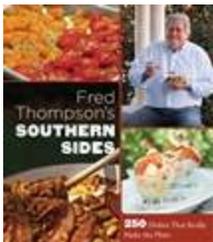
“Buttermilk,” written by Raleigh author Debbie Moose, hits the market just as fresh, whole creamery buttermilk is making a resurgence. Moose advises on grocery store substitutes and offers recipes both sweet and savory.

Extra Photos

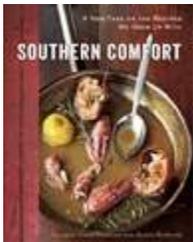


In “Pecans,” Charlotte Observer Food Editor Kathleen Purvis delivers the history of the nut we Southerners claim as native, laced with stories, and sweet and savory recipes laced with tips.

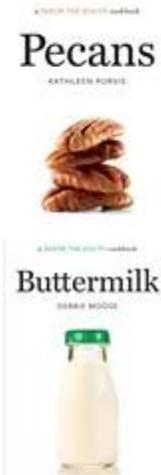
These books offer resources for ingredients. Future books such as “Biscuits” include techniques. The “Savor the South” collection is going to provide a Southern pantry library for cooks. (UNC Press, \$18 each.)



UNC Press has a long history of publishing books about Southern food and foodways; however, Southern cookbooks are coming from all the major publishing houses in 2012 or 2013. From Charleston authors alone, “Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking” by Nathalie Dupree (November 2012) will be followed by Charleston cookbooks by the Lee Brothers (spring 2013), chef Sean Brock (fall 2013) and Callie’s Biscuits (fall 2013).



Rebecca Lang, author of “Around the Southern Table,” explains it this way:



“The food of the South is so hot because we have a relationship with our food like no other part of the country. The trend was really starting to grow about two years ago, as witnessed by the explosion of chefs, restaurants, magazine and newspaper coverage. Authors realized this and responded to it with cookbooks, but it takes about two years from conception to get a book published, so that’s why you see them coming in such large numbers now.”

Three notables

The essence of Lang’s book, “Around the Southern Table,” is its message of Southern

hospitality: Come on in and pull up a chair.

“The South,” writes Lang, “stands apart, where there is always room for another plate, another chair, another friend at the table.” Subtitled “Coming Home to Comfortable Meals and Treasured Memories,” the book’s charming photography beckons the reader to join Lang and her family at her grandmother’s antique oak table to enjoy dishes sometimes generations in the making. There are Southern stand-bys such as biscuits, grits and pound cake, and Lang’s updates. Biscuit dough is layered with country ham and cheddar cheese in a loaf pan to be Biscuit Bread. Egg whites and real Parmesan cheese turn creamy grits into a souffle. Pound Cake From Heaven is used to make French toast. Hungry? Grab a plate. Oxmoor House. \$29.95.

While Rebecca Lang has four cookbooks under her belt, Fred Thompson has 10, including the subjects of iced tea, barbecue, bourbon and crab. His latest, “Fred Thompson’s Southern Sides” is encyclopedic.

“What really defines Southern cooking,” writes Thompson, is “the fabulous juxtaposition of tastes from down-home to urban, is the mouthwatering sides balanced against the fried chicken, barbecue, and ribs.” Thompson offers 250 recipes ranging from starters to sauces, Scuppernong-Glazed Carrots to Special Dirty Rice. With the longest growing season other than California, Southern states provide a plethora of choices for a table laden with fruits and vegetables. Dig in. UNC Press. \$35.

Although New Orleans has its own and very definite accent in the language that is Southern cuisine, Allison Vines-Rushing and Slade Rushing have a unique riff.

In “Southern Comfort Food,” they lay out “a new take on the recipes that they grew up with” in Mississippi and Louisiana. Hushpuppies with caviar, pimiento cheese croquettes, cabbage and dried fig salad with garlic vinaigrette, sweet tea-roasted duck in date sauce. Worth talking about. Ten Speed Press. \$35.

Recipes Country Ham-and-Cheese Biscuit Bread

“Imagine a biscuit already loaded with gooey cheese and salty country ham, and you get this all-in-one bread. Layering the dough in a loaf pan lets you get all that Southern goodness in every bite.” — Rebecca Lang, “Around the Southern Table”

Ingredients

6 ounces country ham

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

4 ounces cheddar cheese

3 1/2 cups self-rising soft-wheat flour (such as White Lily), divided

1/2 cup unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes

1 cup buttermilk

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut ham into 1/2-inch pieces. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add ham; saute 4 minutes or until lightly browned. Transfer ham to a small bowl; chill. Grate cheese on the large holes of a box grater, and chill.

Pulse 3 cups flour and 1/2 cup cubed butter in a food processor 8 times, using the metal blade. Add buttermilk; process until a dough forms.

Transfer dough to a well-floured surface. Use floured hands to knead in remaining 1/2 cup flour; knead until dough is smooth and elastic (about 2 minutes). Divide dough in half. Roll each half into a (16x4-inch) rectangle. Cut each rectangle in half crosswise. (You should have 4 rectangles about the size of your loaf pan.)

Place 1 dough rectangle in an ungreased 8 1/2x4 1/2-inch loaf pan, patting dough to edges of pan. Top with one-third of ham, pressing very lightly to adhere. Sprinkle with one-third of cheese. Repeat layers two more times, patting each dough layer to edges of pan. Top with remaining portion of dough. Brush with 1 tablespoon melted butter.

Bake at 400 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes or until golden brown. Cool in pan on a wire rack 25 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Good Luck Black-Eyes

Serves 4-6

“If I didn’t eat black-eyed peas on New Year’s Day, my mother would have a pure hissy fit. It’s been a tradition for as long as I can remember. Hers were a little plainer than this recipe, but I think you’ll find the additions welcome.” — Fred Thompson

From Fred Thompson's "Southern Sides: 250 Dishes That Really Make the Plate." Used by permission of the University of North Carolina Press.

Ingredients

3 strips bacon

1 small red bell pepper, cut into small dice

1/2 fennel head, small dice

4 carrots, peeled and cut into small dice

2 celery stalks, small dice

1/2 cup diced onions

4 garlic cloves, minced

2 teaspoons red wine vinegar

3 sprigs thyme, tied

2 sage leaves

2 bay leaves

1 pound dried black-eyed peas

6 cups water

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions

Heat the bacon in a large saute pan over medium heat. Cook until the bacon is crisp, 5-8 minutes. Remove the bacon, leaving the fat, drain on paper towels, and crumble. Add the peppers, fennel, carrots, celery, onions, and garlic to the pan. Saute until tender, 6-7 minutes. Pour everything from the pan into a slow cooker. Add the vinegar, herbs, peas and water. Cook on low 10-12 hours or until the peas are tender but still retain their shape. Remove the thyme and bay leaves and discard. Season with salt and pepper, garnish with the bacon, and serve hot or at room temperature.