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Southern cooking on a schedule

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"Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less"

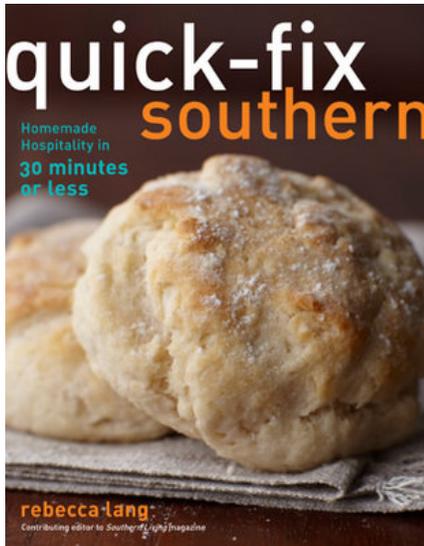
By Rebecca Lang

(Andrews McMeel Publishing,
\$16.99)

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Cooking Southern doesn't mean spending all day in the kitchen. Rebecca Lang shows you how to pull off more than 100 Southern dishes with a half-hour of prep time in her new cookbook "Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less."



Lang, a contributing editor for Southern Living, also writes for myrecipes.com and is featured in cooking segments on the show "Daytime." She's in town this week to sign cookbooks at McIntyre's Fine Books and teach a cooking class at A Southern Season.

She spoke to The Herald-Sun on Friday from her home in Athens, Ga., after returning from cookbook tour stops in Texas. When she got in from the Atlanta airport, she made skirt steak for dinner, a recipe in "Quick-Fix Southern."

Lang has an 18-month-old daughter and 5-year-old son. She said that anyone who works and has kids knows when five o'clock comes around, it's time to get dinner ready fast. Lang dedicates a chapter for "Busy weeknight suppers," where you'll find recipes like oats and bacon meat loaf. Prep time, less than 30 minutes; bake time, 60 minutes. At the beginning of each recipe, Lang adds her thoughts on a dish or any pertinent details. For the meatloaf, she shares how she learned about adding oats from the cooks at famous Atlanta restaurant Mary Mac's Tea Room. Oats are better than bread crumbs for holding the meat together and add richness.

Also alongside many of the recipes are "Cooking School" tips. Lang shares everything from how a dry toothbrush is the easiest way to remove corn silk to storing fresh herbs in your fridge like you would flowers in a

vase. Lang, who also teaches cooking classes, said the tips are the kinds of things professional chefs just assume people know. In class, she always teaches how to cut an onion -- the key is never to take the root off. The key to a good biscuit is not overworking the dough, she said.

A lot of quick cookbooks start with convenience products, Lang said, but these recipes start with the basics. It's what she likes to call "honest food. You have more hands on with it, and it comes from the heart when it comes from scratch," she said.

Lang's grandmothers gave her an appreciation for Southern food. She could take about food and recipes and cooking for hours with her grandmother Claudia Thomas. Cooking is very comforting to Lang.

"It's kind of my 'me' time if I had a bad day. It's also a place to be with family. It's just so fun to me," she said. "Even if I didn't make money, I would still cook."

She said that Southern women especially tend to stand around the kitchen and visit because a lot of traditional Southern recipes take longer.

The chef set a timer and tested all her cookbook recipes to make sure they fit in the 30-minute window. Even with a stocked pantry (Southern flour a must) and the right equipment, some dishes didn't make the cut, like her fried chicken.

But others that take just a half-hour of hands on time include drop biscuits, slow-cooking stone-ground grits, lime mint julep, jalepeno deviled eggs, classic pimento cheese, dilled cucumber soup, sweet onion slaw, blackened catfish, mustard and sage pork tenderloin, shrimp and grits bake, butter bean and bacon hummus, and upside-down chess pie.

"Quick-Fix Southern" helps set up beginner cooks, too, with a guide to pantry staples and refrigerator staples -- the same items you'd see in Lang's kitchen on any given day. That translates to fewer trips to the grocery store -- another way to save time.

Lazy Girl Berry Cobbler

(from "Quick-Fix Southern" by Rebecca Lang)

Serves 6 to 8

Baking time: 50 minutes

Many Southern grandmothers have a version of this simple cobbler in their recipe boxes. It may just be the quickest way to an old-fashioned farm staple. I first heard it referred to as Lazy Girl Cobbler in Nathalie Dupree's kitchen. Her kitchen is a Southern woman's sanctuary. It's always warm, inviting, and never ceases to be a learning place for the hungry.

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup Southern All-Purpose Flour
- 1 cup packed light brown sugar

- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/4 cups buttermilk
- 4 cups fresh blackberries

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

In a 10-inch cast-iron skillet, melt the butter in the oven while it is preheating. Once the butter is melted, remove the skillet from the oven.

Meanwhile, whisk together the flour, brown sugar, baking powder, and salt in a medium mixing bowl. Whisk the buttermilk into the flour mixture.

Pour the batter over the melted butter in the hot skillet. Sprinkle the blackberries evenly over the batter.

Bake for 50 minutes. Serve hot, warm, or at room temperature.

Jalapeño Deviled Eggs

(from "Quick-Fix Southern" by Rebecca Lang)

Makes 24



It's almost unheard of to have any leftover deviled eggs, no matter the occasion. They've been a popular Southern treat since the 1920s. By the mid-1900s, plates made just for these stuffed delicacies were common on bridal registries. If you'd rather have a sweeter egg without the heat of the jalapeños, use 3 tablespoons of sweet pickle relish instead.

- 12 large eggs
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped pickled jalapeño peppers
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Cover the eggs with about 1 inch of cold water in a large saucepan. Bring the water to a boil over high heat. When the water boils, turn the heat off and let the eggs sit for 10 minutes. Submerge the eggs under cold water. Peel the eggs while holding them in running cold water. Slice the eggs in half lengthwise.

Remove the yolks from the eggs and place in a medium mixing bowl. Using a whisk, combine the yolks, mayonnaise, mustard, peppers, and salt.

Carefully spoon the yolk mixture back into the egg whites.

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