

# THE SOUTH'S MOST STORIED RECIPES

BY JENNIFER V. COLE & HUNTER LEWIS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBBIE CAPONETTO & IAIN BAGWELL

prologue

## THIRTEEN YEARS AGO, AN IMPASSIONED GROUP OF CHEFS, WRITERS, AND FARMERS GATHERED IN ALABAMA.

They came together and vowed to protect the food culture of the South. But what exactly *is* Southern food? And how do you preserve it? Today, the Southern Foodways Alliance continues to grapple with these questions. This is their story.

**N**owhere in America can you find more distinct and diverse regional food than the South—from the Lowcountry to Appalachia to the bayous of Cajun country. And only in the South is there an equally distinct and diverse group of food professionals and food enthusiasts who are dedicated to preserving our region's unique culinary traditions. This group, the Southern Foodways Alliance (SFA), is unabashedly committed to celebrating the Southern gastronomic landscape. And it's about time you get to know them.

Founded in Birmingham, Alabama, the SFA has been "putting up" our most prized stories and recipes in the form of oral histories, community cookbooks, and documentary films since 1999, preserving them for generations

to come. Today, the 1,200-member-strong organization, helmed by director John T. Edge and based at the University of Mississippi, sits at the intersection of tradition and advancement.

In *Pride & Joy*, a new feature-length SFA documentary scheduled to air on PBS this spring, viewers will glimpse a snapshot of the people, rituals, and recipes that the organization sets out to document and protect. "Everything we do is about telling some story of the South, a story that advances our understanding of this complicated, beautiful place," says John T. In honor of that film—and because it's time to tell *their* story—we're introducing you to nine influential members, from a young Korean-American chef to a South Carolina peach farmer in her late seventies. Naturally, all of their stories can be told through food. (The recipes begin on page 86.)

“IN THE SOUTH, WHITES, BLACKS, EVERYBODY, WE EAT THE SAME THINGS,” LEAH SAYS. “WE MAY COOK A LITTLE DIFFERENT, BUT WE EAT THE SAME THINGS.”



OYSTERS: STYLING: LYDIA DEGARIS PURSELL; FOOD STYLING: MARIAN COOPER CAIRNS

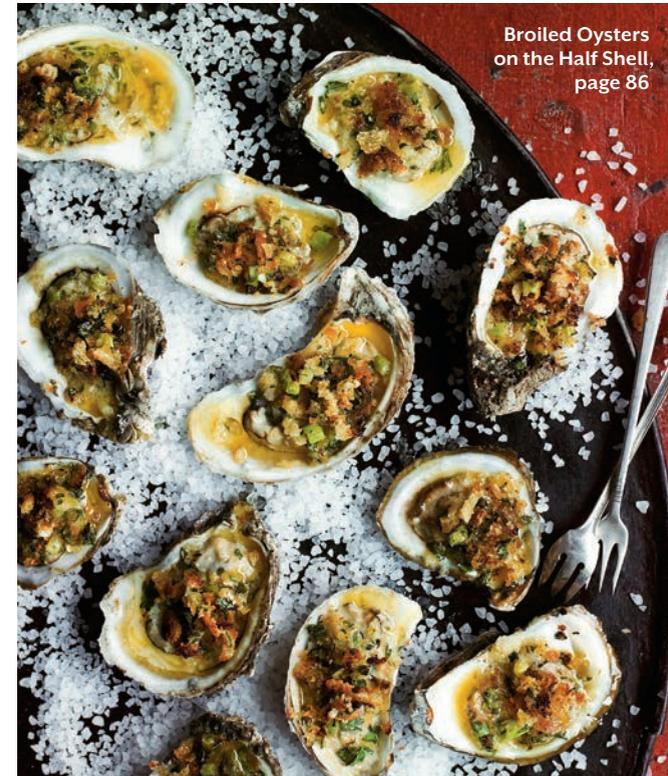
## LEAH CHASE

Chef/owner, Dooky Chase's Restaurant

**LOCATION**  
New Orleans

**RECIPE**  
Gumbo Z'Herbes

The story of 90-year-old Leah Chase reads like a social history of New Orleans. Creole-born across Lake Pontchartrain, she started waitressing in 1941—part of the first group of female servers in the French Quarter—when the men were off at war. In '46, she began working at her in-laws' restaurant, Dooky Chase's, where jazz greats such as Ray Charles, Duke Ellington, and Sarah Vaughan would congregate. “There was no place else for them to eat when they came to town,” Leah says. Then in the 1960s, with desegregation, Leah began “learning what they were doing on the other side,” in places like Commander's Palace, where her clientele now had the opportunity to dine. For her, the strength of the SFA is its ability to transcend borders and bring people together over food. Every year on the Thursday before Easter, she cooks up to 100 gallons of her Gumbo Z'Herbes (page 86), made with nine different types of greens. All of New Orleans, from Catholics to Jews, whites to blacks, flocks to her gumbo pot en masse. “The best way to know people is through food,” she says. “Get them to talk about food. Talk over food. It might be about food, but you're also talking about issues.”



Broiled Oysters on the Half Shell, page 86

## JIM GOSSEN

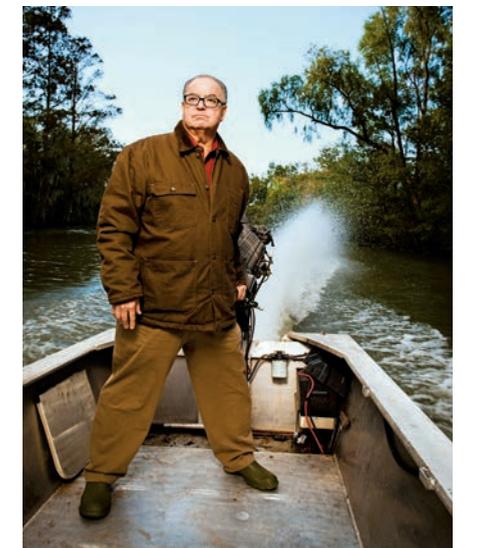
Founder, Louisiana Foods **LOCATION** Grand Isle, LA

**RECIPE** Broiled Oysters on the Half Shell

Jim Gossen is an oyster man. He knows the name of every veteran shucker at oyster bars from Casamento's in New Orleans to Swan Oyster Depot in San Francisco and the province and flavor of the oysters each serves. So why do Gulf oysters, his favorite, cost less? And why are they always sold so generically as “Gulf oysters?” It's not quality, Jim says, “it's marketing.”

A few years ago, he challenged a gathering of Gulf oystermen. “I brought some oysters [from Canada], and I picked out the prettiest ones,” says Jim, an SFA member and founder of Houston-based Louisiana Foods, a seafood wholesaler. “I told all these oystermen, ‘These must be three times better than the ones y'all grow because they cost three times more than yours.’” The men shucked and slurped. Then they grumbled. They knew what Jim

broiled oysters served under a crunchy cloak of breadcrumbs. You'll become a believer once the butter and oyster liquor commingle. No marketing or preaching necessary.



knew: Their plump bivalves were just as good as the New Brunswick Beau Soleils before them. So Jim helped start a new company, Caminada Bay Oyster Farm, to celebrate the distinctive flavor and brininess of Gulf oyster appellations like Barataria Bay and Creole Bay near his Louisiana home. Houston chef Bryan Caswell of Reef was one of his first customers. “We've got to keep preaching the Gulf,” Jim says. “They got such a bad knock because of that damn oil spill. The Gulf has as good a product, or better in some respects, than any part of the world.”

At home, Jim and his wife, Diane, make a mean version of

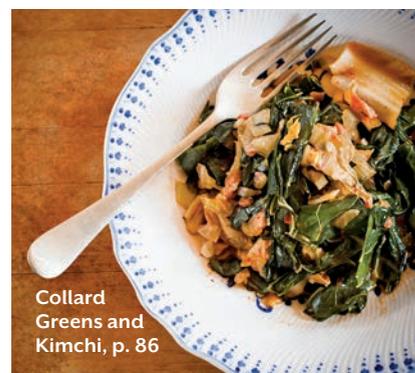
“I DON’T HAVE THE WEIGHT OR THE BURDEN OF A GENERATION OF GRANDDADS AND GRANDMAS TELLING ME TO COOK GRITS A CERTAIN WAY,” SAYS EDWARD LEE. “I LOOK AT IT AS A LIBERATING THING.”



## EDWARD LEE

Chef/owner, 610 Magnolia **LOCATION** Louisville, KY

**RECIPE** Collard Greens and Kimchi



Collard Greens and Kimchi, p. 86

**E**dward Lee tasted collards for the first time when he moved from Brooklyn, New York, to Louisville to cook with a fellow chef 10 years ago. “A woman told me, ‘This is, historically, poor blacks’ food.’ I saw it as a cook’s way to show love and add nutrition in this one overlooked vegetable.” The dish instantly reminded the Korean-American chef of kimchi, which is “[fermented] cabbage, salt, and chili

pepper, and it only costs a few pennies. It was the one thing my parents could rely on that was cheap and plentiful.” Edward celebrates the two humble ingredients, using sautéed country ham and onions to create a robust harmony of sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and umami flavors. Being a stranger years ago freed the chef to embrace Southern ingredients on his own terms. It also forced him to look inward. “When you’re one of 10 Koreans in the state of Kentucky, you ask, ‘Who am I?’ It’s been an incredible journey. Ten years ago, I would never have called the South embracing or accepting. [But] I’ve never been more at home than in this unique place.”

## JOHN EGERTON

Historian, writer, and author of *Southern Food*

**LOCATION** Nashville **RECIPE** Buttermilk Biscuits

**S**outherners have historically shown a distinct preference for hot breads: biscuits and cornbread right out of the oven, steaming hoecakes. “We’re hotter natured down here—it’s born into our culture,” says John Egerton, one of the original SFA founders. But it’s the biscuit that’s been idealized. According to John, the biscuit was even symbolic of your station in life: “I feel sorry for that guy—he eats cornbread for breakfast. He can’t afford the flour and milk to make a decent biscuit.”

Then there’s the finesse and craft of

building the biscuit. “People like to talk about who has the touch, who makes a biscuit better than anybody else,” he says. “You never get to the bottom of who does it best, but you never get tired of arguing about it.” For John, a good biscuit is made of soft winter-wheat flour such as White Lily, lard or butter, whole-milk buttermilk, salt, and a little baking powder. “I like them crusty on the outside, soft and feathery on the inside,” he says. “When you open them, they should be hot enough to fog your glasses. A little butter, some homemade jam. That’s the apotheosis of a good biscuit.”



John Egerton's Buttermilk Biscuits, page 87

BISCUITS: STYLING: INDIA DEGARIS PURSELL; FOOD STYLING: MARIAN COOPER CAIRNS



## DORI SANDERS

Peach Farmer

**LOCATION** Filbert, SC

**RECIPE** Peach Dumplings

**R**aised on a peach farm as one of 10 children, Dori Sanders knows food from the ground up. Her father, son of sharecroppers and a rural elementary school principal, saved enough money in 1915 to buy the South Carolina farm that Dori, the 2011 recipient of SFA’s Craig Claiborne Lifetime Achievement Award, continues to work. Her family always kept half-gallon Mason jars of canned peaches, preserved when they still clasped summer’s warmth. Her mother and older sisters would wrap scraps of biscuit dough around the peaches to make dumplings (page 87). “One of my favorite memories is of them scraping up those pieces of dough, assembling them like a jigsaw puzzle.” Times were hard. Everything was utilized. “It tasted so good because it was precious,” she says. Then she adds emphatically, “We. Lived. Off. The. Farm.”

## BILL SMITH

Chef, Crook's Corner, and author of *Seasoned in the South*

LOCATION Chapel Hill, NC RECIPE Pozole

This soup is an amalgamation of styles and cultures that have collided in my kitchen over the years," says Bill Smith. His Mexican-born line cooks taught him how to make it by simmering a whole chicken, then picking the meat clean and stirring it into a heady broth invigorated with fresh and dried chiles, tomatillos, tomatoes, and herbs. Chewy hominy (dried corn kernels that are soaked in lye, boiled, and washed) is the soup's cross-cultural common denominator. "Since hominy is commonly eaten all

over the South, it was excuse enough to introduce this onto our menu." The kitchen lessons work both ways. His Latino "tribe," as he calls it, is family. Bill is the godfather of some of their children, he travels to their homes in Mexico, and he's writing a book about the immigrant experience. "My cooks started out as dishwashers. The economy of North Carolina's Piedmont region really took off, and you could not steal [a cook] away from another kitchen. Then you realize these guys are right beside you, and they've been watching you all along."



Bill Smith's Pozole, page 87



Blackberry Jam Cake, page 132

## MARCIE COHEN FERRIS

Professor of American Studies, UNC-CH

LOCATION Chapel Hill, NC

RECIPE Blackberry Jam Cake

Huddy Cohen, Marcie Cohen Ferris' Jewish mother, is a cake person. A cherished family recipe for blackberry jam cake represents Marcie's Connecticut-born, matzoh-reared mom's assimilation into Southern culture. So how did a confection that originated in Appalachia cement its spot in the repertoire of a Jewish housewife in Blytheville, Arkansas? It all started with a holiday, naturally. Huddy's friend Julia Harrelson baked the cake every Christmas, and its texture and heft appealed to the Cohen family. "Our family is of Eastern European descent," says Marcie, who still bakes the cake in her mother's avocado-green Bundt pan. "We like cakes that are heavy and moist. An angel cake is lovely, but anything that has lots of layers or chiffon, we're not those people."

STYLING: LYDIA DEGARIS PURSELL; FOOD STYLING: MARIAN COOPER CAIRNS



The Stitts at their Harpersville farm, 25 miles outside of Birmingham, Alabama

## FRANK & PARDIS STITT

Chef/owners, Highlands Bar and Grill LOCATION Birmingham

RECIPE Rabbit Pilau (pronounced PER-loo)

Frank and Pardis Stitt celebrated the fledgling SFA at Highlands on July 22, 1999. The meal almost didn't happen. "I'm kind of anti organization," says Frank. "But we recognized that SFA was an academic and intellectual way of considering

what we do: loving our Southern culture, our heritage, our foods." One of the dishes that night was red wine-braised rabbit and pilau, aka pirlau, a Lowcountry rice stew (page 132). This marriage of regional ingredients and ideas with French and Italian technique, or "New Southern Cooking," as

Frank calls it, has inspired two generations of chefs. Frank and Pardis' restaurants remain vital to our culture, their staff has remained loyal, and the couple's drive is sustained. "I was young and went to the Sistine Chapel and saw Michelangelo's work," Frank recalls. "I was so moved because I knew I would never produce anything of significance relative to that, artistically. [But] we do have the ability to create things with every restaurant experience, to bring some beauty into a person's life."

# THE RECIPES

For more heirlooms like these and info about the SFA and its Community Cookbook, go to [southernfoodways.org](http://southernfoodways.org).

## GUMBO Z'HERBES

**MAKES** 10 TO 12 SERVINGS **HANDS-ON** TIME 55 MIN. **TOTAL TIME** 2 HOURS, 50 MIN.

Use any greens, as long as you use 3 1/4 lb. total, but "you will acquire a new friend for every kind of green in the pot—and we hope one of them's rich," says Leah Chase.

- 5 cups chopped mustard greens
- 5 cups chopped collard greens
- 5 cups chopped turnip greens
- 3 cups chopped beet tops (5 oz.)
- 2 cups chopped cabbage
- 2 cups chopped romaine lettuce
- 2 cups chopped watercress
- 1 1/2 cups coarsely chopped spinach
- 1 cup chopped carrot tops (1 1/2 oz.)
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 lb. smoked sausage, diced
- 1/2 lb. smoked ham, diced
- 1/2 lb. uncooked beef brisket, diced
- 1/2 lb. dry Spanish chorizo or andouille sausage, diced
- 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves
- 1/2 tsp. ground red pepper
- 1/2 tsp. filé powder
- Hot cooked rice

**1. Combine** first 11 ingredients and water to cover in a 15-qt. stockpot; cover. Bring to a boil over high heat (about 20 minutes). Uncover; boil, stirring occasionally, 30 minutes. Drain, reserving cooking liquid. Coarsely chop greens.

**2. Combine** smoked sausage and next 2 ingredients in pot with 2 cups reserved cooking liquid. Bring to a boil. Boil, stirring once, 15 minutes.

**3. Meanwhile,** cook chorizo in hot oil

in a medium skillet over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, 10 minutes or until browned. Remove with a slotted spoon; drain on paper towels, reserving 3 Tbsp. drippings in skillet.

**4. Make** a roux: Stir flour into reserved drippings with a wooden spoon, and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until flour is medium brown (about 15 minutes; see page 118 as a guide). Add flour mixture to mixture in stockpot, and stir well. Add chopped greens mixture and 5 cups reserved cooking liquid. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, stirring occasionally, 20 minutes. Stir in salt, thyme, red pepper, and chorizo. Cook, stirring occasionally, 40 minutes. Stir in filé powder; stir vigorously. Serve over hot cooked rice.

## BROILED OYSTERS ON THE HALF SHELL

**MAKES** 4 TO 6 SERVINGS **HANDS-ON** TIME 30 MIN. **TOTAL TIME** 35 MIN.

For an even easier version of Jim Gossen's oysters, omit the shells, double the recipe, and broil the oysters in a baking dish.

- 2 dozen medium-size fresh oysters in the shell
- 2 Tbsp. butter, divided
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1 1/2 cups day-old French-bread breadcrumbs
- 3/4 cup minced green onions
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 4 garlic cloves, pressed
- 4 Tbsp. minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 tsp. minced fresh thyme
- 2 tsp. minced fresh oregano
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt

- 1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
- Pinch of ground red pepper
- Rock salt

**1. Shuck** oysters, reserving bottom shells and 1 Tbsp. oyster liquor (oyster liquid in shell); discard top shells. Gently loosen oyster from shell, using an oyster knife.

**2. Preheat** broiler with oven rack 6 inches from heat. Melt 1 Tbsp. butter with 1 Tbsp. olive oil in a large skillet over low heat; stir in breadcrumbs and next 9 ingredients. Remove from heat.

**3. Microwave** remaining 1 Tbsp. butter and 1 Tbsp. olive oil in a small microwave-safe bowl at HIGH 20 seconds or until butter melts. Stir in reserved oyster liquor.

**4. Spread** rock salt in a 1/4-inch layer in a 18- x 13-inch shallow pan. Place oysters, in shells, on rock salt. Spoon breadcrumb mixture over oysters; drizzle with butter mixture. Broil 5 to 6 minutes or until top is crisp and browned.

**BROILED OYSTERS** Omit rock salt. Prepare recipe as directed, doubling ingredient amounts. Shuck oysters, discarding shells, and place oysters in a single layer in a 13- x 9-inch pan. (Pre-shucked oysters work well for this. Reserve 2 Tbsp. oyster liquor.) Top with breadcrumb mixture; broil. **MAKES** 8 to 10 servings

## COLLARDS & KIMCHI

**MAKES** 6 TO 8 SERVINGS **HANDS-ON** TIME 50 MIN. **TOTAL TIME** 50 MIN.

Edward Lee's dish works well with King's Mild Kimchi Korean Marinated Cabbage.

- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 1 1/2 tsp. lard or bacon drippings
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup large-diced country ham
- 1 1/2 lb. fresh collard greens, trimmed and coarsely chopped
- 2 1/2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tsp. soy sauce
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 (14-oz.) jar mild kimchi, drained and chopped

**1. Melt** butter with lard in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat until butter begins to foam. Add onion; sauté 3 to 5 minutes or until onion just begins to brown. Add ham, and sauté 3 minutes.

**2. Stir** in collards and next 2 ingredients. Cover and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, to desired degree

of doneness (about 10 to 30 minutes, depending on your color and tenderness preference. Collards should be a vibrant green and tender but still have a little chew to them at 10 minutes).

**3. Add** vinegar, and cook, stirring constantly, 1 minute. Transfer mixture to a large bowl, and toss with kimchi. Serve immediately.

## BUTTERMILK BISCUITS

**MAKES** 1 DOZEN **HANDS-ON TIME** 15 MIN. **TOTAL TIME** 40 MIN.

Use a 2-inch cutter to make John Egerton's biscuits smaller, if desired. Bake in batches.

- 4 cups all-purpose soft-wheat flour, such as White Lily
- 2 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 cup cold butter, cubed
- 2 cups buttermilk
- Melted butter

**1. Preheat** oven to 450°. Sift together first 4 ingredients in a large bowl. Cut butter into flour mixture with a pastry blender until mixture resembles small peas. Stir in buttermilk with a fork until dough forms a ball.

**2. Turn** dough out onto a well-floured

sheet of wax paper. Sprinkle dough with flour, and flatten into a disk. Cover, and chill 15 minutes.

**3. Remove** wax paper, and turn dough out onto a well-floured surface; sprinkle with flour. Pat dough to 1/2-inch thickness. Cut with a 3-inch cutter, reshaping scraps once. Place biscuits 1 inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet.

**4. Bake** at 450° for 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown. Brush immediately with melted butter.

## PEACH DUMPLINGS

**MAKES** 10 SERVINGS **HANDS-ON TIME** 30 MIN. **TOTAL TIME** 1 HOUR, 40 MIN.

You can substitute canned or fresh biscuits for the piecrust in Dori Sanders' dumplings.

- 1 (14.1-oz.) package refrigerated piecrusts
- 1 (20-oz.) package frozen sliced peaches, thawed and divided or 4 ripe peaches, peeled and sliced
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 1/8 tsp. ground cinnamon

**1. Preheat** oven to 350°. Unroll piecrusts on a lightly floured surface, and roll each into a 10-inch circle. Cut 5 (4-inch) circles from each crust. Roll each circle

into an approximately 5 1/2-inch circle.

**2. Coarsely** chop 2 cups peach slices. Divide chopped peaches among dough, placing in center of each circle (about 1/4 cup per circle). Pull dough edges over peaches, and gather in center, pinching to seal and form a bundle. Place in a lightly greased 11- x 7-inch baking dish. Arrange remaining peaches around bundles.

**4. Stir** together sugar, next 2 ingredients, and 1/2 cup water until blended. Pour over bundles and peaches.

**5. Bake** at 350° for 1 hour or until golden brown. Cool 10 minutes.

## POZOLE

**MAKES** 6 TO 8 SERVINGS **HANDS-ON TIME** 1 HOUR **TOTAL TIME** 4 HOURS, 5 MIN.

Serve the fresh garnishes with Bill Smith's earthy soup to add color and crunch.

- 6 qt. water
- 1 (3-lb.) whole chicken
- 1 lb. tomatillos, husks removed
- 2 jalapeño peppers, stemmed
- 1 medium-size yellow onion, chopped
- 6 garlic cloves
- 1 (28-oz.) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 (29-oz.) can Mexican-style or other canned hominy, drained
- 2 Tbsp. dried Mexican oregano
- 4 dried bay leaves
- 2 dried cascabel chiles, stemmed
- 1/2 cup hot water
- 2 tsp. salt
- Lime wedges
- Garnishes: fresh cilantro, sliced radishes, shredded cabbage

**1. Bring** 6 qt. of water to a boil over high heat in an 8-qt. stockpot. Remove neck and giblets from chicken. Add chicken, neck, and giblets to boiling water. Return to a boil, and cook 15 minutes. Cover, remove from heat, and let stand 20 minutes. Transfer chicken to a plate, reserving broth in stockpot; discard neck and giblets. Cover and chill chicken until cool enough to handle (about 30 minutes).

**2. Meanwhile,** combine tomatillos, next 3 ingredients, and 2 1/2 cups reserved broth in a medium saucepan. Bring to rolling boil over medium-high heat, and cook, stirring occasionally, 20 minutes or until garlic is very soft.

Recipes continue on page 132

~ SL Video Exclusive ~

## Founders of the SFA



Above, half of the Southern Foodways Alliance 50 founders at the Southern Living Birmingham campus in 1999. This past fall, the group reunited for an anniversary dinner. Scan this photo to meet the founders on video, or go to [southernliving.com/sfa](http://southernliving.com/sfa), where you can watch the trailer for the new SFA feature-length film *Pride & Joy*, directed by Joe York and on PBS this spring.

**3. Skin,** bone, and shred chicken, reserving bones, skin, and any juices. Cover and chill chicken until ready to use. Return skin, bones, and juices to broth in stockpot. Bring to a rolling boil over medium-high heat; cook 30 to 45 minutes or until the bones begin to separate. Pour mixture through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a large bowl, discarding solids. Return to pot. Skim fat from broth. Bring broth to a simmer over medium-high heat.

**4. Process** tomatillo mixture in a blender or food processor until smooth. Stir into broth. Add crushed tomatoes and next 3 ingredients, stirring until blended; bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, 1 hour.

**5. Meanwhile,** soak chiles in 1/2 cup hot water in a small bowl for 30 minutes. Drain, reserving soaking liquid. Process chiles and 2 to 3 Tbsp. soaking liquid in a blender or food processor until smooth.

**6. Stir** 2 tsp. salt and pepper to taste into broth. Pour chile mixture through a fine wire-mesh strainer into broth, discarding solids. Stir in shredded chicken, and simmer 15 minutes. Serve with lime wedges.

## BLACKBERRY JAM CAKE

MAKES 12 SERVINGS HANDS-ON TIME 30 MIN. TOTAL TIME 3 HOURS, 45 MIN.

We based this recipe on one from *Marcie Cohen Ferris'* Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South.

- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground allspice
- 3/4 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 (18-oz.) jar seedless blackberry jam
- 1 cup finely chopped toasted pecans
- Powdered sugar (optional)

**1. Preheat** oven to 350°. Stir together buttermilk and baking soda.

**2. Beat** butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Gradually add granulated sugar, beating until light and fluffy and stopping to scrape bowl as needed. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended after each addition. Beat in vanilla.

**3. Stir** together flour and next 4 ingredients in a large bowl; gradually add to butter mixture alternately with buttermilk mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Beat at low speed just until blended after each addition, stopping to scrape bowl as needed. Add preserves, and beat at low speed just until blended. Stir in pecans. Spoon batter into a greased and floured 10-inch tube pan.

**4. Bake** at 350° for 1 hour and 5 minutes to 1 hour and 10 minutes or until a long wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack 10 minutes; remove from pan to wire rack, and cool completely (about 2 hours). Dust cake with powdered sugar just before serving, if desired.

## RABBIT PILAU

MAKES 6 TO 8 SERVINGS HANDS-ON TIME 1 HOUR, 20 MIN. TOTAL TIME 3 HOURS

Want to use chicken instead of rabbit in *Frank Stitt's* braise? Substitute 3 lb. chicken parts and increase salt to 1 1/2 tsp.

### RABBIT

- 1 Tbsp. dried porcini mushrooms
- 2 1/2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth, divided
- 1 (2 1/2-lb.) rabbit, cut into 6 pieces
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups dry red wine
- 1/2 cup port
- 1 medium leek
- 6 fresh flat-leaf parsley sprigs
- 4 fresh thyme sprigs
- 2 dried bay leaves
- Kitchen string

### PILAU

- 4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, divided
- 3 carrots, diced
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 2 cups uncooked basmati rice, rinsed
- 3 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth

**1. Prepare Rabbit:** Preheat oven to 300°. Bring dried mushrooms and 1/2 cup chicken broth to a boil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Remove from heat, and let stand 30 minutes.

**2. Meanwhile,** sprinkle rabbit with kosher salt and freshly ground pepper. Cook rabbit, in 2 batches, in hot oil in a heavy ovenproof skillet or enameled cast-iron Dutch oven over medium heat 8 to 10 minutes on each side or until deep golden brown. Transfer to a wire rack in a jelly-roll pan, reserving drippings in skillet.

**3. Add** carrots and garlic to reserved drippings in skillet, and sauté 4 minutes or until carrots are softened. Stir in wine, port, mushroom mixture, and remaining 2 cups broth; bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Skim off foam and fat.

**4. Remove** and discard root end of leek; remove dark green top of leek. Tie together green leek top, parsley sprigs, and next 2 ingredients with kitchen string. Add herb bundle and rabbit to skillet; bring to a simmer, and cover.

**5. Braise** at 300° for 15 minutes. Transfer rabbit loin pieces to wire rack in jelly-roll pan. Braise remaining rabbit 30 more minutes. Transfer remaining rabbit to wire rack; cool 15 minutes.

**6. Meanwhile,** bring liquid in skillet to a simmer over medium heat, and cook 15 minutes or until liquid is reduced by half. Skim off foam and fat. Pour through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a small saucepan; discard solids. Cover and keep warm over low heat.

**7. Remove** rabbit from bones; shred with 2 forks. Discard bones.

**8. Prepare Pilau:** Cut reserved leek in half lengthwise; rinse thoroughly under cold running water to remove grit and sand. Cut leek into 1/2-inch-thick slices.

**9. Melt** 2 Tbsp. butter in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add carrots, next 2 ingredients, and leek; sauté 2 minutes or until onions and leek just begin to soften. Add rice, and cook, stirring constantly, 1 minute. Add broth, and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat to low, and cook 15 minutes or until rice is tender and broth has been absorbed.

**10. Stir** rabbit into rice; transfer to a platter. Whisk remaining 2 Tbsp. butter into warm braising liquid. Spoon liquid over pilau before serving. 🍴