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Southern Cooking and Northern Appetites

By LINDA SPENCE BROWN

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Southern cooking and northern appetites! To the uninitiated, this may seem rather a trivial and dull theme. To one, however, who all her life has known southern cooking and in the last few years has learned something of the northern appetites it is a most important and interesting subject.

Born and brought up in the south the only cooking I knew until I was grown was what we southerners fondly call "Old fashioned southern cooking." For the past several years my way of life has been fortunate enough to give me opportunities to observe how far our ability, their energy and our many materials. True many of our northern friends attempt to make up what they have lost in their youth by travel in the north than in the south. We are as poor and as hearted as we are in Mississippi and Texas if the boll weevil or the flea gets the cotton. It is always a matter of much dispute in the family as to which corn grows. The result of such a social and economic system was that the South became famous for such dishes as beaten biscuit, Virginia ham, waffles, sun cooked preserves, and many other materials and handicaps.

I can remember the big colored woman who presided over my grandmother's kitchen baking dough for thirty minutes. My grandmother was always a matter of much poverty, illness or many other unfortunate circumstances of their youth. Witness the rise of James E. Hill, the railroad magnate from the poverty of his early years. The successful struggle which Theodore Roosevelt waged against the ill health of his youth. The victory of Edward Bok against his ignorance of American customs and the English language. But can you imagine Calvin Coolidge so far overcoming the misfortune of his New England bringing up as to be able to really enjoy mustard and turnip greens cooked together with hamstrung spoon bread?

Our northern friends probably wonder what it is about this southern cooking that makes it, in our opinion, at least, the most delectable in the world.

In answer to such a question I should say the same old factors that always determine quality in food products—raw materials and the manner of using and combining these materials.

In the matter of raw materials we admit that the Creator favored the Southland when he gave us climate and soil which could raise rice, sweet potatoes, okra, black eyed peas, turnip and mustard greens. He was partial when he put into our southern waters oysters, shrimp, crab, pompano and terrapins and the many other delicacies which abound from Baltimore to New Orleans.

The climate of the south has always been favorable to the production of dairy products and of poultry. Mild winters and green forage all year makes it easier to produce milk and eggs than in the north. One does not have to be in the restaurant business to know that much milk, cream and butter and many eggs produce the best results in cooking. Southern cooking was developed during a period when all these ingredients were plentiful and cheap. I have in my possession a cook book which my grandmother brought out from Virginia to Texas. It is called "Domestic Cookery" by Elizabeth E. Sei and was published in 1846. I have looked in it and over the recipes in it I find no cake that calls for less than one pound of butter and 10-12 eggs. Most of the desserts required whipped cream, and all vegetables were cooked with large amounts of butter.

Southern cookery, however, does not owe all its charm to natural resources. We would respectfully remind our northern appetites that we southerners have used imagination and discrimination in utilizing our food material which grows better in many parts of the south than in the north. We refer, of course, to corn.

You well know, then, Iowa is "The state where the tall corn grows." We watch our corn crop as attentively as the south watches its cotton. It is our money crop—if the corn fails we are as poor and as down hearted as we are in Mississippi and Texas if the boll weevil or the flea gets the cotton.

In spite of the splendid quality of the northern corn and notwithstanding the delicious dishes which can be made from ground corn products, there is little used in northern cooking as compared with the amount used in the south where climate and soil conditions produce neither an abundance nor a variety of the northern corn. In Iowa last year all sorts of experiments were tried to use corn syrup and corn to take up the surplus corn crop. If the people of Iowa would eat corn bread, corn muffins, grits and corn mush as we do in the south, they wouldn't have any surplus corn. It is a most important and interesting subject.

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Southern Dishes
Tempt Northerners
(Continued from page 5)
ed that the cakes on top were the
hottest because they were the last to
leave the griddle. Others held that the
top cakes kept the bottom ones warm
that hot biscuits below were the
hotter. My grandmother died at the
age of seventy-five without ever having
settled this momentous question.
so was the method pursed in southern
cooking give you an
idea of the time and energy which
was devoted to those southern dishes
which are still well known. The best
and most varied of raw materials,
plenty of help to prepare these
materials, a manner of living which had
leisure for much entertaining, and a
social system which placed hospitality
at the table first among the virtues of
well bred people; all these I consider
at the table first among the virtues of
northern people. In the South
we like our coffee strong. Your
Louisiana people drink french or drip
coffee which almost stands alone.
Our
drink in the South than in the
North.
With
drinking

In
my
experience more buttermilk is
known in the North.

In connection with meat cookery one
cannot but mention the lack of ap-
preciation for okra in the North. Rice
and gravy is seldom used and in many
public eating places meats appear
without any gravy, something we
southerners cannot understand.
Several distinctive southern vege-
tables should be mentioned here. The
first is okra. Of all southern dishes I
believe okra is the most universally
disliked by the north, except fried okra,
okra and tomatoes, gumbo, all these
are delicacies for which our northern
friends as a rule have only contempt.
Sweet potatoes are quite gener-
ally in the North, although from a
southerner's viewpoint the northern
sweet potato is poor. As far as I can
discover most people like a
sweet potato which is as much like an
Irish potato as possible, white and dry.
They have little appreciation of pure
orange or red yams which are high
in sugar content. Sweet potatoes are
usually candied in the North—rarely
baked in the skins as we like them.
Black-eyed peas and lima beans are
vegetable little used in the North. Also
turnip greens and collards.
Much spinach is used but for that rare
combination of ours, turnip and mus-
tard greens cooked together, they have
little respect. Butter beans, as we
know them in the south are not much
used in the North. Their nearest
neighbor the small lima bean is used
as a substitute.
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