



First Helpings

PUTTING ON THE RITZ

I REALIZED REMARKABLY LATE in the game that this edition of *Gravy* is about comfort food. Food as solace. Food preparation and consumption as acts that soothe and restore us.

“What’s the theme this time?” asked everyone from Richie, our graphic designer, to my husband, Kirk, at various points in the production cycle.

“We’re not doing that anymore. The feature is about barbecue, but really, there’s no theme. Well, okay, a bunch of the stories are set in the Mid-South. But that’s not a theme. We’re not doing themes.”

Here at the SFA, we’re always doing themes.

I’m not a cook who finds zen in a pot of boiling water, nor an eater who practices mindfulness on a raisin. My comfort food is Ritz crackers. By themselves. With peanut butter. Pimento cheese. Regular cheese—fancy or otherwise. Salami. A hot dip, if the universe is really on my side.

When possible, I like to alternate



a dipped or topped Ritz with an unadorned one. It’s a vehicle, yes, but it’s more than that, and must be appreciated as such. Turn the cracker upside down so that the salt lands on your tongue. Bite it in half and feel it flake apart. Savor the hint of butter, which is surely not real butter at all. A quarter-sleeve later, and the world is right again.

The writers and characters in this issue find solace in fried corn. In cheese dip. In collard greens. In whole-hog barbecue, and in pulled shoulder. May their stories comfort you. —SCM

Tip No. 59 Are you an SFA member? Join or renew for 2016 at southernfoodways.org.

Ladies' Home Journal, October 1937

NASHVILLE

*Is the South's 4th Largest City** *Outside of Texas, that is.

IN PREPARATION FOR THE SUMMER FOODWAYS SYMPOSIUM JUNE 23–25, WE LOOKED AT SOME OTHER NOTABLE 4S IN MUSIC CITY.

NASHVILLE IS KNOWN FOR ITS MEAT & THREES. WORD ON THE STREET IS THAT THE NEXT TREND IS THE MEAT & FOUR.*

**We made that up. But wouldn't it be great?*



NASHVILLE IS HOME TO FOUR

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HBCUs):

Fisk, Tennessee State, American Baptist, and Meharry Medical.

FOUR THINGS TO DO IF YOU ARRIVE EARLY:

JUN 18 **TASTE** of **MUSIC CITY**

JUN 19 *Ringo Starr* at the **RYMAN**

JUN 22 **WALK** Eat Nashville's SoBro/Downtown **FOOD TOUR**

Visit Athena at Centennial Park's Parthenon and let the Goddess of Wisdom prepare you for three days of learning about the city's foodways.

ABC'S NASHVILLE is in its fourth season.

Summer Symposium tickets go on sale to SFA members on Wednesday, 4/6.

In addition to supporting our work, you'll be eligible to purchase tickets to the Summer Symposium.

The Parthenon Museum; Jennifer Justus