

GRAVY #61 FALL 2016

First Helpings



Tomatoes ripen on the vine at McMerton Gardens in Memphis, TN.

BLESS THIS FOOD?

No cornbread. No bourbon. No tortillas, tamales, nor pozole.

For as long as I've been part of Team SFA, we've danced around one topic without ever landing on it: religion. Or, put another way, spirituality. It seems like a no-brainer, doesn't it? But there are just so many ways to get it wrong. So many ways to drive our wagon into the ditch. Here's where we have landed: We're an academic organization, not a political one. We don't want to tell you how to vote. It follows, then, that we don't want to tell you how to worship. Or whether to worship at all.

That said, two writers in this issue of Gravy compelled us to make room at the SFA table for honest, thoughtful, and open-minded writing on religion. When you reach the middle of the book, you'll find two distinct, yet related meditations on progressive Christianity in the South. Think of them as acts of pondering, not proselytizing. Come to think of it, that's what we hope Gravy offers readers, regardless of the topic. —SCM

AT SFA WORLD HEADQUARTERS, we organize programming and documentary work around an annual theme. We tend to alternate among totemic ingredients, subregions of the South, and more abstract ideas that intersect with food and drink in ways that shape and define our region. This year we explore all things corn, perhaps the most Southern of all staple foods. Without it, there would be no grits.

Houston Corfield

Featured Contributors Emily Elizabeth, Squared

WRITE. EAT. DRAW. That's how Emily E. Wallace lives her life. She's become a fixture on these pages. Her words and illustrations grace most issues. Called a pimento cheese scholar (she totally is, by the way) by *The New York Times*, Wallace was a 2015 James Beard Foundation Journalism Award nominee for "Ham to Ham Combat," featured in *Gravy* 57.

She works as deputy editor of *Southern Cultures* and has written and illustrated for *The Washington Post*, *The Oxford American*, and many others. Her other areas of expertise include mayonnaise, *The Price is Right*, roadside restaurants, and yams.

Emily E. Hilliard is the West Virginia state folklorist and a self-taught expert in pie.



Emily Wallace

She has worked for a number of cultural heritage organizations, including Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and the American Folklife Center.

For over a decade (and that's a lifetime in the blogging world), her blog about pie, *Nothing in the House*, has set a standard for thoughtful, engaging, beautifully produced food websites.

Hilliard's interests include foodways and music, women's domestic creativity, and the intersection between traditional and experimental art and music. She also plays old-time fiddle and guitar.



Emily Hilliard

Top: Kate Medley;
Bottom: Jess Schreibstein

TIP No. 61

No more FOMO: Look for two articles from the Nashville Summer Symposium in this issue, and more from the Fall Symposium in the winter issue.