Jamaica just about every tree that we grow is edible in some way or the other, whether it's the leaf, the fruit, the nut, whatever—they're edible.

I said to myself, "Well I'm going to change that." And so I set out to try to plant trees that are edible. And I'm in the process. I am growing bananas just like I would in Jamaica. I'm growing apples. I'm growing peach. I'm growing plum. I'm growing every berry that you could think of. I'm growing herbs and spices and eucalyptus and flowers and tropical pumpkin vines. I'm just growing.

Everything is grown in natural soil. I do have problems with worms sometimes, but when all else fails, if I have to have some worm holes in some of my vegetables, let it be. All they did was eat some before I got to it, so, you know, I have to eat the rest.

I grow a lot of supplies that other farmers don't grow. One big one is the tropical pumpkin. They have so many different names for my big tropical pumpkin. You see, I wear it over my shoulder. I call it my baby. It weighs fifty, sixty pounds. "What on earth is this she has? Is that a big gourd? Is that a watermelon?" I am known for my famous tropical pumpkin soup, and I sell it at the farmers' market and I am always sold out. People love it. It is made up with the pumpkins and potatoes and carrots and not little tiny pieces—it's filling. When you have a bowl of tropical pumpkin soup with all the goodies that I put in there, it's a meal.

There are not many black farmers in Atlanta at the moment, especially where we're farming in the West End, because there's not a lot of farmland. It's not huge. We would more or less call it a garden. There are more black farmers, and female, out in the rural areas. But I found out that one of the reasons that you don't find as many black females farming is because they grew up thinking farming is not a pleasant thing. But it's coming back around again.

I have five children, and I spent more money on bread than on doctor bills for the past forty-seven years. My mom is eighty-six and she runs rings around me. My aim right now is to teach others for the future to eat nutritious, healthy food, and sustain themselves. That's what I'm doing here in Atlanta, so that's my plan: to teach the neighborhood how to survive.

PHOTOS, PAGE 32 & 35, *by Lizzy Johnston.*

DIRECTOR'S CUT

A LOWCOUNTRY PEDIGREE

REMEMBERING MY MOTHER IN CHARLESTON

by John T. Edge

MY MOTHER, MARY BEVERLY EVANS EDGE, was born in Bowman, South Carolina, an hour west of Charleston on the edge of the Lowcountry. Her father, Jesse Clifton Evans, ran a narrow-gauge railway that connected Bowman to nearby Branchville. After a fire on the train wiped out a neighbor's cotton crop, my grandfather moved the family fifteen miles to Orangeburg, where he ran a filling station and repaired lawn mowers.

No matter where she lived, my mother longed to belong to Charleston. A lifetime student of the city's rainbow-row architectural styles, my mother collected seagrass baskets once used to winnow rice on local plantations and souvenir spoons embossed with palmetto-framed horse and carriage scenes. When talking, she swallowed her vowels to mark her birthplace, cultivating a Lowcountry gentry accent even after moving to Georgia, where she met my father, and where I was born and raised.

In 1970, when I was seven, our family of three traveled to Charleston for the city's tricentennial celebration. My mother hoped to get a glimpse of the Earl and Countess of Malmesbury, said to be in the city to offer salutations and congratulations from the Queen Mother. Because my mother said that's what proper young gentlemen wore when dining, she dressed me each evening in knickers and a blue blazer with a City of Charleston crest on the breast pocket. And each evening, when a waiter appeared tableside, my mother ordered she-crab soup to begin, for she believed that dish was the height of sophistication.

My mother passed more than a decade ago. I now return to Charleston often. Though I've ditched the knickers, I still wear a blazer when I dine. When I take a seat at a damask-draped table and unfold a starched linen napkin, I think of my mother's aspirations and appetites. For a moment, it's 1970. My mother is in her element. The Earl and Countess are on their way. And a demitasse of she-crab soup, laced with orange roe and Lowcountry pedigree, awaits.

John T. Edge directs the Southern Foodways Alliance.

WINTER READING

A RARE COPY *of* Thursdays and Every Other Sunday Off, *by SFA Craig Claiborne Lifetime Achievement Award winner Vertamae Grosvenor, is worth the hunt. Don't ask John T. Edge to lend you his copy (pictured here); you'll have to find your own.*