

A SKILLET IN ONE HAND, A BOOK IN THE OTHER

by Sara Camp Milam

MOST OF THE SFA STAFF lists reading and cooking among their favorite hobbies, and I am no exception. To be honest, I tend to gravitate toward the former and let my husband take charge of the latter. He's by far the better cook, and I (sadly) can't play to my culinary strength—baked goods—every night. I don't read at the dinner table, though. My parents banned that practice when I was a much smaller bookworm.

We read a lot at SFA World Headquarters, too. If you follow our blog, you might have noticed that its new editor, Jenna Mason, has started a "What We're Reading" column. One desk over from Jenna at the Gravy office, I've begun to read four books that will come out later this year. These are books I think you should read—and, yes, cook from. Mark

Essig's *Lesser Beasts* is a compulsively enjoyable global history of the pig. Senegal's latest cookbook by Dakar-born, Brooklyn-based chef Pierre Thiam, gives me a serious case of wanderlust. The *Jemima Code* by Toni Tipton-Martin, compels me to scour used bookstores for hidden cookbook gems. And Cynthia Joyce's *Please Forward* frames the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina by way of a powerful collection from the post-disaster blogosphere.

This will be the third spring that Atlanta chefs Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison host New South Family Supper. Chefs from across the South will join them at their home, Summerland Farm, to stage an evening of food and drink that benefits the SFA. This year's NSFS menu is inspired by the unsung men and women who work in our region's restaurants, from dishwashers to valets. John T. and I were able to snag a few stories and recipes in advance, and we've shared them in these pages. And because SFAHQ does not have a test kitchen, I asked Tamie Cook, a longtime SFA member and Atlantian, to test them. So when your churros fry up just right, and you find yourself wrapping tamales like a pro, you have not only the NSFS chefs and their colleagues to thank, but also Tamie.

More often than not, my outside-of-work reading is fiction. Earlier this year I read *The Last Days of California*, a quietly moving novel about adolescence, family relationships, and faith. The author, Mary Miller, is this year's John and Renée Grisham Writer-in-Residence at the University of Mississippi. I invited her for coffee, gave her some recent copies of *Gravy*, and hinted very strongly that if she ever wanted to write for us, you know, that would be pretty cool. But no pressure. She took the bait—you'll appreciate the turn of phrase when you read her piece in this issue about hunting, fishing, vegetarianism, and the love between parents and children.

As we go to press, I'm reading *At Night We Walk in Circles*, a fantastic novel by Daniel Alarcón. (I have a thing for Latin American literature, going back to my college major. While Alarcón wrote this book in English, it most definitely belongs on the shelf next to the likes of his compatriot Mario Vargas Llosa.) Alarcón, who grew up in Birmingham by way of Peru, now lives in San Francisco. So it will be a little harder arrange a meeting with him. I remain hopeful. 🍷

PHOTO: Eudora Welty's home library from the series *A Sense of Place* © Susana Raab.

