



Willis pulls crab pots from the waters of Back Sound

with a long aluminum pole while Morales, stake in hand, waits for the nod. Without hesitation, they make the hand-off. Morales takes the jet out of Willis' hands, and Willis grabs the pound stake. The pole slides with ease into the sea floor. They repeat this along the "Great Wall," the name Willis coined for the massive configuration of poles that spans 2,300 yards across the water. In three hours' time, Morales' white oyster gloves are soaked and grayed from soil and seawater. Willis' T-shirt collar sags with sweat.

"What I've learned from P.D. and Eddie are things I would have never thought of learning, things that the locals don't even know," says Morales. "I know where the crabs are, and that when the half-moon rises, it's time for shrimp."

The Willises have supported Morales' path to citizenship, which he's been working on for the last three years.

"Alberto has come to be a life-long friend and family member. He knows what I'm going to do before I do it, and I know what he's going to do," says Willis. On Harkers Island, a tight-knit community that holds fast to its traditions, Morales might have once been thought an outsider. Not now. "When I quit, this is all his," says Willis.

Like the waters of Core Sound, the tide inevitably shifts. Morales has already recruited his son, Jesus Eduardo, to come work at the fish house. When the time comes, he will pass on the tradition to the next generation of Southern watermen. 🐟

Keia Mastrianni is a writer based in Shelby, North Carolina. Find her Harkers Island oral history project for the SFA online at southernfoodways.org. Translation by Victoria Bouloubasis.



# CORN-FED *and Beyond:*

RECIPES FROM THE 2016  
SOUTHERN FOODWAYS SYMPOSIUM

## THE 2016 SOUTHERN FOODWAYS SYMPOSIUM

in our hometown of Oxford, Mississippi, explored the corn-fed South and examined corn as symbol, sustenance, and problem. During Symposium weekend, more than a dozen chefs (and one envelope-pushing bartender) took the humble cob as their muse **and riffed on corn in every way imaginable, from the pre-Columbian to the postmodern.** We asked a few of them to share their recipes so that you can recreate the Symposium's greatest hits in your home kitchen. (Note: Because no one can live on corn alone, we've included a few cob-free crowd-pleasers.)

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Gravy thanks SFA Nathalie Dupree Graduate Fellow Kevin Mitchell for testing the recipes for cornbread madeleines, crispy cornmeal mush, okra stew, and spiced sweet potato cookies. Mitchell, a graduate student in Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi, is a chef and former instructor at the Culinary Institute of Charleston.

# CORNBREAD MADELEINES

by JEAN-PAUL BOURGEOIS

DURING MY SOPHOMORE YEAR OF CULINARY SCHOOL, I visited a friend in Birmingham over a break. That was the first time I tasted Frank Stitt's cooking. He was doing cornbread madeleines as part of his bread service at Highlands Bar & Grill. They really stood out to me. I know this is controversial to some, but the cornbread I grew up with had sugar—it wasn't a sugary dish necessarily, but it had a sweetness to it. As soon as I tasted Stitt's cornbread madeleines, I knew one day I was going to put them on my menu. When I was growing up, we served cornbread with warm cane syrup and butter, so I serve these madeleines the same way. My recipe is different from Stitt's, but it still reminds me of those madeleines at Highlands. Note that this recipe only works well in madeleine pans.

Jean-Paul Bourgeois is executive chef at Blue Smoke in Manhattan, New York. Born and raised in Thibodaux, Louisiana, he is a graduate of the John Folse Culinary Institute at Nicholls State University.



Makes approximately 40 madeleines

## INGREDIENTS

- 1½ cups coarse cornmeal, such as Anson Mills
- 1½ cups fine cornmeal, such as Anson Mills
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 3 tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ cup white granulated sugar
- 2½ cups buttermilk
- 2 whole eggs
- 4½ ounces (9 Tbsp.) butter, melted
- Nonstick cooking spray

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Combine all dry ingredients until thoroughly mixed.

In separate bowl, melt butter and combine with buttermilk.

In separate bowl, whisk eggs and combine all wet ingredients.

Gently fold buttermilk mixture into dry ingredients until thoroughly combined.

Lightly spray madeleine molds with nonstick spray.

Fill each mold¾ of the way with batter.

Bake for approximately 10 minutes or until madeleines are golden brown and edges are crispy.

Set aside mold tray to cool, then remove madeleines.

Serve with melted butter and warm cane syrup.



# CRISPY CORNMEAL MUSH MUSH

by CASSIDEE DABNEY

WHEN I LEARNED ABOUT POLENTA IN CULINARY SCHOOL, I remember telling my dad about it. He said, “Oh, that’s just cornmeal mush.” He used to fry cornmeal mush and coat it in a pepper jam.

For the Symposium, I thought it would be fun to garnish the dish with hazelnuts and mint. Peppers and dill are companion plants—they grow next to each other in our garden at Blackberry Farm. They’re actually just a few feet from the Hickory King corn and hazelnut orchard. I tend to incorporate flavors common to some Indian cuisines in my recipes, ever since my internship at an Indian restaurant in Germany. I wanted this recipe to be creamy and satisfying, without getting so heavy that people can’t button their pants.

Originally a physical anthropology major at the University of Arkansas, Cassidee Dabney graduated from the New England Culinary Institute. She took the position of sous chef at Blackberry Farm in 2010 and was appointed executive chef in 2015.

Brandall Atkinson

## EDITOR’S NOTE:

*This is a graduate-level project for the home cook, and the recipe yields enough for a crowd. Try it! Dabney recommends starting the night before for perfect cornmeal mush. You may substitute store-bought pepper jelly for the pickled pepper jam. If you forgot to put up your own pickled ramps last spring (oh, shoot!), you can purchase a jar from a number of sources, such as Blackberry Farm or Farmer’s Daughter.*

## PICKLED PEPPER JAM

Makes 3 cups

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup white wine vinegar
- 1 pint sliced lunch box pepper rings
- 1 tsp. Aleppo or cayenne pepper
- ¼ cup pickled ramp liquid

Add everything except ramp liquid into to a non-reactive pan. Reduce to a thin, light amber syrup (think the same consistency as simple syrup). Stir in pickled ramp liquid. Set aside and let cool.

## DILL YOGURT

Makes 2 cups

- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 cup crème fraîche or sour cream
- ½ cup gently packed dill, stems removed
- 3 whole pickled ramps
- Salt to taste

Purée the dill, yogurt, and ramps in a blender or food processor for about one minute. The yogurt will be thin and green.

Add the crème fraîche and blend until just incorporated. This will thicken the mixture, but do not overmix. Season with salt to taste. Refrigerate for at least two hours.

## CORNMEAL MUSH

- 3 cups polenta or cornmeal
- 4 ½ cups vegetable stock
- 4 ½ cups milk
- 4 ½ Tbsp. butter
- 3 tsp. salt
- Vegetable oil
- Chopped fresh mint leaves, chopped hazelnuts, and corn nuts for garnishing

Line an 11x17" baking dish or pan with oiled parchment paper.

In a saucepan, bring the vegetable stock, butter, milk, and salt to a boil. Add the polenta slowly and whisk constantly to avoid lumps. Cook over medium heat until the polenta becomes tender, about 20 minutes. Pour the cornmeal mush onto the prepared baking pan and spread evenly. The mush will be about one to one-and-a-half inches high. Cover with plastic wrap to prevent a crust from forming. Refrigerate overnight. The next day, remove plastic wrap and cut sheet of polenta into desired cube size.

In a pot or home fryer, heat vegetable oil to 350 degrees. Working in batches, fry the cubed mush for about one minute or until golden brown and crispy. Toss fried mush cubes with your desired amount of chopped mint, chopped hazelnuts, sliced pickled ramps, and corn nuts. Toss everything with pepper jelly to coat lightly.

Serve immediately with the dill yogurt on the side or plated beneath the cornmeal.



## SQUASH CASSEROLE

by DORA CHARLES

SOUTHERNERS KNOW THAT SQUASH CASSEROLE—CREAMY, with a crunchy, cheesy topping—is a big thing. I usually make the topping from crushed Ritz crackers and canned fried onions. For the Symposium, I only used crushed crackers. My recipe calls for cheddar cheese, but for the Symposium I doubled up with mozzarella and cheddar in equal amounts. Maybe that's why it was such a hit.

Dora Charles grew up in Savannah, Georgia, where she began cooking alongside her grandmother at age seven. For twenty years, she led the kitchen of The Lady and Sons. Reprinted by permission from *A Real Southern Cook in her Savannah Kitchen* by Dora Charles (Rux Martin Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015).

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Serves 4–6

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds crookneck squash, cut into ½-inch-thick slices
- 1 pound zucchini, cut into ½-inch-thick slices
- ¾ stick (6 Tbsp.) butter
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 large green bell pepper, chopped
- ½ large orange bell pepper, chopped
- 1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
- 1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese

- Dora's Savannah Seasoning, to taste (see below)
- 1 cup crushed crackers
- ½ cup fried onions, crushed

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Put the squash slices in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook just until the squash is tender, a few minutes. Drain well and when it cools a little, squeeze the squash dry and set aside. Tip: Squash holds a lot of water, so squeeze it well to ensure the casserole isn't watery.

Melt 4 tablespoons of the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and bell peppers and cook until soft, six to seven minutes.

Scrape the onion and peppers into a large bowl. Add the yellow squash, zucchini, sour cream, cheese, and seasoning. Put the squash mixture into a 9x7" or 8x8" casserole dish.

Melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter. In a small bowl, combine the cracker crumbs and fried onions with the melted butter and mix well. Spread the cracker mixture over the casserole and bake until golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Serve hot or warm.

### DORA'S SAVANNAH SEASONING

- ⅓ cup Lawry's seasoned salt
- ¼ cup salt
- 2 scant Tbsp. granulated garlic or garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp. black pepper

In a small bowl, mix everything together thoroughly. Makes about 2/3 cup. Store seasoning in a tightly sealed glass jar. It will last for about three months.

# OKRA STEW

by EDOUARDO JORDAN

THIS DISH HIGHLIGHTS SOUTHERN CUISINE'S TRANSITION from Africa to America. I was influenced by gumbo—I like a dark roux—but wanted to do something different. I settled on okra and tomatoes. At Salare, we do our take on the traditional Ethiopian spice mix, Berbere. Our version is not as hot, so it became a workhorse spice for us. Serve with a grain, such as rice or cornbread for a warm, satisfying meal.

Serves 12–16

## INGREDIENTS

- 3 medium-sized onions, diced
- 1–2 ounces olive oil
- 5 garlic gloves, sliced thin
- 3 (28-ounce) cans San Marzano tomatoes, crushed
- 2 tablespoons Berbere spice mix (see below)
- 3 pounds okra, sliced into rings (may use frozen)  
Finely ground African bird's eye chili, to taste (or substitute  
½ scotch bonnet pepper or 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper)
- Salt, to taste
- Aged sherry vinegar, to taste

In a large pot, sauté onions in oil on medium heat.

Add garlic and continue to sweat ingredients for five minutes on medium heat. Stir frequently to avoid browning.

Add Berbere spice mix. As soon as you smell the spices, add tomatoes and cook on medium for 30 minutes. Stir to avoid sticking.

Add okra and cook until tender.

Season pot with salt and vinegar to taste. For more heat, add more cayenne.

Spoon over rice or serve with cornbread.

## SALARE'S BERBERE MIX

*Berberé is a traditional Ethiopian paste or spice mix made from garlic, cayenne pepper, coriander, and other spices, often used in stews. It is usually quite spicy; Salare's version is mellow.*

- 3 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp. black pepper
- 4 ½ tsp. cardamom, ground or pod
- 2 tsp. true cinnamon
- 1 ½ tsp. chili flakes
- 1 Tbsp. white sesame seeds
- 4 ½ tsp. onion powder
- 3 tsp. coriander
- 3 tsp. fenugreek seed

Blend all ingredients in a spice grinder. Pass through a fine sieve. Store in a tightly sealed container in a cool, dry place.



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# SPICY SWEET POTATO COOKIE

by EDOUARDO JORDAN

GINGERBREAD COOKIES INSPIRED THIS RECIPE. I LIKE soft-batch cookies with a crispy edge and chewy middle. These are spicy. We didn't want to shy away from full flavor. At Salare, we include ground madrone bark, foraged from trees in the Northwest. It can present like cinnamon and it's almost chocolaty, but it's hard to find. I've left it out here, but if you track it down, add a tablespoon.

Edouardo Jordan is executive chef and owner of Salare in Seattle. He was born and raised in St. Petersburg, Florida, and later attended Le Cordon Bleu in Orlando. His next effort, Junebaby, will focus on Southern cuisine and is slated to open in Seattle in 2017.



## SPICY SWEET POTATO PURÉE

- 3 medium-sized red sweet potatoes
- 2 ounces honey
- 1½ tsp. cayenne
- 2 Tbsp. grapeseed or vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Peel and quarter potatoes.

Toss potatoes with honey, cayenne, and oil. Cover with foil.

Place potatoes on baking sheet and roast in oven until tender throughout, about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Let cool completely, then purée in a food processor.

## SWEET POTATO COOKIES

Makes approximately  
3 dozen cookies

- 24 ounces (3 cups) white sugar
- 24 ounces (3 cups) brown sugar
- 20 ounces (5 sticks) butter, softened
- 24 ounces (3 cups) sweet potato puree (see above)
- 2 Tbsp. fresh ginger, minced
- 4 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 30 ounces (3¾ cups) all-purpose low-gluten or cake flour
- 1 tsp. salt

- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1½ tsp. cayenne
- 1 tsp. allspice
- 2 tsp. cardamom, freshly ground
- 1 nutmeg, freshly grated

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

In a standing mixer, cream together both sugars with butter using the paddle attachment. Mix until light and fluffy.

Beat in eggs one at a time.

Add sweet potato purée, vanilla, and grated ginger, and mix until well combined.

In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, salt, baking soda, and spices.

Add dry ingredients to the wet, mixing until just combined. Do not over mix.

Using a #20 ice cream scoop (approximately 2 tablespoons) or a spoon, place cookie dough balls on to nonstick baking pan or baking pan lined with parchment paper, leaving space between cookies. Sprinkle each cookie with raw sugar.

Bake at 325 degrees for 16-18 minutes.

# CORNFIELD COLLINS

by MILES MACQUARRIE

THIS DRINK WAS INSPIRED BY THE CORN HUSKER'S luncheon at the 2016 Fall Symposium, cooked by Steven Satterfield of Miller Union. Mint and corn make a lovely combination, and they both mix well with gin and lemon. I used Bristow Gin from Cathed Distillery as a nod to the SFA's Mississippi home. I wanted this drink to be light and interesting while keeping corn as the focal ingredient. This riff on the Tom Collins might even become your new go-to.

Miles Macquarrie is co-owner and bar manager of Kimball House in Decatur, Georgia. He is a three-time James Beard Award semifinalist for best bar program.

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Makes 1 cocktail

## INGREDIENTS

- 1½ ounces gin, such as Bristow
- ½ ounce lemon juice, freshly squeezed and strained
- ½ ounce mint syrup (see below)
- ¼ ounce lemon vinegar (see below)
- 3 ounces corncob tea (see below)

Shake, then strain into an iced Collins glass. Garnish with a sprig of mint.

## CORNCOB TEA

*Corncob tea is also lovely by itself. I recommend adding a touch of sorghum or honey, a little lemon juice, and salt.*

Remove kernels from 3-4 corncobs and save for another use.

Place cobs in a large stockpot and cover with water.

Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer.

Simmer for one hour.

Strain off the fresh corn tea.

Set aside to cool.

Store leftover tea in refrigerator.

## MINT SYRUP

Blanche 5 to 7 mint sprigs for about 15 seconds in boiling water.

Immediately shock mint leaves in a bowl of icy water.

In blender, add leaves and simple syrup. Puree for one minute.

Strain syrup through a fine sieve or chinois strainer.

Keep bottled in refrigerator up to two weeks.

## LEMON VINEGAR

Mix equal parts lemon juice, sugarcane syrup, and Champagne vinegar.

