

Summer in Montgomery

PAYTON SYKES' MAMA MADE ALL KINDS OF GOOD FOOD. SHE WAS KNOWN for her collards, mac and cheese, and black-eyed peas. His favorite dish was her fried chicken. Nobody could make it like her, and nobody ever will. She took her recipe to the grave. "My mama's fried chicken was the best fried chicken I ever ate," he told me. I met Sykes while driving through Montgomery one afternoon last summer. He was in his backyard grilling ribs that you could smell from the road. I share the faces and stories of Alabamians as part of a project celebrating the state's bicentennial. Like Sykes, most are willing and eager to share a bit of their life with a stranger. We talked about food, his family, and lessons life has taught him. After our conversation, I asked if he wanted to put his ribs down before I took a photo. "Nah, I'm country," he said.

—TAMIKA MOORE, photographer



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The SFA documents, studies, and explores the diverse food cultures of the changing American South. Our work sets a welcome table where all may consider our history and our future in a spirit of respect and reconciliation.

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