

GRAVY #SUMMER 2016

First Helpings

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SUMMER AT THE SFA

PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME IF the Southern Foodways Alliance, like the University of Mississippi and the town of Oxford, slows down for the summer. It's not polite to laugh in someone's face, but that would be an accurate response. The truth is, we pack our summers just as full as the rest of the year.

By the time you read these words, we will have just wrapped up our Summer Symposium in Nashville. Our minds and stomachs will be full of the stories and tastes of the Music City, from hot chicken to Kurdish flatbread.

For SFA oral historian Sara Wood, July means the annual oral history workshop, where we share our mission and methods with a new class of documentarians. And by early August, our Fall Symposium is fully programmed, and tickets go on sale.

This summer we've got another project in the works: The Southern Foodways Alliance Guide to Cocktails. Our partner in this volume, which UGA Press will publish in 2017, is Jerry Slater. Jerry manned the bar at Louisville's Seelbach Hilton before moving to Atlanta in 2008. He kept harried travelers lubricated at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport's One Flew South, then opened H. Harper Station in a former train depot in the Reynoldstown neighborhood. Jerry can expound on our region's cocktail history as gracefully as he can mix a perfectly balanced original creation. We're lucky to have him on board.

And now, while you're enjoying this issue of Gravy, excuse me while I turn back to edit that cocktail book! —SCM

Andrew Thomas Lee



Featured Contributor

JULIAN RANKIN

So, Julian, tell us a bit about yourself.

I'm a writer and photographer raised in Mississippi and North Carolina. My work explores identity and personal history with a focus on the American South. Currently I serve as the director of marketing and communications at the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson.

I'm husband to an amazing Oxford, Mississippi, girl, and father to a two-year-old son called Possum.

What drew you to telling the story of Ed Scott Jr., the first black man to farm and process catfish in the Mississippi Delta?

I didn't exactly discover the story of Ed Scott. It presented itself, as many stories do, as a narrative itching for an expansive telling. Scott's daughter Willena White is the keeper of the family's historical legacy. When I heard through colleagues about her interest in sharing her father's story, I initiated a meeting at her home in the Mississippi Delta town of Renova.

During this spring 2013 visit, I spoke with a ninety-one-year-old Scott. In raspy, nearly inaudible sequences—which I would become accustomed to deciphering in the months to follow—Scott poured out the contents of his life.

He told me about his early years watching his father escape the economic bondage of sharecropping for the uncertainty of entrepreneurship; his lack of formal schooling as a child and the lessons of the land; his service under General Patton on the Western Front in World War II; his return home to take over and expand the family's unlikely agriculture empire; and his decision to dig up his fields in the 1980s to start farming catfish. The rest, as they say, is oral history.

TIP
No. 60

Tickets for our Fall Symposium (Oct. 13–16) go on sale in early August. Be sure your SFA membership is current if you plan to purchase a ticket!

IRA WALLACE: WRITER, SEED SAVER, EDUCATOR

IRA WALLACE IS A SEED SAVER, an educator, and the essential intellectual and physical energy behind Southern Exposure Seed Exchange—one of the country's best known and most respected sources for heirloom and open-pollinated seeds.

Raised by her grandmother in Tampa, Florida, Wallace developed a love of gardening. Under her grandmother's tutelage, she grew mango, avocado, pecan, and soursop trees; tended an enormous garden; and raised chickens. At New College in Sarasota, Florida, in the 1960s, Wallace designed her own major and dug deep into the philosophy and practice of cooperative education and living.

Ms. Wallace traveled the world, exploring organic agriculture, seed saving, and cooperative living. In the 1980s, she joined the Twin Oaks Community in Louisa, Virginia. Nearly 100 folks who value cooperation, sharing, nonviolence, equality, and ecology call Twin Oaks home.

These days, Wallace splits her time



between Twin Oaks and Acorn, the Mineral, Virginia, community she helped to found in the 1990s.

Acorn Community Farm is an anarchist, egalitarian community committed to income-sharing, sustainable living, and creating a vibrant, eclectic culture. The Southern Exposure Seed Exchange is Acorn's sustaining enterprise.

Ira Wallace is the founder of the Heritage Harvest Festival, held each fall at Monticello. She presents at sustainable agriculture conferences across the region, and she is the author of *The Timber Press Guide to Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast*.

You'll be hearing more about Wallace from the SFA in the months to come.

Sara Wood

SFA SEED SAVING

BIRDS DO IT. SQUIRRELS DO IT. LET'S DO IT. LET'S SAVE SOME SEEDS.
TO ENSURE SUCCESS, START WITH PLANTS GROWN FROM OPEN-POLLINATED SEEDS.



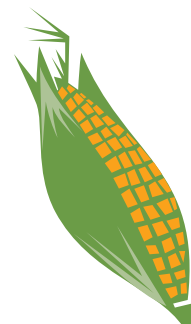
All it takes to save tomato seed is a ripe tomato, some time, and a somewhat suppressed sense of smell.

Squeeze the pulp and seeds from a ripe tomato into an open container. Let the mixture sit and ferment for at least 4 days. (It will get stinky!) Drain off the liquid and the solids that floated to the top. Spread the remaining seed on a plate to dry completely.

Leave in the field until pods are papery and dry. Harvest by pulling up the entire plant. Lay it on a tarp or hang in a dry place until the seed is completely dry. Not sure if the beans are dry enough? Try to press the seed with your fingernail. If the beans are ready to become seed then your nail won't leave an indentation. Shell each pod by hand then clean.



Allow the ears of corn to dry on the plant and harvest when husks are dry and papery. Once harvested, shuck and dry again indoors for 3 to 6 months. Remove any discolored kernels (toss any totally or mostly discolored cobs).



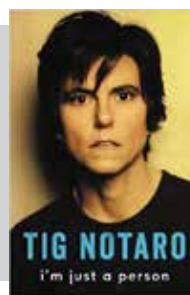
Shell over a large bowl, holding the cob with one hand and twisting with the other to remove the kernels (they'll be very wrinkled). Continue twisting until all the kernels have fallen into the bowl. Store in a rodent-proof container. Remember, humans aren't the only species crazy for corn.

GRAVY BOOK CLUB

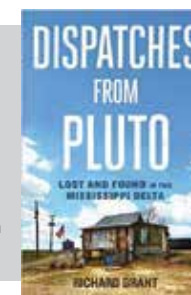
SFA staffers read more than food books. In this space, we share our favorites. Blog editor Jenna Mason offers this issue's recommendations.



WHERE'D YOU GO, BERNADETTE?
by Maria Semple
Fifteen-year-old Bee Branch compiles every piece of evidence she can find—e-mails, invoices, transcripts, news clippings—to track down her mother, who has vanished after an apparent breakdown.



I'M JUST A PERSON
by Tig Notaro
Mississippi native Tig Notaro endures a dangerous illness, the sudden death of her mother, a breakup, and a cancer diagnosis with honesty and humor.



DISPATCHES FROM PLUTO:
LOST AND FOUND IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA
by Richard Grant
On a whim, writer Richard Grant moves with his girlfriend from their New York City apartment to an old plantation house in the Mississippi Delta.