



Gravy

Nothing is so musical as the sound of pouring bourbon for the first drink on a Sunday morning. Not Bach or Schubert or any of those masters.
—Carson McCullers, *Clock Without Hands*

NUMBER 25, SUMMER 2007

NEWS FROM THE SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE

Camp Carolina: Preserving the Taste of Place

by Sheri Castle, *SFA Camp Carolina Host Committee*

Join us for Camp Carolina, September 7-9, 2007, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. With the University of North Carolina at its center, Chapel Hill is where Southern culture aficionados have long come to immerse themselves in a world dedicated to the preservation and celebration of foodways, farming, music, pottery, and history.

The weekend begins with self-guided Friday evening activities, both in Chapel Hill and in nearby historic Hillsborough, followed by a cocktail and bluegrass gathering at the Carolina Inn, better known as the “front porch” of the University of North Carolina.

Upon arrival, campers will receive a Camp Carolina Handbook, a guide to local restaurants, galleries, and live music venues. Chapel Hill and environs are home to a slew of legendary restaurants, from fine dining to ‘cue joints.

Starting bright and early on Saturday, we’ll have a jam-packed camp devoted to preservation in all guises. The day begins with a tour of Carrboro Farmers Market. Our timing is great, because on September 8 the market hosts its annual chef cook-off, and there will be plenty of dishes to sample prepared from market fare. In honor of SFA, this year’s theme is “Southern Food.” After the market, we’ll gather at the venerable Carolina Inn for a “Southern Part of Heaven Foodways Primer,” featuring a keynote by Ben Barker of Magnolia Grill as well as tales and music from Bland Simpson, piano player for the Red Clay Ramblers and director of UNC’s Creative Writing Program.

We’ll divide into three groups for pre-registered afternoon tours:

- 1 Group Book and Eats heads to A Southern Season for a local food, wine and literature roundtable lead by author Alan Gurganus and cooking instructor Sheri Castle.
- 2 Group Turners and Burners visits the studio of potter Siglinda Scarpa, and hear from Terry Zug, professor emeritus

of folklore and English at UNC-Chapel Hill and expert on North Carolina pottery.

- 3 Group Mozz and Tomatoes tours Peregrine Farm and Chapel Hill Creamery, where the products are artful and the agriculture is sustainable.

No matter the tour, campers will enjoy a themed lunch at each location, courtesy of Sara Foster of Foster’s Market, Keith Allen of Allen & Sons Barbecue, Counter Culture Coffee, and others. We’ll drink wine from our own Yadkin Valley, a designated American Viticulture Area, as well as other regions of North Carolina. During the early evening, we invite you to stroll through Chapel Hill for “Roving Cocktails.” You’ll find a number of welcoming watering holes along the way to Crook’s Corner.

Later, chef Bill Smith will serve a family-style summer supper of fried chicken and sides crafted from the best of the Carrboro Farmers’ Market. Karen Barker is rounding up talented local bakers to handcraft desserts from North Carolina peanuts and sweet potatoes. And the North Carolina Wine and Grape Council, primary underwriter of this Day Camp, will pour its best. After supper, we’ll hear from John Dee Holman, storyteller, dancer, and Piedmont blues artist.

Sunday morning offers an extraordinary coffee cupping at 3 Cups, as well as breakfast selections from Sandwhich, known for their eclectic menu and dedicated support of local growers and local artists.

After that, you can meander on your own before you head home. Camp Carolina lasts less than 48 hours, but we promise you that Chapel Hill can keep you well fed, happy and entertained for years to come. There’s a reason we live in the “southern part of heaven.” Come see for yourself!

Symposium and Delta D Mark Milestones

The 10th annual Southern Foodways Symposium will be held October 25--28. During this anniversary gathering we examine the State of Southern Food.

We will ponder where we have been. And where we are going. We will assay our field of study. And think critically about the SFA's role in documenting and celebrating the diverse food cultures of the American South. We will pay homage to the subjects of our oral history initiative. We will repay debts of pleasure earned over generations.

We're focusing a good bit of attention on our tenth symposium, but this year also marks a milestone for the Delta Divertissement. This is year five. And this edition of the Delta D, set for October 24-25, is more robust, more chockablock with cooking classes. Over the course of a 24-hour sojourn to Greenwood, we will ponder the pig, explore the Mississippi Delta, and gain practical knowledge of Southern cookery and culture.

Leading the way will be Bay Area sausage maestro and cookbook author Bruce Aidells and New Orleans chef Donald Link of Cochon and Herbsaint. Details may well be posted online by the time you read these words.

➤ GRAVY ◀

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Letter from the President

Since the early spring, a dedicated group of SFA members have met monthly at my home to plan Camp Carolina. (See the related article in this issue.) We gathered around my kitchen table when it was still frosty outside and gradually moved to the screened porch as the weather warmed.

Looking around the table at one of those meetings, I saw a microcosm of SFA membership. Bill Smith, chef at Chapel Hill's Crook's Corner, bikes to my house from the restaurant, as he does throughout town, helping to preserve our bit of ozone. He never fails to visit our table at Crook's to say hello and meet guests, no matter how crowded it gets or how stressed I imagine he must be. When he's not working, he's on the road on book tours or, earlier in the year, in New Orleans, working with John Currence and other SFA volunteers to rebuild Willie Mae Seaton's restaurant and home.

Sheri Castle is at the table, too. She balances her popular cooking classes at Chapel Hill's Southern Season, writing, speaking, and oh, yes, being a wife and mother, too. And Karen Barker, my co-chair, is calm and visionary in her work for SFA, while she prepares delectable desserts at her and husband Ben's Magnolia Grill in Durham, recently nominated for the Outstanding Restaurant Award by the James Beard Foundation. Karen takes care of two families—one at home and the other, at her business, a mix of young and seasoned food professionals.

This is who we are at SFA—hard-working, passionate, and committed to a vision for documenting and celebrating the foodways of the American South. I thank you for all you do to support the important work of the SFA.

Congratulations are owed Amy Evans, SFA oral historian, for her important work on the Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail. The Mississippi Historical Society recently recognized Amy with the 2006 Elbert R. Hilliard Award for Outstanding Oral History Project.

I am so proud of the many SFA members who were recipients of the 2007 James Beard Awards, including Best Chef Southeast, Scott Peacock of Watershed in Decatur, Georgia, and Best Chef South, Donald Link of Herbsaint in New Orleans. Making us all kvell were Matt and Ted Lee, whose Lee Bros. Southern Cookbook won the Beard Award for Cookbook of the Year.

In closing, take a look at our new SFA vision statement, which is now posted on our Web site. It says, "We set a common table where black and white, rich and poor—all who gather—may consider our history and our future in a spirit of reconciliation." And as we look forward to celebrating our tenth SFA symposium this fall, isn't that what it's all about?

Best wishes for a relaxing summer. I hope to see you this October at the tenth annual Southern Foodways Symposium. Check our Web site for more information about this great event. Let me hear from you.

—Marcie Cohen Ferris
ferrism@email.unc.edu

Southern Classics: Homage to the Duke

by Timothy Davis

Like many folk in the Carolinas, I was brought up on Duke's mayonnaise. In fact, considering that my mother did all the grocery shopping and I spent all my time bugging her for quarters to feed into the little trinket machines and electrified rocking horses in the front of the store, I never knew there was any other brand of mayonnaise until I started doing my own grocery gathering. It was the first mayo I ever ate, and it is still the brand I buy to this day, even as I commit the possible heresy of buying the green-label reduced-fat version, which I still find quite tasty.

I can't imagine a summer tomato sandwich without the slightly acidic taste and creamy consistency of Duke's. (Indeed, a friend of mine talked of a tomato sandwich he'd eaten slathered with Hellman's and pronounced it "an affront to the love apple.")

Evidently, I'm in good—or at least, infamous—company. The Duke's Web site boasts famous aficionados as varied as the late race car driver Dale Earnhardt, TV cook Paula "Y'aula" Deen, and golfer Davis Love III.

Duke's is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year, and it is still made in Greenville, South Carolina, where Eugenia Duke whipped up her first batch for Camp Sevier soldiers stationed in the area back in 1917. Today, Duke's cranks out nearly 250 jars a minute, but the initial recipe—save a few additions like the odd preservative—has remained almost exactly the same: heavy on the egg yolks—nobody ever said the stuff was healthy, just delicious—and light on the added sugar (as in none added whatsoever).

Available in parts of Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, as well as newer locations in Alabama, Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee, Mom's favorite mayo is now even available online.

Fans of Duke's (if a moniker is in the offing, "Jarheads"

gets my vote) will be pleased to learn that there's even more good news on the horizon: an ever-burgeoning chain called the Duke Sandwich Company. Related to the original company but not a subsidiary (originally, Eugenia Duke, evidently a hell of a businesswoman, sold her spread recipes to her bookkeeper, Alan Hart, and her mayo recipe to one C. F. Sauer), the Duke Sandwich Company first made its name by selling sandwiches to textile mills, who would then sell them to their workers, and soda fountains and drug stores outfitted with canteens.

In 1964, Hart sold the Duke Sandwich Company to his wife's brother, Loran Smart. Richard Smart, Loran's son, then took over the family business and, over the next 30-odd years, took the company from a wholesale to a retail business, establishing several restaurant locations throughout the South Carolina upstate, with most of the locations concentrated around the company's home base of Greenville.

By 2002, Richard Smart's son Andrew Smart took over the company and announced plans to open franchises in four Duke's-friendly Southeast states: South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. To date, Duke Sandwich Company has opened four franchise locations and awarded 11 others in the state of South Carolina and four in the greater Atlanta, Georgia, area.

All of the franchises to date stay pretty true to the company's original, brown-bag-lunch-style offerings. There are fresh-made grilled cheeses, PB&Js, deviled egg salad sandwiches, pimento cheese sandwiches, a sort of high-end deviled ham sandwich, hot dogs, and a straight-out-of-the-Junior-League-cookbook concoction, the "exotic" cream cheese, pineapple, and pecan spread sandwich.

BBQ in the Lone Star State

by Amy Evans

"Southern barbecue is a proud thoroughbred whose bloodlines are easily traced. Texas barbecue is a feisty mutt with a whole lot of crazy relatives."

— Robb Walsh

The Southern BBQ Trail premiered online last fall, highlighting a collection of interviews that document barbecue in Alabama. In January we set our sights on Texas.

The SFA is working in collaboration with the Central Texas Barbecue Association and the American Studies department at the University of Texas at Austin to begin documenting barbecue in the Lone Star State. Dr. Elizabeth Engelhardt dedicated her graduate level American Foodways class to the collection of fieldwork for the Trail. SFA oral historian Amy Evans traveled to Texas to give a workshop on conducting interviews. Graduate students sat down with restaurant owners in and around Austin to collect their stories. Robb Walsh, SFA member and author of *Legends of Texas Barbecue Cookbook*, wrote the introduction to the project, offering a short history of barbecue in Texas.

Given the scope of the Southern BBQ Trail, this collaboration is a welcome and necessary one. Working with academic institutions such as the University of Texas at Austin is a wonderful way to not only to add content to the BBQ Trail, but to forge relationships and bring more scholars into the field of oral history. Some of the UT graduate students will continue collecting interviews though the summer. We hope that our collaboration with the American Studies department at UT will be on-going—whether it's barbecue, boudin (yep, there's boudin in Texas), or baked beans.

The Texas leg of the Southern BBQ Trail includes oral histories, photos, audio clips, and an interactive map for hungry travelers. Listen to Ben Wash of Ben's Long Branch explain how brisket became the foundation of Texas barbecue. Learn what Vencil Mares of Taylor Café puts in his sauce. Meet the Texans who have dedicated their lives to the craft of 'cue.

Visit the project online at www.southernbbqtrail.com.

Rare Soul Food Tapas

by Angie Mosier

“My grandmother doesn’t see what the fuss is all about. She says, ‘I can put lobster in my macaroni and cheese; what’s the big deal?’” The lovely young server at Atlanta’s Rare imitates her grandmother as she sets down a plate of collard green pot stickers.

Rare is a new restaurant in midtown Atlanta that boasts “Soul Food Tapas,” small, stylish plates of Southern soul food tastes. Chef Anthony Sanders’s menu offers standards like hoppin’ John, and a trio of deviled eggs but plays with others like Buffalo-style chicken livers with crispy onions, and the Georgia Street taco, a fish taco topped with a tangy black-eyed pea relish.

The space is hip—really, really hip—and at the same time elegant. The restaurant is owned by Lorenzo Wyche, a 29-year-old New York transplant who, a couple of years ago, opened the very successful Harlem Bar in the historic Sweet Auburn neighborhood. Wyche has assembled a staff of smart, stylish and passionate young folks who care very much for the history of the food and people who came before. Restaurant designer Douglas Hines has married rich fabrics and antiques with a decidedly slick, urban feel. One side of the restaurant holds traditional tables and chairs for dining, and the other is arranged with upholstered banquettes that invite patrons to linger and soak up the vibe.

The nod to the past comes not only from the furnishings, but from photos that grace the walls of the restaurant. Not just famous black Americans, but also photos of hard working folks like black farmers. The owners want to pay homage to those who came before and, as they say, “paved the way for us to have this place, and serve this food.”

There is also a giant screen in one room that plays reels of what Douglas calls “mile marker films” for black actors. The sound is turned down, but the images of a young Sidney Poitier flickering past beg one to ponder the brave people who maintained such grace and elegance during dirty times in America’s history. The films and photos are fun, yet important—a very sweet tip of the hat.

Sure, the perfect, mini portions of chicken and waffles, and lobster mac and cheese are incredible, but the subtle history lesson makes the experience rich. Oh, and when the server came back, she made sure to mention that “my grandmother likes this food, she just wanted to make sure I still thought hers was the best.”

Rare, 554 Piedmont Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30309, 404-541-0665, www.rareatl.com. Dinner only, closed Mondays.

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