

Introducing

How to Be Your Own Best Cook



Collard Greens, Candied Yams, Hot Water Corn Bread

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	3
History of Soul Food and Southern Cooking	4
Popular Soul Foods	5
How to Prepare Fresh Greens	7
How to Add Herbs and Spices to Your Cooking	10
“A Dash of This” and “A Pinch of That”	12
Tips on Baking Perfect Desserts	13
Tips for Putting Together a Party Menu	15
Popular Southern & Soul Food Appetizers	17
The Skinny Side of Southern Cooking	19
Low Fat Cooking Guide	21
Super Soul Food and Why They’re Good For You	22
Soul Food Lovers’ Newsletter	24
Soul Food Lovers’ Cookbook	26
Book Reviews and Customer Comments	27
Grocery Shopping on a Budget	29
Thank You	31
About the Author	32
Resources	33

Introduction

Welcome to **How to Be Your Own Best Cook**. This e-book is designed to help you prepare great southern and soul food dishes. Regardless what your level of cooking is--a beginner or advanced cook, you can become your own best cook with the tips and techniques described in this e-book.

Improve your cooking skills and raise your level of cooking no matter what type of food you're making. Being the best cook you can be is simply learning a few tips and techniques to help you master your **OWN** unique cooking skills.

Many people are intimidated by Southern cooking, but to be perfectly honest, Southern cooking can be mastered just like any other style of cooking.

And you do not have to have grown up making Southern food in order to really know how to prepare it.

The truth is--

Anyone can learn Southern cooking just by knowing a few tips and learning how to master and perfect your recipes.

The Secrets to Making Great Southern Food

In this e-book I focused on a few problem areas that people seem to have when making southern food. These areas include how to add seasoning to recipes, how to make a great pot of greens, what it takes to make perfect desserts, and how to perfect your recipes. Once these areas are mastered, you will be able to make great southern recipes.

And before you know it, you'll soon discover --

How to be Your Own Best Cook

History of Soul Food and Southern Cooking

All Soul Food is Southern food but not all Southern food is soul food. Let me explain. Slavery and poverty were historical factors that influenced the evolution of Southern cooking. The African slaves who cooked and served generations were the primary creators of Southern cooking.

Soul Food is an African American cuisine mostly known as Southern, down home, or comfort food and is considered food that nourishes your body as well as your soul. This method of cooking also introduced the foundation from which many popular Southern dishes are made from today. Soul food is food that the African slaves prepared for their families along with foods that were brought over to America which included several plants such as black-eyed peas, okra, sweet sorghum, and watermelons, to name a few, as part of American's crops and foods.

The difference in Soul Food and Southern Food is that in the 1960's, Southern cooking by Black Americans, was called "Soul Food" due to its deep roots in American slavery. Soul food derived from prized Southern dishes during the American slavery era and is a reminder that African slaves paved the way in the development of African American style cooking. **Another big difference is that Soul food has always been considered "cheap eats" which means that you can prepare homemade meals for \$3.99 a meal and even less for some one-pot meals. Soul food is very cost effective to make especially on a budget.**

Between 300 -1619, the first group of Africans landed in America in Jamestown, Virginia. African slaves were farmers, cattle raisers, and fishermen and introduced several plants. Even though black-eyed peas and okra for example are considered Southern dishes, they are also highly labeled as Soul Food because these were foods from seeds that were planted by the African slaves.

Many years ago, black cooks verbally exchanged recipes as they remembered them and today many Southerners still cook without a recipe, just by simply remembering main ingredients and adding seasonings to their taste. This way of cooking has produced many great cooks.

Today, people from all walks of life now enjoy Southern and Soul style cuisine. The foundation for Soul Food was laid many years ago, and today, the tradition lives on.

For more detailed information on Soul Food and Southern cooking, please visit http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/black_history_month.html

Popular Soul Foods

Just to give you an idea of popular soul foods, this partial list include foods that are commonly used sorted by category and is a guide when putting together great soul food menus.

Entrees

Barbecue, chicken, pork, beef, ham, turkey, fish, beef stew, liver, wild game, neck bones (beef or pork), ham hocks, chitterlings.

Fresh Fruits

Watermelon, cantaloupe, mango, pineapple, peaches, pears, apples.

Homemade Desserts

Cakes, pies, cookies, puddings, cobblers – regular and fruit.

Homemade Breads

Oven corn bread, hoecakes, hot water corn bread, spoon bread, biscuits, cracklin' bread, hush puppies, dressing, rolls.

Miscellaneous

Molasses, sweet sorghum, groundnuts.

Pasta/Rice/Dressing

Spaghetti, macaroni & cheese, rice dishes, grits, corn bread dressing, dumplings.

Vegetables

Sweet potatoes, white potatoes, collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens, green (or string) beans, black eyed-peas, cow peas, cabbage, okra, turnips, beets, corn, butter beans, tomatoes, crowder peas, pinto beans, white beans, lima beans, baked beans, green peas, hominy.

Seasonings

Onions, garlic, vinegar, black pepper, red pepper, hot pepper pods, seasoned salt, soul-food seasoning, cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, cumin, chili powder, parsley, basil, rosemary, sage, poultry seasoning, , vanilla extract, flavored extract, thyme, chives, dill, tarragon.

Condiments

Hot sauce, chow chow (pickled relish), sliced red tomatoes, chopped onions, homemade gravy.

Cooking Methods

Cooking methods vary depending on the type of meal you're putting together and can be prepared in many different ways. Frying, baking, grilling, boiling, and roasting are popular cooking methods that were often used. This helps balance out a well-planned menu. Chicken is not always fried but can also be baked, roasted, or grilled as well. I remember my mom making barbecue chicken on Sundays which for us was a real treat.

Vegetables are still a big part of Southern and Soul Food menus. Of course, no dining experience is complete without homemade corn bread served with fresh collard greens or black-eyed peas.

Herbs and spices add flavor and often brings out the natural taste of food. Homemade desserts were popular in the early years and are still a staple in many kitchens today. You know there's nothing that takes the place of a good homemade peach cobbler after that perfect meal.

How to Prepare Fresh Greens

Many people find it difficult to prepare fresh greens. In this section, I have outlined a few steps and techniques to help you prepare a great pot of greens.

Step #1: How to Purchase Greens

Greens are found in the produce section in the grocer and normally come in a bunches. About 4 bunches (depending on size and how they are put together) are sufficient for a 3 to 4 pound recipe after the stems have been removed. This is the traditional way to purchase greens. Make sure the leaves are a dark green color, healthy looking, and have not wilted or have turned yellow.

Fresh Grown Greens

The best greens are grown from seeds in warmer climates and can be cooked and frozen for later use. You can either pick them yourself from a green patch or purchase them from a farmer's market, or a road side stand. There is quite a big difference in taste when preparing store bought greens as opposed to fresh grown greens. In my opinion, preparing a pot of fresh grown greens are the best you'll ever taste. So if all possible try to make fresh greens. **I don't recommend ready to cook greens in bags because they are more expensive and you get less for your money.**

Step #2: How to Wash Collard Greens

1. Place greens in cool water in sink slightly higher than greens.
2. Use both hands by dipping the greens in and out of the water.
3. Repeat process 2 to 3 washings or until dirt and grit have been removed.

Tip: Greens from a field or green patch may need more washings.

Step #3: How to Prepare Collard Greens for Cooking

Once greens have been washed-

1. Remove large stem in middle of greens by folding the leaf vertically.
2. Pull greens away from stem starting from the top.

3. Slice leaves into bite-size pieces by rolling several leaves together and slicing in 1/4 inch strips.

4. Disregard all stems. See Recipe Below.

Step #4: How to Prepare Turnip or Mustard Greens

Turnip and mustard greens are more tender than collard greens so they do not need to be cut. They also get done faster than collard greens.

Follow Step 1 and Step 2 for preparing turnip and mustard greens.

Collard Greens with Smoked Turkey Recipe

1 smoked turkey wing or 3 to 4 ounces smoked meat
2 quarts water
1 to 2 hot pepper pods or 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
3 to 4 pounds fresh collard greens
1 to 2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons vinegar
1 medium onion, peeled and chopped
4 medium turnips, peeled and quartered
Salt and pepper to taste

Place turkey wing or smoked meat in large pot; add water and pepper pods. Cover. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until tender. Remove from heat, but do not drain. Break stems off of greens. Wash leaves thoroughly. Slice leaves into bite-size pieces by rolling several leaves together and slicing in one fourth inch strips.

Add greens, sugar, oil, vinegar, onion, salt and pepper to smoked meat. Let greens cook down in pot, then cover over medium heat for about 30 minutes. Add turnips and continue cooking until greens and turnips are fork tender. Serve with a slotted spoon. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

Note: Omit sugar for turnip and mustard greens.

Serving Suggestions

Fresh greens are usually served with chicken, pork, or beef, along with either white or sweet potatoes, macaroni and cheese, and corn bread. Many southern cooks also serve greens with sliced tomatoes, chopped onions, and chow chow, to complete the meal.

Tips to Remember when Preparing Greens

1. Cutting collard greens in ¼ inch strips will help them cook faster.
2. You can substitute turkey bits or smoked ham instead of smoked turkey wings. The more tender the meat, the faster it will cook.
3. Adjust your seasonings as you see fit. For example, you can omit the salt and use very little pepper.
4. You can add more onion if you like. I add about ½ cup onions in with my meat while cooking and then add a few more after the greens have cooked for about 20 to 25 minutes. I found this process gives the greens more flavor. It's basically up to you.
5. I also add a few dashes of red hot sauce. It really don't make them spicy, I think it just adds to the flavor.
6. Start with 1 red pepper pod or ½ teaspoon of red crushed pepper to determine if it's too spicy for your taste. Just remember, red pepper carries heat.
7. Try different variations with seasonings and spices to come up with your unique blend. Once you've mastered the process, you'll be on your way to making a great pot of greens.

How to Add Herbs and Spices to Your Cooking

Whether you're a beginner or an experienced cook, seasonings play a major roll in how flavorful your food will taste. In fact any type of recipe that you'll ever prepare call for some kind of seasonings. Why? Because using herbs and spices properly is the key to how your recipes turn out. You can't make great food with it. Herbs and spices brings out the true flavors in your dishes. It gives food a special taste that's missing.

Just to be clear, when I say spice, I'm not talking about spicy as in "hot", I'm talking about how to season your food to bring out the true flavors. Many times the amount of spices in recipes are usually fine, but not always enough. If you add more spice than the recipe call for, you should first do a test or an experiment.

Perform a Spice Test

An easy way to perform this test is when the recipe call for one teaspoon of cinnamon, I usually add about an extra half teaspoon more because I really like cinnamon. I do this quite often when I make my old-fashioned peach cobbler. Of course, when you add more, it must compliment the dish and not overpower it. I learned this from my grandmother. She also taught me to add spices to my food as I see fit to bring out the flavors. You can perform a similar test using other seasonings as well.

The type of spice to use depends on your taste and what you're preparing. For best results, experiment with different ones to come up with a blend that's right for you. When conducting a test for a new spice, start by using small amounts in the palm of your hand, then taste it. If it taste light, yet has a mild flavor, you can proceed to add, but if it's very strong to your taste, use a small amount for the first time.

If you want to use more seasonings than the recipe call for, I would add only a pinch more, (more on this later) then gradually add more as needed according to your taste.

When adding **hot red pepper sauce** or **hot pepper pods**, proceed with caution. If you want to heat up a dish in a hurry, add **hot red pepper sauce**. **Just, remember once you add red pepper, you can't remove it.**

Adding whole spices to a recipe during cooking allows the flavors to penetrate throughout the food. However, they are better if used with a cheesecloth or some type of strainer for easy removal. Ground or cut herbs are best when used halfway through the cooking process.

Best Way to Store Spices

For best results, store spices in a cool, dry place around 65° to 70° F and away from direct heat, moisture, and bright lights. Dampness and excessive moisture will cause ground spices to cake or clump up. They will usually keep just fine in their original container if kept cool.

To help red-colored spices prevent loss of color and flavor such as paprika, cayenne pepper, and chili powder, store them in the refrigerator. Shelf life vary and most carry an expiration date. Make sure you always check the expiration date before purchasing. You can also store them in glass or plastic containers to protect against moisture, yet still preserve their natural flavors and aroma.

If you're making a new recipe and you want to add a new spice but you're not quite sure what spice go with the recipe, visit our <http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/cooking-spices.html> **Spices for Specific Food Groups Guide** for more information. This guide will give you an idea of what is appropriate for the food you're preparing.

Important Tip to Remember: How well your food turn out depends of how you have chosen to distribute your herbs and spices in your recipes. **Spices are what make a recipe and will determine the success of your recipe.**

If you use the tips and techniques that I have described, you shouldn't have a problem adding seasonings to your recipes. Good luck!

"A Dash of This" and a "Pinch of That" Traditional Terms Used in Southern Cooking

"A dash of this" and "A pinch of that" were traditional cooking terms the African slaves started using to know how to add cooking spices and seasonings to their food.

Why were these terms used and what do they mean?

These terms were used because during slavery there were no measuring devices, cookbooks, or cooking classes to learn from; the slaves had to second guess their measurements and they only had each other to rely on to remember main ingredients. So they created terms that were easy for them to remember when it came to seasoning their food.

A dash and a pinch are usually less than measurements of a teaspoon, actually about 1/8 of a teaspoon of whatever you're using. For example, a pinch of salt or a dash of red hot sauce.

The African slaves also developed ways to know when their food was done by saying "bake until golden brown." Today, this phrase is still popular in many Southern kitchens.

Anyone who makes Southern food know that recipes are only a base (when it comes to seasonings) for you to start with. The amount of herbs and spices a recipe call for may be more or less to your taste. **What's important about this method is that you control the amount of spice that you use because only you can determine the amount of seasonings to add for a particular recipe.**

Since the base of Southern cooking is spices, you will find these cooking terms, "a dash of this" and "a pinch of that" throughout my new cookbook, **Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook**. The recipes in the cookbook also allow you to use your judgment when adding more spices to your recipes.

Today, many Southerners still cook without a recipe, just by remembering main ingredients and adding seasonings to their taste. **There will definitely be times when you want to add a dash more to your recipe. Don't be afraid to add more. Sometimes you have to experiment to know what works. Add more if you're certain that it will bring out the true flavors in your dish.**

Tips on Baking Perfect Desserts

Cakes

1. When making a scratch cake, all dry ingredients such as flour, sugar, baking powder, and baking soda should be measured carefully and sifted to eliminate even the smallest lumps that may not appear visible. Many recipes don't ask you to sift the dry ingredients but you should do this anyway unless the recipe specially tell you not to.
2. Cleanliness is another key element in successful baking. Make sure supplies such as bowls, mixing beaters, spoons, measuring cups, and baking pans have been properly washed before using. Also make sure the area used for baking is clean and free of clutter.
3. Use the correct baking supplies, such as measuring cups and baking pans. For accurate measuring, **always use** individual measuring cups instead of multi-purpose measuring cups for dry ingredients. Individual measuring cups allow you to measure more accurately by leveling off excess ingredients. Also pre-set measuring spoons are better than regular kitchen spoons.
4. Fill cake pans two-thirds full and spread batter into corners and sides, leaving a slight hollow in the center.
5. Cake is done when it shrinks from the sides of the pan or when the cake springs back when touched with the finger.
6. Always follow the recipe to ensure success.
7. Do not frost cakes until thoroughly cool unless recipe instruct otherwise.

Pies

1. Pie Crust will be better and a lot easier if all ingredients are cool. The lower crust should be placed in the pan so that it covers the surface smoothly. Air pockets beneath the surface will push the crust out of shape while baking.
2. By folding the top crust over the lower crust before crimping will help keep juices in the pie.
3. When making a custard pie, bake at a high temperature for about 10 minutes to prevent a soggy crust. Then finish baking at a lower temperature.
4. When making a cream pie, sprinkle crust with powdered sugar in order to prevent it from becoming soggy.

Whether you're baking a cake or pie for a special event or for a family meal, baking is an enjoyable experience and bring smiles to many faces.

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Cookies

1. If you need to roll out cookie dough, it works best if refrigerated up to 30 minutes before rolling.
2. Only place small amounts of cookie dough on a floured surface so you can easily handle.
3. Always flour the rolling pin slightly and roll lightly to the thickness you desire.
4. Make sure your dough is evenly distributed when placing on the cookie sheet. Also make sure you have about an inch that separates the cookies from each other.
5. Watch cookies carefully when baking to prevent burned edges.
6. Let cookies cool on rack before serving.

Cobblers

1. Use fresh or frozen fruit when making a cobbler.
2. Cobblers can also be prepared with a pie crust topping.

For more cooking and baking tips, please visit
<http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/cooking-and-baking-tips.html>

Tips for Putting Together a Party Menu

Selecting the right menu for your special event is no mystery or big secret, you just need to know a few details and answer a few basic questions. In no time you will be on your way to preparing a great menu.

If you're hosting a party for someone, you need to know what type of event you're planning, the theme, and what type of food the guest of honor enjoy. If you're planning a party for friends, you need to have an idea as to what type of foods they enjoy. Once these questions have been answered, you can incorporate other food selections that the guest of honor enjoy into the menu with selections that are appropriate for the event.

Let's say you're hosting a graduation party for your cousin Mary with about 15 family and friends. Mary mentioned that she love soul food. Her favorite soul food meal include hot wings, collard greens, and macaroni and cheese.

By knowing the type of food that Mary enjoy, you can take her favorite foods and incorporate other selections that would compliment the menu. Even though macaroni and cheese and collard greens are not appetizers, it's always best to serve what Mary enjoy for this event. After all this event is for Mary. You can always add appetizers that will compliment what Mary like. Let's look at the menu below:

Sample Menu

Hot Wings (halves)
Mini Cold Turkey Sandwiches
Collard Greens
Macaroni & Cheese
Fresh Cut Fruit
Country Deviled Eggs (halves)
Corn Bread Muffins
Homemade Lemonade

The sample menu above includes Mary's favorite foods which are hot wings, collard greens and macaroni and cheese. Since this is a graduation party, appetizers are also appropriate, so all you need to do is incorporate foods that are appropriate for the event. That way not only will you have variety on the menu, it also introduces different choices for the other guests. The mini turkey sandwiches go well with hot wings, and offers an alternative for guests who don't like hot wings.

If you want to stay in the same food family, you could add oven fried or barbecue wings instead of turkey. Fresh cut fruit or a fresh vegetable tray are always a hit for this type of event. Deviled eggs and corn bread muffins compliment the collard greens.

Important Things to Remember

1. No matter what type of function you're planning, just incorporate foods that the guest of

honor enjoy along with additional items that are appropriate for the type of event you're hosting. If you're planning for group, you need to know what type of foods they like.

2. Always prepare enough food to accommodate the guests. It's better to have more food than you think you're need than to run out. **Running out of food will not sit well with your guests and will leave a bad impression on you.**

3. For pre-planned special event menus visit <http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/soul-food-event.html>.

And remember a party is still a party whether you serve a hot meal or appetizers.

Suggested Serving Per Person for Sample Menu:

3 to 4 hot wings , 1 to 2 mini turkey sandwiches, 6 to 8 ounces of collard greens, 4 to 6 ounces macaroni & cheese, ½ cup fruit, 1 to 3 halves deviled eggs, 1 corn bread muffin.

Popular Southern & Soul Food Appetizers

Do you have a favorite Southern-style appetizer? Or, do you ever wonder what appetizers are appropriate for parties? If so, you're come to the right place. I have compiled a list of popular appetizers from my **Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook** that are often served at parties and special events.

These familiar appetizers were requested most often when I operated my Southern catering business a few years ago. Next time you have a party, try a few of these appetizers. They rate high among partygoers and I promise, if you love soul food, you're gonna love these appetizers.

Hot Wings - An old time favorite - No matter what the reason hot wings just seem to fit just about any occasion. Rate high among party goers.

Southern Fried Chicken Wings - A soul food favorite. Southern Fried Chicken Wings continue to be the talk of the party and they're so delicious. A very popular item on my catering menu.

Mini Smoked Sausages - These sausages are also a crowd pleaser. Make sure you have enough on hand--they go fast.

BBQ Meat Balls - An old Southern party favorite. People love eating them probably because they are not just delicious they're beef. Add your favorite barbecue sauce to these beef meat balls and watch them disappear before your eyes. Make sure you have plenty on hand.

Soul Food Spaghetti - No party is complete without it. This dish is a real party favorite. It's often served with hot or fried wings and it helps stretch your menu and your budget. Another great party food.

Assorted Cocktail Sandwiches - When you add these sandwiches to a party menu, you add variety for your guests. Instead of ham and turkey, you could also fill with tuna, chicken, egg, cheese, or pimento salad. However, you make them, they're still delicious.

Stuffed Mushrooms - A true crowd pleaser. Your guest will love these mushrooms. They offer variety, texture, and a wonderful addition to any party menu. An outstanding finger food.

Ranch Deviled Eggs - Another party favorite. For a more dressed up feel, add shredded cheddar cheese on top. My, my, what a treat!

Spicy Cheese Spread - This is an old party recipe I used to make - and it works wonders. Your guests will love this recipe. This is an excellent recipe to experiment using different seasonings. Use your imagination with this one.

Fresh Fruit Platter - No matter what type of food you're used to serving, fresh fruit go with any menu in any culture. Don't miss the opportunity to serve your guests what everyone love. It's good to have variety on the table.

Shrimp Spread - If your guests are shrimp lovers, they are going to love this recipe. It is soooooo good until you will want to double it.

Favorite Dill Dip - Another healthy treat for your guests and a great addition to any menu. Great with raw veggies.

All of these wonderful recipes and many more are in my new book, **Soul Food Lover's Cookbook**, <http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/soul-food-cookbook.html>

The Skinny Side of Southern Cooking

Growing up in Tennessee I had the opportunity to watch my grandmother prepare Southern meals. She used lard and butter for frying since they were plentiful and frying was preferable in the region's hot climate. This method of cooking didn't take as long as baking and didn't seem to heat up the house as much. Frying is still popular today, however, today there are healthier alternatives.

Many believe that if its not fried, its not Southern food. But contrary to that myth, **fried foods does not define Southern cooking.** Frying was only one method used by African slaves to prepare their food. They also boiled, grilled, roasted, and baked their meals.

When I think about Soul food and Southern cooking, I just don't just think about fried chicken, collard green, or sweet potato pie. ***Soul Food is not just about the food, its about the stories behind the food.*** It's about African slaves during their struggles through hard and difficult times. It's about nourishing families with meals they had no idea where they were coming from. And its about creating fond memories with family and friends that will last a lifetime. **This is really what soul food is all about.**

One of the biggest challenges preparing Southern dishes is that people fear consuming too much fat and calories. But, the truth is -- you can consume too much fat and calories with whatever foods you're eating. There are numerous ethnic foods from other cultures that are non-fried, yet high calories dishes. But when you add baked chicken, fresh fruit, and vegetables, you have a well-balanced meal. Again, it's how you prepare your food.

A friend of mine from Wisconsin own a bakery on the south side of town. With all the crave about low-fat cooking, she feared that people would stop patronizing her business. I suggested that in addition to her specialty items that she carried why not add reduced-fat versions of her customer's favorites. She could easily do this since she did most of the baking herself. After she advertised her reduced-fat bakery line, her business increased by 30% within a short period of time.

The Good News

Today eating healthy does not mean giving up the home-cooked Southern food we're used to. It's a matter of rethinking our eating habits and developing a healthier lifestyle. Collard greens, for example, is a good source of vitamins and minerals, and so are most Soul Food recipes, however, it's how you prepare them that can make them unhealthy.

**The type of meat you season your food with--
Makes all the difference in the world.**

To be perfectly honest, you can take a simple low-calorie lettuce salad and turn it unhealthy just by adding loads of cheese, bacon bits, ham, and high-calorie salad dressing. So, it's just a matter of how you prepare the foods you love.

The Alternative

Today we have healthier alternatives to assist us in preparing good tasting, yet low-fat meals for our family. Many Southern and Soul Food recipes can be altered to reduce-fat and calories. But the key to Soul Food cooking is knowing how to do that without sacrificing taste.

Oven Fried Chicken, for example, is very tasty and a healthy choice from the traditional pan frying. Grilled Chicken is also a good choice and it's low-fat. When you learn to prepare your foods differently, you will reap the health benefits. To control your weight, my best advice is to eat less fat, sugar, and consume less salt, calories with whatever food you're eating.

I have both reduced-fat and low-fat recipes in my new cookbook, **Soul food Lovers'**, for you to try that are both healthy and delicious. These quick and easy dishes will give you a head start on preparing great low-fat and reduced-fat meals for your family.

You'll be amazed how delicious these recipes are and you'll discover that with just a few ingredients low-fat cooking is a real winner.

For great reduced fat recipes, visit <http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/soul-food-low-fat-recipes.html>

Low-Fat Cooking Guide

You can instantly reduce the fat and calories in your everyday cooking with this handy cooking guide. Use this guide to prepare low fat southern dishes for your family.

- Purchase low or reduced fat salad dressings, mayonnaise, cheese, cottage cheese, margarine, creams, yogurts, and many sauces. These products taste good and comes in a variety of selections. Take advantage of them.
- Try using turkey and leaner bacon, sausage and ham. Read the package for leaner cuts of your favorite cold cuts.
- Meats with the word "loin" or "round" carry less fat and calories. Read the labels.
- Bake or roast raw meat such as beef and chicken. Chicken can be baked in skin to maintain its moisture and taste. Remove skin after cooking.
- Try using sugar substitute instead of regular sugar.
- Learn to read the nutrition label on foods to determine the fat content.
- To add more flavor to your turkey or chicken dishes, add seasonings such as dried herbs and spices.
- Substitute whole-wheat flour for 1/2 the flour in all your recipes. This adds fiber and other nutrients. Incorporate more grains in your diet. Eat brown rice, whole-wheat bread, and rye crackers.
- Eat salads with reduced-fat dressings. Also add lettuce, and spinach to sandwiches and in cold vegetables dishes. Nonfat yogurt and non-fat sour cream are good for making dips, sauces and adding to creamy soups.
- Make fries in the oven by spraying a baking pan with non-fat cooking spray. Spread fries on baking pan and bake at 450 to 500 degree until crispy. Turn occasionally. They're delicious.
- Use egg substitute. Read the label for the amount according to what you're making. Usually its two egg whites to equal one egg.
- Use non-fat or low-fat beans in dishes. The taste is the same and high fat beans. Read the labels.

Super Soul Food and Why They're Good For You

Soul Food is loaded with vitamins and nutrients and is good for the body, spirit, and mind. Research has shown that fresh vegetables help prevent or cure common diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular, and neurodegenerative ailments.

But Wait a Minute--

If this is true then why do so many believe that Soul Food vegetables like collard greens, black-eyed peas, and sweet potatoes are bad for you?

Before you decide, take a look at these fresh vegetables along with some nutritional information about each one.

I have listed the most popular Soul Food vegetables used mostly in homes across America. These fresh vegetables are prepared in some form everyday with a variety of main dishes. So let's first look at how these Soul Food vegetables help contribute to good health.

Collard Greens are a soul food staple. No social gathering is complete without it. Not only do they taste wonderful, collard greens are rich in calcium and loaded with Vitamins A and C.

Sweet Potatoes are low in calories and fat-free. Sweet potatoes are high in Vitamin C and a very good source of fiber, Vitamin B-6, and potassium.

Black-eyed Peas are another soul food icon and is also fat-free. Studies also show that black-eyed peas provide a high level of energy and a good source of Vitamins A and C.

Green Cabbage is loaded with Vitamin K Blood clotting, bone health Fiber (insoluble), promotes healthy gastrointestinal tract, and an excellent source for weight maintenance.

Red Beans which include small red, pinto, and dark red kidney varieties, are an excellent low-fat source of antioxidants, protein, and dietary fiber. They're also a good source of iron, potassium, and thiamin.

Spinach (just ask pop-eye) is high in Vitamin A, and is a good source of calcium, iron, magnesium, riboflavin, and Vitamins B-6 and C. The plant compounds in spinach may boost your immune system and help prevent certain types of cancer.

Green Beans has Vitamin C Immunity enhancement and is excellent for your skin,

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cancer prevention, and heart disease prevention.

Tomatoes helps prevent cancer, heart disease, helps maintain healthy vision, an immunity enhancement, Vitamin C Immunity enhancement, and aid in skin health.

Carrots helps maintain healthy vision, an immunity enhancement, contribute to skin health, helps aid in cancer prevention, and heart disease prevention.

Corn helps convert carbohydrates to energy. Niacin helps the body use sugars, and fatty acids helps enzymes function, helps produce energy in cells of your body. Corn also helps promote healthy blood pressure, cancer prevention, heart disease prevention, helps maintain healthy vision, and an immunity enhancement.

So, since we know these Soul Food vegetables are good for you, how do you prepare them and keep them healthy?

- You cook them with smoked turkey instead of salt pork,
 - You season them with a little olive oil instead of fatty lards, and
 - You cut back on salt by using low-salt or salt-free seasonings.
-
- Also, by adding natural herbs and spices you bring out the true flavors of these wonderful vegetables. You will be surprised at how much you can enjoy food that is seasoned WITHOUT salt.

So the next time someone tell you how bad Soul Food is for you, give them the facts about Soul Food then let them judge for them self.

Soul Food Lovers' Newsletter

Join the great cooks who subscribe to
Soul Food Lovers' newsletter.

It caters to people who love great southern cooking.

If you subscribe to newsletters or blogs about
food, recipes, cooking, then
Soul Food Lovers' is perfect for you!

With over 2,000 subscribers,
The newsletter has a fast growing community
and serves as a resource for anyone looking
for great meal ideas, cooking tips, and is ideal for
experienced and advanced cooks.

It's also a valuable resource for the latest trends in southern cooking.

I invite you to come by, join the RSS feed, and sign up
for our monthly newsletter.

Soul Food Lovers Newsletter Includes --

- Fresh Soul Food Articles
- Cooking and Baking Tips
- Great Southern Recipes
 - Meal Ideas
- New Website Updates
- All emailed to you each month.

The Newsletter Also Includes--

- Soul Food Column

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- **Best Soul Food Recipes**
- **Guest Interviews**
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Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook

Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook include over 250 Recipes by Three Generations of Southern Cooks. The cookbook is already in it's second printing.

THE COOKBOOK ALSO INCLUDE--

- Pre-planned Soul Food Meals
- Recipes Used for Bake Sales and Church Picnics
- Best Recipes for Large Groups
- Low Fat and Popular Desserts
- One-Pot Recipes Served During Slavery
- Cooking and Baking Tips

WHAT MAKES THIS COOKBOOK REALLY SPECIAL IS THE RECIPE NOTES--

The recipe notes really make this cookbook come alive. "I am a third generation cook and I will speak to you (within the Recipe Notes) throughout this cookbook," says Cassandra Harrell, Author.

RECIPE NOTES includes helpful cooking tips, fun stories, suggestions for using the recipe, and a piece of history about the dish. Recipe Notes help savor the tradition and share memories of treasured recipes and how they were used by family members in the past.

THE RECIPES NOTES ALSO TELL YOU --

- What recipes were used by first generation cooks
- What recipes are best for entertaining
- Which recipes are perfect for bake sales
- Which recipes are great for large groups
- What to serve with certain soul food recipes
- Which recipes are just plain delicious

ALSO --

- Learn how some recipes got their name, and
- Learn a little bit more about Soul Food and Southern Cooking

Below are a Few Recipe Notes in Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook

DEB'S DEEP DISH CHOCOLATE PIE (from soul food cookbook)

Recipe Note: This pie is my sister's signature dessert and is simply to die for! If you love chocolate, you're gonna love this pie. Make it and you'll "taste" why. Absolutely delicious!

EMERSON'S FRIED CORN (from soul food cookbook)

Recipe Note: My stepfather Emerson used to make fried corn quite often. I remember he would pull up a stool to the stove as he prepared this dish. We couldn't wait for Emerson's fried corn. It was certainly a real treat for the entire family.

COUNTRY BANANA PUDDING (from soul food cookbook)

Recipe Note: This was my mother's original recipe from her personal collection. The custard for this pudding is outstanding and is best with pure vanilla extract. Great for any occasion.

BIG MAMA'S BUTTER ROLL (from soul food cookbook)

Recipe Note: A very old recipe Big Mama used to make when I was a young girl. Everyone raved about her homemade butter roll.

Make a special recipe from Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook for your family and set back and listen to the compliments and rave reviews.

In fact, just read what a few customers have to say about Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook.

Book Reviews and Comments from Customers Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook

"Cassandra's recipe in her cookbook did not fail to meet expectations and tasted just how I remembered. Those who like straightforward recipes, you will not be disappointed here. If you are looking for a small southern cookbook with recipes familiar to the Cajun and Creole style of cooking then this is the book for you."

From: Amy R. Kendall

BellaOnline Southern Cooking Editor

<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art36849.asp>

"You either like Banana Pudding or hate it, but the Harrell's cookbook would sway anyone's nay vote. It was delicious. But let's move from the desserts category to the Main Dish section: The Gumbo Chicken Wings were very good and so were the Smothered Pork Chops. Don't get me started on the Breads & Rolls section."

"... the picture on the cover is truly what prompted me to accept this review as well as prepare a few recipes for my family who really enjoyed them. I own and have read other

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soul food cookbooks - Soul Food Lover's Cookbook is at the top of the list."

From: Linda

Pajama Mommy Community - <http://pjmommy.com/?p=833>

"I just want to let you know that I made the Sweet Potato Pie from your cookbook and it was DELICIOUS!!!! I thought my husband would hurt himself. Also, I had my 13 year old daughter make three Pecan Pies and they were so good. We also made the Carrot Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting, and Big Mama's Pound Cake (I make this often). Everything was so good and I got so many compliments. Thanks for sharing your recipes."

Tanita from Little Rock, Arkansas

"Thanks for your great recipes I am an inexperience cook and just wanted to feed my family but didn't have your recipes to do so. I want my family to be close to their roots by providing them good soul food cooking. Thank you once again!"

Gloria from Missouri

"We love our Soul Food Lovers Cookbook and all of the wonderful old fashioned recipes I grew up with that you post in your newsletters. And would love to know about any other great recipes that you may have. Thanks again for all the happiness you bring us."

Helen from Tupelo, Mississippi

"I recently purchased a copy of your delightful cookbook. As a little background, I am a 65 year young widower who is learning to cook....Thanks in advance. I really enjoy reading your newsletter. Keep up the great work. A dedicated fan from Crockett County Tennessee, now retired in Atlanta, GA." Raymond from Atlanta, Georgia

To Read More About Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook , Visit Below:

<http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/soul-food-cookbook.html>

Announcing the "Grocery Shopping On A Budget" E-course!

Are you worried about soaring grocery prices?
Would you like to reduce your grocery bill?
Out of control grocery spending is one of the biggest money wasters
for American families.

We spend \$350 a month on groceries for a family of five and we
never pay more than \$2.00 per pound for meat.

**Learn to save and stretch your
food dollars with the
Grocery Shopping On A Budget E-course!**

Grocery Shopping On A Budget e-course

Are you overwhelmed just trying to figure out how to begin getting your grocery shopping under control? The Grocery Shopping On A Budget e-course breaks it down into easy to follow steps. Using these steps, you can learn practical skills that make reducing your grocery bill easier!

The e-course also offers many extras like how to save money on meats, how to save on cleaning supplies and it will also show you how to---

Find the lowest prices *every time* you shop
Organize your kitchen into a money saving machine!
Easy meal planning tips
How warehouse stores can cost you money
How to use or not to use coupons

Money Saving Meats e-book

One of the questions we hear most frequently is, "How do you find meat for \$2.00 per pound or less?" This ebook gives you lots of useful tips to shop better and use the meat you buy more efficiently. Money Saving Meats includes lots of great reader tips to help you get the most out of

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your meat budget!

Saving On Cleaning Supplies e-book

The Saving On Cleaning Supplies e-book explains how to use cleaning supplies effectively to clean and save money. It also includes recipes for making your own cleaning supplies.

When you order the "Grocery Shopping On A Budget" e-course, you will also get the following 4 bonus items free!

Eating Healthy On A Budget e-booklet

Eating Healthy On A Budget shares thoughts on eating healthy without dumping the contents of your purse on the counter at the grocery store.

Is Eating Out Eating You Up? e-book

Eating You Up? looks at the cost of eating out and provides great alternatives that cost significantly less!

224 Meals In A Hurry e-book. This ebook gives lots of delicious recipes to get you in and out of the kitchen in a hurry so that you're not tempted to eat out... **AGAIN!**

Grocery Savings e-book

Many people see dramatic savings after using the tips from this e-book. It explain why using coupons is not the best way to save money, how to shop without making so many impulse buys.

Review of Grocery Shopping on a Budget:

You can definitely reduce your grocery shopping bill by following the techniques in this e-course. This e-course will teach you how to shop, how to get the best shopping deals, and where to find the most economical buys. I was amazed at how easy it is to follow. To read my full review, visit here <http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/grocerybill.html>. Cassandra Harrell, Author, Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook

To Read More About Grocery Shopping on a Budget, Visit Here:

<http://cass0806.livingonad.hop.clickbank.net>

Thank You

Thanks for downloading **How to Be Your Own Best Cook**. I hope you have enjoyed reading this e-book as much as I enjoyed putting it together. It is also my hope that you now know more about soul food and southern cooking than before. Soul food is my passion and I love sharing valuable cooking techniques that I have lived by for many years when making southern food.

Since you now know all about southern cooking, this is a perfect opportunity to start making recipes from **Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook**. These recipes are so easy to prepare, don't take a lot of time, and are quite delicious. And I know you'll be using these recipes for many years to come. I certainly do.

Another opportunity that's too good to pass is **Grocery Shopping on a Budget**. You know when I look at these menus in this series, I can't help but think about Soul Food and how economical it is to prepare. One reason is because Soul Food has always been considered "cheap eats", as I mentioned before, however, they just forgot to mention how good Soul Food is for you.

With the economic the way it is today, **Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook** and **Grocery Shopping on a Budget** are a winning combination that **WILL SAVE** you lots of money when you prepare meals for your family. I know because I use both of them regularly and I have saved a tremendous amount by making recipes in **Soul Food Lovers' Cookbook** and at the same time reduce my food bill using the techniques in **Grocery Shopping on a Budget**.

Finally, please give us some feedback about this e-book and do tell everyone that you feel would be interested. I will be publishing more e-books for your enjoyment in the future.

Thank you so much!
Cassandra Harrell

Please leave your comments here:
<http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/contactus.html>

About the Author



Cassandra Harrell

Cassandra Harrell learned the art of cooking from her mother and grandmother (Big Mama) growing up in Halls, Tennessee. Cassandra is a third generation Southern cook and has made soul food for most of her life.

With over 30 years in her soul food kitchen, Cassandra and her husband, Earl opened an award-winning soul food restaurant and catering business and served thousands including professional NBA team, the Milwaukee Bucks, the Milwaukee Brewers Baseball Team, national recording artists, and political figures.

Popular dishes include Earl's famous barbecue, collard greens with smoked turkey, creamy macaroni and cheese, southern potato salad, old-fashioned peach cobbler, and her mom's country banana pudding to name a few. People literally lined up for their Soul Food Sunday Buffet as it attracted customers as far as Chicago and was the talk of the town for several years.

Cassandra also taught soul food cooking classes and hosted cooking demonstrations on TV, at community events, and local fairs. Cassandra is the creator of her popular website, Soul Food Advisor.com, and is editor of her monthly newsletter, Soul Food Lovers'.

To learn more about Cassandra, please visit her website:

<http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/biography.html>

Resources

Soul Food Advisor.com

<http://www.soul-food-advisor.com>

Soul Food & Southern Cooking History

http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/black_history_month.html

Spices for Specific Food Groups

<http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/cooking-spices.html>

Cooking & Baking Tips

<http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/cooking-and-baking-tips.html>

Low Fat Soul Food Recipes

<http://www.soul-food-advisor.com/soul-food-low-fat-recipes.html>

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