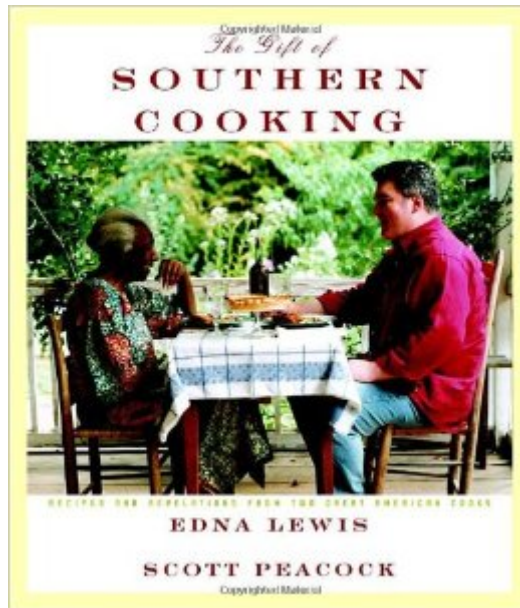


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The Gift Of Southern Cooking: Recipes And Revelations From Two Great American Cooks



Synopsis

Edna Lewis--whose *The Taste of Country Cooking* has become an American classic--and Alabama-born chef Scott Peacock pool their unusual cooking talents to give us this unique cookbook. What makes it so special is that it represents different styles of Southern cooking--Miss Lewis's Virginia country cooking and Scott Peacock's inventive and sensitive blending of new tastes with the Alabama foods he grew up on, liberally seasoned with Native American, Caribbean, and African influences. Together they have taken neglected traditional recipes unearthed in their years of research together on Southern food and worked out new versions that they have made their own. Every page of this beguiling book bears the unmistakable mark of being written by real hands-on cooks. Scott Peacock has the gift for translating the love and respect they share for good home cooking with such care and precision that you know, even if you've never tried them before, that the Skillet Cornbread will turn out perfect, the Crab Cakes will be "Honestly Good," and the four-tiered Lane Cake something spectacular. Together they share their secrets for such Southern basics as pan-fried chicken (soak in brine first, then buttermilk, before frying in good pork fat), creamy grits (cook slowly in milk), and genuine Southern biscuits, which depend on using soft flour, homemade baking powder, and fine, fresh lard (and on not twisting the biscuit cutter when you stamp out the dough). Scott Peacock describes how Miss Lewis makes soup by coaxing the essence of flavor from vegetables (the She-Crab and Turtle soups taste so rich they can be served in small portions in demitasse cups), and he applies the same principle to his intensely flavored, scrumptious dish of Garlic Braised Shoulder Lamb Chops with Butter Beans and Tomatoes. You'll find all these treasures and more before you even get to the superb cakes (potential "Cakewalk Winners" all), the hand-cranked ice creams, the flaky pies, and homey custards and puddings. Interwoven throughout the book are warm memories of the people and the traditions that shaped these pure-tasting, genuinely American recipes. Above all, the Southern table stands for hospitality, and the authors demonstrate that the way everything is put together--with the condiments and relishes and preserves and wealth of vegetables all spread out on the table--is what makes the meal uniquely Southern. Every occasion is celebrated, and at the back of the book there are twenty-two seasonal menus, from A Spring Country Breakfast for a Late Sunday Morning and A Summer Dinner of Big Flavors to An Alabama Thanksgiving and A Hearty Dinner for a Cold Winter Night, to show you how to mix and match dishes for a true Southern table. Here, then, is a joyful coming together of two extraordinary cooks, sharing their gifts. And they invite you to join them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

On the surface, this book bears a strong resemblance to the volume by James Villas and his mother, Martha Pearl Villas, entitled 'My Mother's Southern Kitchen', as it is written by a younger man and an older woman, both of whom have serious culinary chops, and where the younger man does most of the actual writing. The differences between the two books, however, are much more instructive. First, in this book, both authors are professional restaurant chefs who both grew up eating southern cuisine and who specialize in cooking it. In the Villas' book, neither are professional chefs. This means that there is just a bit more fussiness about the methods and ingredients in the Lewis / Peacock recipes. One example is that while both pair of authors endorse homemade mayonnaise, Lewis and Peacock go an additional step by recommending and giving a recipe for homemade baking powder, especially for use in making biscuits. Skeptics, please note, I have made biscuits with my White Lily flour and homemade baking powder, and the homemade stuff does make a difference in eliminating the faint metallic aluminum taste in the stuff from Clabber Girl or Count Rumsfield. Second, in this book, the two authors are originally from two very different parts of the south. Edna Lewis was raised in rural Virginia and Scott Peacock grew up in Alabama. Both now work in urban Georgia. The Villas' are native of low country North Carolina. Therefore, this book is much stronger in discussing regional differences between, for example, the peanut oil cooking Alabama and the lard cooking Virginia. While the Villas' book deals with some regional issues, such as the dispute over the source of Brunswick stew, it is largely oriented around the cuisine of a single North Carolina low country household and extended family.

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