



The Taste of Country Cooking: 30th Anniversary Edition

Edna Lewis

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In recipes and reminiscences equally delicious, Edna Lewis celebrates the uniquely American country cooking she grew up with some fifty years ago in a small Virginia Piedmont farming community that had been settled by freed slaves. With menus for the four seasons, she shares the ways her family prepared and enjoyed food, savoring the delights of each special time of year:

- The fresh taste of spring—the first shad, wild mushrooms, garden strawberries, field greens and salads . . . honey from woodland bees . . . a ring mold of chicken with wild mushroom sauce . . . the treat of braised mutton after sheepshearing.
- The feasts of summer—garden-ripe vegetables and fruits relished at the peak of flavor . . . pan-fried chicken, sage-flavored pork tenderloin, spicy baked tomatoes, corn pudding, fresh blackberry cobbler, and more, for hungry neighbors on Wheat-Threshing Day . . . Sunday Revival, the event of the year, when Edna’s mother would pack up as many as fifteen dishes (what with her pickles and breads and pies) to be spread out on linen-covered picnic tables under the church’s shady oaks . . . hot afternoons cooled with a bowl of crushed peaches or hand-cranked custard ice cream.
- The harvest of fall—a fine dinner of baked country ham, roasted newly dug sweet potatoes, and warm apple pie after a day of corn-shucking . . . the hunting season, with the deliciously “different” taste of game fattened on hickory nuts and persimmons . . . hog-butcher time and the making of sausages and liver pudding . . . and Emancipation Day with its rich and generous thanksgiving dinner.
- The hearty fare of winter—holiday time, the sideboard laden with all the special foods of Christmas for company dropping by . . . the cold months warmed by stews, soups, and baked beans cooked in a hearth oven to be eaten with hot crusty bread before the fire.

The scores of recipes for these marvelous dishes are set down in loving detail. We come to understand the values that formed the remarkable woman—her love of nature, the pleasure of living with the seasons, the sense of community, the satisfactory feeling that hard work was always rewarded by her mother’s good food. Having made us yearn for all the good meals she describes in her memories of a lost time in America, Edna Lewis shows us precisely how to recover, in our own country or city or suburban kitchens, the taste of the fresh, good, natural country cooking that was so happy a part of her girlhood in Freetown, Virginia.

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