

2013

## Arkansauce, 2013

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# ARKANSAUCE

The Journal of Arkansas Foodways

Issue 3, 2013



Clyde and Minnie Clarke, center, enjoy a picnic with their family and friends, near Jonesboro, Craighead County, Arkansas, ca. 1915. Courtesy Clyde Nuell Clarke Papers (MC 792), Special Collections, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

# ARKANSAUCE

*Arkansauce: The Journal of Arkansas Foodways* is published by the **Special Collections Department of the University of Arkansas Libraries**.

The mission of the Special Collections Department is to collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to research materials documenting the state of Arkansas and its role in regional, national, and international communities.

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# Welcome to *Arkansauce* 2013!

By Timothy G. Nutt

Special Collections Department Head

The third issue of *Arkansauce* has just come out of the publishing oven, and I am pleased to serve it to you. We have commissioned a number of articles that hopefully will both entertain and inform you. I know you will enjoy learning about prehistoric peoples in Arkansas and their diet and many of you will identify with the articles on deer and squirrel hunting. Growing up, deer season was not only a social event (camaraderie on a deer stand), but also gave us three days out of school. What kid wouldn't like that? I am also certain that some of you will remember Arkansas-based Minute Man restaurants. I remember my first visit to a Minute Man and how good the burgers tasted. As I read Monica Mylonas's article on the chain, I lamented the fact that only one of the restaurants still exists. Those are just the tip of the culinary iceberg; there is much more packed into this issue.



Timothy G. Nutt, photograph by Russell Cothren.

I am enthusiastic that Tom and Mary Dillard agreed to guest edit this issue of *Arkansauce*. Tom was one of the founders of the journal and with his guidance, Special Collections was able to produce two savory issues, so it seems appropriate that he take on this role after his retirement. Having been the guest at many meals at the Dillard home, I can attest that Mary is an extraordinarily good cook, but she is also a good writer. Under their leadership, another fine issue of *Arkansauce* was published. As always, we could not have produced this edition without the work of Managing Editor Diane Worrell and the rest of the employees in Special Collections and the University of Arkansas Libraries.

The popularity of *Arkansauce* continues to skyrocket, and we receive requests to be added to the mailing list on a daily basis. The *Oxford American*, led by Warwick Sabin, is just one of our enthusiastic supporters, but we need even more support to keep this

journal going and free to subscribers. Any donation to Special Collections to offset the design, printing, and mailing costs are welcome.

We are also interested in submissions for the next volume of *Arkansauce*. Yes, even before this issue was put to bed we were already scouting for the next guest editor and possible articles so keep those suggestions coming. It is gratifying to know that people look forward to each issue and to have folks contact me with article and photograph suggestions for future issues. I hope *Arkansauce* brings you as much pleasure as it does to us in Special Collections.

We'll see you at the supper table.

—Tim Nutt

## Call for Menu Donations

As a part of its foodways initiative, Special Collections is seeking to build a collection of Arkansas menus. While we are especially seeking older menus, recent ones are welcome too. We are looking for:

- Restaurant menus
- Menus for special events
- Menus for family meals, such as descriptions of meals in handwritten letters

If you wish to donate a menu, please mail it to or contact Timothy G. Nutt, Department Head and Manuscripts Librarian, University of Arkansas Libraries, Special Collections Department, 365 N. McIlroy Avenue, Fayetteville, AR 72701, phone: 479-575-8443, e-mail: [timn@uark.edu](mailto:timn@uark.edu).



# From Arkansas's Farms and Forests: Foodways in the Natural State

By Tom and Mary Dillard

**D**ocumenting the history of food and foodways is neither simple nor easy. We all grow up eating food—and some of our strongest childhood memories revolve around certain beloved, or hated, foods. But, how often do we record information on our favorite foods? It does not help that food preparation has traditionally been the domain of women—and the lives of women are not well documented. How many women in, say 1900 Arkansas, had the time to keep a journal? Before the modern era, cookbooks were few and far between, especially

*For generations, southern women began their Sunday mornings by killing and dressing a chicken—to be fried upon returning from church, especially if the preacher was in tow.*

in rural areas. Your editors hope this issue of *Arkansauce* will do its part to make our Arkansas food history and foodways better documented and shared with a broader audience.

We have recruited several writers to delve into the history and prehistory of Arkansas food. State Archeologist Ann M. Early has contributed an essay on prehistoric Arkansas foods, including interesting



Mary Dillard and Tom Dillard in their Farmington kitchen.

references to foods actually domesticated in Arkansas. Monica Madey Mylonas, an archivist at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's Center for Arkansas History and Culture, contributed a most interesting piece on Wes Hall of Little Rock, the founder of Minute Man and the man who brought the microwave oven to Arkansas.

Wild foods, both plants and animals, still play a role in Arkansas food culture. Our good friend and writer Martha Estes, of Fayetteville, contributed a brief remembrance of her single mother killing and cooking squirrels for her young family. Larry Don Frost, the brother of editor Mary Dillard and an avid hunter, contributed two essays on hunting deer and cooking venison. As our featured cookbook, we selected a volume on wild plant foods of Arkansas, *Billy Joe Tatum's Wild Food Cookbook & Field Guide*.

Former State Senator Jimmy Jeffress submitted a wonderfully evocative story on the "Rose Inn Restaurant" in his hometown of Crossett. Mr. Jeffress was recently the Democratic Party candidate for the fourth district Congressional seat. Despite the popularity of restaurants such as the Rose Inn, most Arkansans made do eating at home. But, one home meal was special—"Sunday dinner." For generations, southern women began their Sunday mornings by killing and dressing a chicken—to be fried

upon returning from church, especially if the preacher was in tow. Little Rock freelance writer Marcia Camp recalls those chicken dinners in her essay "Chicken Every Sunday." Remembered meals from an early childhood in Arkansas influenced Maine-resident Stephanie Harp to contribute a remembrance of her "gastronomic home."

Mary Dillard engaged in a little "remembering" as she wrote an essay on her efforts to recreate a dessert from her childhood, an "Apple Stack Cake." It took three tries before the cake was just right, but Tom Dillard enjoyed each effort.

We urge you to go put on the coffee pot and prepare to settle down with this edition of *Arkansauce*. A nice slice of apple stack cake would be good, too.

Tom Dillard  
Mary Dillard

# Chicken Every Sunday

By Marcia Camp

The first harbinger of spring was the arrival of certain birds—chickens. Or so it was when I was growing up. They came by train, those small mail-order chicks, eight to ten weeks before warm weather. Families from miles around found their way to the depot where baggage carts were piled high with shallow cardboard boxes with tiny beaks darting out quarter-size portholes. We took home the promise of summer's fryers and eggs.

The new chicks were placed on the dining room table, warmed by a light bulb hanging beneath a broad porcelain shade, where the butter-colored dollops of down soon grew wing feathers. After a short stay on the back porch, and access to the chicken yard when weather permitted, they gradually grew into gawky young chickens. They became part of the microcosm of society where emotions too grandiose for small feathered bodies were displayed.

From the rooster's first strutting crow, as if he commanded the dawn, to the banty's last fight at night, it seemed an exaggerated slice of life. There were temperamental setting hens and protective biddies instructing their chicks with ragged clucks that sounded as if they'd come through their craw. And always there was the legendary pecking order.

Every Sunday morning, my father would decide which chicken's number was up, and he'd proceed

to wring its neck. With a mixture of horror and fascination, I watched the wind-up, the quick jerk, then the release that sent the chicken flailing its life away, but I accepted this as necessary.

There was something sort of elegant about my mother, so daddy always cleaned and dressed the chicken (when I married, her only advice was, "never learn to cut up a chicken"). Then he placed the dinner-to-be in a pan of sweet milk to "take the wild taste out." It languished in the icebox until noon.

Church and chicken dinner were synonymous with Sunday. They were such a shared experience that our senses agreed with "the Sunday smell of someone's frying chicken" from Kris Kristofferson's "Sunday Morning Coming Down."



Postcard showing a breed of chicken developed in Arkansas, ca. 1900. Courtesy of Tom W. Dillard.

As a young girl, I believed that high-noon hunger had the power to save souls. It was partly the effects of the preacher's tears shed into a handkerchief the size of a linen napkin, reinforced by the repeated chorus of "Just as I Am," but mostly it was the desire for release to get home to fried chicken.

Today when we think of chicken, we think Tyson, and that's sad. Gone are those delightful by-products—feed sack dresses and feather beds—and schoolboys no longer chase girls with a chicken's foot grasping from the tug of a tendon. The majestic eagle may be our national symbol, but it's the chicken that has found its way into our hearts.

*Marcia Camp is a freelance writer living in Little Rock.*

# A Short History of Prehistoric Arkansas Cuisine

By Ann M. Early

The first people to develop an Arkansas cuisine arrived here at least 13,000 years ago during the lingering centuries of the last Ice Age. Inheritors of a hunting lifestyle that stretched back 25,000 years in Europe and Asia, these Paleo-Indians were well versed in making a living from whatever plants and animals were available across the largely untamed landscape.

No Paleo-Indian campsites have yet been studied in Arkansas, but hundreds of Ice Age Indian camps and workplaces found across North America give us a good idea of what was on the Paleo-Indian menu. We also have examples of pre-industrial hunting people across the world to show us how hunters made a living.

Meat was surely common fare. Some doubtless came from formidable prey like now-extinct species of bison, bear, and even mastodons, one of several species of Ice Age elephant known to have lived in this part of the South. Other animals still with us today like opossum, rabbit, raccoon, and deer would have been on the menu. Hardwood forests and warm, sluggish streams were not prevalent in the Ice Age Arkansas landscape, so turtles and other amphibians, fish and shellfish, and perhaps migratory birds would have been less common and unavailable in some places. Nuts, fruits, bulbs, and other edible plants like greens would have been variable in their geographic and seasonal availability.

How does one prepare mastodon? Some cuts may have been eaten raw—a mastodon tartare. Roasting on skewers or buried in coals would be fast and easy cooking methods. Meats and plants may have been boiled in

water-filled skins heated by dropping them in hot rocks. In some seasons, food could be dried to extend shelf life and create a form of Paleo jerky or trail mix.

Hunting people must be mobile in order to take maximum advantage of the wild foods scattered across the landscape, so food storage was largely impractical. Although heavy on animal protein, the menu featured fresh foods and varied from day to day, season to season, and location to location, as luck, skill, and seasonal abundance provided.

Arkansas's Ice Age climate was moderating even as the first people arrived. By 10,000 years ago, changes in temperature and rainfall encouraged the spread of hardwood and pine forests, warmed the streams, and supported an explosion in animal and plant populations in new habitats. Mastodon, ground sloth, and several other species faded from the scene. Forests and streams offered an array of new foods that were more reliable and less mobile than many previously important animal species. In response, Indians developed a broad spectrum lifestyle that was linked to the seasonal rhythms of abundance and decline of the animals and plants within well-defined hunting and foraging territories. This Archaic lifestyle, as archeologists call it, continued, with adjustments to some cyclical climate oscillations, for more than 9,000 years.

People ate a wide variety of foods. Deer, elk, bear, small mammals, fish, turtles, shellfish, turkeys, pigeons, and waterfowl were all taken with spears, nets, traps and snares, and by hand. Deer were the meat staple. Bear would have been one source of nutritionally important and tasty oil,

*Arkansas's Ice Age climate was moderating even as the first people arrived. By 10,000 years ago, changes in temperature and rainfall encouraged the spread of hardwood and pine forests, warmed the streams, and supported an explosion in animal and plant populations in new habitats.*

as well as meat. In the forest, hickories, black walnuts, and oaks were an important and reliable source of nuts. Fruits, berries, tubers, and greens were used in season.

Social groups moved from place to place on a seasonal round to hunting and collecting stations. Some camps may have been used for weeks or months at a time if a harvest was extended and nearby. Extended residence meant dwellings of substance where food could be stored. Indians in Northwest Arkansas also took advantage of rock shelters for natural storehouses, especially for nuts and grains.

Archaic people developed a more diverse cuisine with an array of menu items that changed with seasons and localities. Venison, nuts—especially hickories in the early centuries, with acorns increasing in popularity later—



Woven bag with chenopod fruits or seeds from an Ozark rock shelter (now submerged), approximately 2,000 years old. Photograph courtesy of University of Arkansas Museum Collections.

and shellfish were staples. Meals were roasted in fireplaces, on beds of hot rocks, or in hot ashes. Hot rock cooking in skins was likely practiced. Meat, nuts, and grains could be pounded into powder and used to thicken liquids and add flavor to the meal. Dried meat, dried grains, and fruits could be pounded into meal, and bound with grease or cooked in ashes to make cakes. Indians continued to make persimmon cakes and similar items into the historic period.

Archaic Arkansans, most likely women, may have been among the great cultural innovators of their day in eastern North America. Although they were using only Stone Age technology, Archaic people had a significant impact on the landscape. They opened the forest canopy by taking timber for fuel, tools, dugout canoes, and house building—and by using fire to encourage tender new

vegetation much loved by deer. This favored some kinds of sun loving plants and animals over others.

Long residence campsites—where leftover animal bones, grease, and other food residue, human waste, abandoned food storage pits, and disturbed soil accumulated—attracted opportunistic pioneer plants in densities greater than their native stands along forest edges and streams. These “camp followers” were starchy and oily seed producing annuals such as sumpweed, maygrass, chenopod, erect knotweed, and amaranth. Collectively, they are referred to as the Eastern Agricultural Complex, native North American plants managed, and in part domesticated, by Indians long before the appearance of corn and beans.

Among most foraging people, women were frequently tasked with gathering plants and capturing slow

moving animals close to home, while men ranged more widely in search of mobile and distant resources. With an abundance of seeds literally on the doorstep, and a tendency for the plants to reappear each year in the same nutrient rich garbage heaps, when traveling bands returned to regularly used campsites, these wild crops became regular items on the Archaic menu. Nearly 5,000 years ago, people were cultivating plots to encourage their appearance. Harvested seeds were stored in sacks along with nuts and other plants in rock shelters and in grass lined storage pits. Over the millennia some of these plants crossed the biological boundary between cultivation and domestication. The Ozark uplands may be one of the birthing places. Arkansas rock shelters still hold plants that document this transformation.

In addition to the edible annuals, Archaic people harvested gourds for use as containers and for edible seeds and meats. Sunflowers were added to the gardens, first wild and then domesticated, and local wild beans, distant cousins to the domesticated varieties grown by historic era Indians, became part of the menu. Wild potato and other roots and greens, and a variety of fruits and berries were also on the menu.

About 2,500 years ago, the challenge of cooking with seeds, grains, and other foods not easily roasted on a stick or toasted over a fire, was resolved with the introduction of pottery. Fire hardened containers could be used repeatedly for soups, stews, and other “one pot” meals, even though the vessels were made rapidly with local clays and little technological expertise. Broken or worn out, they could be quickly replaced. A new cuisine, and with it changes in menu, followed. Some recipes still called for roasting, toasting, drying and other preparations, and meat and other animal products continued to be essential foods, but more plants were added to the menu. The Ameri-

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can lotus was cultivated for its seeds and roots in this period, and pokeweed seeds and greens were added to the mix. This pottery-making and simple gardening and foraging lifestyle is called the Woodland tradition.

A thousand years after the appearance of pottery, a revolutionary new food that first changed American Indian economies—and later hundreds of societies across the globe, including our own—began to show up among Arkansas Indians. Corn, referred to as *maize* through much of the world, appears as a food crop, domesticated more than 7,000 years ago in Mesoamerica. It spread to North and South America as one society after another took up gardening in earnest, even though the first primitive cobs were barely the size of a human finger. With the intervention of Mother Nature and humans tinkering in the corn patch, many races emerged with variable cob sizes, kernel characteristics, growing regimes, and drought characteristics, among other genetic traits. American Indians eventually grew not one but an array of corn varieties that were suited for many different recipes prepared over the course of a year.

The first Arkansas corn appears in tiny amounts, as scattered kernels in Woodland camp middens, about 1,400 years ago. Perhaps only a few sacks of kernels arrived from farmers in the southwest, an exotic treat that would not make a full meal in itself but might produce a few new plants in the camp garden. It took another three or four hundred years before corn agriculture was the foundation for Arkansas Indian societies.

After AD 1,000, all Arkansas Indians were dedicated to some degree to corn farming. Beans arrived from the south or west a couple of centuries later and were added to the garden, along with several varieties



Prehistoric pictograph of a fiddlehead fern in an Ozark Mountain rock shelter. Photograph courtesy of Arkansas Archeological Survey.

of squashes and melons grown for their edible flesh as well as for their use as containers. By AD 1,300 or so, the “three sisters” of corn, beans, and squash, so familiar in historic Indian societies, were the foundations for Native Arkansas cuisine. Archeologists refer to this general lifestyle as Mississippian.

Wild foods and some of the older cultivars were still important, even vital, ingredients in the cooking pot and roasting pit. Deer, elk, bear, raccoon, turtles, turkeys and other birds, fish from several different habitats, amphibians, reptiles, other small mammals, and shellfish were all eaten. Deer were favored game, but fish, turtles, and other animals were regular menu items. Shortly before Europeans appeared on the scene, bison began moving into Arkansas from the southern plains and gave these Native Arkansans a chance for big game hunting that their distant ancestors enjoyed thousands of years earlier. Nuts, fruits, berries, seeds, roots, and greens were still on the Mississippian menu. Sunflowers and some of the weedy annual cultivars like little barley and maygrass were still garden crops.

Mississippian cuisine was varied, and recipes would have de-

pended in part on what was available in the fields, in the storerooms, and in the neighboring forests and streams. People lived for all or most of the year within an easy walk to their fields, and often in large organized communities. Harvest surplus could be stored at home or in community storehouses. Mealtime was no longer simply about feeding the family. Social events, religious rituals, and other community gatherings were punctuated by special meals and community feasts. Oversized pottery—suited for cooking for and serving to crowds—indicate that some of these menu items were one-

pot dishes, while others were fresh, roasted, baked, and dried foods. One popular event in historic times was the Green Corn ceremony, celebrating the first maturing corn crop and featuring fresh corn dishes like roasted ears and a version of succotash. Similar events tied to the agricultural cycle probably took place in earlier times as well.

As anyone who’s eaten unseasoned cornmeal, oatmeal, or another carbohydrate staple knows, an unrelieved diet of bland offerings is not appetizing and probably not healthy in the long run. When they became corn farmers, Mississippian people also began making salt to enliven recipes. Inadvertently, they were also boosting sodium levels in a diet where the natural nutrients in wild foods were reduced by a heavy reliance on corn and the other garden produce. It’s something to think about the next time you sprinkle salt on that hot, buttery, roasted ear pulled fresh from the campfire.

*Ann M. Early is the Arkansas State Archeologist. Her duties are diverse, including all aspects of public archeology—site reporting, dealing with public agencies, and providing educational opportunities.*

# Salt Was Important From Early Arkansas Times

By Tom Dillard, Guest Editor

**S**alt is so taken for granted these days that we forget how important it is to the human diet. Until the modern era salt production was an important industry, and one of the important resources of frontier Arkansas was its salt producing springs.

Salt production was certainly important to Native American populations in prehistoric Arkansas. The first recorded European to visit Arkansas, Hernando de Soto in 1541, was welcomed by Indians bearing salt as a gift of welcome. Later a group of Indian salt traders were caught up in one of the Spaniard's dragnets for slaves. Among the historic tribes that manufactured salt were the Tunicas, Koroas, and Caddos.

The Arkansas Archeological Survey published a technical report on one of the late prehistoric salt works, the Hardman site. Located on the edge of Saline Bayou close to the Ouachita River near modern Arkadelphia, this site produced salt for generations of Caddo Indians—and later, for white settlers.

Early French accounts tell of encountering Caddo traders who were marketing two of their specialties to the Quapaws, loaves of salt and lengths of "bois d'arc" wood to be used in making bows.

The European settlers, like the Indians, usually followed the same procedure in manufacturing salt. It involved boiling salty water, known as brine, until it became granular. The brine was usually boiled in large kettles, with ten or twelve of them set in a close row atop a furnace. Sometimes two rows of kettles were placed in each furnace. Usually the furnaces were covered with a shed so work could continue during bad weather. About fifty-five gallons of brine were required to produce one

bushel of salt. The larger salt works were often run with enslaved labor. A kettle from the salt works at Arkadelphia can be seen on the grounds of the Clark County Courthouse.

One resident of Arkansas Territory complained in 1826 that, "Salt is a necessary of life which comes higher to the people of this country, than any other article." Since salt was such a necessity, and since its weight and bulk made it expensive to ship, its production was often lucrative.

Indeed, salt was such an important commodity that the Federal government reserved ownership of all salt springs, and surveyors were required to note them on their maps. Seventeen salt springs were known to exist in eleven areas located in Johnson, Franklin, Cleburne, Pope, Hot Spring, Little River, Clark, and Sevier counties.

Salt was usually sold on the frontier by the bushel. In 1828 Arkansas salt makers usually sold their product at about one dollar per bushel at the salt house. Arkansas settlers were fortunate to have local salt, for the national production came from far away Ohio. Domestic salt was also protected by a high tariff from 1812 to 1845, making the commodity even more expensive.

Pioneers not only needed salt for cooking but also for curing meats. Draft animals also had to be supplied with salt. Early Arkansas wives usually kept a dish of salt—a "salt cellar"—readily available in the kitchen.

The widespread availability of steamboat shipping in post-1830 Arkansas meant that large amounts of salt could be transported cheaply. Shippers regularly found that salt, sugar, flour, and dry goods were the main articles shipped by steamboat to Arkansas wharfs.

*One resident of Arkansas Territory complained in 1826 that, "Salt is a necessary of life which comes higher to the people of this country, than any other article." Since salt was such a necessity, and since its weight and bulk made it expensive to ship, its production was often lucrative.*

Salt production declined as an economic activity after 1840. The Civil War brought a renewed interest in salt production, with Ezekiel Kinsworthy operating a salt works in Sevier County. Commenting on the capture of New Orleans by Union forces in 1862 and its impact on food prices, one Ouachita County resident noted that "more is said about salt than any other [needed] article, they have some in Camden \$15 the sack."

The post war years brought new technology, and the discovery of vast underground salt deposits in coastal Louisiana made the old boiling technique obsolete. Arkansas remains a major producer of brine, a naturally occurring salty solution which has a number of industrial and chemical uses.

*Tom Dillard is the retired head of Special Collections at the University of Arkansas Libraries and co-founder of Arkansauce. He is an enthusiastic historian and gardener.*

# Wes Hall's Minute Man: An Education

By Monica Madey Mylonas

I am threading the audio reel onto the digitization machine, and I am nervous. The tape is impossibly thin and delicate, and my unaccustomed fingers struggle to guide it over and under the various spools and spindles of the reel-to-reel, a clunky anachronism-turned-peripheral. My supervisor assures me that if the tape snaps, we can splice it back together. But I know that is not an ideal situation. I get there in the end and wait, headphones secured, breath bated, for signs of life. For several seconds, there is only a soft crackle. I begin to consider the prospect that the only audible record we possess of this historic fast food chain is the rustle of a potato chip bag. Then I jump as a brass band soundly proves me wrong. Like any 1960s theme song worth its salt, the jingle threatens to remain with me all week as I instantly, if involuntarily, commit the lyrics to memory:

*Share a minute with a friend at  
the Minute Man*

*And you'll be back for seconds at the  
Minute Man!*

*There's no bigger, better burger  
than the Minute Man!*

*Share a minute at the Minute Man  
and you'll be back for seconds!*

I admit with some embarrassment that I had never heard of Minute Man before a researcher requested digital copies of the audiovisual materials in the Wes Hall Papers. But with my background in food anthropology, the task fell to me, and I happily accepted. The collection, housed at the UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture, contains a wealth of correspondence, business materials, printed materials, news clippings, memorabilia, photographs, and even employee training films. And of course, audio tapes of every iteration of the Minute Man jingle.

I soon learned that Minute Man of America, Inc., was a pioneering fast-food chain that was based in Little Rock. At the height of its operation during the 1960s and 1970s, Minute Man had 57 locations in Arkansas and seven surrounding states. The only Minute Man location currently in operation is in El Dorado, Arkansas. Utterly ignorant of the brand but vastly intrigued, I delved into the life and times of Minute Man founder Wesley T. Hall.

Wes Hall was born in Little Rock on April 15, 1915, and graduated from Little Rock High School. He got to know the ins and outs of the food industry when he worked at the Food Palace, Little Rock's first supermarket, from 1933 to 1936. During this time he also attended Draughon's Business College, studying accounting part time. Then, from 1936 until 1942, Hall worked for Kraft Food Company. He went on to serve in the U.S. Army infantry and spent seven months in the Pacific theater during World War II. Hall was recalled to active duty in 1951, at which time he operated mess

halls for the Quartermaster Corps at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, and Camp Crowder, Missouri. He also worked for Lido Enterprises, a cafeteria and restaurant business, until 1951.

Hall opened the first Minute Man restaurant at 407 Broadway in Little Rock on May 26, 1948, along with partners Oliver Harper, Walter Oathout, and Alton Barnett. The original Minute Man was a coffee shop with 24-hour service. In 1956 Hall bought out his partners and converted the flagship store into a fast-food establishment. A historical marker was later placed at the site.

According to Hall, Minute Man was a forerunner in a number of fast food concepts. In 1948 the Raytheon Company placed three experimental "RadaRange" microwave ovens in locations across the United States; Hall and partners received one of the three. They pioneered the use of microwave ovens in the restaurant business. The most popular and publicized offering born out of these ovens was surely the Radar Deep Dish Pie, a sweet treat that many Arkansans re-



Original Minute Man restaurant at 407 Broadway in Little Rock, 1956. Courtesy of the UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture.



Wes Hall with free Minute Man glasses, 1976. Courtesy of the UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture.

member for its tendency to burn the roof of one's mouth. Minute Man also sold "real charcoal-broiled hamburgers," and offered a gourmet burger with a double full-sized meat patty with extras, called the "Big M," a full year before McDonald's debuted the Big Mac.

Hall's marketing strategies were just as groundbreaking. Minute Man was the first fast food restaurant to give a free drinking glass to customers, as part of a Coca-Cola promotion in the early 1970s. Additionally, Minute Man was the first to offer a specialty meal for children, called the Magic Meal. Burger King bought the rights to use the Magic Meal concept and name in 1982-1983. Minute Man's rights to the slogan "old-fashioned hamburgers" were later sold to Wendy's.

Like these titans of the fast food industry, Hall understood that it was important to frame his restaurants as gathering places for family and friends. Food may be a basic biological need, but the eating of it is social. Restaurants designed for speed thus spend their advertising dollars slowing down the experience of consumption. A letter from the president of Ouachita Baptist University to Minute Man associate Al McCor-

mick, dated March 11, 1967, reveals that the Minute Man in Arkadelphia had become a social hub for youngsters of all ages—a fact for which he was effusively grateful:

"In reply to your inquiry about the acceptability of the recreation facilities in conjunction with the Minute Man operation in Arkadelphia, I am happy to say that they have been satisfactory in every way. A large number of our students—both boys and girls—frequent the place, and we have never heard anything but praise for it. From the school's standpoint, we have had absolutely no problems. As a parent, I have also been pleased. I have a teenaged son and daughter who go here frequently with their friends, and I am glad they do. It is a clean, wholesome place, and I know where to find them if I want them. —Ralph A. Phelps, Jr., President"

In addition to Minute Man of America, Inc., Hall operated Dixie Equipment Company, Food Service Supply, and Razorback Sign Company. After selling his controlling interests in these businesses in 1981, Hall formed Corporate Finance Associates, a merger and finance company. Then in 1985, he founded Wes Hall, Inc., a real estate company, before retiring in 1991. Hall served as an adviser to the

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• EVERYTHING ON OUR MENU CAN BE PACKED TO GO •

Menu from North Little Rock location, ca. 1974. Courtesy of the UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture.

Service Corporation of Retired Executives (SCORE) until his death in 2002.

Hall's business record is eclectic, to say the least. But he will be remembered in this state, and perhaps a few others, for his knack for knowing what people want and how to deliver it. Minute Man represented not only a quick meal at a reasonable price, but a place to "share a minute with a friend."

The Wes Hall Papers (UALR. MS.0100) are housed at the UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture and may be consulted in the Arkansas Studies Institute reading room in downtown Little Rock. An online guide to the collection may be found at <http://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/findingaids/id/868>.

*Monica Madey Mylonas, a native of Little Rock, is an assistant archivist at the UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture. She holds a master's degree in the Anthropology of Food from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, as well as bachelor's degrees in Anthropology and English from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Her interests lie in the study and preservation of endemic foodways.*

# A Gastronomic Home

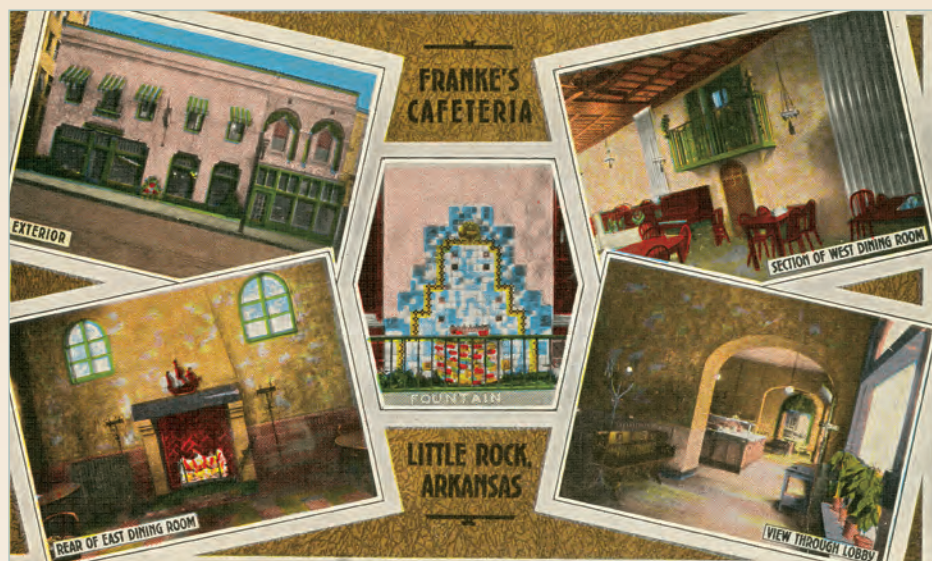
By Stephanie Harp

**W**hen I stepped off the plane in Little Rock—on that decade-ago trip that combined history research with my first visit to extended family in fourteen years—I was famished. Before going to see my great aunt, before finding my way to UALR’s Ottenheimer Library, before almost anything else, I pulled my rental car into what was then the Black-Eyed Pea, near my aunt’s retirement home on West Markham. Thank goodness my cousin had recommended the place, with its chicken-fried chicken, black-eyed peas with ham and lots of pepper, cornbread, and a giant glass of iced tea. After a dehydrating day on airplanes, I drank it in about thirty seconds.

“A bit thirsty, are you, ma’am?” the waiter said, as he refilled.

*The love of local food surely must be a measure of home, no matter how long you’ve been away.*

The love of local food surely must be a measure of home, no matter how long you’ve been away. After they married, my parents left Little Rock for St. Louis, where I was born. Growing up, I lived in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Charlottesville, Virginia, with only a brief stop back in Little Rock when I was in kindergarten and first grade. No matter where we lived, we trekked home every couple of years to visit, and to eat Southern food in settings much more appropriate to the cuisine than were the kitchen tables in our various Northern houses. From my own first independent trip to Little Rock, I remember where I ate as much as anything else: the Black-



Postcard showing different exterior and interior views of Franke’s Restaurant, ca. 1930. Courtesy of Timothy G. Nutt.

Eyed Pea, The Dixie Café and, of course, Franke’s Cafeteria.

My dad’s sister and her husband picked me up at my hotel on their way home from church that Sunday, and they took me to the lunch I’d requested. Franke’s didn’t feel familiar until we got inside. Then I remembered being a child of five or six, waiting in that long line to watch my plate served with eggplant casserole, rolls, and pecan pie, the only dishes I recalled and on which I fixated this time. I added more iced tea, a salad, and turnip greens, which made me laugh at myself. Enticing me to eat turnip greens had been a constant challenge for my mother during my Pennsylvania childhood.

I had intended to pay for all our meals, but my uncle beat me to it. When I tried to insist, he said, “You haven’t eaten it yet.” As though I’d have any regrets.

While we ate, we talked about the food. My aunt said the pie wasn’t as good as hers (whose recipe I have and use myself) but they deemed it acceptable enough that my uncle was eating a slice, too. A waiter refilling our tea paused to listen as my aunt told me about the

*In Pennsylvania, I could eat Southern food only when my mother cooked it at home. Loving fried okra and cornbread dressing set me apart from my suburban Philadelphia, first- and second-generation friends who ate Italian, Chinese, Indian, and Irish food...*

fried pies she used to have waiting for my cousins when they got home from school. The waiter turned to me: “Those would have been good.” Lucky cousins.

And lucky them, too, for growing up with this sort of food accessible at every turn. In Pennsylvania, I could eat Southern food only when my mother cooked it at home. Loving fried okra and cornbread dressing set me apart from my suburban Philadelphia, first- and second-generation friends—who ate Italian, Chinese, Indian, and Irish food—

and now from my New England neighbors who know how to boil live lobsters and can make virtually anything out of potatoes.

On another day in Little Rock I met—in person for the first time—the late historian Richard Dixon, with whom I'd been corresponding for several years since the death of my grandmother. She'd been a non-traditional student of his back when UALR was Little Rock University. He was dressed in a light blue suit and white shirt and carried a cane, when I picked him up from the frame house at Ringo and Cross streets where he'd grown up. He directed me to The Dixie Café, his choice, which was crowded enough at noon that we had to give our names and wait for a table.

After we sat down, the waitress put before us the largest glasses of iced tea I'd ever seen, larger, even, than at the Black-Eyed Pea. After my animalistic consumption of that first night's supper, the Cajun-grilled catfish with vegetables sounded too heavy, but I couldn't pass up the opportunity. This excellent choice was as delicious as any fish I'd had—light white meat covered with cayenne and spices. More good choices included the corn bread muffins and rolls, and the sides of black-eyed pea salad and turnip greens (again, hear that, Mother?).

I let the friendly waitress talk me into ice cream atop my black-berry cobbler.

"No," I'd tried to say. "I don't think I'll have any."

"Oh, come on! If you're gonna have it, you might as well have the whole thing. Hot cobbler, cold ice cream?"

"OK. You talked me into it. You know," I continued, "I've been some places where they serve pie cold, and then try to put ice cream on top."

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Advertisement for Franke's Cafeteria, 1956. From the *Little Rock-North Little Rock City Directory*.

"How awful!" she exclaimed. "They must be Yankees."

I smiled to her and laughed to myself. They were. And I must have been doing a pretty good job hiding the fact that I'd lived away from Arkansas so much longer than I'd lived in it.

If food equaled home, I was right where I belonged.

*Stephanie Harp is a historian living in Maine. She is currently working on the history of a 1927 Little Rock race riot and lynching.*

# Deer Hunting

By Larry Don Frost

Those beautiful, delicate creatures happily munching away on your hostas, azaleas, and landscape shrubs—or darting across the highway when you are steering with one hand and talking on your phone to your stylist with your other hand—were once, as hard as it is to believe today, rare sights, even in rural states like Arkansas.

After the Great Depression of the 1930s, when hungry people hunted wild game year round, day and night, local papers would report the sighting of a set of deer tracks as a news item.

The old joke was that rabbits grew so scarce that whenever a trapper took one in a “rabbit gum” (trap), he would milk it and turn it loose for later.

State wildlife agencies used game refuges, hunting restrictions, trapping, and transporting to bring the deer herd back. Today over one million of Bambi’s kin live in Arkansas, even though hunters thin their rosters by over 100,000 each year.

The biggest explosion of deer has occurred in southern Arkansas, in the gulf coastal plain, where timber companies routinely clearcut hundreds of thousands of acres of mature timber to replant in pine. Thick vegetation springs up in the cutovers, providing food and cover for deer for the next ten years.

These companies also lease hunting rights to clubs, which in turn post the land and plant food plots to improve the size and quality of the deer herd. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission enrolls tens of thousands of acres in its leased land program and sells hunting permits for forty dollars per year.

When I was a teenager in the 1950s, I often heard men say, “I’ve hunted twenty years and never killed a deer.”

Back then the only way that most people hunted was with hounds. Handlers would release the dogs to start “drives” while others lined roads, even state highways, hoping for a shot when a fleeing deer crossed the gravel or pavement. I remember driving State Highway 35 from Benton to Sheridan and seeing boys as young as ten standing on the shoulders with shotguns and “thuty-thuty” rifles. No one wore blaze orange “five-mile cloth” then either.

Today’s regulations have gotten armed boys off the highways, and all hunters go bedecked in blaze orange or blaze green. Ironically, most wear full camouflage beneath the highly visible vests and caps.

Deer are much more plentiful today than in the 1950s, and today’s hunters are better skilled and more efficient than their grandfathers were. Today’s hunter washes his



Mr. and Mrs. Wilhite and Mr. Christian with deer, Mena, Polk County, Ark., ca. 1930. Courtesy L. Oscar Plaster Photographs (MC 813) Box 2, File 10, Image 13, Special Collections, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

clothing in scent-free detergent and seals it in plastic bags until ready for use. By contrast, Grandpa’s hunting overalls and flannel shirts STANK to both man and beast.

In the 1950s when a hunter got cold, he might build a smoky fire and stand over it to get warm. Today’s hunter dresses in Gore-Tex and clutches pocket hand-warmers without stirring up scents that alarm every deer in the woods.

One atavistic aspect of hunting still presents problems. Primitive man fought tribal wars over hunting territories. Today, hunting clubs lease large blocks of land from timber companies and private landowners. They put up “leased to” signs and often use anti-trespassing laws or outright intimidation against anyone who sneaks onto the property to hunt.

In a way that is an improvement over the 1950s’ way of claiming territory. Clubs, often of multiple families, would pitch camp on timber company land or in a national forest and declare that a section or two was theirs to hunt. Anyone else who showed up was ordered to leave. Many fights ensued.

When venison was scarce, campers would divvy up the meat at the end of the season, but some would quarrel over the hams and tenderloins.

If one club’s dogs ran a deer into another club’s range and the deer was shot, each club was entitled to half the meat. If a stranger shot a deer on a club’s territory, he might be ordered to depart, leaving the deer for the club.

In the 1950s, deer season lasted only twelve days. With such a huge deer herd today, archery season runs October through February. Gun season lasts over one month in southern Arkansas, where the yearly limit is six deer, all six of which can be does.

When deer hunters reminisce about the good old days, the good old days are now.

# Cooking Venison

By Larry Don Frost

**“Y**ou want recipes?” The old mossback deer hunter looked at me as if I were an idiot. “You put it in the pan and COOK IT!” In lard. For a long time. I knew then why many people say they do not like venison. But there are many more ways—and far better ways—to “cook it.”

Venison is a lean meat free of antibiotics, pesticides, and growth hormones. Trim the fat, and it is almost cholesterol free. Treat it right, and it makes delicious steaks, roasts, and stews. Properly wrapped, it lasts for months, even years, in the freezer.

It is easily acquired. The legal limit in Arkansas is six deer per year, and many successful hunters will give friends and neighbors extra venison if only asked. Besides, shouldn't you get some return for all the hostas, azaleas, and decorative shrubbery that you have fed them?

Myths surround the care and cooking of venison. First, the carcass does NOT need to be hung for a week to tenderize it. If hung unskinned, the fat under the hide goes rancid and spoils the taste.

Contrary to folk wisdom, the meat does not need to be pre-soaked in vinegar, buttermilk, salty water, or anything to remove “that gamey taste.” Properly cared for, venison has a mild taste without suffering from any of these abuses.

Venison does not need to be cooked a long time to be palatable. It actually cooks quickly and can easily become overdone. Without the marbled fat of beef, however, it benefits from moist cooking techniques.

Whether you are a KIY hunter or acquire your protein source from someone who is, the meat comes to the kitchen in four forms: stew meat, hamburger (ground), steaks, and roasts. Here are four really good, easy recipes, one for each form.

## STEW

Start with any cut of meat. Cube it, boil it twenty minutes, drain it, and rinse it. Boil it in new water another fifteen minutes with a can of beef broth or three beef bouillon cubes for flavor. Add a sliced yellow onion and several cut-up carrots. Boil fifteen minutes longer; then toss in cut-up potatoes and boil another fifteen minutes. Season with Mrs. Dash original blend and salt and pepper to taste. A can of drained whole kernel corn sweetens the stew, and a can of diced tomatoes adds color.

## TWIN MEAT LOAVES

Hand mix a pound of ground venison, a pound of pork sausage, 2 beaten eggs, 3/4 cup milk, 1/4 cup chopped onion, and 1/4 cup chopped celery. Add com-

mercial bread crumbs and mix until the loaf holds together. Form two loaves into 13" x 9" x 2" pans and bake uncovered at 350°F for one hour. Spoon off the sausage grease. Mix a topping of 1/4 cup catsup, 3 tablespoons of brown sugar, 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg, and 1 teaspoon dried mustard. Apply to loaves and bake another ten minutes. You will never taste a better meatloaf.

## STEAKS

Like any tenderloin, venison “back strap” is one long muscle easily sliced into steaks. All other steaks come off the deer's hind quarters or “ham,” and they require more effort.

A deer ham consists of a tight bundle of five or six overlapping muscle groups. Sliced in the traditional “retail” way, large deer steaks break apart into a stack of crescent-shaped smaller steaks that cook unevenly.

If you get a whole ham, use your fingers to separate the muscle groups; then cut each one off the bone at each end. Then you can slice each of these against the grain and make small steaks or “chops.” If the steaks come to you retail cut, separate the sections into “chops” before cooking.

Using steaks from the back strap or the ham, pound them with a tenderizer. Marinate them in zesty Italian dressing for a few hours. Dredge each oily steak in salted and peppered flour, and brown them in canola or peanut oil for no more than two minutes per side. Serve as steaks or on sandwich buns. These are great!

## ROAST

Phyllis Speer, on AETN's *Arkansas Outdoors*, prepared this wonderful dish. Use a whole deer shoulder or a two-pound rump roast or tenderloin. Stick holes in the meat and insert six whole garlic cloves. Pour the following marinade over the meat and chill overnight: 1 teaspoon of garlic powder, 1 finely chopped onion, 2/3 cup soy sauce, 1/3 cup canola oil, 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice, 1 teaspoon of curry powder, 1 teaspoon chili powder, and 2 teaspoons of ginger.

Bake in the marinade at 225°F for three or four hours. Add 8 ounces of fresh mushrooms for the last hour.

Shred with a fork. This is great with rice or creamed potatoes.

## AND MORE

You can find many more wonderful recipes for wild game and fish at [www.aetn.org/programs/arkansasoutdoors/phyllisrecipes](http://www.aetn.org/programs/arkansasoutdoors/phyllisrecipes)

*Larry Don Frost is a retired English professor and longtime hunter.*



# Recreating Fern Newcomb's Apple Stack Cake

By Mary Dillard, Guest Editor

Any summer when the Buckalews—neighbors who owned a tourist court near my childhood home in Benton—had a good apple crop, they would share with my family. My mother then made green apple pie, my favorite childhood dessert. Another apple dessert I remember fondly, and one which I've long wanted to replicate, was Fern Newcomb's apple stack cake.

The Newcomb family lived across the street from mine in Benton and their daughter, Jimmie Fern, named after parents Jim and Fern, was the same age as my sister Judy. In the summers, my sisters and other neighborhood kids played card games, often at the Newcomb's house. On a few rare occasions, Mrs. Newcomb made an apple stack cake which we got to sample. The cake consisted of thin cake layers with a spicy apple filling; it wasn't a beautiful cake but it was a delicious one.

I wanted to make the cake myself and finally found a recipe in a November 1995 issue of *Gourmet* magazine. Later Michael Dougan sent a recipe that a woman had modified from an internet search to more closely align with her mother's memory of the cake. Her mother's memory included mixing the cake batter by hand and leaving it overnight in the cellar. Heavy duty mixers and modern refrigeration make that process unnecessary, thank goodness.

*The Arkansas Classic Country Cookbook* by Ruth Malone and Bess Lankford includes a recipe for Pioneer Wedding Stack Cake described as "a favorite wedding cake in the early days when sugar was not plentiful. Wedding guests brought a thin layer of sorghum cake to add to the bride's cake. A bride took great pride in the



Finished apple stack cake

height of her cake—a higher cake denoted more friends. Some say the footed cake stand became popular for this reason. The bride's mother furnished applesauce to go between the layers. Stack layers are similar to a rich cookie dough."

It was time to see if I could replicate the cake I remembered so fondly from my childhood. I first made the cake from the magazine recipe. It was very good but not as spicy as I remembered. The filling also called for two cups of sugar which I felt overwhelmed the apple flavor and made the whole cake too sweet.

The internet is a great resource for recipes so I began researching and found that many traditional recipes used sorghum molasses to sweeten the cake batter. Sorghum would have been a readily available sweetener in many parts of Arkansas. According to my historian husband, generations of Arkansans considered molasses one of the three primary foods—meat, meal (corn meal), and molasses. So I found a recipe and baked my second version of the cake with sorghum produced by volunteers at the Heritage House Museum in Montgomery

County, a gift from Tom's sister.

Cake number two included both sorghum molasses and ginger in the cake batter as well as more spice in the applesauce. This cake was my contribution to Thanksgiving, and both my sisters agreed that the cake layers, although good, tasted too much like ginger bread to match Fern Newcomb's cake. It also was eight layers high which made it unwieldy; so six layers became my standard. At this point I was feeling like a cook at *Cook's Illustrated* working to perfect a recipe. I had found recipes for cake layers ranging from six to nine inches round and finally settled on 8 inches since I could fit two layers on one baking sheet and cut my cooking time in half. Jimmie Fern Newcomb recalled that her mother cooked the dough on a griddle and then used a plate to trim each layer to uniform size. I didn't have a griddle, so I stuck with a standard baking sheet.

So, it was on to cake three which basically used the applesauce mix from the second cake and the cake itself from my first effort. This one nearly matched my memory and got better each day for several days as the

Right: The steps taken in recreating a childhood favorite resulted in a delicious product. Photographs by Mary Dillard.

cake absorbed some of the essence of the apple mixture.

Every recipe I found called for dried apples, and the two sources I used created a different result. The dried apple rings from the natural foods store worked much better than the dried slices from the local grocery that never seemed to break up and had less apple flavor, as well as an unnatural green color.

Apples were once a major crop in Northwest Arkansas from the 1890s until after the Great Depression in the 1930s. Dried apples were a staple in early Arkansas, and the methods I found for home-drying ranged from drying in a slow oven to placing the apple slices on trays, covering them with cheesecloth and leaving them in the hot summer sun. One reference described placing apple rings on a string and hanging them to dry. Since insects were attracted to the drying apples, they were sometimes finished off in a hot oven to kill any insect eggs or other contaminants.

Dried apples were also available commercially. Thomas Rothrock described his family's apple operation in the winter 1974 issue of the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* and wrote, "Apple driers were numerous. Along a three-fourths mile stretch of road bordering the west portion of our farm, there were three of them. The apples were peeled and sliced, then dried by a night crew over wood stoves. Sulphur was thrown on the fires, the resulting vapors preventing the apple slices from turning too brown. When ready to market, the dried apples were sprinkled with soda water and then packed in wooden or paste-board boxes."

The "very nearly like Fern Newcomb's stack cake" recipe follows. The process could be shortened by omitting the overnight soak of the dried apples and cooking them a little longer. But letting the cake sit overnight in the refrigerator is a good idea, and enjoying it over several days an even better one.



## Old-Fashioned Apple Stack Cake

### For filling:

12-14 ounces dried apple slices  
5 cups water  
1 cup brown sugar  
¼ teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
½-1 teaspoon ground ginger  
¼ teaspoon ground cloves (optional)  
½ teaspoon ground allspice  
1 teaspoon vanilla

### For cake layers:

½ cup buttermilk  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
5 to 6 cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 cup vegetable shortening  
2 ½ cups sugar  
2 large eggs  
1 teaspoon vanilla

### Make filling:

In a large bowl combine apples and water. Chill covered overnight.

Transfer apples and water to a large heavy saucepan and add sugar, salt, and spices. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring, and cook at a low simmer, stirring frequently, until softened, 30 to 40 minutes. Add extra water if it becomes too dry. Stir in vanilla and cool completely. Pulse apple mixture in a food processor until coarsely chopped and transfer to a large bowl. (Filling may be made a day ahead and chilled, covered.)

### Make cake layers:

Preheat oven to 400°. In a small bowl stir together buttermilk, baking soda, and baking powder and set aside. In a large bowl sift together 4 cups flour and salt.

Beat shortening with sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition, and then beat in vanilla. Add buttermilk mixture and beat until combined well. Gradually add flour mixture, beating until well combined. Add enough of the remaining 2 cups flour, ¼ cup at a time, to form a soft but not sticky dough.

Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface and divide into 6 pieces. Working on a lightly floured sheet of wax paper, shape each piece into a disk and roll into an 8 or 9 inch round. Arrange rounds on parchment paper and gently prick dough all over with a fork. Bake layers on a baking sheet in the middle of the oven until golden, 12 to 15 minutes. Cool layers completely on racks and carefully remove parchment.

### Assemble the cake:

Spread 1 cup filling on one cake layer and top with another cake layer. Continue layering filling and cake layers in the same manner, ending with a cake layer. Chill cake, covered, overnight and bring to room temperature before serving. Dust with confectioner's sugar.

# Squirrel for Breakfast

By Martha Estes

[NOTE: Martha Hogan Estes has a vivid recollection of growing up with an extraordinary mother and an absentee father in eastern Washington County and later Fayetteville, after World War II. Martha's mother, Phydella Hogan, managed to keep her family together, give them a good education, and demonstrate how to transform a little pluck into a dandy breakfast. Her children, in order of birth, included Bill (Billy), Martha (also called Markie or Mark), Joe, and Jerry.]

In the fall of 1949, my older brother Bill got his first rifle (not counting the Daisy BB gun we all shared when we were little); he was just shy of his thirteenth birthday. It was a little single-shot, bolt-action Winchester .22 with a walnut stock. Daddy brought it when he came to see us at Goshen, just before we moved to Fayetteville.

Bill already knew how to hunt and was a fair shot. Joe and I practiced shooting at bulls-eyes we drew on newspapers and tacked on the south side of the barn. Joe was coming along pretty good. I missed the whole target. Bill swore I didn't even hit the broad side of the barn. Well, that didn't last long because Mom put a stop to wasting the box of .22 longs Daddy left.

"You might need 'em later," she said. "Save 'em for hunting."

Mom admired the rifle, rubbing the smooth, dark stock and sliding the bolt back and forth as she reminded us that she once had one of her own. I reckon Daddy took that rifle when he left; Mom hadn't hunted since.

When I woke one frosty Saturday morning, Mom and Granddad were sitting at the kitchen table, steaming coffee cups in front of them, watching the squirrels play in the trees outside the back door. Mom held a Lucky Strike cigarette in her hand, and Granddad poured creamy coffee into a saucer, then lit his Prince Albert "roll-your-own." A cloud of cigarette smoke drifted around the table and blended with the smell of coffee and wood smoke from the old cook stove.

"A mess of squirrel and gravy would sure be good this morning," Mom said, as she raised a finger to her lips to hush my usual chatter. "You stay here and be quiet. I'm going to try out Billy's rifle." She picked up the gun, slid a cartridge in and closed the bolt, dropping three more shells in her jeans pocket as she



"Try and do it"—with an old fashioned flintlock horse-pistol! Sills Photo

Photograph from a 1927 article about squirrel shooting. Courtesy Otto Earnest Rayburn Encyclopedia, Squirrel Folder, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries.

gingerly stepped out, closing the door softly behind her. I ran to wake my brothers.

"We're gonna have squirrel and gravy for breakfast," I whispered. Joe muttered something; baby Jerry didn't respond at all. Bill rolled out of his warm bed and followed me to the kitchen as he pulled on his jeans.

We heard one sharp crack from the gun. Mom, standing at the edge of the woods, slowly reloaded; we peeked out the door and waited. Another shot rang out and we saw

her reload quickly and then get off another shot. Soon she stepped into clear view holding two nice fat squirrels by the tails.

"We'll skin 'em," Bill said, grabbing his pocket knife, which he kept sharp enough to shave his skinny little arms. "Come on, Mark. You can hold 'em."

As Mom came in, we ran out to the porch where Bill lifted a squirrel, made a precise cut at the base of its tail and began to pull the furry skin from the flesh. I just held on tight. Soon we were back in the cozy kitchen where Joe sat in a cane bottom chair, yawning. Jerry, with his blanket draped around him, was snuggled in Granddad's arms.

Since it was a weekend, we didn't have to catch the school bus after quickly downing our usual biscuit and a glass of milk. We were having squirrel and gravy for breakfast. No one was in a hurry. And no one had to be urged to eat breakfast.

Mom already had the milk gravy simmering on the back of the wood stove and a bowl of flour for biscuits sitting on the table. She washed the meat, cut it into small pieces; shook it in a paper sack filled with flour, and transferred it to the big black frying pan. She poured milk and grease in the mixing bowl, stirred it with a wooden spoon, and rolled the biscuit dough into little balls. An especially tiny one was made for Jerry, who would eat only bread and gravy from his perch on Granddad's lap.

"I wish I could go hunting," Joe said.

"You're learning," Bill said. "We'll go next week. But Mom, I forgot you used to hunt."

"I've missed it, too," Mom responded, stirring the gravy. "That's sure a nice gun, son."

"We watched you, Mama," I said. "I thought you had three squirrels."

"I guess she missed one," Bill said.

"No, I hit him, but I didn't kill him—had to put him out of his misery. I always swore I'd quit when I couldn't get one with the first shot. I just maimed the second one."

"Ain't nobody can hit 'em all ever' time," Bill said.

"No, I guess not, but I sure hate that," she said, shaking her head as she peeked in the oven at the browning biscuits.

"I reckon Joe'll just have to take my place. Well, breakfast is about ready. Markie, set the table."

Oh, the aroma was heavenly. Nothing could possibly smell as good as fried squirrel, wood smoke, and coffee on a cold morning. We ate squir-

rel and licked the grease off our fingers. We talked and laughed as we slathered butter on the biscuits and spread homemade blackberry jam on them, too. Even Jerry wanted seconds when we passed the bowl of gravy around the table again.

"Biscuit, please, Mama," he said, grinning and wiping gravy off his face with the back of his hand.

### **Fried Squirrel**

2 young squirrels (dressed)

½ cup flour

1 teaspoon salt

Pepper (to taste)

¼ cup lard, bacon grease, or shortening

Cut squirrel into serving pieces. Rinse in cold water, drain. Put flour, salt and pepper in a paper bag. Heat grease in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat until hot; do not allow it to smoke. Shake 4 or 5 pieces of meat in the flour mix at a time; place in skillet with hot grease; continue until all meat is in the frying pan. Fry both sides turning occasionally until all are pieces are browned lightly. Reduce heat or move pan to edge of heated surface and simmer until tender when pierced with a fork.

### **Milk Gravy**

¼ cup lard, bacon grease, or oil

¼ cup flour

1 cup water

1 cup milk

In heavy skillet, melt grease; stir in flour. Stir constantly with a wooden spoon until flour begins to darken slightly. Add water and stir quickly to prevent lumping; add milk and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat; add salt and pepper and simmer, stirring occasionally, until thickened.

### **1-2-3 Biscuits**

Sift together in large bowl:

2 cups flour

1 teaspoon salt

3 teaspoon baking powder

Add: 1 cup milk, stir well

Heat: ¼ cup lard or oil in 8 X 8 biscuit pan in oven.

Pour most of the grease into the biscuit dough and mix well. Pinch dough into approximately 9 balls or drop by tablespoon in hot oil being sure to turn them once. Bake in a hot oven (450°) until brown and crusty.

*Martha Hogan Estes is a Fayetteville writer. She and her siblings were raised by their mother, who was as good with a squirrel rifle as with a banjo.*

# Rose Inn Restaurant in Crossett Offered Fare with Flair

By Jimmy Jeffress

Crossett is situated at the western end of Ashley County and has billed itself for decades as the “Forestry Capital of the South.” Janice Clark (now deceased and at one time a free-lance writer for the *Ashley News Observer* in Crossett), wrote in an April 1973 *News Observer* article that the town had its genesis in 1899, soon after three businessmen of Davenport, Iowa (E. S. Crossett, Dr. J. W. Watzek, and C. W. Gates) founded the Crossett Lumber Company. They hired Gates’ nephew, Edgar W. “Cap” Gates, to manage the mill operations and to oversee the camp and the town which would grow up around it.

In her article, Clark wrote that “Cap” Gates dreamed of founding a “different” sort of sawmill town. He did not want Crossett to become a stereotypical mill town of the time with “brawling drunks on Saturday nights, slatternly camp followers, unkempt children, or any of the legendary prototypes of ‘cut-and-get-out’ sawmill towns.”

Gates refined a more personal vision for the town as time went by. Most folk believed that all of the area’s timber would be cut and everyone would be gone in twenty to twenty-five years. However, Gates built a permanent town that was vastly different from those that usually surrounded the tawdry lumber camps in the south at the start of the twentieth century.

By 1910, as Gates oversaw the progress of the Crossett Lumber Company and the beginnings of Crossett, he began to plan for the future livelihood of the people in his town. He formed the Crossett Hampshire Club and began to promote the growth of purebred Hampshire hogs and cattle in Ashley County. He carved out a



Rose Inn, ca. 1950. Courtesy of Ray Hanley.

cattle farm from the forest a few miles from Crossett and stocked it with a herd of black Angus cattle.

In 1912, Gates built a 45-room inn in the community and named it after his wife Rose. He was determined that the Rose Inn would “symbolize a community of gentle people with gracious manners.” He imported a professional chef and black waiters from Little Rock for a year while, “they taught a local staff to cook, wait tables, and perform other services for the inn.”

The Rose Inn was a stunningly beautiful building with a wide porch spanning the front. The building was “separated from the unpaved street by a wrought iron fence to keep out the cattle and hogs that wandered at will over the town until a stock law was passed in the late 1940s.” Ceiling fans cooled the big lobby and dining room, and were also placed in the bedrooms upstairs.

Built of the finest pine lumber the Crossett Lumber Company produced, the building “burned to the ground on the night of November 9, 1913,” a little more than a year after it was opened. The fire was thought to have started when a “vent pipe leading from the

basement furnace through the three floors overheated.”

Before the ashes had cooled, “Cap” Gates announced that “a new inn will be started immediately and completed in three months if possible.” Gates, a man for whom nothing was seemingly impossible, saw that the building was finished on schedule in early 1914. It was built by the original plans and it “immediately became a favorite oasis for businessmen who traveled more than fifty miles over rutted forest roads to do business in the thriving mill town.

For many years the inn was host to the directors of the Crossett Lumber Company who would come for annual meetings to review the business and to plan its future course. The directors came from such places as Davenport, Iowa, Chicago, and cities in California and Oregon, and each came to expect the same fine service at Crossett’s Rose Inn as could be found in any major city of the U.S. at the time.

The inn developed a reputation for good food and good service. A Christmas dinner menu from 1914 read as follows: “Giblet Soup Anglais, Olives, Sweet Pickles, Escalloped

*The Rose Inn was a stunningly beautiful building with a wide porch spanning the front. The building was "separated from the unpaved street by a wrought iron fence to keep out the cattle and hogs that wandered at will over the town until a stock law was passed in the late 1940s."*



Postcard showing exterior and interior views of the Rose Inn, ca. 1930. Courtesy of Ray Hanley.

Oysters, Roast Young Turkey with Sage Stuffing, Baked Yams, Mashed White Potatoes, Spinach with Egg, Cranberry Jelly, Christmas Salad, Frozen Grape Juice Punch, English Plum Pudding with Hard Sauce, Nuts and Raisins, Oranges and Apples, White and Dark Fruit Cake, Cheese and Crackers, Coffee. Dinner 50 cents."

A 1920 dinner for the Crossett Hampshire Club's Second Annual Sale at the Rose Inn featured the following menu: "Oyster Soup, Celery Hearts, Ashley County New Radishes, Ashley County Roast Wild Turkey, Oyster Dressing/Cranberry Sauce, Ashley County Quail on Toast, Rasher of Hampshire Bacon, Roast Arkansas Young Venison, Red Currant Jelly, Arkansas Asparagus/Vinnigrette, Ashley County World's Champion Candied Yams, Chicken Salad, Arkansas Green Apple Pie, Stuttgart Cheese, Arkansas Sweet Potato Pie, Ashley Mixed Nuts, Coffee, Cigars. To be served only to guests of Crossett Hampshire Club on the evening of Nov. 20, 1920. C. J. Boardman, Prop. Rose Inn, Crossett, Arkansas."

Clark wrote in her 1973 article that, "This sumptuous meal, as well as the less elaborate but equally good regular weekday food, was served in a big dining room beneath clusters of electric lights which hung in bell-shaped globes of frosted glass with milk glass

shields to deflect and soften the light. Black waiters in starched white jackets served the food on white damask covered tables, where Vienna-made cane bottomed bentwood chairs lent light grace to the room. Promptly at 6:00 each evening the double doors of the dining room would be opened by a waiter announcing with quiet dignity, 'Dinner is served.'"

"Testimony to the continued excellence of the food served at the Rose Inn," is the national attention it received when the November 1961 *Ford Times*, published by the Ford Motor Company, featured the Rose Inn in the "Favorite Recipes of Famous Taverns" section. "A water color painting of the Rose Inn appeared opposite the comment, 'A forty-year reputation for fine food and hospitality is maintained at the Rose Inn in Crossett.' In the late 1940s Duncan Hines gave the Rose Inn his seal of special approval for its quality food."

Time has a way of changing things. The Crossett Lumber Company was bought by the Georgia-Pacific Corporation in 1962, and in 1973 announced that the Rose Inn would be closed. "It could no longer make adjustments to modern demands for central air conditioning, sound-proof walls, color TV, and baths in every room."

It was fitting that the last luncheon for a community group, held at the inn

on May 5, 1973, was that of the Crossett Book Club, the oldest organization in town, formed in 1937. The last party held there was the junior-senior prom for Huttig High School whose students traveled approximately 35 miles for their event. Huttig no longer has a high school.

As a historical note, the contents of the Rose Inn were placed on public auction on June 8-9, 1973. The proceeds were given to the Crossett Jaycees to be used to help retire the debt of the Carousel School, a local entity dedicated to serving severely developmentally challenged children in the community. The inn was dismantled and the site cleared shortly thereafter. The block on Crossett's Main Street where the Rose Inn was located is now a park that was dedicated during Crossett's Centennial Celebration. It contains flowers, walking paths, memorials, and a covered pavilion that is used for weddings, family gatherings, and other such activities.

On a personal note, my mother often told me (and I have no reason to doubt her veracity) that she and Daddy spent their honeymoon night in the Rose Inn, and that I was conceived there.

*Jimmy Jeffress is a retired public school teacher, a former member of the Arkansas Senate and House of Representatives.*

# Arkansas Food Quiz

1. What Arkansas city holds an old well-known watermelon festival each year including a "seed-spitting contest" and has featured some of the world's largest watermelons?
  - a. Hermitage
  - b. Bald Knob
  - c. Hope
  - d. Clarksville
2. Dry prehistoric bluff shelters in the Ozarks have yielded food such as:
  - a. River mussels
  - b. Acorns
  - c. Corn
  - d. All of the above
3. Which of the following tomato varieties was developed in Arkansas?
  - a. Early girl
  - b. Brandywine
  - c. Mortgage Lifter
  - d. Traveler
4. Which of the following is not an Arkansas winery?
  - a. Kessler Mountain
  - b. Mt. Bethel
  - c. Wiederkehr
  - d. Post Familie
5. Edamame is the name for an Arkansas product made from:
  - a. Corn
  - b. Soybeans
  - c. Wheat
  - d. Grain sorghum
6. What was the name of the prominent bakery that recently closed in Fordyce?
  - a. Kohlers
  - b. Karcher-Schmand
  - c. Klines
  - d. Klappenbachs
7. The Pelfrey family of Rogers, Arkansas developed a business selling:
  - a. Raspberries
  - b. Peaches
  - c. Rabbits
  - d. Venison
8. The famous gathering place and bar for politicians in Little Rock's historic Marion Hotel was:
  - a. The Gar Hole
  - b. The Flaming Arrow
  - c. The Coachman
  - d. The Leather Bottle
9. A long-time and well-known Jewish ethnic restaurant in Hot Springs was:
  - a. Esther's
  - b. West Mountain Diner
  - c. Mollie's
  - d. Sam's Delicatessen
10. Even though Cotham's is a popular restaurant in Little Rock, the original Cotham's is in:
  - a. Scott
  - b. Keo
  - c. England
  - d. Cabot



Answers: 1. C; 2. D; 3. D; 4. A; 5. B; 6. D; 7. C; 8. A; 9. C; 10. A

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# Featured Cookbook

## From Our Collection

### *Billy Joe Tatum's Wild Food Cookbook & Field Guide:*

*An Illustrated Guide to 70 Wild Plants, and Over 350 Irresistible Recipes for Serving Them Up Good*  
New York: Workman Publishing, 1976

By Mary Dillard, Guest Editor

Billy Joe Tatum became a nationally recognized authority on wild foods after moving to Melbourne in 1958 with her country-doctor husband, Harold. As she accompanied her husband on house calls, she learned about medicinal herbs from his patients and how to cook the game and wild foods that "Doc" Tatum sometimes received in payment. She wrote columns for *The Ozarks Mountaineer* for several decades but became a celebrity nationally after the publication of her wild food guide and cookbook in 1976. She appeared on *The Dinah Shore Show* and *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* promoting her book; she proved a popular guest due to her intelligence, wit, and knowledge of all things wild and edible. She was well-educated and colorful. She wore a feather in her long hair, often went barefoot, played the dulcimer, and smoked a corn-cob pipe packed with dried apples or herbs. She lectured at the Smithsonian Institution and was the "herb doctor" at the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View.

In addition to *Billy Joe Tatum's Wild Food Cookbook & Field Guide*, she and her sister, Ann Taylor Packer, produced a book in 1987, *The Ozarks Collection: The Best Recipes From the Heritage and Traditions of a Storied Region*. Her cookbook and guide was reprinted in 1985 in a smaller format to be more easily used for identifying plants in the field.

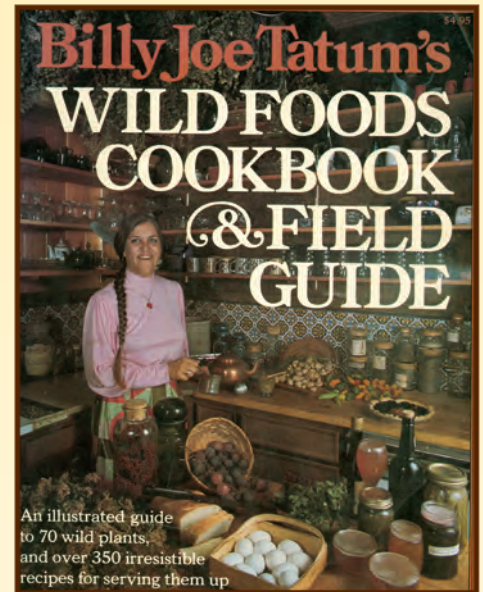
Tatum was known to host numerous parties at the large A-frame home she called "Wildflower" between Melbourne and Possum Trot. One of her parties, purchased by Winthrop Paul Rockefeller at an auction,

was featured in a 1979 issue of *People Magazine*. Included among the guests were then-Governor Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Clinton. Watercress soup, pheasant liver patè, hickory-nut-stuffed eggs, and venison Wellington were on the dinner menu. Dessert was "wild strawberry cloud."

Part One of Tatum's book is a field guide to edible wild plants, and Part Two includes recipes for wild foods. She describes what plants can be found in each of the four seasons and then provides detailed descriptions of each wild food beginning with acorns (used after leaching and roasting as a nut or ground into flour or meal) and ending with yucca, whose flower petals and seeds are edible. She provides both common and botanical names for the plants, where to find them, the parts used, and how they are used. She begins each of the forager's seasons sections with a quote. For spring it's from Milton: "In those vernal seasons of the year, when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against nature not to go out and see her riches, and partake in her rejoicing with heaven and earth."

Edible mushrooms are described in detail in the book with drawings and a caution to be sure mushrooms are correctly identified before eating. Those varieties are the chanterelle, Judas's ear, meadow, morel, oyster, puffball, shaggy mane, and sulphur shelf. One story about Billy Joe was that she refused an interview with Charles Kuralt for his *On the Road* television program because she was too busy hunting morels.

Among the 350 recipes are some irresistibly interesting ones such as



Cover of Billy Joe Tatum's cookbook.

cattail pollen pancakes, pawpaw custard, wild ginger tea, dandelion flower soup, and sassafras brittle.

Billy Joe Tatum died on March 26, 2012, at the age of 80. In a December 1986 article in *The Ozark Mountaineer*, Billy Joe wrote, "I'm not one of those who chose to live in the Ozarks, I chose to live with someone who chose to live here." Billy Joe Tatum found that the Ozarks offered "a lot to see, to hear and to learn," and she shared what she learned in her columns, books, and a well-lived life.

Tatum's book is available in the reading room in the University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections, some local libraries, and used book stores. I bought my copy from the Trolley Line Bookstore in Rogers owned by my friend Myra Moran.

*Mary Dillard is a retired political consultant, a nature lover, and a fabulous cook.*



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## Featured Menu

Banquet menu from President Ulysses S. Grant's visit to Arkansas, 1880.  
Courtesy UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture.

