

(Worth the read and great gifts, too!)

It's a busy and exciting season for many of our local food folks who have authored an assortment of cookbooks that will propel you towards your kitchen and entertain you with well-written and personally driven reads. The gift of a cookbook—to a friend or yourself—is another expression of the importance of gathering at the table.

UNC Press continues its *Savor the South* cookbook compendium.

Biscuits: A Savor the South Cookbook by Belinda Ellis glorifies that most important of Southern breads and helps us create great biscuits with a very personal infusion of herself and a career that has, in large part, been centered on creating the perfect biscuit. Ellis, who also happens to be Executive Editor of *Edible Piedmont Magazine*, has taught thousands of folks in the ins and outs of biscuit bakery during her tenure at White Lilly Flour Company, considered by most to be THE biscuit flour. UNC Press broke from their normal formula of "no inside photography" for this series, allowing for the inclusion of 15 how-to shots to make your baking experience successful. Belinda delves into the history of the biscuit and does an outstanding job of explaining—in everyday language—the science behind the ideal biscuit. Beside the classic styles of biscuit making, Belinda goes on to give you a slew of interesting and enjoyable takes on the biscuit. This is a must-have for every Southern kitchen or person with a longing for a taste of the South.

Kathleen Purvis adds a follow-up to *Pecans: A Savor the South Cookbook* from last fall on a subject dear to our lips—***Bourbon: A Savor the South Cookbook***. Purvis, who is the highly regarded food editor of the *Charlotte Observer*, gives us an assortment of bourbonology. From classic cocktails to the newfangled trend of smoked bourbon and bacon-infused bourbon, Kathleen leads the reader through appetizers, main dishes, and past bourbon balls to a host of indulgent sweet treats. This spirit is truly American and has always been a hallmark of the South. Kathleen does bourbon justice with insights and attention to detail in the history and distilling process of this amber nectar. If you know a bourbon drinker, make sure they have a copy.

If you live in the Triangle, or shop at Whole Foods Market, then you probably have become enamored with La Farm Bakery breads. Owner Lionel Vatinet is a master baker and much sought-after bread consultant around the country. When *Edible Piedmont* profiled him a few years back, we were struck by his willingness to share his craft—and his passion for wanting everyone to succeed as a baker at home. Lionel now gives that knowledge to a wider audience with the publication of ***A Passion for Bread, Lessons from a Master Baker, 7 Steps to Great Bread*** (Little Brown). Belinda and I were lucky enough to supply some help during the early stages of this project, and that unique insider's look makes us wholeheartedly recommend this book. Lionel leads you through the ingredients, science, and equipment necessary for creating successful bread every time. The key to this book is the large number of step-by-step photos that guide you through the process. Along with Lionel's instructions, you

have a blueprint for making great bread at home. Also included are many of the café's favorites, like our guilty indulgence, his Croque Madame. Take the mystery out of great bread by adding a copy to your kitchen bookshelf.

Sandra Gutierrez, could you make me any hungrier for Latin food? Yes, this Cary resident can, thanks to her follow-up to ***The New Southern Latino Table*** (UNC Press), ***Latin American Street Food: The Best Flavors of Markets, Beaches, and Roadside Stands from Mexico to Argentina*** (UNC Press). Sandra is such a soothing writer that belies her vibrant, multi-layered recipes. A beautiful book with full color photography throughout, Sandra takes you on a journey of Latin America with culinary history, funny stories, and unexpected dishes that will have all your senses raging. We can't begin to pick a favorite recipe (OK, maybe the Cuban Sandwich, or the Red Chilaquiles, or...). As the photographer, I had the opportunity to taste many of these flavorful treats. The recipes are well-written and, like all of Sandra's work, successful in your kitchen. On the occasion that you might need a special ingredient, she points you in the right direction. If you're looking for a cookbook to perk up your kitchen, give this one a read.

Soul Food, The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine (UNC Press) by Adrian Miller is an engaging look at what is at the backbone of Southern cooking. Miller, a food observer, attorney, and a longtime member of the Southern Foodways Alliance, looks into Southern ingredients and influences, as well as the South's culinary and social history, and discovers how everything from fried chicken to chitlins became a part of the soul food plate and part of African American culture. There's a wonderful section on one of our favorite foods—collards. Adrian's book is both thought-provoking and celebratory. *eP*

Also worth a look:

Tyler Mathis, *Southern Tailgating*
Fred Thompson, *Fred Thompson's Southern Sides*
Sherri Castle, *The New Southern Garden Cookbook*
Nancie McDermott, *Southern Pies*
Debbie Moose, *Buttermilk: A Savor the South Cookbook*

