

# *The Soul of Food*

## Lesson 1: Southern Foundations and Mississippi



Photo: Maya Marie Stansberry

“Food served is always more than just food served. That is to say, it is more than just fuel for the body. Depending upon who has prepared the food and who has served it and with what spirit, it can uplift.” - *Maya Angelou*

# **Table of Contents:**

## **Course Overview**

- Course Takeaways and Objectives
- Course Sequence
- Where is the South?

## **Lesson 1: Foundations of Southern Cuisine**

- Mississippi Food History
- Featured Southern: Fannie Lou Hamer

## **Our Crops**

- [Corn, Maize](#)
- [Collards](#)
- [Pork](#)

## **Recipes**

- [Seaport Buttermilk Cornbread](#)
- [Super Moist Vegan Cornbread](#)
- [Mary's New Smoky Braised Greens](#)

## Course Takeaways & Objectives

- **Define Southern cuisine** and highlight the regions of the United States that contributed to its development.
- **Describe the culinary and agricultural contributions of West Africans and the diaspora** to the development of Southern cuisine. As well as recognize the influence of indigenous people of the Americas and European colonization.
- **Identify and describe the origins of Southern crops** and how they relate to the development of Southern cuisine (as well as understanding current issues in the food system).
- **Identify culinary techniques and seasonality used in Southern cuisine** (boiling, braising, roasting, brining, frying, pickling, candying, etc.) and **their various purposes** (flavor infusion, preservation, seasonality, improving digestibility, resourcefulness, etc.).

## Course Sequence

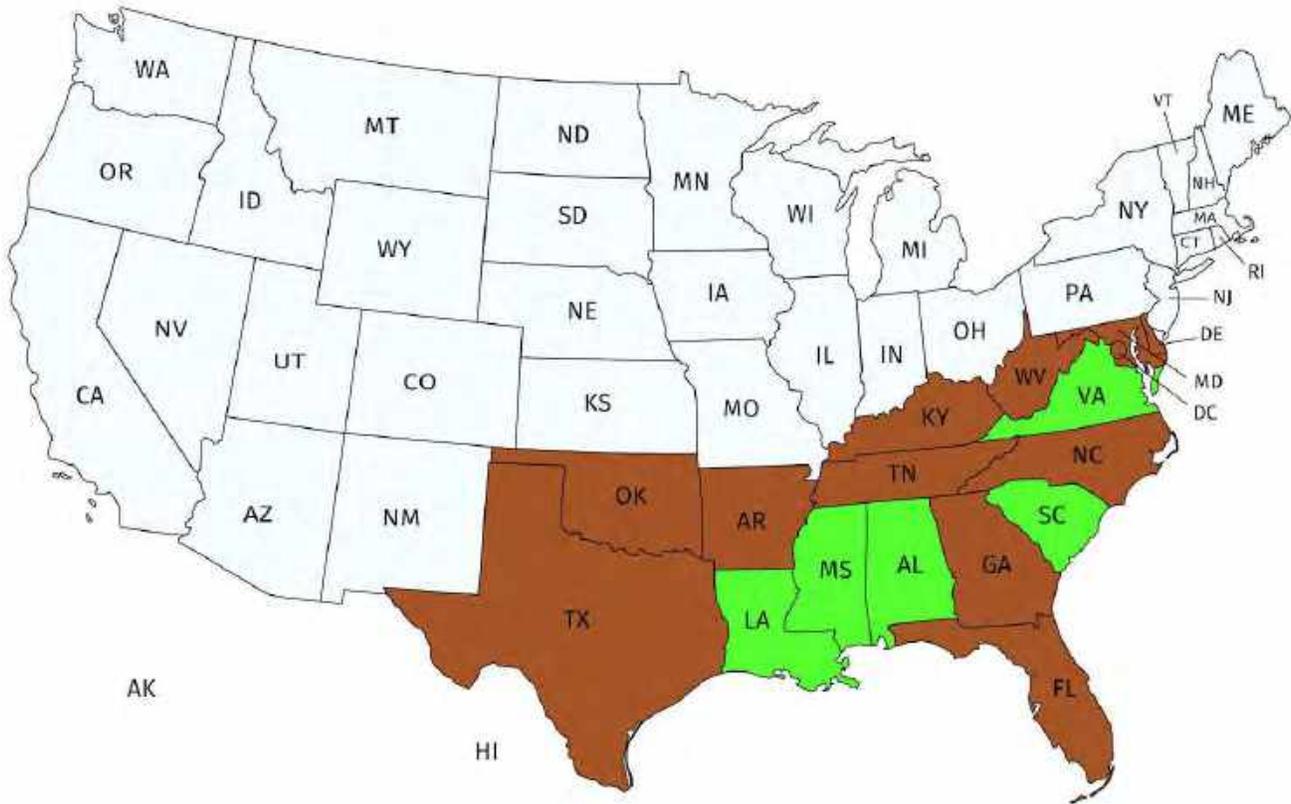
*(Sequence of content is subject to change throughout the duration of the workshop, students will be notified of these changes)*

Week	Lesson 1:	Lesson 2:	Lesson 3:	Lesson 4:	Lesson 5:
<b>Title</b>	<a href="#">Foundations of Southern Food</a>	<a href="#">The Lowcountry</a>	<a href="#">The Bayou</a>	<a href="#">The Black Belt</a>	<a href="#">A Juneteenth Jubilee Feast</a>
<b>Region of Focus</b>	Mississippi	South Carolina	Louisiana	Alabama	Virginia
<b>Crop(s) of Focus</b>	Corn, Collards (Greens), and Pork	Rice and Field Peas	Okra and Sugar	Sweet Potatoes, Molasses (Sorghum, sugar cane)	Chicken, Wheat
<b>Featured Black Southerners</b>	<b>Fannie Lou Hamer</b>	<b>Abby Fisher</b> , Vertamae Grosvenor, and Sallie Ann Robinson	<b>Lena Richard</b> , Mahalia Jackson, Leah Chase	<b>Georgia Gilmore</b> George Washington Carver	<b>Edna Lewis</b> , Ruth Gaskins
<b>Indigenous People</b>	Choctaw, Chickasaw, Natchez, Houma, Biloxi, Tunica, Quapaw, Ofo	Catawba and Carolina Siouan, Creek, Cusabo (charleston area), Cherokee	Caddo, Tunica, Natchez, Houma, Choctaw, Atakapa, Chitimacha	Alabama-Coushatta, Chickasaw, Koasati, Cherokee, Choctaw, Muskogee, Biloxi	Yuchi, Cherokee, Catawba, Tutelo and Saponi, Powhatan, Tuscarora, Croatan

*Note: Please use this educational material with integrity.*

*(A Word from [Soul Fire Farm](#) about using and repurposing educational materials.)*

# Where is the South?



Map Generated with: [mapchart.net](http://mapchart.net)

The South includes 16 states that lie below the Mason-Dixon line of the United States, and includes incredibly diverse lands, people, animals, plants, and histories. In this class we'll be focusing on five states along with their histories, foods, and people.

While the history of Southern cuisine includes many ethnicities and races, this course will be centering the contributions and experiences of Black and Indigenous/Native American people.

# Lesson 1: Foundations of Southern Cuisine

## Where We Going? Mississippi

Capital: Jackson | Population: 2.9 million

### Land and Original People



Mississippi is located on what was once the territory of several indigenous groups including the **Choctaw, Chickasaw, Natchez, Houma, Biloxi, Tunica, Quapaw, and Ofo**. Many of these tribes were more fluid in their locations than what a map can illustrate, but this map gives an idea of where they were generally. If you look at the maps of nearby states, you'll see many of the indigenous tribes defy the United States border lines. However, once European colonizers arrived in the 1600/1700s many indigenous groups were forced off their land to other states, and state lines like those of Mississippi were created to become what we see today.

Prior to European colonization, the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez made up the majority of Mississippi, and they had many traditions when it came to land stewardship, food, and ceremony which significantly influenced Southern cuisine. For example corn is arguably the cornerstone of Southern history and its cuisine: think grits, corn pone, corn bread, animal feed, rations for enslaved people. However, corn was important to the culture of indigenous tribes before colonization and the trans-atlantic slave trade, and had it not been cultivated by them for centuries Southern food would probably look very different.

### America's Black Belt

Once named for the color of its fertile soil and later for the high percentage of African-American residents, more than 600 counties in 11 states make up the Black Belt region.



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture

AP

On top of that indigenous tribes held a deep respect for foods like corn. For example, on **the Natchez calendar**, rather than names like March or April, months represent the celebration of the natural bounty. Corn was named after 2 months. Little Corn in what we know as May, and Great Corn in what we know as September.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the Natchez used the agriculture technique practiced (then and now) by many indigenous people called the Three Sisters, where corn is the big sister giving structure to her siblings beans and squash.

The rich soil that indigenous people stewarded in Mississippi for centuries is likely what attracted European colonizers to continue visiting and building upon the region beginning in the 1500s, and this soil is also how states like Mississippi and Alabama came to geographically be known as the Black Belt. Booker T. Washington described it as an area that had

<sup>1</sup> High on the Hog by Jessica B. Harris, and Native-Languages.org  
Indigenous map of Mississippi from Native-Languages.org

“this thick, dark, and naturally rich soil . . . the part of the South where the slaves were most profitable, and consequently they were taken there in the largest numbers.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore the Black Belt is a nickname for the region of the South that refers to its soil, as well as its demographic make-up (being predominantly Black people due to slavery).



3

### Food and Civil Rights in Mississippi

Aside from Mississippi's agricultural history, this state is a significant starting point for looking at Southern cuisine because it was an important site during the Civil Rights Movement. It was where 14 year old [Emmett Till](#) was murdered, catalyzing the Civil Rights movement, and was also the place where many folks within the movement organized and convened. People like [Medgar Evers](#), [Fannie Lou Hamer](#), and [Vernon Dahmer](#) and many others are best known for their significant contributions to advancing the rights of Black people through the means of education and voter registration, but they also played an important role in building community through food.

For example, Fannie Lou Hamer developed a cooperative farming and food operation called Freedom Farm, in the rural area of Ruleville, Mississippi. Aside from being a civil rights activist, Vernon Dahmer was a business owner and farmer in Hattiesburg, Mississippi who would host fish fries and other events in the community as a means to educate Black folks about their rights, build practical skills, and come together to celebrate and share in his abundant resources. These are a few of the many individuals who used food as a vehicle to advance the quality of life of Black Mississippians.

---

<sup>2</sup> Up From Slavery (Ch. 7: Early Days at Tuskegee) by Booker T. Washington. (online <https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/92/up-from-slavery/1600/chapter-7-early-days-at-tuskegee/>)  
[Museum of Mississippi History](#) and [Mississippi Civil Rights Museum](#)  
[Mississippi Department of Archives and History](#)

<sup>3</sup> Image from the University of Southern Mississippi [https://digitalcollections.usm.edu/uncategorized/digitalFile\\_9742e595-d809-4d93-87db-4f6b35aa0cb1/](https://digitalcollections.usm.edu/uncategorized/digitalFile_9742e595-d809-4d93-87db-4f6b35aa0cb1/)

# Featured Southern: Fannie Lou Townsend Hamer

**Born:** October 6th, 1917, Montgomery County, MS.



- **Worked as a sharecropping farmer** in Ruleville, Mississippi with her family until she was a teenager.
- **Advocated for voter rights** for Black Americans by joining the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as a field organizer to educate and register people to vote. She also spoke at the Democratic National Convention in 1964 to describe the abuses she and other organizers had experienced at the hands of the police.
- **Adopted 3 daughters**, because she was unable to have children due to a doctor giving her a hysterectomy without her permission when she needed a tumor removed.
- **Ran for Congress and State Senate** in the 1960s and 70s.
- **Established the Freedom Farm Cooperative (1967)** to create employment and cooperative support for rural farmers and families. Starting with 40 acres of land in the Delta, members could grow cash crops for selling as well as nutritious crops like greens, beans, and tubers for themselves and their families.
- **Established the Pig Bank (1969)** with Dorothy Height, for rural farmers to raise pigs for their families. Members could raise and deposit pigs back into the bank, and over time didn't have to rely on buying meat from stores.

## Learn More:

**Freedom Farmers** by Monica M. White (Chapter 2: A Pig and a Garden)

**Freedom Farmers Cooperative reading and video** <https://snccdigital.org/events/fannie-lou-hamer-founds-freedom-farm-cooperative/>

**Interview with Fannie Lou Hamer** (3 min) ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nhu\\_uxRR2og](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nhu_uxRR2og)) (about Mississippi food justice from Heritage of Slavery documentary)

**"Fannie Lou Hamer."** National Women's History Museum. 2017. Debra Michals [www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/fannie-lou-hamer](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/fannie-lou-hamer).

---

<sup>4</sup> Image from Jean Sweet Collection via <https://thegrio.com/2019/03/14/remembering-fannie-lou-hamer-42nd-anniversary-of-her-death/>

# Corn, Maize

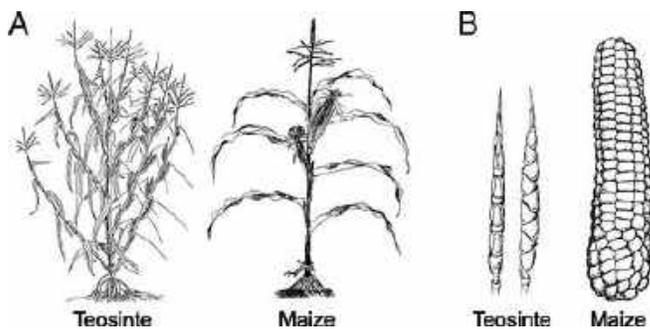
*Tlaolli* (Nahuatl, Aztec language) - *Mahis* (Taino/Arawak language) - *Maíz* (Spanish) - *Zea mays* (Latin) - *Maize* (English) - *Corn* (U.S. American)

---

“The importance of Native American foods to the development of African American, southern, and American cuisine, more broadly, cannot be understated. Perhaps no single food has more profoundly shaped African American and southern cuisine than maize, or corn.” - Robert A. Gilmer

---

## PLANT ORIGIN AND NAME HISTORY



The corn we know today is a grass in the poaceae plant family, and is believed to have originated from the teosinte plant in Mexico over 6,000 years ago. Teosinte grew tall and produced mostly leaves with very tiny heads of corn kernels.<sup>5</sup> Indigenous Mayan, Aztec, and Incan people from South and Central America cultivated teosinte over the centuries to produce larger heads of corn which over time came to look like the largekerneled heads we think of when corn comes to mind.

Additionally, prior to the colonization of the Americas and Caribbean, corn wasn't seen as just a food but played an important role in the lives of indigenous people. For example the Choctaw and Chickasaw people had a calendar with 13 months, celebrated at each new moon, starting in March, and two of those new moon celebrations were dedicated to corn. The third moon (May) was for She-Corn and the seventh moon (September) was for great corn.<sup>6</sup> In addition to being recognized in two months, corn was also a part of an important indigenous agricultural practice that is still used today. This practice has corn sown on an earth mound, then beans and squash are sown close to it. Together these plants grow alongside each other to provide structural support as well as nutrients and shade for the soil. Throughout various parts of the Americas indigenous groups (Iroquois, Natchez, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and many others) call this method “the three sisters”. In the Caribbean, Taino people call these conucos, in which they might also grow plants like cassava.

Like many plants, corn has many names, and it was changed from the original names indigenous people of the Americas and Caribbean had given it (e.g. mahis, tlaolli, and many more) to English and Spanish names (maíz, maize, and corn) due to colonization. When Spanish colonizers, such as Christopher Columbus, arrived in the Dominican Republic in the 1400s they learned that the indigenous Taino people called corn *mahis*, which the Spanish changed to *maíz*.<sup>7</sup> Maize would come to be called corn in the United States, originating from the German, Dutch, and Old English words for “an important grain”.

---

<sup>5</sup> *On Food and Cooking: Maize, or Corn*, (2004) McGee pg. 477

<sup>6</sup> *High on the Hog*, Harris (2011) p. 48

<sup>7</sup> *Oxford Symposium on Food: Maize as a Staple Food*, Ortiz (1989) p. 134

## CORN'S MIGRATION TO OTHER LANDS

From the Dominican Republic, Spanish colonizers brought corn back to Europe and from there it would make its way to West Africa in the 1500s with Portuguese colonizers. Countries in this region such as Nigeria were already growing indigenous grains like millet and sorghum to make staples like bread, dumplings, and porridge; therefore when corn was introduced they swapped it in to make those same staples.<sup>8</sup> Therefore by the time the trans-atlantic slave trade had begun in the 1600s corn had become very much apart of West African diets and was an abundant grain to grow and store.

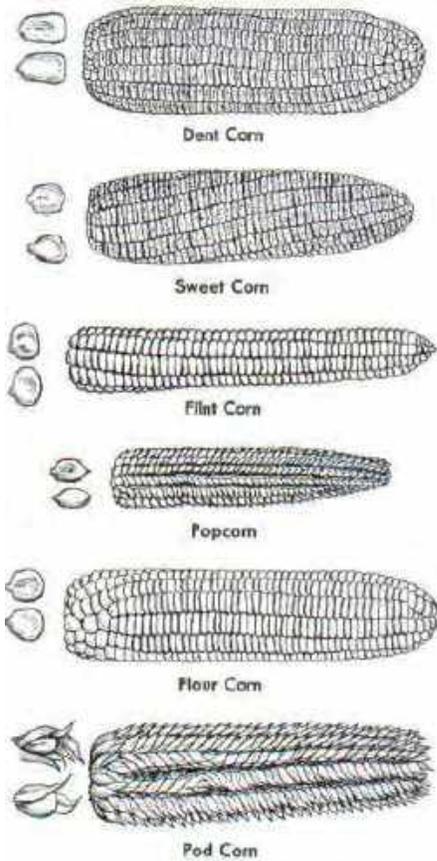


Slave traders would eventually take note of West Africans' dietary preference for corn, and would stock cornmeal on slave ships to feed captured people during their journey to new colonies on North American and Caribbean coasts.<sup>9</sup> Once in the colonies, enslaved West Africans would continue to encounter corn as part of their food rations from enslavers along with pork fatback. On top of that since the indigenous people of the Americas had already been growing and using corn for centuries they would over time share new or similar methods of preparing corn with West Africans. One of these similarities was using leaves to wrap and cook corn, or placing them on hot ashes.<sup>10</sup> These exchanges would facilitate corn becoming a foundational ingredient in the Black foodways of the Americas, Caribbean, and African continent that is still important today.

<sup>8</sup> *Soul Food: Cornbread*, Miller (2013) p.187, *Oxford Symposium on Food: Maize as a Staple Food*, Ortiz (1989) p. 134

<sup>9</sup> *Soul Food: Cornbread*, Miller (2013) p.188

<sup>10</sup> *Dethroning the Deceitful Pork Chapter 2: Native American Contributions to African American Foodways: Slavery, Colonialism, and Cuisine*



Type of Corn	Common Uses (in the U.S.)	Time to mature
Dent	Flour, grits, animal feed, car fuel, and plastics.	
Sweet	Eating fresh, boiling, roasting, grilling.	70 days or less
Flint and Flour	Flour and animal feed.	90 days or less
Popcorn	Popping and eating as a snack.	95-120 days
Ornamental	Decoration, animal feed.	



(from Truelove Seeds - Blue Flint Corn)

“Corn requires warm soil to germinate. Wait a week or two after the last frost and sow seeds directly in the ground. Plant in rows 2-3' apart. For good pollination, it is better to plant at least 3-5 shorter rows next to each other rather than one or two long rows. Sow 1" deep and thin to every 6-12" within the row. Keep soil moist until germination. Consider planting successions every few weeks for continual harvest.” from [TrueloveSeeds.com](http://TrueloveSeeds.com)

<sup>11</sup>Corn Type Image from <http://robinsonlibrary.com/>

# THREE SISTERS COMPANION PLANTING

By the time European settlers arrived in America in the early 1600s, the Iroquois had been growing the "three sisters" for over three centuries. The vegetable trio sustained the Native Americans both physically and spiritually. In legend, the plants were a gift from the gods, always to be grown, eaten and celebrated together. The three sisters provide both sustainable soil fertility as well as a healthy diet from a single planting.

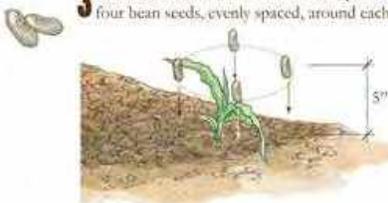
**1** In spring, prepare the soil by adding fish scraps or wood ash to increase fertility.



**2** Make a mound of soil a foot high and four feet wide. When the danger of frost has passed, sow six kernels of corn an inch deep and about ten inches apart in a circle of about 2 feet in diameter.



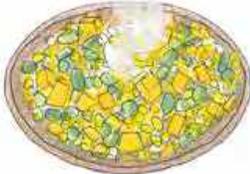
**3** When the corn is about 5 inches tall, plant four bean seeds, evenly spaced, around each stalk.



**4** About a week later, plant six squash seeds, evenly spaced, around the perimeter of the mound.



**5** After harvest, make three sisters succotash.



## CORN

provides structure for the beans.

## BEANS

pull nitrogen from the air and bring it to the soil and vines wind and twist towards the sunlight, they bind the three together and provide further structure.

## SQUASH

The large leaves of the sprawling squash provide shade keeping the soil cool, moist and weed-free, create living mulch that shades moist and preventing weeds. The prickly squash leaves also keep away raccoons, which don't like to step on them.

## TOGETHER

The three sisters provide both sustainable soil fertility as well as a healthy diet.

©2018 Charlotte A Ricker  
www.rickerstudio.com

# Collards

*Caulis oñati (Latin) - Brassicaceae oleracea (Latin) - Colewort (Old English) - Collard/Collerd (British)*

“Look in a pot of simmering greens and you’ll know exactly how the cook feels about Soul food. **A traditionalist** gets fresh greens and cooks with some form of pork; **the pragmatist** lives in the moment and uses whatever is available -- fresh, canned, or frozen greens; **the reformer** flavors greens with leaner meats like chicken, fish, smoked turkey, or a meat broth; and **the progressive** goes completely without meat.” *Adrian Miller from Soul Food*

## PLANT ORIGIN AND NAME HISTORY



There is often confusion that collards originated from Africa due to their popularity in Southern cuisine, especially since there are many crops in Southern cuisine that are of African origin. However, collards are a cold weather crop that suffers from pest infested, dry leaves when exposed to temperatures higher than 100F, and need to go through a winter season to produce viable seeds. In fact, collards are such a cold hardy crop, they can survive below freezing temperatures and varieties grown prior to their introduction in the United States had leaves that were nearly purple or blue<sup>12</sup>. All that being said, while there is some debate among researchers as to where collards first originated, most point to a European origin, where there are cool temperatures and significant winters.

Wild varieties of collards, as well as its close plant relatives kale and cabbage, can be found scattered throughout Europe and Asia. Therefore in areas of northern Spain, western France, Italy and the United Kingdom, the collard plant has grown freely without the help of humans for centuries. While research is still being done to find documentation of collard origins in Africa and the Americas, for now the crop is believed to be of European origin.

The name for collards also comes from European origins, and is a reference to the plant’s stems or leaves. The Spanish called them *caulis oñati*, which is Latin for “stem” and “place of the hills”. Many records that have descriptions matching what we know as collards today, were called coleworts, with “cole” describing a plant of the Brassica family.

## COLLARDS’ MIGRATION TO OTHER LANDS

Between the 1500s and 1800s there were lots of collard seeds imported to the Americas because they were popular with British colonists who wanted to grow food from their homes in Britain. Despite collards’ initial popularity with British colonists, it was mainly enslaved Africans and Native Americans who cultivated and saved collard seeds on U.S. soil.



<sup>12</sup> *Collards: A Southern Tradition from Seed to Table* by Edward H. Davis and John T. Morgan

North Carolina is particularly important to the legacy of collards in the South because it has the earliest records of collard cultivation by Cherokee people. Here, before European colonizers had fully settled colonies, they'd traded collards with Cherokee people. However, just as collards were being adapted to U.S. soil in the mid-1700s, cabbage was becoming more popular with British colonizers. This was due to cabbages being easier to transport than loose collard leaves. Collards were soon considered fodder (animal feed), and becoming something to be consumed by White people.

## CULTURE - GROWING AND EATING COLLARDS



### West African Influence, African American Adaptation

Collards are one of the many ingredients that are prominent in Southern cuisine that has its origins in the West African tradition of eating greens<sup>13</sup>. As Judith Carney mentions in her book *In the Shadow of Slavery*, "In West Africa alone there are more than 150 indigenous species of edible greens . . . where they're served in a variety of ways: uncooked as a salad, boiled in side dishes as spinach, mixed in soups and stews or with other vegetables as potherbs or used as garnishes . . . In all of these various culinary guises, greens contribute crucial stores of vitamins, minerals and micronutrients to the diet."

During slavery, when traditional African leafy greens like callaloo weren't readily available, enslaved Africans substituted them with the collards they'd been introduced to by Europeans and indigenous peoples of the Americas. Even after collards lost popularity with Europeans, enslaved West Africans would continue to grow collards because of their nutritional value. Some enslaved people were allowed to tend to subsistent garden plots before or after they completed their 12-16 hour work days tending to the plantation's commodity crops, and would grow plants such as collards. Greens like collards would supplement the rations of grains and salted meats given to enslaved Africans by enslavers.

Areas of the south where collards became most popular included the Carolinas as well as Virginia, Georgia, and Alabama. These states also shared similar methods of cooking collards with meats like pork to season the fibrous greens, which required long cooking to make them tender and easy to digest. These days, as Adrian Miller mentions in the quote at the beginning, collards can be prepared in a variety of ways with or without meat, but always with flavor in the hands of people of color.

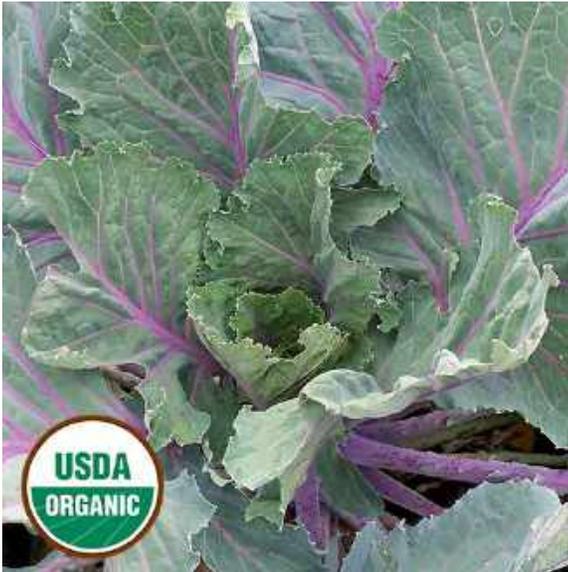
---

<sup>13</sup> Reference to collards origin in africa can be found in the *Shadow of Slavery* bibliography and chapter 10  
Reference to the use of cooking leaves in african foods for nutrition in the *Shadow of Slavery* by Judith Carney pg. 178

## AGRICULTURE

There are many varieties of collard greens out there: green, blue, purple, shiny, tender, and sturdy! Seed companies often provide information describing the conditions that best suit each variety, so whether you're in the South, Northeast, West, or somewhere in between, there's a collard variety that could thrive in your region. Below are some sources for getting and growing your own.

### (A Few) Types of Collards



(From [Seed Savers Exchange](#))  
**Old Timey Blue Collards**



(from [Southern Exposure Seed Exchange](#))  
**Green Glaze Collards**

### Growing Collards

“Collards prefer a fertile, well-drained soil high in organic matter with a pH range of 6.0–7.5. Consistent moisture will produce the best quality leaves. **For Direct Seeding:** Plant from early spring to approximately 3 months before expected fall frost. For bunching, sow 3–4 seeds every 12-18", ½" deep, in rows 18–36" apart. Thin to 1 plant per group. For baby leaf production, sow 60 seeds per foot in a 2–4" wide band ¼–½" deep. **For Transplanting:** Sow 2 seeds per cell in 50- to 72-cell plug flats, 3–4 seeds/in. in 20 row flats, or in outdoor beds ¼" deep. Seedlings should be ready to transplant in 4-6 weeks. If possible keep soil temperature over 75°F (24°C) until germination, then reduce air temperature to about 60°F (16°C). Transplant outdoors 12–18" apart in rows 18–36" apart. Collards prefer cooler growing temperatures, between 55–75°F (13–24°C), optimum being 60–70°F (16–21°C), but will produce good crops under warmer, summer conditions.” - *Johnny's Selected Seeds*

(<https://www.johnnyseeds.com/vegetables/collards/top-bunch-2.0-f1-collard-seed-4032.html?cqid=collards#start=1>)

### Other Growing Guides

Seed Saver's Exchange <https://www.seedsavers.org/ole-timey-blue-organic-collard>

Southern Seed Exchange Growing Guide <https://www.southernexposure.com/greens-growing-guide/#collards>

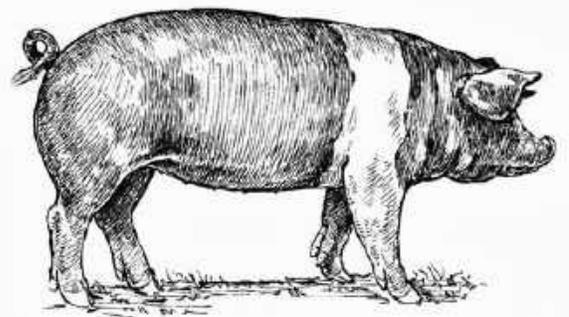
# Pork

*Sus scrofa domesticus* (Latin) - Pork (British) - Swine (English)

## ANIMAL ORIGIN AND NAME HISTORY



Pigs were first domesticated in Western and Eastern Asian countries (specifically Turkey and China) over 10,000 years ago. Over the span of thousands more years, pigs would be introduced to European countries like England, Rome, Spain, and Greece. It was in Europe where Chinese pigs were bred with Turkish pigs to become the fatter species of pigs that are more commonly known today in Europe and the Americas<sup>14</sup>, such as Hampshire and Yorkshire.

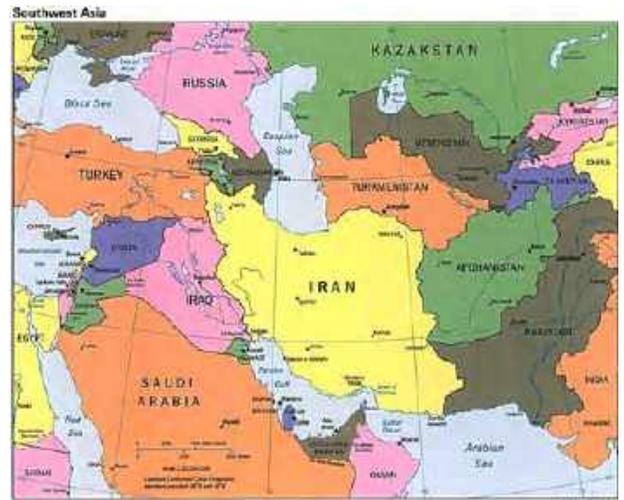


European pigs would travel with Spanish colonizers like Christopher Columbus and Hernando de Soto in the 1400 and 1500s to the Americas on land that would become Cuba and the United States. In the U.S. pigs would first land in Virginia and Florida from which they spread across the country to states like Georgia, Iowa, Alabama and Tennessee.

## CULTURE - RAISING AND EATING PORK

Like most animals, pigs naturally like to roam free, and early in their domestication they did. Pigs in the subtropical region of China, and those later brought to Western European countries of the United Kingdom, would roam the forests for the fallen fruit from trees such as acorns and other nuts. This accumulation of nuts on the forest floor is called mast<sup>15</sup> and the act of having pigs forage the forest floor is called pannage.

During the time before industrialization, pigs would feed mainly on mast and were very lean and fit because they used a lot of energy just to get around for food. However, during the early 1700s, there was an increase in deforestation in England due to population growth and industrialization, that caused farmers to begin the shift towards raising pigs in enclosed styes rather than forests. During this time of industrialization, farmers were also trying to raise bigger pigs in a shorter amount of time, and when the Chinese species of pig came to England in the 1700s they started experimenting with new breeds that were bigger, fatter and took less than a year to mature for slaughter. It was around this time that farmers were also being advised to not rely on mast to feed their pigs but to grow crops that would fatten their pigs such as legumes and beans.



<sup>14</sup> From *Globalized Pig Breeds to Capitalist Pigs; Pig Domestication and Human-Mediated Dispersal in Western Eurasia Revealed through Ancient DNA and Geometric Morphometrics*

<sup>15</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mast\\_\(botany\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mast_(botany))

When English and Spanish colonizers brought pigs to the Americas in the 1500s and 1600s, they found that the indigenous corn of the Americas was great for fattening pigs and other livestock, and would begin to predominantly rely on corn as a source of animal feed rather than the diverse diet that pigs used to have from roaming freely. The change in diet would make pork more abundant and widely available to colonizers who would use it throughout their diets as well as the diets of enslaved West Africans throughout the U.S. Southern states and Caribbean. Low quality pork would be used as rations for enslaved people alongside cornmeal mush, while higher quality pork would be reserved for White slave owners and those of higher incomes.

Pork's prominence in the South would also arise from "hog killing days" and barbeque events that brought community members together to partake in the abundance of meat alongside cool drinks like moonshine and beer<sup>16</sup>. Due to their skills with raising livestock such as cattle and goats in West African countries, enslaved West Africans, and later freed Blacks, would often be at the helm of processing pigs from slaughtering to barbequing them. Therefore the process of preparing pork over a spit/pit in the ground is greatly influenced by the techniques carried through to the Americas by Africans of the diaspora.

---

<sup>16</sup> *Pork Ribs and Politics* <http://albbqhistory.org/>

## Seaport Buttermilk Cornbread

*If there's a dish that is tattooed into my DNA it's cornbread. Cornbread was one of the first recipes I learned to make as a kid and I've definitely made it over a thousand times within the past 20 years, which is not meant to be a brag but just to stress how much it's a part of my cooking identity.*

*With burgeoning reading skills, my mom assigned me to make cornbread from the blue box of Jiffy so that she could focus on making the more important parts of dinner and I could practice my reading and comprehension. Like a true Northern-born Southerner<sup>17</sup> I'd always add a ridiculous amount of sugar to it, sneakily making it into a dinner cake, much to my dad's delight. It wasn't until I was in my pre-teens that I learned how to make cornbread from scratch using different recipes that my mom wanted to try, and by my teens I could make various styles of cornbread excellently, but by that point I'd seen so much cornbread I was way over it and often wouldn't eat it.*

*When I started working at a Seaport District bakery in my late teens, I learned to make this cornbread recipe and it renewed my love of cornbread with the savory add-ins. Even without the add-ins, this cornbread is super tender and comforting, and not noticeably sweet. I used to make this for an old friend of mine alongside chili and we'd drizzle raw honey on hot slices of it. This also tastes great with any jam or jelly you have.*

*Sincerely, Maya*

### Serves: 8

### Ingredients:

2 cup	All-Purpose Flour (unbleached)
1 cup	Cornmeal Flour
½ cup	White Granulated Sugar
2 ¼ teaspoon	Baking powder
1 ⅛ teaspoon	Baking Soda
1 ¼ teaspoon	Salt
½ cup	Mild Cheddar Cheese, shredded (optional)
2 stems	Scallions (a.k.a. green onions), sliced into small rings (optional)
2 sticks	Butter, melted and slightly cooled
3 large	Eggs
2 ¼ cup	Buttermilk (or regular milk with 2 tablespoons of lemon juice or vinegar)

### Get Into It:

1. Preheat oven to 375F, and prepare a 9x11" baking pan with the oily paper from your butter to grease the bottom and sides of the pan. Alternatively you can use baking spray or an oiled paper towel to grease the pan.
2. Combine flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a medium bowl. If you're using the cheddar and scallions stir them in now, making sure to evenly distribute and coat them in flour so they don't sink to the bottom of bread when baked.
3. In a large bowl, combine melted butter with eggs and buttermilk. Then use a rubber spatula to fold flour mixture into the butter mixture. Fold just to combine the flour completely with the wet mixture so that there aren't any dry patches, but don't worry about any small lumps in the batter.
4. Pour batter into prepared baking pan and bake for 30-45 minutes, and mid way turn the pan 180F so that it evenly browns. To test whether the bread is ready, you can either gently press the surface of your bread to see if it springs back (done) or sinks slightly (needs a little more time). You can also simply prick the bread with the tines of a fork to see if you get defined crumbs and not batter.
5. Remove the bread from the oven and allow to cool slightly before cutting into slices. Serve with your favorite soup or chili, or eat for breakfast with butter, jam or honey. Enjoy!

---

<sup>17</sup> That is to say that some "real" Southerners think adding sugar to cornbread is blasphemous.

## Super Moist Vegan Cornbread

*At this point in my life about 60% of my friends are vegan, going vegan, or trying to eat less animal products. Because my main drive behind cooking is to cook for people, friends included, I had to learn how to make a version of cornbread that they could enjoy and I'd feel proud of. Luckily I've known people who are vegan since I was a little kid and am familiar with the dairy substitutions that work for me and the ones that don't, and this has helped me to create recipes me and my friends love.*

*I adapted this recipe from one of my favorite vegan blogs (Minimalist Vegan), keeping it to the ingredients I always have and swapping out ones I'm allergic to (e.g. almond milk). I found that the buttermilk and applesauce were adequate for leavening and binding the batter, but you can check out the [original recipe](#) if you're into flax eggs (as nutritious as they are I'm not about to get, grind, and mix those expensive little seeds for cornbread). Also, some of my favorite blogs for amazing vegan baked goods and vegan food in general are Minimalist Baker, Sweet Potato Soul, and Avant Garde Vegan.*

*Sincerely, Maya*

### Ingredients:

¾ cup	Coconut or Oat Milk (or any milk substitute)
1 tsp	Vinegar (or lemon juice)
⅓ cup	Vegetable Oil based butter*, melted
½ cup	Granulated Sugar (or an alternative granulated sweetener)
2 tbsp.	Apple Sauce
¾ cup + 1 tbsp.	All-Purpose Flour
¾ cup + 1 tbsp.	Cornmeal Flour
½ tsp.	Salt
½ tsp.	Baking Soda

1. Preheat oven to 350° F, and prepare an 8x8" pan or muffin tins with baking grease/spray. Set aside.
2. Combine milk and vinegar in a small bowl and allow to sit for 5-8 minutes, until slightly "curdled". Set aside.
3. In a medium bowl combine flour, cornmeal flour, salt and baking soda, mixing with a whisk or fork thoroughly.
4. In a large bowl combine butter, sugar, and applesauce. Then add in milk mixture. Stir everything to combine, then add in flour mixture and fold together to rid mixture of large pockets of dry flour, but leave some small lumps.
5. Pour mixture into your prepared baking pan or muffin tins. A pan of cornbread will take about 20-30 minutes to bake, while muffins will take 15-25 minutes to bake. To test whether it's ready you can either gently press the surface of your bread to see if it springs back (done) or sinks slightly (needs a little more time). You can also simply prick the bread with the tines of a fork to see if you get defined crumbs and not batter.
6. Serve with your collard greens, or with your favorite fruit jam!

*\* Vegetable-based butters can be great substitutes for animal-based fats (butter, lard, etc.) in recipes! However, be sure to check out the product's nutrition label to see what oils are being used (canola, flaxseed, and olive oil are some of the more beneficial oils you'll want) and make sure the oils being used are non-hydrogenated. I typically use Earth Balance, but there are more and more great brands coming on the market, so be sure to explore your local grocery store and try something new!*

## Mary's New Smoky Braised Greens

*My beloved Grandma Mary typically cooked greens with ham hock, and boiled the greens first. She would often prepare this for family gatherings that included my siblings, my parents, their siblings and cousins and tons of other people I could hardly keep up with. So there were tons of greens to process (e.g. clean, chop, etc.) and the process could take days.*

*My mom changed the recipe to use either bacon or turkey neck, and cut out the boiling to simply saute and braise the greens. She would cook this for me, my seven siblings, and our dad, similar to my grandma, on the holidays or weekends. If I have time on my hands (e.g. spending the holidays alone) I make a fusion-style of my grandma (pre-boiling) and mom's (bacon instead of ham hock) recipes, because it takes me back to sitting in the company of my family.*

*This recipe is my own revision that I began preparing as a busy, young adult in NYC, with my mom and grandma in mind. It's just as thoughtfully flavored and prepared, minus the pork, turkey, and multiple-day preparation. I like to eat dark leafy greens about 2-3 times a week and typically go with this adaption at least once a week, and the tender greens and broth (aka potlikker/ pot liquor) really heals my body. It's also my go-to for a friendsgiving or get together if my friends aren't already demanding me to bring cornbread.*

*Sincerely, Maya*

**Serving Size: 8**

### Ingredients:

4 pounds	Collards, stems removed and diced small, and leaves cut into ½" strips
2 medium	Yellow Onions, medium dice
5 cloves	Garlic, minced
4 tablespoons	Vegetable Oil (Canola or Olive Oil)
1 tablespoon	Red Pepper Flakes
2 teaspoon	Smoked Paprika
1 - ½ oz. bunch	Fresh Oregano or Thyme, minced
3-4 teaspoons	Salt, coarse
1-2 teaspoons	Black Peppercorns, freshly ground
2 cups	Vegetable Stock or Unsalted Broth

### Directions:

1. In a large, deep saute pan heat your olive oil over medium-high heat. Add your onions, collard stems, and garlic, stirring until aromatic. Add oregano, red pepper flakes, smoked paprika, and season with a sprinkle of salt and pepper. Cook until onions and stems are beginning to soften and becoming translucent, about 5-8 minutes.
2. Add in your collard leaves, folding them under the onions and stems, and once there's a little more room in the pan add in vegetable broth. Stir and cook until leaves have shrunken a little, season with a little salt and pepper and reduce to a simmer. Cover pan with a vented lid and cook until greens become tender, about 35-40 minutes. Remove the lid and taste the greens, adding seasonings as needed. Enjoy!