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Cookbook



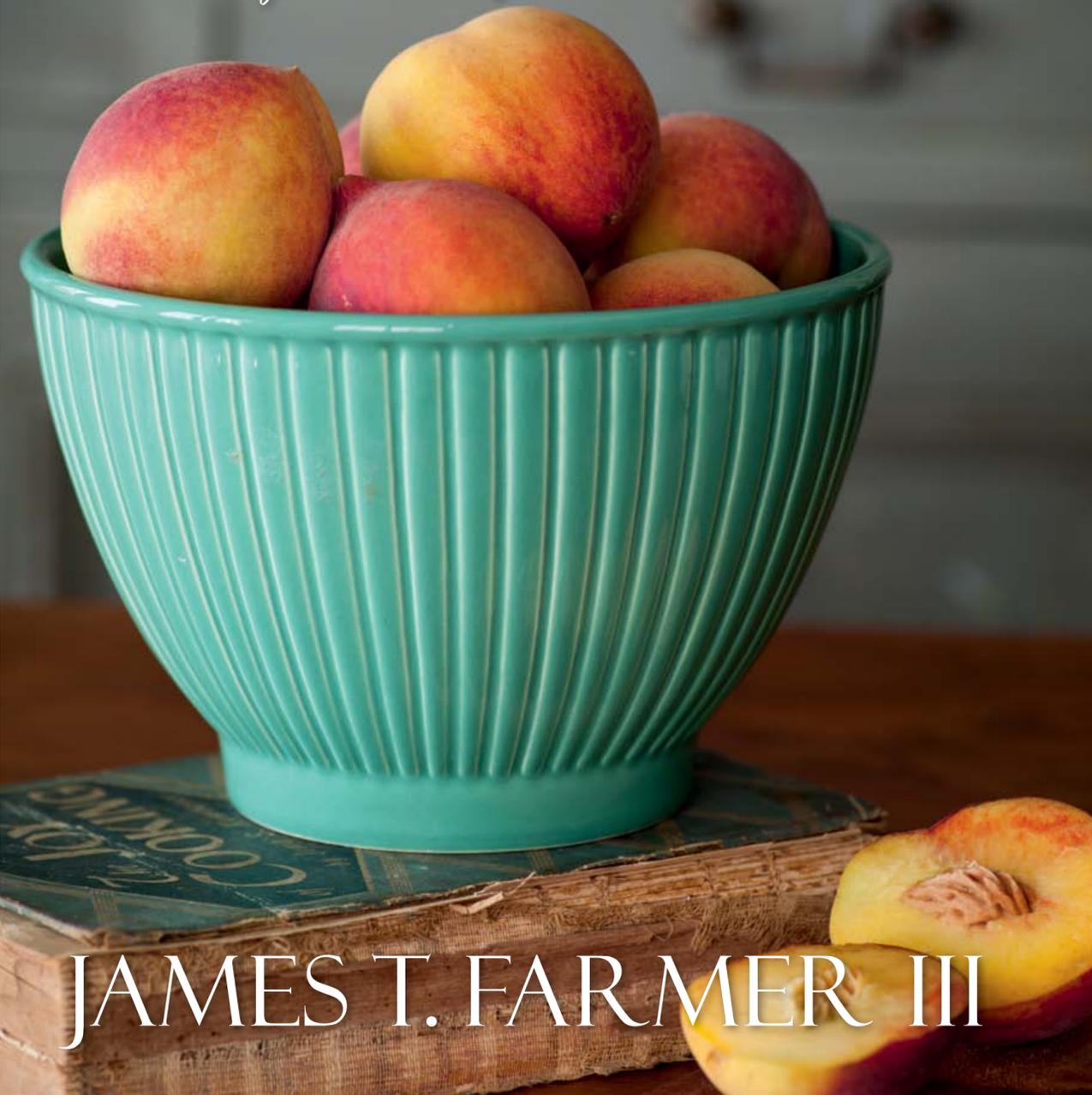
A TIME TO COOK

JAMES T. FARMER III



A TIME TO COOK

Dishes from My Southern Sideboard



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\$35.00 U.S.

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Food is our direct link to our past and the sustenance for our future. Recipes, dishes, silver and linens are passed down from generation to generation. James Farmer—a young voice for the New South—honors Southern food heritage with stories and recipes from his own growing-up as well as contemporizing the recipes for modern home cooks.

Southern food goes way beyond biscuits, cornbread and fried chicken. Farmer revamps the menu with twists on traditional southern dishes (ergo, Peach and Pecan Chicken Salad, Collard Cole Slaw, Plum & Persimmon Pork Tenderloin). Stitched together with a combination of tradition and nostalgia, Farmer's dishes are updated for today's lifestyle without sacrificing the scrumptious delight that is the hallmark of Southern foods. What is fresh and best, gleaned from the land and garden, and steeped in heritage.

Meat and Seafood

THOSE THAT SWIM, THOSE THAT SCRATCH BACKWARDS AND THOSE THAT MOVE FORWARD

The main dish . . . the star or center of the plate . . . the entrée . . . the list goes on. I am spoiled rotten when it comes to butchers and meat markets. I am from the home base of some of the South's best sausage, cuts of meat, tenderloin filets and bacon. M&T Meats is on Lower River Road in Hawkinsville, Georgia, the small river town where I grew up. There, Mr. Phil Mathis and his team truly make you feel like you are part of the family immediately upon stepping through the doorway.

What I love about local meat markets is that I am getting the freshest and best product available. Old-school methods of raising the animals, the abattoir, the relationships between butcher and customer make markets such as this truly remarkable. Whenever I have company from out of town, I serve M&T products, and folks always rave. I think people often forget, or haven't really experienced, just how amazing truly fresh, farm-raised local foodstuffs are—meat being no exception. I love Cajun Phil's Boudin Sausage and the Smoked Mild and Hot Sausages too. The Mediterranean Pork Tenderloin is divine and the filet mignons are velvety smooth. Southern-style Chicken Cordon Blue (country ham and locally made pepper Jack cheese) and

house-cut chops and bacon can fill your pantry, fridge, and freezer for months to come. And I relish the good ol' hamburgers, especially prepared in an iron skillet.

I am further biased towards another terrific market in our area. Stripling's, just outside of Cordele, with their pun of slogan, "You Never Sausage A Place," heralding locals and tourists alike to try their home recipe and truly amazing sausage, fantastic cuts of meat, stuffed burgers and a sundry array of products for a country market or gourmet food shop. Whether you are spending some time on nearby Lake Blackshear or just journeying down the Georgia/Florida Parkway, a cooler in the car would be a wise take-along.

This is why I am spoiled rotten when it comes to meat. I grew up with the best. From learning about different cuts of meat from Mr. Phil or Mrs. Mary or Mimi, to Mr. Phil teaching me how to butcher-knot and dress a tenderloin (after the cut is usually stuffed, of course), to simply knowing that my family and I are experiencing a part of the great Southern farm-to-table tradition and knowing the farm, the farmer, and the butcher too.



PLUM AND PERSIMMON PORK TENDERLOIN A LA MRS. HARMON

Have you ever cooked with someone and the two of you literally threw together something, served it and then had dozens of folks ask you for the recipe? Well, this happened one time to Mrs. Harmon and me. Sometimes the two of us can get into trouble, but we never mean to.

I have traveled with my friends the Harmons and Wilsons to Mexico, DC, New York and the mountains of North Carolina. In the Highlands of North Carolina, we just about caught our pants on fire for not being totally truthful about a dish. Mrs. Harmon is a Montgomery Mama to me, and our trouble started over a party she was throwing for yours truly to meet some of her friends at her amazing Highlands home. The wine was poured, the cheese spread, the bar stocked and linens pressed. We even marinated some pork tenderloins to roast and serve with yeast rolls and horseradish. This is where the trouble found us.

Everyone at the party raved over the pork. “What is in this marinade?” they would ask. “I must have this recipe!” others would exclaim. “I can taste the . . . and the yada yada yada . . . you must have used a bit of . . .” folks kept saying. So I decided to tell the clamoring crowd our recipe. Unbeknownst to me, Mrs. Harmon was giving out the marinade recipe as well. Our stories were not aligning, for I overheard one gaggle of gals say “she used bourbon” when I told them I had used wine.

Throughout the course of the evening, the partygoers kept trying to decipher just what was in the marinade that made the pork so delicious. Mrs. Harmon and I would tell them honestly what we put in the marinade—we just did not realize that we had both put into the marinade! The result was a stunning list of ingredients that I doubt we could ever duplicate. What got us into trouble is that there are now groups of folks serving our famous pork tenderloin and we can’t even duplicate it! I’ve heard it’s delicious on fish and chicken, too.

By our powers combined, we subsequently got our act together, united our ingredient lists and marinated in unison. The result is a confident duo that can honestly say, “This is what is in the marinade.” Garnish with seasonal fruits such as persimmons, plums or peaches to complement the natural sweetness of the pork. Grilling these fruits is fabulous as well!

Marinade

¾ cup of soy sauce

¾ cup of Dale’s marinade

¾ cup of bourbon (good whiskey, mind you)

½ cup of Worcestershire sauce

½ cup of honey

2 heaping tablespoons of minced rosemary

2 heaping tablespoons of minced garlic

2 medium pork tenderloins

Creole seasoning for dusting

Seasonal fruit, roasted

Mix the marinade ingredients, then marinate the pork for at least 1 hour, but overnight or during the day works wonders.

About an hour before cooking, allow the pork to come to room temperature. This is a good rule of thumb for meats in general. Dust the tenderloins with Creole seasoning before placing in the oven.

Roast at 400 degrees for 40 minutes, then tent for another 20 minutes. Slice into medallions and serve with Mimi’s Yeast Rolls or your favorite bread for a sandwich, or as the star attraction on

the dinner plate. Serve with roasted seasonal fruit (plums and persimmons pair well with pork). A dollop of this Farmer’s Hopsy Sour Cream (page 64) adds a lively kick.

Farmer’s Tip: Before marinating the pork, wrap the tenderloins in bacon, securing with rosemary sprigs and toothpicks. Be sure to tuck some rosemary underneath the bacon. This makes a lovely presentation and fills the house with two of the best scents known to man. The bacon crisps nicely and can be served with the pork after slicing.



BEEF FILETS WITH GARDEN POTATOES AND DILL SOUR CREAM

4 (6-ounce) beef tenderloin filets
Salt and pepper
½ cup butter
2 cups sliced mushrooms
2–3 shallots, finely diced

1 cup beef stock
½ cup red wine
1 tablespoon cornstarch dissolved in ¼ cup cold water

Season the beef filets with salt and pepper, then brown them in the butter over medium heat in an iron skillet or heavy-bottomed pan. Remove to a platter and tent loosely with foil.

Add mushrooms and shallots to pan and sauté until soft and beginning to brown. Add beef stock and wine. Lower heat to a simmer and reduce the liquid to about ½ cup.

Stir cornstarch slurry into the mushroom-wine mixture and bring to a boil until thickened, continuing to stir.

Taste for seasonings and adjust to taste. Add filets to the wine sauce, turning to coat and warm through. Serve filets topped with the mushroom sauce.



ROASTED NEW POTATOES WITH DILL

12 ounces baby new potatoes
2 tablespoons olive oil

Salt and pepper
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill

Wash and dry the potatoes. Coat thoroughly with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Place in a single layer in a roasting pan. Roast at

400 degrees for about 15 minutes, or until they can be easily pierced with a fork.

Toss with dill and serve.

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THE BEST ROAST

"They'll feast on Who Paddling and Rare Roast Roast. Roast Roast is a feast I can't stand in the least."

—The Grinch, appropriately enough.

That poor ol' Grinch, he obviously had never had beef tenderloin, trimmed, tied and roasted to perfection! Whether for Christmas Dinner or any nice occasion, this dish is quite easy but elegant. It's definitely a dish where you get what you pay for, since this score of meat is where a filet mignon is cut. Like all high quality and naturally flavorful cuts, simple treatment is best—a bit of marinating, some searing and roasting and dinner is served, my friends!

For six people, I relied on "almost a pound a person," which is more than adequate, even if leftovers are wanted. I asked my butcher, Phil Mathis, to "trim and tie" the tenderloin, which saves the cook a great deal of work but is a task that every good cook should learn nonetheless. A quick marinade of red wine vinegar, soy, Worcestershire, sesame oil, onions and herbs (parsley and rosemary) was just right for this slab of meat. (If you do not have time to marinate, pat dry the meat, rub it with vegetable oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper then sear. It's as simple as that. But you won't have the lovely marinade to dress the meat for eating.)

Now, for the secret to good chops, roasts, steaks, tenderloins, and filets: sear them first! I use a cast-iron griddle for a large tenderloin but a skillet for filets or chops. Grease the cast iron with spray oil and heat it up over medium heat until it's smokin' hot, literally. When it's smokin' and smellin', it is ready!

Sear each end every side for about 1 minute, max. What you are doing is forming a crust—a delicious outer layer that shells in the moisture and juu juu.

Add the meat back to the roasting pan with some reserved marinade. For a medium-rare filet, roast at 450° F for 20 to 25 minutes. Remember, your meat will continue to cook after you tent it with foil for at least 10 minutes before you slice. If you slice it without giving it this resting period, all the juices will run out.

The reserved marinade becomes a gravy too—yum, yum, yum. Bring the marinade to a boil and let it simmer to reduce and thicken.

After your meat has rested under its tent of foil, carve or slice the meat width-wise for individual servings or filets. Cook some of the rarer pieces of meat a couple of minutes in the gravy, for those who prefer a more thoroughly cooked piece of beef.

Farmer's Tip: The more "rested" the meat is, the better it slices. These leftover slices of filet are phenomenal as a sandwich on focaccia or ciabatta bread with a bit of tangy horseradish aioli (½ cup of good mayo, ½ cup of sour cream, and horseradish to taste, lightly spread on the bread) and a touch of green such as a butter lettuce, baby spinach or spring greens. Chow down—quite delish!

Beef—it definitely was what was for dinner!

