



The Taste of Country Cooking: 30th Anniversary Edition

By Edna Lewis

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

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

The scores of recipes for these marvelous dishes are set down in loving detail. We come to understand the values that formed the remarkable woman—her love of nature, the pleasure of living with the seasons, the sense of community, the

satisfactory feeling that hard work was always rewarded by her mother's good food. Having made us yearn for all the good meals she describes in her memories of a lost time in America, Edna Lewis shows us precisely how to recover, in our own country or city or suburban kitchens, the taste of the fresh, good, natural country cooking that was so happy a part of her girlhood in Freetown, Virginia.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

The recipes and reminiscences of the American country cooking Lewis grew up with some 50 years ago. A richly evocative memoir of a lost time and a practical guide to recovering its joys in your own kitchen.

About the Author

Edna Lewis died on February 6, 2006, at the age of eighty-nine. This commemorative edition contains a new preface from her editor, Judith Jones, and a foreword by Alice Waters.

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Compote of Stewed Blackberries*Everyone seems to have forgotten how delicious blackberries were—if they ever knew. We picked them mainly for canning, for making wine and jelly to use in the winter, but how we did enjoy them too during the summer season in blackberry pie, rolypoly, or with cream and sugar, as well as stewed and served warm. Blackberries are still gathered from the wild and they are the one frozen fruit that still tastes good. Put up in Marion, Oregon, they can be purchased in the A & P frozen, and they are just as delicious when stewed for 10 minutes with a little water and sugar to taste. Serve warm with cookies or cold with warm, plain cake.* 1 cup sugar 1 cup well water or bottled water 1 pint blackberries Serves 4 to 5 Set the sugar and water to boil briskly for 10 to 12 minutes. Pick over the berries, wash them off, and drain on a clean towel. Then add them to the boiled syrup. Bring this to a near boil and stew gently for 10 minutes. Turn the heat off and leave in a warm spot if they are to be served warm.

Busy-Day Cake or Sweet Bread*Busy-day cake was never iced, it was always cut into squares and served warm, often with fruit or berries left over from canning. The delicious flavor of fresh-cooked fruit with the plain cake was just to our taste and it was also refreshing with newly churned, chilled buttermilk or cold morning's milk.* 8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter at room temperature 1 1/3 cups granulated sugar 3 medium to large eggs 2 cups sifted flour 1/2 cup sweet milk, at room temperature 1/4 teaspoon salt 2 teaspoons vanilla 4 teaspoons Royal Baking Powder 1 light grating of nutmeg (about 25 grains) 1 10 x 10 x 2-inch cake pan Serves 4 to 5 Blend the butter and sugar by hand until it is light and fluffy. Then, one by one, add the eggs, beating the batter with a wooden spoon after each egg. Add in 1/2 cup of flour and one part of the milk, alternating the milk in three parts and the flour in four parts, and ending with the flour. Add salt, vanilla, baking powder, and nutmeg, and mix well. Stir well after each addition, but always stir only once after you have added the milk then quickly add more flour so as to keep the batter from separating. Butter and flour the bottom of the cake pan and spoon the batter into it. Bake in a preheated 375° oven for 40 minutes. Cut into squares and serve warm.

Users Review

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Jane Cuellar:

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Christina Ochs:

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Scott Padilla:

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