**FACTOR 3**

In the Plantation South, biscuits and cornbread frequently take the place of yeast-leavened breads.

expensive imported English wheat flour were reserved for special occasions.

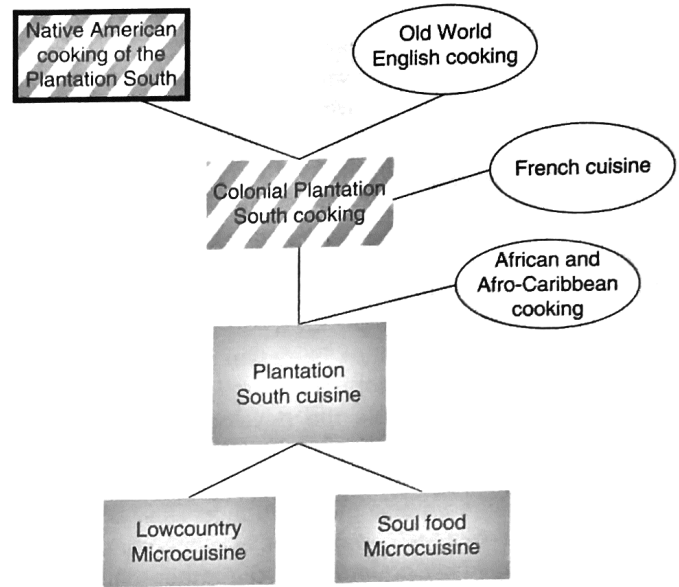
gave them a lighter texture, and allowed them to be kept for a longer time before staling.

The strains of wheat that can grow in the South primarily produced "soft," low-protein flours, not the best choice for making yeast-leavened breads. Moreover, the region's hot, humid weather made yeast difficult to control. Thus, the colonial Southern housewife or servant cook didn't make many yeast-leavened breads. For everyday meals early Southern bakers made cornbread leavened with beaten eggs and soft flour biscuits, called *beaten biscuits*, made light by pounding the dough. Yeast breads made with

Thus far we've discussed the development of early colonial Plantation South cuisine, a cooking style based on the region's indigenous Native American cooking blended with the colonial domesticates and Old World cooking of English colonist first settlers. Much of the information you've learned thus far on Native American and English colonial cooking also applies to the other East Coast regions. We're now poised at the point in history where subsequent developments in agriculture and commerce brought about a dramatic new influence on Plantation South colonial cuisine.

■ UNWILLING SETTLERS: ■ THE PLANTATION ■ SYSTEM AND SLAVERY

Within fifty years of the settlement of Jamestown, most of the arable land in the Virginia, Maryland, and Carolina coastal plain had been granted. Although a number of smaller inland grants went to middle-class farmers and completed indentures, most prime coastal land had been distributed in vast tracts to wealthy merchants and aristocrats, primarily from England, but also from France and other European nations. These large

**FIGURE 2.15**

The Development of Plantation South Cuisine

parcels of land were called **plantations**, and the owners were called *planters*.

The English government expected Southern plantations to become successful business enterprises producing agricultural commodities for export, thereby generating large tax revenues. Large-scale commercial agriculture requires large fields cleared of trees, with tree stumps and rocks removed from the ground and crops planted in long rows. When attempts at forcing Native Americans to work at European-style agriculture failed, early planters had only indentured servants to clear the woodland covering their properties. Once fields were laboriously cleared and planted, both indigenous and colonial domesticated food crops thrived. Among the most important early food crops, dried corn (called *Indian corn*) was shipped to Africa and the Caribbean, where it was used to feed both animals and slaves. In Europe, cornmeal became a cheap starch food for the lower classes.

BISCUITS: BEATEN AND BUTTERMILK

In early colonial times chemical leaveners such as baking soda and baking powder did not yet exist. Southern cooks leavened beaten biscuits by physical means; dough made of soft Southern wheat flour, water, and pure pork lard was pounded with a wooden mallet to incorporate air.

Baking soda, or sodium bicarbonate, became available in the 1800s. This alkaline substance reacts with an acidic liquid to produce CO₂ gas for leavening. The acidic liquid most frequently used for baking was buttermilk, the watery substance remaining after butterfat is separated from cream, resulting in butter. In the Southern heat, buttermilk quickly fermented, becoming thick and tangy. Because of its acidity, buttermilk was a perfect moistener for baking soda-leavened baked goods. Buttermilk biscuits soon became the daily bread of the Plantation South.

Biscuits were served at virtually every meal and even became a dessert component. Because it was easier to handle than flaky pastry, biscuit dough often replaced piecrusts. Cobbler—fruit filling baked under dollops of biscuit dough—is a classic Southern dessert.



FACTOR 2
Tobacco becomes a vital cash crop, creating economic viability.



FACTOR 5
Wealthy planters imported foodstuffs, creating a broad palette of ingredients.

Although corn provided substantial revenue, tobacco soon became the region's most valuable crop. After early colonists learned to smoke tobacco from natives, they shipped samples back to England. By the mid-1600s pipe smoking was the rage all across Western Europe,

creating huge demand for American tobacco. Tobacco became the first cash crop of North America, so valuable that it was used in place of money. Although not a food, tobacco was instrumental to the development of Plantation South cuisine because the wealth produced by tobacco created the opulent planter lifestyle that made possible the development of a complex, world-class cuisine.

To achieve financial success, early Southern planters needed to grow more and more product. Their business plan lacked only one element: cheap labor. Native Americans resisted plantation work, many preferring to die rather than face a lifetime of hard labor. Indentured servants were costly to import and expensive to maintain in conditions acceptable by European standards. Moreover, they were a poor long-term investment. By the time an indentured servant was fully trained in a particular craft or skill, his term of indenture was over and he had to be released. Planters quickly recognized that they needed a cheaper source of long-term labor. The obvious answer to this problem was slavery.

French and Spanish planters had been using African slaves in the Caribbean since the early 1600s and had amassed great fortunes. Following their example, Southern planters began acquiring slaves from the Caribbean and then from Africa. Between 1700 and 1776, almost 225,000 slaves were imported to the Southern colonies. Although they were unwilling immigrants, this large number of African and Afro-Caribbean slaves comprised an important second-settler group that had a dramatic impact on Plantation South cuisine. The techniques, ingredients, and taste preferences of African-American slave cooks transformed colonial Southern cooking, bringing it to a new level of complexity and creating one of America's most spirited and delectable cuisines.

Using cheap slave labor, plantation owners cleared large tracts of land and cultivated a wide variety of crops. Cash crops were shipped out on small merchant ships that arrived several times a year. In addition to cash crops for export, plantations produced nearly everything their inhabitants needed and thus were virtually self-sufficient. Nonetheless, the typical planter's family imported numerous luxury goods, such as furniture, books, and fabrics, as well as expensive foodstuffs, such as spices, condiments, and wines and spirits, which enriched the cuisine.

The typical plantation employed hundreds of slaves, most for fieldwork but others as skilled craftsmen such as blacksmiths and carpenters. The social status of plantation slaves was based on the type of work they performed. Well-trained slaves who prepared and served the planters'

food were among the highest-ranking and often enjoyed special privileges.

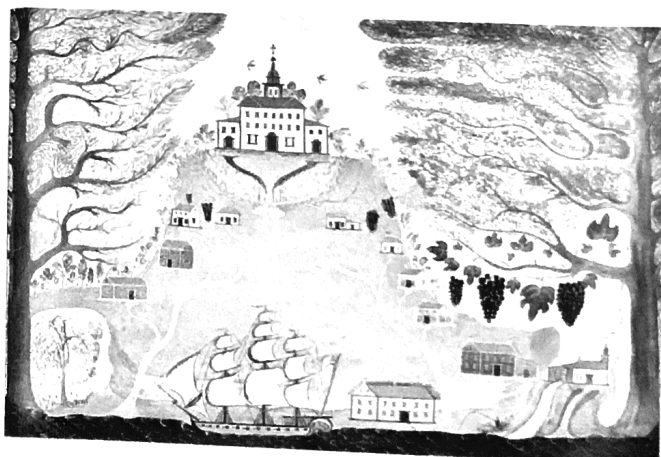
On Southern plantations the kitchen building was always separated from the mansion house to minimize heat, odor, and risk of fire (see Figure 2.16). The typical plantation kitchen was equipped with the latest in European cooking technology: a huge open hearth, several ovens, and a battery of tools and equipment for virtually every purpose. The plantation's head cook, usually a woman slave, might supervise a dozen cooks, kitchen maids, porters, and scullery maids. A slave butler, typically an older man, oversaw slave servers as they transported the family's food from kitchen to dining room, often via a covered walkway, carrying scores of covered dishes.

Eating well was a primary source of pleasure for planters and their families. Entertaining guests at table was not only a social activity but also a duty. Because there were few towns with accommodations for travelers, plantations were expected to extend hospitality to both friends and strangers. Unexpected guests could arrive at all hours of the day or night, and invited guests came often. Setting a lavish table became an important status symbol; a plantation's reputation depended as much on its cuisine as on its agricultural success. Thus, the planter class developed a strong food culture that would pervade all levels of Southern society.

Between the late 1700s and mid-1800s, the Plantation South produced excellent domestic food products, had access to imported ingredients, enjoyed unlimited cheap labor, and developed a strong food culture based on a liberal outlook—all of the elements necessary to create a world-class cuisine. Most food historians agree that the cooking of the Plantation South reached its highest level during this time period.

FIGURE 2.16

This colonial-era watercolor depicts the layout of a typical plantation, showing the planter's mansion on a hill, workshops, slave quarters, the overseer's house, and the warehouse and river dock. Handmade oil painting reproduction of *The Plantation 1825*, a painting by anonymous artist



FACTOR 4
African and Afro-Caribbean slave cooks transformed colonial cooking into traditional Plantation South cuisine.

TRADITIONAL PLANTATION SOUTH CUISINE

In studying traditional Plantation South cooking you'll discover several facets of the same cuisine: planter cooking, slave cooking, and the cooking of the region's middle class. Planters, their families, and their guests enjoyed a complex cuisine based on expensive foodstuffs and unlimited labor. Slaves subsisted on scraps, trimmings, and foraged foods assembled in haste. Both cooking styles evolved in the hands of the plantation's slave cooks, who prepared their own food with the same skill and verve as the food they cooked for their masters. Middle-class Southerners strove to emulate planter cuisine but often ate fare more closely resembling slave cooking.

Dining in the Big House: Planter Cuisine

The everyday diet of Southern planter families was varied, substantial, and rich. They typically ate large amounts of protein foods: their meals typically focused on meat, poultry, game, or seafood.

Plantations produced chickens that were roasted, stewed, fricasseed or, most famously, fried. Cows produced milk that was primarily processed into butter, buttermilk, and a Cheddarlike type of cheese. Hogs provided most of the South's meat. The best cuts went to the planters' tables; pork chops and pork roasts, country hams, and bacon were everyday fare. Planters used much of their ample leisure time for hunting, typically bagging small game animals and wildfowl for the table.

Because most plantations were located on the water, fish and shellfish frequently appeared on the plantation table. Throughout the region shrimp, crab, and oysters were among the most favored foods, whether caught along the property shore or brought by boat to plantations farther inland. Both freshwater and saltwater fish were frequently served.

Although plantation kitchens had the ingredients, equipment, and labor to produce fine wheat flour baked goods, wealthy planters retained the colonial taste preference for cornbread and other cornmeal dishes, and plantation menus featured them often. Abundant corn was also used for making mellow Bourbon whiskey.

Plantations produced a wide variety of vegetables and fruits. Because many seeds, bulbs,

and cuttings shipped from England and continental Europe thrived in the Southern soil and climate, plantation gardens and orchards yielded a wider selection of colonial domesticates than those of other regions. The mild climate even allowed the cultivation of Mediterranean food plants such as artichokes and figs.

In addition to wines, spirits, cheeses, and seasonings imported from Europe, planters also imported Caribbean ingredients, including rum, cane sugar, cane syrup, molasses, and tropical fruits. Spices worked their way through the trade routes from Asia and across the Atlantic to planters' tables.

European influence on Plantation South cooking wasn't confined to ingredients. Planters' wives and daughters learned "domestic management" as part of their education. Using handwritten heirloom recipes as well as French and English cookbooks, they planned menus as lavish and sophisticated as those of their European counterparts. However, their role was to advise and direct rather than actually cook.

Slave Cooks Add African Sizzle and Spice

Although planters' wives planned the menus, slaves did the cooking. In the early days of slavery, women fresh from Africa or the Caribbean learned English cooking from indentured servant cooks. Later they learned from one another; experienced older cooks taught the younger ones who would eventually replace them. Because slaves were not permitted to learn to read, generations of slave cooks acquired large repertoires of elaborate recipes simply by watching and memorizing. Some plantation owners, such as Thomas Jefferson, hired European chefs to give their slave cooks instruction in French cuisine.

Although technically skilled at European cooking, few slave cooks embraced the subtle seasoning of European cuisine, finding English dishes, in particular, bland and boring. In response, slave cooks applied their own African and Caribbean taste preferences to Plantation South cuisine. Using a free hand with spices and seasonings, they made European and colonial dishes livelier. They introduced African cooking techniques, such as

ELEMENTS OF WEST AFRICAN CUISINE

FOUNDATION FOODS

principal starches: true yams, millet, rice, (later) cornmeal

principal proteins: game meats, goat, fish, black-eyed peas

principal produce: okra, groundnuts, eggplant, leafy greens

FAVORED SEASONINGS: onions, garlic, dried and fresh chiles, sesame seeds

PRINCIPAL COOKING MEDIA: palm oil, vegetable oil

PRIMARY COOKING METHODS: spit-roasting, frying, boiling, stewing

FOOD ATTITUDES: strong food culture, culinary liberals



FACTOR 3

Planters' protein-based diets included colonial domesticates, wild game, and seafood.



FACTOR 2

Indigenous game meats, fish, and corn remain important in traditional Plantation South cuisine.



FACTOR 4

African and Caribbean flavors transformed Plantation South cuisine.

pounding starches into purées and using ground peanuts to thicken soups and sauces. Fond of frying, they used indigenous cornmeal to make fritters and coat fried fish. Slave cooks banished dreary English-style boiled vegetables from the Southern repertoire, replacing them with fried and sautéed ones. Afro-Caribbean slaves added their barbeque techniques and knowledge of tropical produce such as bananas, mirlitons, and coconuts. Caribbean chiles were ground into fiery table sauces.

Many vegetables now associated with Southern cuisine arrived via Africa and the Caribbean. According to legend, captured Africans hid the seeds of okra in their hair so that they could grow it when they reached their unknown destinations in the New World. Black-eyed peas and sesame seeds, first introduced to Africa by the Arabs, also traveled to the Americas with African slaves. Both peanuts and South American chiles recrossed the Atlantic on slave ships to become staples of the evolving Plantation South cuisine. Slaves brought rice culture and cooking to the Carolina Lowcountry, a unique microcuisine area discussed on this book's companion website.

Although sweet potatoes are indigenous to southern Mexico, they had arrived in the Caribbean and Deep South by the time of European contact. African slaves found the sweet potato similar to the true yam and called it by the same African name, *nyam* (nyahm). Thus, in the Plantation South sweet potatoes are frequently called "yams," although the term is technically incorrect. Candied "yams" and sweet potato pie are dishes favored by Southerners both black and white.

The influence of African and Afro-Caribbean slave cooks on Plantation South cuisine simply can't be overestimated. They contributed an important foundation starch, new produce items, new seasonings and ways of using existing seasonings, and new cooking techniques. Thus, the Plantation South's African-American second-settler group profoundly enriched its cuisine, making Plantation South cooking substantially different from other English-based regional cooking styles.

Southern Hospitality and Entertaining

Planters entertained often and based their reputations at least partially on the quality of their hospitality. For special occasions the plantation kitchen went into high gear, often producing food for hundreds of guests. The plantation's head cook, with dozens of assistants, turned out a magnificent array of sumptuous dishes for a variety of occasions ranging from hunt breakfasts to formal dinners to grand buffets.

Warm Southern weather gave rise to a variety of outdoor feasts. In the summer hundreds of guests might be invited to a fish fry down by the river, where huge cast-iron cauldrons of pork lard heated over wood fires awaited the sizzle of breaded fish fillets. Early autumn brought oyster roasts, at which bushels of oysters were set to steam and pop on wire racks over glowing coals. The warm season's most anticipated event was the plantation barbeque, to which guests came from miles around to feast on succulent pork slow-cooked in smoky pits and steaming with droplets of spicy mopping sauce. The head cook of every plantation had his or her own special barbeque recipe,

and guests argued about the merits of each plantation's signature style.

Eating in the Quarters: Slave Cooking

Creative cooking was not confined solely to the big house. Women slaves lower in the plantation hierarchy labored long days in workshops or fields only to come home afterward and begin preparing meals for their families. In order to prepare nourishing and enjoyable meals, they had to use both ingenuity and imagination because their ingredients were both poor and severely limited.

Slave rations doled out by the plantation manager consisted of little more than cornmeal, dried beans, lard, and salt. In what little free time they were allowed, slaves grew okra, black-eyed peas, peanuts, chiles, collards, and other greens in tiny garden plots behind their cabins. These starches and vegetables formed the foundation of the slave diet; protein foods were used primarily for seasoning. Ham rinds and smoked neck bones flavored slow-simmered beans and greens. When a hog was butchered, slaves received the ribs, neck bones, ears, tails, and feet. Thus, using odds and ends, discards, and seasonings "borrowed" from the plantation kitchen, ingenious slave cooks prepared nutritious and tasty meals, making something delicious out of virtually nothing.

Even more important than the food was the fellowship of dining. A few precious minutes sitting around the dinner table accounted for virtually the only time a slave family could spend together. No wonder that, for modern African-Americans, food remains a strong expression of tradition, family, and cultural solidarity.

The cooking of plantation slaves and, later, free African-Americans evolved into a distinctive microcuisine called soul food. While similar to Plantation South cuisine, in many ways it's different and unique. The soul food microcuisine is discussed on this book's website.

"For over two hundred years we were told where to live and where to work. We were given husbands, and we made children, and all these things could be taken away from us. The only real comfort came at the end of the day, when we took either the food we were given, or the food we raised, or the food we had caught, and we put it in the pot, and we sat with our own kind and talked and sang and ate."

—Ruth Gaskins, Alexandria, Virginia,
from Betty Fussell's
I Hear America Cooking

Middle-Class Cooking

Not all white people in the Plantation South lived the lavish lives of the planter aristocracy. Many white farmers, including former indentured servants and their descendants, worked their own fields and cooked their own food. Middle- and lower-class whites and, later, free blacks practiced a scaled-down version of planter cuisine.

As in planter families, proteins were favored, high-status foods. However, ordinary folks couldn't eat them every day. Although just about everyone hunted and fished and could afford



FACTOR 4

Slave cooks made nutritious, satisfying meals with ingenuity and limited ingredients.

to feed a few chickens and a hog, protein foods were typically reserved for Sundays and holidays. Like the slaves, ordinary white folks lived primarily on starches and vegetables flavored with seasoning meat. Corn in all its forms—from cornbread to hominy soup—was the staff of life. Because even the smallest farm had room for a garden, ordinary Southerners enjoyed a variety of vegetables such as collard and turnip greens, sweet potatoes, turnips, cabbage, green corn, black-eyed peas, pole beans, butter beans, and okra. Housewives made jams and jellies from local fruit and dried and pickled their garden produce.

■ THE CIVIL WAR ■ AND BEYOND

The plantation system ended when the South lost the Civil War in 1865. During the war agriculture had come to a standstill. Land, buildings, equipment, and goods were destroyed. The abolition of slavery removed the inexpensive labor that fueled the Southern economy. Formerly wealthy planter families were now penniless, and much of the middle class was jobless. For the poorest Southerners, poverty led to a diet based almost entirely on cornmeal dishes, causing a devastating nutritional-deficiency disease called *pellagra*, discussed on the book's companion website. Economic conditions in the American South remained bleak for more than a hundred years, and traditional Plantation Southern cooking was in danger of being lost.

Fortunately, the cuisine was kept alive both by African-American cooks and the "genteel poor," descendants of the planter aristocracy who maintained a gracious lifestyle despite having little money. Through two world wars and the Great Depression, struggling Southern families prepared heirloom recipes using homegrown vegetables and foods obtained by farming, hunting, fishing, and foraging.

Although economic viability is normally essential to the development of fine cuisine, through the mid-1900s the depressed economy of the Plantation South helped preserve the cuisine. While more prosperous parts of America suffered a culinary decline in the 1950s and 1960s (America's national cuisine, website), of necessity Southern cooks kept traditional cooking alive. When other Americans were turning to industrially processed convenience foods, Southern cooking still featured homegrown, home-canned, and home-raised food—partly because it was affordable, but mainly out of preference. Sunday dinner, depicted in Figure 2.17, was the highest expression of Plantation South home cooking.

Although most of the Plantation South's defining dishes were created during the plantation era, two major elements of the cuisine were developed during the post-Civil War period: barbeque and Southern desserts.

Southern Barbeque

After the Civil War, barbeque moved from the plantation to the roadside, becoming a true American culinary art form. Today traditional Southern barbeque can be found at country crossroads and on city street corners throughout the region.



FIGURE 2.17

A Southern Sunday dinner. Bamabas Kindersley © Dorling Kindersley

Traditional barbeque is cooked outdoors. The modern barbeque pit is a low rectangle built of cinder blocks. A hickory wood fire built in the pit burns down to embers, and a metal grate is placed on top. Tough, fatty cuts of pork, typically shoulder and spareribs, are seasoned with spice rub. The meat is placed on the grate and periodically basted with a bucket of vinegar-based mopping sauce—actually applied with a clean, new string mop. Like the Native American and plantation versions, modern barbeque is bathed in fragrant smoke. It alternately steams in the mop sauce vapors and crisps over dry heat.

City barbeque happens indoors in specially constructed wood ovens. Although the heat technology is different, in expert hands the result is the same: moist, tender, succulent meat with crisp edges and a spicy, tangy flavor.

Some barbeque lovers prefer their meat sauceless; others enjoy adding a splash of sweet or tart barbeque sauce. The consistency, spiciness, and acidity of barbeque sauces vary from place to place within the region.

For an in-depth look at Plantation South barbeque, as well as the barbeque of other culinary regions, refer to the barbeque section of this book's companion website.

Southern Desserts

Home-style baking is a Southern tradition that reached its peak after the Civil War, when baking powder became widely available. Of all Americans, only the Pennsylvania Dutch surpass Southerners in their love of sweet baked goods. Whether at breakfast, afternoon teatime, or the end of a meal, Southern

folks just have to have a little something sweet. Today Southern home bakers still compete for prizes at state and county fairs. At church or school bake sales, jealous eyes watch to see whose cake, pie, or cookie tray sells first. Per Southern hospitality, no guest is ever received without being offered a little taste of homemade baked goods.

Among the many signature Plantation Southern desserts are tall layer cakes frosted with fluffy boiled icing. Old-fashioned biscuit shortcake is filled with fresh fruit and topped with whipped cream. Pecans are featured in cakes, cookies, and pecan pie, typically spiked with a little Bourbon whiskey.

Near the end of the 20th century, Southern towns and cities finally began to prosper when economic incentives brought service and telecommunications jobs to the region. The 1970s and 1980s saw an influx of new Southerners eager to explore the cuisine of their adopted home. At the same time, established Southerners began rediscovering traditional cuisine, seeking out local artisan products and reviving old-fashioned cooking methods. Heirloom ingredients, such as stone-ground grits and Carolina Gold rice (website), are making a comeback as home cooks and restaurant chefs showcase the fine products of days gone by.



FACTOR 5
In the 1980s, the return of economic viability revitalized Southern cuisine.

■ ■ CONTEMPORARY ■ ■ PLANTATION SOUTH ■ ■ CUISINE

Until the end of the 20th century, Plantation South cooking meant home cooking. Although good Southern food could be found at barbeque shacks, old-fashioned luncheonettes, and family-style restaurants, white-tablecloth operations featuring authentic Plantation South cuisine were few. In the South, fine restaurant dining usually meant French or Continental cuisine (p. 791).

In the 1980s, chefs and cookbook authors began exploring and celebrating regional American cuisines. Restaurants featuring Southern food sprang up in urban areas nationwide, and entrepreneurs founded national chain restaurants featuring barbeque. Chefs in the Plantation South returned to their roots and devoted their energies to interpreting Southern cooking as a restaurant cuisine. Now Southern chefs are refining traditional Southern cooking, applying European techniques and devising elegant presentations to bring their traditional dishes into the forefront of American dining. Refer to this book's companion website for noteworthy Plantation South cuisine restaurants.



■ ■ ELEMENTS OF PLANTATION SOUTH CUISINE

FOUNDATION FOODS

principal starches: cornmeal dishes, wheat flour quick breads, rice

principal proteins: pork (fresh and preserved), dried beans, seafood, poultry

principal produce: collard greens, turnips and turnip greens, green beans, okra, sweet corn

FAVORED SEASONINGS: smoke, cured and smoked seasoning meats, cayenne pepper, bottled hot sauce, thyme, sage, granulated onion and garlic

PRINCIPAL COOKING MEDIA: lard, vegetable oil

PRIMARY COOKING METHODS: pan-frying, barbeque, stewing/simmering

FOOD ATTITUDES: strong food culture, culinary liberals

■ ■ THE FUTURE ■ ■ OF THE CUISINE

Although no cuisine is static, the regional cuisine of the Plantation South is, perhaps, changing faster than any other. Through the turn of the 21st century, growing economic migration to the South, by both Americans and immigrants from around the world, is swelling the populations of Southern cities. These new arrivals will surely add a thick overlay of new foodways to the established cuisine, changing it in unpredictable ways.

At the same time, modern health concerns threaten some of the Plantation South's most venerable ingredients. Today's sedentary lifestyle makes frequent use of fundamental elements of the cuisine, such as pork lard and frying, problematic. Cultural preferences among many African-Americans and immigrants are reducing the use of pork as the region's preferred meat. Global climate change is threatening Southern agriculture, evidenced in recent regional droughts. Though cooks and chefs across the nation have discovered many of the region's traditional ingredients, such as stone-ground grits and heirloom bean and rice varieties, limited production is not keeping up with demand.

Finally, the fast pace of modern life means that home cooks, the standard-bearers of traditional Plantation South cuisine, are spending less time at the stove. As this trend continues, the future of the cuisine now lies in the hands of professional chefs. Your challenge as a chef is to understand the cuisine and faithfully interpret it for future audiences.

■ ■ THE LOWCOUNTRY ■ ■ MICROCUISINE

The Carolina coastal plain from Charleston to Savannah, Georgia, is an area of flat land bordered on the east by saltwater marshes protected from the Atlantic Ocean by the Sea Islands.

This topographically unique area was settled by a more diverse group of European planters who imported the South's largest concentration of African slaves to plant and tend vast tracts of paddy rice. The rice trade brought incredible wealth to the area, engendering a thriving maritime trade and an opulent lifestyle that included a highly developed food culture and cuisine. From rice, abundant seafood, and an international palette of ingredients, African-American plantation cooks created a Lowcountry haute cuisine world famous in its time. African slaves and their descendants developed Gullah cooking, a spicier, more rustic cuisine. Two faces of the same coin, these cooking styles make up Lowcountry cooking. Go to this book's companion website for in-depth information about Lowcountry cuisine.

hunted and foraged foods, garden produce, and scraps from the masters' larders. After Emancipation, Southern slaves began a great diaspora, migrating first to Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern cities and then across America. Wherever they went, African-American cooks took with them the comfort foods of home, such as cornbread, collard greens, black-eyed peas, and barbeque. In the 1960s, the civil rights movement brought a new spirit of cultural pride to the African-American community. At this time the traditional cooking of black Americans became known as *soul food*. Although born in the Plantation South, soul food is now a microcuisine that transcends its origins, found throughout America. The companion website offers more information about this lively cuisine.

Visit this book's companion website at www.pearsonhighered.com/sackett to learn more about the Carolina Lowcountry and Soul Food microcuisines. Following are some photos relating to these two microcuisines.

■ THE SOUL FOOD ■ MICROCUISINE

During the plantation era, African-American slave cooks developed their own distinctive cuisine using indigenous cornmeal,

■ TABLE 2.1 PLANTATION SOUTH DEFINING DISHES

ITEM NAME	HISTORY	DOMINANT INGREDIENTS AND METHOD	OTHER
PEANUT SOUP	A significant part of Southern cuisine by the early 20th century.	Poultry stock flavored, thickened, and enriched with ground peanuts.	Some versions are subtle and creamy; others are bright and spicy, showing the influence of African cuisine.
DEVILED EGGS	In the South no picnic, church supper, or holiday dinner is complete without a platter of these tasty treats.	Hard-cooked eggs are cut in half and the yolks puréed with mayonnaise, yellow mustard, a dash of hot sauce, and something sweet.	Modern versions add ingredients such as chopped shrimp or crabmeat, deviled ham, minced fresh herbs.
SOUTHERN PICKLES	Pickling was originally done for preservation, now done for flavor.	Cucumbers, watermelon rind, okra, peaches, and green beans are preserved in vinegar with sugar and seasonings.	Southern-style pickles tend to be on the sweet side, with "bread-and-butter" cucumber pickles a favorite.
SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN	Once a dish seasonal to spring and early summer, fried chicken remains the centerpiece of the traditional Sunday dinner throughout the South.	Fried chicken is always cooked from a raw state, fried at a low-to-moderate temperature that allows the meat to cook moist and juicy while the exterior coating becomes crisp and golden.	The dense legs and thighs are cooked longer than the breasts and wings.
FRIED SEAFOOD AND HUSH PUPPIES	This treat is essential at a Southern outdoor fish fry. Deep-frying is the most effective method of frying for a crowd; many Southerners prefer the crunchy texture of breaded fish pan-fried in a black cast-iron skillet.	Fish, shrimp, and shucked oysters are dipped into seasoned cornmeal or corn flour and fried crisp and golden in vegetable oil, traditionally flavored with a little lard. Deep-fried fish is incomplete without hush puppies.	Hush puppies are light, round, relatively greaseless, golden-brown cornmeal fritters. Fish is always served with tartar sauce; shrimp is teamed with a ketchup-based cocktail sauce; oysters go either way.
SMOTHERED FOODS	Called "smothered" because the main ingredient is cooked in a thick, dense sauce.	Items are browned in lard or bacon drippings; then flour is added to the pan and cooked into a light brown roux that is simmered with flavorful stock to make a thick, substantial sauce.	Pork chops and chicken are the usual candidates for smothering, but turkey legs, elderly game birds, tough cuts of venison, or any lean meat can be smothered. Smothered foods are normally served over rice or with biscuits.

(continued)

TABLE 2.1 PLANTATION SOUTH DEFINING DISHES (continued)

ITEM NAME	HISTORY	DOMINANT INGREDIENTS AND METHOD	OTHER
COUNTRY HAM	Dry, dense, and salty, with a deep, complex flavor, a Southern country ham is similar to European cured hams. It is served in small portions. Baked ham, glazed with brown sugar, studded with cloves, and sometimes garnished with pineapple, is the ultimate centerpiece of a Southern buffet.	The ham is first scrubbed to remove the mold that develops during aging, soaked for several days in several changes of water to remove some of the salt, then poached in a sweet and slightly acidic liquid: wine, apple cider, or even Coca-Cola. The ham is cooked through to 160°F, cooled, glazed, decorated, and then finished in the oven.	Ham is served with fried eggs, grits, and redeye gravy, a sauce made by deglazing the pan with strong black coffee. "Ham, biscuits, and gravy" is the quintessential Southern breakfast. Hot biscuits are split and filled with thin-sliced country ham and topped with creamy pan gravy. Mini-biscuits filled with ham are a popular Southern hors d'oeuvre.
SOUTHERN QUICK BREADS: BISCUITS AND CORNBREAD	The earliest and most famous of biscuits could be called "quick" only in the culinary sense of having no yeast. For beaten biscuits, the dough was literally pounded with a heavy object, such as a mallet or the flat of an ax head, until it became glossy and blistered with air bubbles. Beaten biscuits bake up crisp and unusually light.	Baking powder biscuits and buttermilk biscuits are made from soft flour with milk or buttermilk and lard. Eaten at breakfast with butter and honey or cane syrup. Classic with thin-sliced country ham and cream gravy. Accompany any lunch or dinner entrée.	Traditional Southerners prefer a pure, unsweetened cornbread made from cornmeal, eggs, baking powder, baking soda, and buttermilk. The batter is poured into a hot cast-iron skillet greased with bacon drippings to develop a tasty, well-browned crust. Given body and protein from white wheat flour, this batter becomes the basis for fritters, muffins, cornsticks, and griddlecakes.
GRITS	Artisanally produced, whole-grain, stone-ground grits are the original; worth finding for their superior texture and deep corn flavor.	Simmered in salted water. Cooled, solidified grits are sliced or formed into cakes and fried.	Grits are the staple starch of Southern breakfasts. They are also used as a side starch to accompany sauced entrées. Commercially produced grits cook up quickly but lack texture and flavor.
GREENS	No food is more representative of old-fashioned Southern cooking than a dish of greens long-cooked with smoked meat in a savory broth called "pot liquor" or "pot likker."	Collard greens are the best-known choice, but kale, cabbage, chard, dandelion, spinach, cress, mustard greens, and turnip greens are also simmered in water with seasoning meat.	A frugal supper, greens are served with cornbread or corn dodger dumplings and a glass of fresh buttermilk. At Sunday dinner or other festive meals, they are an indispensable side dish.
VEGETABLES COOKED WITH SEASONING MEAT	Early vegetable cultivars required longer cooking, simmered until tender with salty, smoky seasoning meat and tasty pot liquor.	String beans, shell beans, squashes, turnips, kohlrabi, cabbage, and many other vegetables are cooked this way. Chunks of potato may be added to thicken the broth. Alternatively, cornmeal dumplings are poached in the pot liquor.	Despite long cooking times, vitamins and minerals are recaptured when the pot liquor is consumed, as all good Southerners love to do.
FIELD PEAS, DRIED BEANS AND SHELL BEANS	Called <i>field peas</i> , to distinguish them from English or garden peas, black-eyed peas, cowpeas, and crowder peas are not peas at all, but actually beans. Small, round, and beige with a single black-brown spot, to some Southerners black-eyed peas represent all the soldiers, black and white, who served in the Civil War.	Simmered with smoked pork and aromatic vegetables.	Dried beans are a traditional comfort food in the South. Shell beans are bean seeds eaten in fresh form. <i>Butter beans</i> is a term for several members of the lima bean family, ranging from the tiny <i>seiva</i> ("sivvy") bean to large, mature yellow lima beans.
PORK, FIELD PEAS 'N' GREENS: THE SOUTHERN TRINITY	Served on New Year's Day, this meal is so universal that many stores completely sell out of greens and black-eyed peas several days before the holiday. Pork symbolizes health and luck, black-eyed peas represent coins, and greens represent paper money.	Prepared separately, this trinity of ingredients comes together on the plate.	Not reserved for New Year's only, the trinity appears in many dishes such as spareribs with Hoppin' John and collards, country ham with black-eyed pea cakes and wilted salad, or a tasty pot of black-eyed pea soup simmered with neck bones and cabbage.
OKRA: SAUTÉED, SIMMERED, OR FRIED	West African slaves brought with them not only the seeds of okra, but also its African name, <i>gombo</i> , which has mutated into <i>gumbo</i> , now the name of an entire group of defining dishes found in both the Lowcountry and Louisiana.	Okra thickens stews and gumbos; it is served as a side dish sautéed in bacon drippings or simmered in a fresh tomato sauce and as an appetizer or side dish when floured and deep-fried.	Pickled okra appears on Southern relish trays.

TABLE 2.1 PLANTATION SOUTH DEFINING DISHES (continued)

ITEM NAME	HISTORY	DOMINANT INGREDIENTS AND METHOD	OTHER
FRUIT DESSERTS AND GELATINS	Gelatins based on fruit juice and sweet wines became popular desserts once refrigeration became widely available in the South.	Preparations vary.	Ambrosia is the favored dessert of Southern church suppers and potluck dinners. Fresh or syrup-poached fruit is layered with whipped cream and shredded coconut. Mixed with custards or ice creams, sparking gelatins add color to the dessert table.
PUDDINGS AND CONFECTIONS	Trifles and bread puddings were traditionally made to use up stale bread or cake. Often spiked with Caribbean rum and/or Bourbon whiskey, they offered an opportunity for "proper" ladies to indulge in a taste of spirits.	Banana pudding, made with sliced bananas, vanilla wafer cookies, and cooked custard, is favored in the deep South. Spirits also find their way into bourbon balls and rum balls, both popular homemade confections.	Nut brittles, pralines, macaroons, kisses, divinity, and benne wafers are only a few of the South's many confections.
ICE CREAMS	When Thomas Jefferson returned from France, he brought a "cream machine for ice" to Monticello and is reputed to have made the first ice cream in America. Food historians argue that ice cream was made in Charleston and on the Ashley River plantations some twenty years earlier.	A sweet custard base is churned over salted ice until frozen. Hand-cranked churns were replaced by electrically powered and cooled machines.	In 1835, the first shipment of block ice made its way to Savannah, and the era of the ice cream garden was born.



Pre-Civil War mansions line the Charleston waterfront. Matty Symons/Shutterstock



Locally caught shrimp are sold fresh and head-on in Lowcountry markets. Dave King © Dorling Kindersley



Soul food restaurants brought Plantation South African-American home cooking to a mainstream dining audience. Demetrio Carrasco © Dorling Kindersley