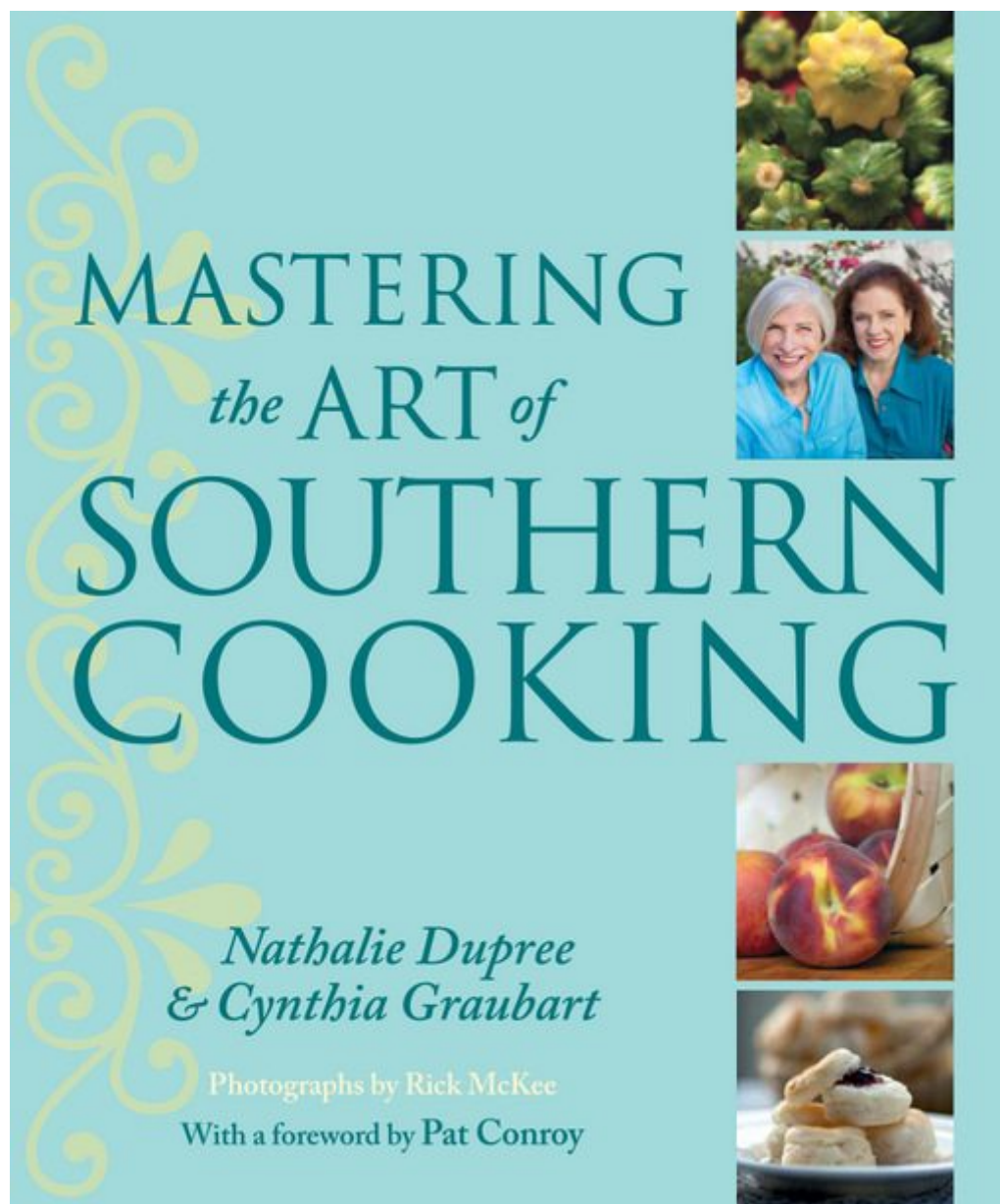


Cook the Book: 'Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking'

KATE WILLIAMS



Summer is officially upon us. And when you come from a family of Southerners, summer means prime reunion time. Whether they're formal, organized family reunions or casual barbecues with all of the cousins, these boisterous gatherings multiply as soon as the temperature rises above 70 degrees. What better time than now to explore classic Southern cooking?

Nathalie Dupree and **Cynthia Graubart**'s massive James Beard award-winning cookbook, *Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking*, is a perfect place to start. Taking cues from Julia Child's masterpiece, this book covers just about every element of Southern food you (and your grandmother) could imagine. Everything from grits to chitlins gets a mention, and more often than not, a detailed description of history and proper technique.

There is also an incredible amount of butter listed throughout the pages. Yes, many of these traditional dishes are rib-sticking, sideboard-warping fare, and Dupree and Graubart don't shy away from the rich stuff. Those who like their

casserole dishes buttered and their collards slicked with bacon grease will feel right at home.

The simpler vegetable dishes do provide a respite. As befits a book on a region with impressive farmland and a cornucopia of local produce, *Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking* takes a close look at the local favorites. These are one or two-line recipes, offering guidance more than directions; after all, most of the local greenery is so good it doesn't need much fiddling.

Many of the meatier recipes follow this same simplicity. Dupree and Graubart aren't out to teach total novice cooks how to heat a skillet, but they will give plenty of direction when it comes to frying chicken or shaping perfect biscuits.

This week we'll cook up a potluck's worth of Southern specialties, some devoutly traditional and others offering newer twists on the classics. **Squash casserole** and **roasted okra chips** will start us off. Then we'll tackle spicy, buttery **New Orleans-style barbecue shrimp** and custard-based **macaroni (and cheese) pie**. Finally, we'll finish with some crowd-pleasing **buttermilk skillet-fried chicken**.

Win 'Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking'

Thanks to the nice folks at Gibbs Smith, we have five (5) copies of *Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking* to give away this week. All you need to do to enter is to tell us about **the cuisine you'd most like to master** in the comments section below.

Cover photographs by Rick McKee from *Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking* by Nathalie Dupree and Cynthia Graubart, reprinted with permission by Gibbs Smith.