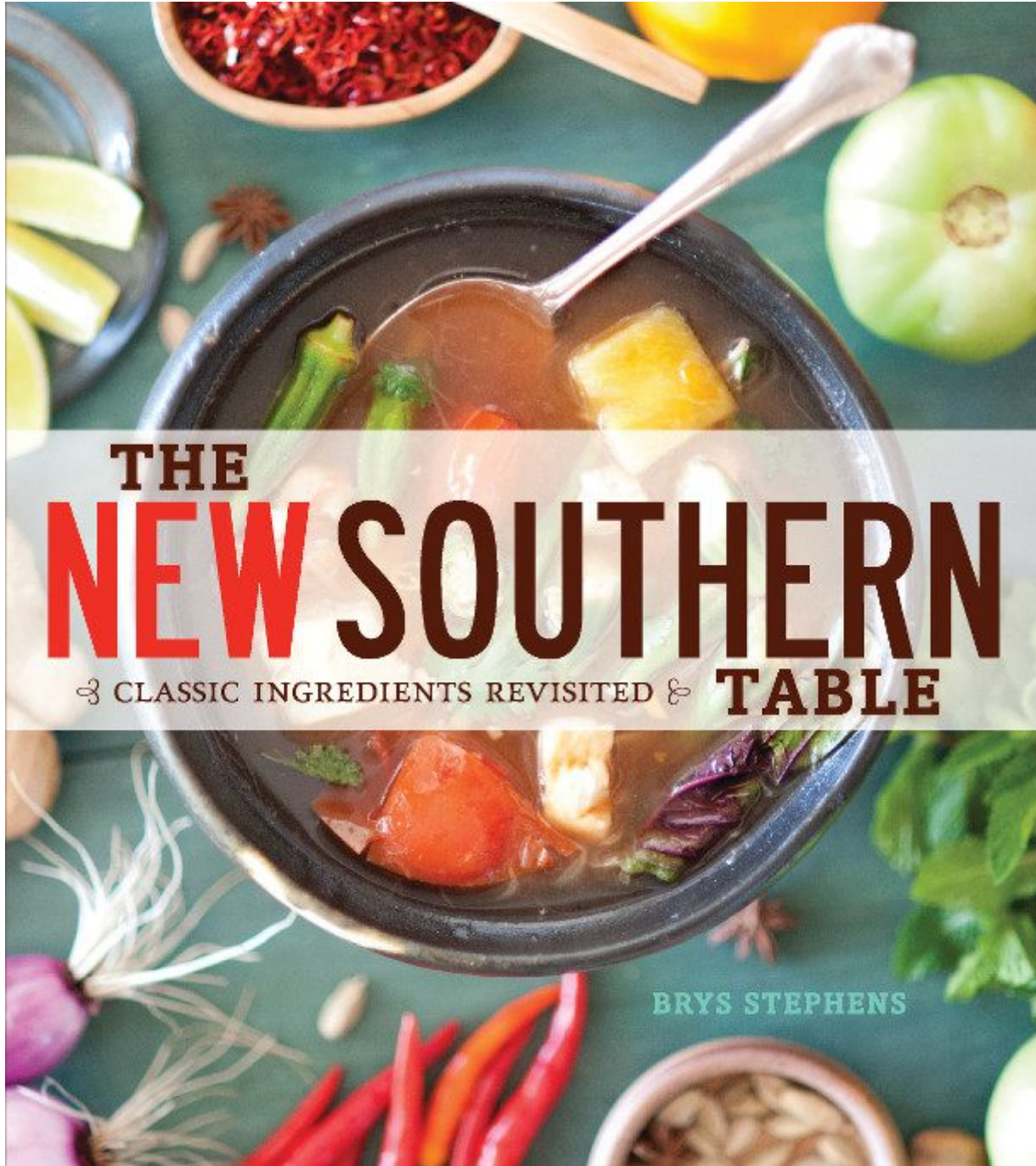


# Cook the Book: 'The New Southern Table' by Brys Stephens

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When I went to college, I moved just about as far as I could get away from my Southern hometown. I assumed that this transition signaled my permanent departure from that culture, both physically and emotionally. Like many 18-year-olds, I was stubbornly happy to make this change and assured that nothing would draw me back in. But, despite the fact that I still live 3,000 miles away, I now feel a much greater connection to my Southern identity. Why? Food, of course.

The growing popularity of "New Southern" cuisine was a surprise to me at first; I assumed that most people outside of the Southeast would have little interest in the long-cooked collards and crumbly cornbread of my childhood church suppers. Yet this "new" way of preparing Southern foods, as many of you readers know, is about so much more than reinterpreting soul food. It's an embrace of the local crops, both historic and contemporary, and their influence on culturally significant dishes. It's this attention to ingredients that drew me back in, curious to taste and learn more.

Southern ingredients are likewise the inspiration for Charleston-based food writer [Brys Stephens](#)'s cookbook, [The New Southern Table](#). Smartly divided into chapters dedicated to particular Southern ingredients, Stephens's book demonstrates the versatility of the Southern harvest. Many of the recipes aren't even Southern, per se, as Stephens draws inspiration for his recipes from his travels around the world. However, with each bite of collards, okra, or corn, you can still get a taste of the South underneath Middle Eastern spices or Parisian herbs.

Stephens does a great job of writing recipes that are both simple and easy to execute. Most of the dishes in [The New Southern Table](#) can be prepared on a busy weeknight with very little fuss. His palate is bold and upfront; expect lots of spice, lots of fresh herbs, and lots of flavor. It's easy to see why these ingredients captured his excitement.

This week, we'll taste a cornucopia of Southern ingredients, prepared in ways familiar and unexpected. Okra and collards will each get their own Mediterranean spin: we'll toss okra with feta, tomatoes, and marjoram and then stuff the collards full of lamb and bulgur, dolma style. Later, we'll make a Middle Eastern tabouleh studded with fresh field peas and then simmer a pot of saffron chicken and rice layered with golden beets. Finally, we'll finish out the week with a Peruvian ceviche with flounder, corn, and sweet potatoes.

## Win 'The New Southern Table'

Thanks to the kind folks at Fair Winds Press, we have five (5) copies of [The New Southern Table](#) to give away this week. All you need to do for a chance to win a copy is to tell us **your favorite way to use Southern ingredients** in the comments section below.