



# The Carolina Table: North Carolina Writers on Food

*Randall Kenan (Editor)*

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At the intersection of food and story, The Carolina Table: North Carolina Writers on Food will offer a collection of essays about the best meal, food and memory, the best family tradition, a cherished food ritual, a dreaded food ritual, a favorite recipe, the worst recipe, the worst meal, the funniest meal.

## **The Carolina Table: North Carolina Writers on Food Details**

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# From Reader Review *The Carolina Table: North Carolina Writers on Food* for online ebook

## Amy says

"Nabs were, and still are, the king of a road trip, the salve on a workday."

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## Wulfwyn says

I won a copy of *The Carolina Table: North Carolina Writers on Food* in a Goodreads Giveaway. (People really do win!)

I love cooking and have been collecting cookbooks for a number of years. This is not what I call a cookbook though it does have a number recipes in it. What I adore about this book were the stories of North Carolina kitchen tables. Some of them reminded me of my Mamaw's table in Southeast Kentucky. It was the various authors bringing the different flavors that make up North Carolina cuisine and serving them at homes where love ruled the table. Some of the stories will educate you. Some will have you howling with laughter. All will inspire you. These are stories that nourish the soul as well as the stomach.

Your stomach will be nourished, too. Though not a cookbook in the traditional style, there are recipes included. The Annie Collins Pound Cake will delight your taste buds as no box mix for pound cake can. It is divine and not complicated at all to make. I was never one for Butter Beans. I ate my Mamaw's and they were good. My favorites though were Leather Britches. I made the recipe for Better Butter Beans that is in the book and fell in love with Butter Beans. Who knew they could taste so good? If you have never tried cheese grits, I invite you to follow the easy recipe for this southern favorite. If you eat your cornbread on a plate, try it in a cold glass of milk, (a filling supper any night of the week). Sausage biscuits do cure anything that ails you, especially covered in gravy.

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## Sarah Chao says

Like the saying, "you are what you eat" this book describes the treasured food culture that is called Southern food. I read this in one sitting-all at once it was funny, inspiring and educative. I even marked the pages with recipes, so I can come back and try them.

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## Jessica says

As Randall Kenan says in the introduction to *The Carolina Table*, "This is the story of the Tar Heel state through food." (p.7) A collection of essays centering around Southern food, food memories, and how food continues to shape the cultural experience of the South today. As with any collection of essays by different authors, there are some I liked more than others and some I could more personally relate to, but overall it is a great collection of stories about Southern food. It's a pretty quick read and I liked that the editor divided the stories into sections - Someone's in the Kitchen, Carolina Flavor, Adventures in Eating, and Traditions.

Definitely a must-read for any NC foodies.

A quote I really liked:

"One time when we all went out for bagels in Chapel Hill, she [Lee Smith's mother] said, 'This may taste good to someone who has never eaten a biscuit.' Another thing she used to say is, 'No matter what is wrong with you, a sausage biscuit will make you feel a whole lot better.' I agree..." (p.47)

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## **Dani says**

The Carolina Table lays out stories about beloved food and community the way aunts and great-aunts in Nancie McDermott's *The Family Reunion* laid out their best dishes on clothed tables at the Schley Grange. Be a hungry child, walk beside the long tables crowded nearly at eye-level with best pickles in cut-glass bowls, deviled eggs on proper deviled egg plates, Aunt Julia's chicken pie, "threes" and "actual vegetables", then the dessert table with "flights of pies", fresh coconut cake, black walnut fudge and peach cobbler. It's how I felt as I read this collection. My plate was over-full, and I kept coming back for more.

Reading *The Carolina Table* also feels like speaking your blessings out loud, with gratitude. Richard Chess's *Make It Holy* about his "Sabbath Tribe" is a heart-full celebration of rituals of food, history, scripture. Bridgette A. Lacy's *Mater Day* reminds us that we still yearn to gather together over good, good food at its glorious peak.

I recommend that you sit upright reading, so as not create an unsafe situation when you read Michael Parker's *Let's Cook*, EXCLAMATION POINT, including a remembrance of his father's Scrambled Hamburger ("apparently his hamburger did not need any help") or Stephen Petrow's *The Pies That Bind*, a cautionary tale about complacency.

In three brief pages, Lenard D. Moore's *An Onslow County Tradition* sings a ballad of land and sea, fatherhood, abundance, salty, sweaty work and contentment, memories of which cannot be erased by heartbreak, death, or bulldozers.

Diya Abdo's *On Food and Other Weapons* is a sliver of this Syrian mother, now, here, tucked away in a North Carolina community. And, it is also, of course, the oldest story of all: an isolated, shy immigrant cook who knows as she breathes that her food will bring people to the table, to the home, to the heart. "The visiting Afghani boys say to 'tell her that her food is delicious.' That it tastes exactly like something they eat in Afghanistan." Her cooking, like Sophia Woo's dumplings in *Vulnerability* or Paul Cuadros' chicken in *Pollo a la Brasa Keeps Turning* in North Carolina remind us that we are still a messy, delicious community of people from all over the world, that Southern food will evolve as the cooks and eaters are woven in.

In North Carolina and other places, food traditions were nearly lost by the post-war generation of can-cooks, my mother among them. The writers in this collection are conservators, having saved the stories as well as the well-worn recipes, like Lee Smith's mother's in *The Recipe Box*, "soft, weathered index cards covered with thumbprints and spatters". And good that they did, for as she says, "our recipes tell us everything about us" and we are handed down treasure. Jaki Shelton-Green in *Singing Tables* says "the ghosts of other tables, other kitchens, remind me that we are all just ingredients and what matters is the grace with which I cook the meal".

Zelda Lockhart's Garden Gate is for everyone who ever thought, "If my ancestors could do it, I certainly can... and should". She could and did: cheer her triumph. In Zelda's garden, in Wayne Caldwell's Ruby's Kitchen, on the cottage deck in Bill Smith's Hard Crab Stew, or Jill McCorkle's grandmother's kitchen sink in Remembering the Cake we visit the places where love and food and memory meet.

My generation of chefs and cooks show our gratitude in the thriving food scenes from Asheville to Durham to Kinston to Wilmington, and the kids are alright. As Sophia Woo says, despite the intense hardships of building a food business, "What made it worth it was people came to eat."

In the same way that Nancie McDermott's family reunion has evolved over years and generations, we may pine and hunger for the meals of those uncomplicated (we imagine) old black and white photographs and supper tables, but we won't turn down a good takeout chicken leg and biscuit. We still gather and eat, and there is chocolate cake. All is not lost, and these good people remind us of the truest gifts of food, family and communion at our Carolina tables.

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