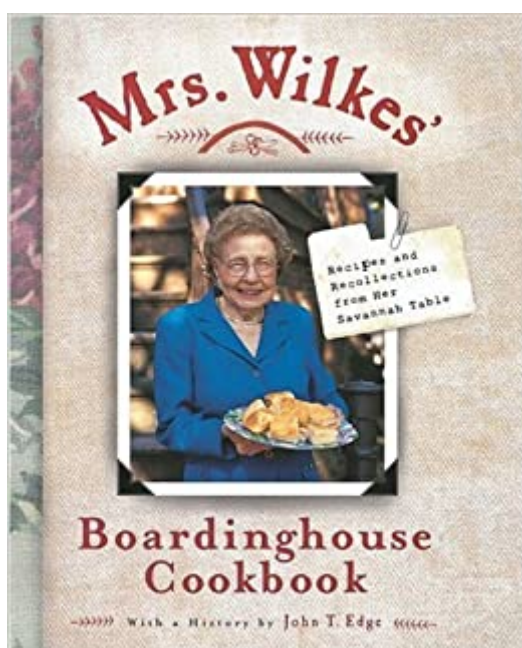


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Mrs. Wilkes' Boardinghouse Cookbook: Recipes And Recollections From Her Savannah Table



Synopsis

In 1943, a young and determined Sema Wilkes took over a nondescript turn-of-the-century boardinghouse on a sun-dappled brick street in historic downtown Savannah. Her goal was modest: to make a living by offering comfortable lodging and Southern home cooking served family style in the downstairs dining room. Mrs. Wilkes' reputation was strong and business was brisk from the beginning, but it was the coverage in Esquire and the New York Times, and even a profile on David Brinkley's evening news that brought Southern-food lovers from all over the world to her doorstep. Sema is now 95 years old, and four generations of Wilkeses help her keep the tables laden with platters of her legendary fried chicken, pork ribs, and biscuits, while friends and strangers pass bowls brimming with her sublime butterbeans, collard greens, mashed sweet potatoes, and banana pudding. The line snakes out the front door and down the street, where along with the locals and visitors, it's not uncommon to find Jimmy Carter or Roy Blount Jr. among other familiar faces waiting for their turn at Mrs. Wilkes' table. With over 300 recipes and culinary historian John T. Edge's colorful telling of Mrs. Wilkes' contribution to Savannah and Southern cuisine, this rich volume is a tribute to a way of cooking "and eating" that must not be forgotten. • Recipient of Southern Living's Reader's Choice Award 2000. • Mrs. Wilkes won the 1999 James Beard "America's Regional Classics" Award. • Mrs. Wilkes' self-published recipe book, Famous Recipes, which became the foundation for MRS. WILKES' BOARDINGHOUSE COOKBOOK, has sold over 250,000 copies. • Illustrated throughout with over 50 black-and-white photographs from Mrs. Wilkes' Boardinghouse and 25 color photos of her classic recipes. • • • • • •

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ninety-four year old Sema Wilkes has been running her boardinghouse in Savannah, Ga., since 1943, cooking up traditional Southern favorites biscuits, collard greens, hush puppies for a clientele of gentlemen farmers, Girl Scouts and Yankee tourists. Indeed, the remembrances of Mrs. Wilkes and her family and friends are so entertaining that the book is best approached as a memoir/oral history interrupted by recipes for soups, casseroles, fried delights and desserts. The book vividly portrays a few of the eatery's more irregular regulars, including one Spanish Civil War veteran who, always arriving via tricycle, ate there every weekday for three decades. Equally well-rendered are the strong women who have helped Mrs. Wilkes in the kitchen throughout the years, including the late Mildred Capers, who judged the doneness of her fried chicken by the sound of the oil in the fryer. But it's not clear how some of these dishes would fare outside of Mrs. Wilkes's delightful environs; the Fried Chicken recipe lists the needed ingredients: flour, evaporated milk, salt and pepper, but obviously, it is the context Southern hospitality, fresh ingredients and an experienced kitchen staff that make it special. Also, a few oddities included in the book would have perhaps been best left on the boardinghouse table a Tango Salad, for instance, with lemon gelatin, canned pineapple and pimentos. Nevertheless, this is a delightful homage to Southern life. (May)Forecast: The continuing interest in Southern food, along with an ecstatic blurb from Craig Claiborne, should help this book's sales. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Sema Wilkes has presided over her Savannah, GA, dining room for 68 years. At age 94, she still tastes every dish before it comes out of the kitchen, but now there are three other generations of her family working in the restaurant. Although "Mrs. Wilkes' " was originally a typical boardinghouse, feeding only its dozen or so roomers, good food was always her focus, and it became a restaurant soon after she took over in the 1940s. Today, there are lines around the block of people waiting to taste her Southern food at least 13 different dishes at every meal and "the boardinghouse" has a national reputation. But the cooking is much as it always was (one of her cooks has been there since the 1950s): Buttermilk Chicken, Corn Pudding, the biscuits that Craig Claiborne described as "one of the greatest things, ever, to happen" in his life. Coauthor Edge's readable text provides the history of the restaurant and the people involved in it. Recommended for all regional American cooking collections. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

If you've ever been there for her amazing lunchtime table loaded with delicious southern food, the cookbook is a must! And less expensive than if I'd bought it at the boarding house. Some fun recipes, very simple to make. Not fancy. Practical! Mrs Wilkes ran a warm & friendly boarding house (not a gourmet restaurant!) I also love the history contained in this book... Mrs Wilkes was born in 1907 and being a bit of a history buff, it was/is fun to review her wonderful life while learning some nice recipes along the way. Good purchase.

I've eaten at Mrs Wilkes in Savannah, GA. It was great and I highly recommend it. The cookbook was a bit of a disappointment and I passed it on to my niece. It's OK, but there are lots of "Southern" cooking books out there with better recipes. IMHO.

We ate at Mrs. Wilkes restaurant during a recent trip to Savannah and really enjoyed all the food. I had planned to purchase the cookbook there but didn't get the chance as so many people were paying at the same time. I particularly wanted a sweet potato recipe that tasted like one I remembered from childhood so I ordered the book from Amazon instead. I made the sweet potato recipe as soon as the book arrived and it was a big hit with my family. The narration before the recipes in each section is very interesting also. If you want a book with time-tested Southern recipes, I highly recommend this book!

I love this cookbook. I have another one that I bought at a resale shop, several years ago. It is a soft cover and has come apart, since I used it so much. I have over a hundred cookbooks, but this one seems to be my favorite. I keep it separate from the others, I am going to do keep this new one in a handy place, also There are several new recipes in this one. I could have put it on my Kindle, but I like the feel of a book. I am sure I will wear this one out, too.

I was so excited to find this kindle version of my favorite cookbook. I misplaced my signed hardcover version when I moved. My favorite recipe -curried broccoli- is not in here. Why? I have no idea. That was my main reason for purchasing this and I am really disappointed. Kind of a waste of 1.99 in my opinion...oh well.

I read the whole book in two sittings. Recipes are true to their roots and quite doable. This book further distinguishes itself with only one typo. Does an editor's heart proud (and no I am not the editor). Well worth the price, especially if you have southern palates to please.

a great cookbook

This was a real treat. I own so many cookbooks and felt guilty to buy another. When I saw how the Seaboard Airline Railroad employees were at one time were her main customers, I had to have it. My grandfather was a section Forman and am sure he ate there. The recipes also brought a picture of my mother cooking huge dinners on Sunday for after church meal. Mrs. Wilkes has more of the old southern recipes than any book I have ever found. They are simple but know how good they are because my mother and granny cooked just like she does. I enjoyed reading the stories to go along with the many recipes. Most of all I found the coconut cake and fruitcake like we had so many years ago at Christmas when all the kin came back home to Carolina. So happy to have this book.

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