



Recipes from *The Darling Dahlias and the Red Hot Poker*

By Susan Wittig Albert

Huey P. Long's Southern Fried Oysters

We've been hearing a lot lately about filibuster, but it's nothing new. [It's been a political strategy since the 1830s](#). You might remember these recent examples. In 1986, to try and stall a military spending bill, Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) read the D.C. phone book. And in 2013, Ted Cruz (R-TX) read *Green Eggs and Ham* when he was trying to hold up the Affordable Healthcare Act.

Huey Long's (D-LA) contribution to this time-honored tradition was a recipe for Southern Fried Oysters. Here it is, from the Congressional Record of June 12, 1935. (Long was filibustering in an attempt to keep control of appointments of New Deal officials so he could share the jobs with his Louisiana friends.) The ingredients and instructions are Long's.

What You Need

A frying pan "about 8 inches deep and about 17 inches in diameter"
New Orleans oysters
10-pound bucket of cottonseed-oil lard
Corn meal and salt, "to salt the meal"
A strainer

How You Do It

"You take the oysters and you lay them out on a muslin cloth, about 12 of them, and then you pull the cloth over and you dry the oysters and you roll them into a meal which is salted. You do not want to cook the meal or put water in the meal at any time or anything like that. Just salt the meal and roll the oysters in it. Then, let the grease get boiling hot. You want the grease about 6 inches deep. Then you take the oysters and you place the oysters in the strainer, and you put the strainer in the grease, full depth down to the bottom. Then you fry those oysters in boiling grease until they turn a gold-copper color and rise to the top, and then, you take them out and let them cool just a little bit before you eat them."

Southern Fried oysters are made to be eaten with a Cajun red dipping sauce. This one starts with a prepared tomato sauce and then gets *hotter*. This is also a good sauce for hush puppies.

Cajun Red Sauce

Mix together:

- 1 cup catsup or chili sauce
- 1 tablespoon horseradish
- 1 teaspoon celery salt
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 5-6 drops Tabasco, more if you dare

Tabasco is news to you? Learn about [this famous Louisiana sauce](#) here—and yes, it is truly made from peppers fermented in brine.



Alice Ann's Stewed Southern Okra

- 4 strips bacon, sliced crosswise into inch-wide slices
- 1 cup diced onion (about 1 medium onion)
- 1 cup diced bell pepper (about 1 bell pepper)
- 1/2 cup diced celery (about one rib)
- 1 teaspoon chopped garlic (about 1 clove)
- 1 (15-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes and their juices
- 1 pound (16-ounces) frozen or fresh okra, thickly sliced, trimmed of tops and tips if fresh, defrosted if frozen
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme
- 1 pinch cayenne
- 1 pinch cinnamon
- 1 pinch ground cloves
- 1/2 cup water
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a heavy 4-quart pot over medium heat, cook the bacon until it's lightly browned. Add the onions, celery, and bell pepper. If necessary, add a tablespoon of oil. Sauté over medium high heat until vegetables are lightly browned, about 8-10 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for a minute more. Add the

tomatoes, okra, and spices. Stir. Add water. Cover and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Bessie's Cajun Green Bean Casserole

Most of us have made this casserole with a can of mushroom soup. But Dorcas Reilly, the chef in the Campbell's Soup test kitchen, didn't come up with the "classic" green bean casserole recipe—the one with mushroom soup and canned fried onions—until 1968. The first canned fried onions seems to have appeared in the 1930s but may not have been widely available. Olney & Carpenter advertised the canned fried onions in the 1960s-70s. French's acquired the product in 1986. [More details here.](#) Bessie's Southern-style recipe (predating Campbell's) has a bit of a Cajun bite.

12 ounces andouille or cajun sausage, thinly sliced
2 small onions, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
3 pounds fresh green beans, stemmed and stripped; with about 4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
OR 3 one-pound cans cut green beans, drained, with 2 1/2 cups of chicken or vegetable broth

1/4 cup butter
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon oregano
1/2 teaspoon cayenne (more if you like)
1 1/2 cups grated white cheddar cheese
salt and pepper to taste

Heat the sausage in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat until lightly browned and tender. Add 1 chopped onion and sauté until tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté another minute or two.

- If using fresh green beans, add them plus broth to cover, bring to a boil, and simmer, covered, for 25 to 35 minutes, until beans are tender. Strain the cooking liquid from the beans and reserve (you should have about 2 1/2 cups).
- If using canned, add beans, stir, and heat.

Preheat oven to 350°. Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add the rest of the chopped onion, salt, and cook, stirring, until very soft, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the flour and stir until incorporated. Stir in the cream and 2 1/2 cup reserved liquid or broth. Cook, stirring, 5-7 minutes, until the sauce is thick enough to drip slowly from the spoon. Stir in the cheese, add green beans and toss until combined. Taste, adjust salt and pepper.

Pour into greased 9 X 13 baking dish and bake about 25 minutes, until hot and bubbly around edges. Bessie probably wouldn't have used fried onions for a topping, but that doesn't mean *you* can't. Add as many as you like and pop back into the oven for another 10-15 minutes. Cool slightly, serve warm.

Twyla Sue's Buttermilk Grits

Grits are a Southern staple, especially nice with the subtle, creamy tang of buttermilk. They show up at many different meals and in many different recipes, so it's a good idea to learn how to cook them right. Stone-ground grits take longer to cook than quick, instant, or regular grits, where, the corn pericarp and germ are removed, leaving just the starch. Stone-ground grits, less processed, contain more fiber and nutrients. The key is a cooking at a low simmer until creamy and thickened. Adding butter near the end ensures a richer flavor.

4 cups water
1 cup whole milk
1 1/4 teaspoons salt
1 cup uncooked stone-ground grits
3/4 cup buttermilk*
2 tablespoons butter

Bring water, milk, and salt to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Gradually whisk in 1 cup uncooked stone-ground grits; return to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until creamy and thickened, 25 to 30 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in buttermilk and butter. Cover and keep warm until serving time.

*No buttermilk? Substitute yogurt. Twyla Sue wouldn't have heard of it, but *you* have. It has the same acidic tang as buttermilk. Or put 1 tablespoon white vinegar or lemon juice into a measuring cup, add milk to the 3/4-cup level, stir and let sit for a few moments. If you like buttermilk but don't want to buy a full quart (or more), try buttermilk powder.

Myra May and Violet's Pulled Pork

1 4-pound pork shoulder or pork butt, bone in or out, cut in thirds

Dry Rub

1 tablespoon salt
1 tablespoon black pepper
1 tablespoon paprika
1 tablespoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon onion powder
1 tablespoon chili powder
2 tablespoons brown sugar

Sauce

1/2 cup barbecue sauce
1/2 c cider vinegar
2 tablespoons molasses
1 tablespoon horseradish
Tabasco optional

Preheat oven to 200 degrees (slow).

Adjust spices to your preference and mix together. Thoroughly rub over pork. Place meat on a rack in a roasting pan. After you've finished supper in the evening, put the meat in the oven, uncovered.

Mix together the BBQ sauce and the vinegar. Before you go to bed, brush the sauce over the meat. If you wake up, do it again. If you don't, that's okay. Do it first thing when you get up.

After breakfast, take the meat out and check for doneness (pork is done at 145°). It's been in the oven for about 12 hours, so it should be fork-tender. If not, put it back in for a while longer. It's easier to shred while it's still warm. Add the sauce and give it a good stir.

Serve on buns with extra sauce on the side. Or for a south-of-the-border taste, add a little cumin and serve on tostados with guacamole, chopped tomatoes, and cheese.

Note: Slow cookers hadn't been invented when Myra May and Violet were cooking. If you have one, you can use it instead of that overnight oven (especially good in the summertime). Just pour the sauce around the meat in the cooker—add a little water as necessary during the cooking process.

And for the interesting and long-forgotten backstory behind the time-saving invention of the slow cooker, [check out this fascinating Smithsonian post.](#)

Raylene's Sweet Potato Pudding Pie

Pastry for a single-crust pie

2 cups mashed cooked sweet potatoes (about 2 medium, peeled and cooked)

1/2 cup butter, softened

1 cup brown sugar, packed

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

2 tablespoons rum (optional)

1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

6 large eggs, separated

1 cup condensed milk

3/4 cup chopped candied pecans

Preheat oven to 350°. Prepare pastry dough and line pan. In a large bowl, beat sweet potatoes and butter until blended and smooth. Beat in brown sugar, flour, vanilla, rum, and nutmeg. Add egg yolks, one at a time, beating until blended. Add condensed milk; beat well. With clean beaters, beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Fold into sweet potato mixture.

Pour into pastry shell and top with candied pecans. Bake 45-55 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Cover edge loosely with foil during the last 15 minutes if needed to prevent crust from becoming too brown. Cool on a wire rack; serve or refrigerate within 2 hours.