

Richmond's
Quirk

American
Applejack

Texas
Kolaches

Tamale
Road Trip

THE LOCAL

PALATE

FOOD CULTURE OF THE SOUTH

HERBSAINT'S
REBECCA WILCOX
Rebecca & Co.

THE FALL TRAVEL ISSUE

An Insider's Guide to **NEW ORLEANS**



HERBSAINT'S CHEF DE CUISINE
REBECCA WILCOX SERVES
HER SHRIMP CALLALOU

DISPLAY UNTIL SEPTEMBER 30, 2017

\$5.99US \$6.99CAN



SEPTEMBER 2017
THELOCALPALATE.COM

0 74851 26636



EXPERT PICKS: JOHN T. EDGE

ON THE ROAD

The Potlikker Papers author shares memorable dishes from his book tour

By Margaret Loftus // Illustrations by Katy Clune

As a James Beard award-winning writer and director of the Southern Foodways Alliance at the University of Mississippi, John T. Edge has been shaping the conversation about how we eat below the Mason-Dixon line for nearly twenty years. In his latest book, *The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South* (Penguin Press) released earlier this year, Edge limns the tumultuous history of the region through the lens of food, from the Civil Rights Movement, when black cooks raised funds for the Montgomery Bus Boycott by selling food, to a modern-day South enriched by the foodways of immigrants from all over the world. *TLP* caught up with Edge toward the end of his book tour to talk road food strategies and the meal highlights of a month spent crisscrossing the South.

“In restaurants, I seek an equilibrium between oilcloth and white tablecloth, between funk and finesse.

What kind of places do you seek out on the road?

I aim for a balance between places that I know and love—where I walk in the door and I see familiar faces and smell familiar smells—and new experiences. That’s what travel is about, revisiting past pleasures and discovering something new. In restaurants, I seek an equilibrium between oilcloth and white tablecloth, between funk and finesse.

What’s a typical day?

Early in my tour, I landed in Savannah and went straight to Narobia’s Grits & Gravy, where I ate shrimp and grits—stewed shrimp in brown sauce over grits, topped with fried eggs. That dish reminded me of the working-class roots of shrimp and grits. And of Bill Neal, the Chapel Hill chef, who popularized the dish in the 1980s. After a book talk at the Savannah College of Art and Design, I booked a dinner table at the Grey with a big group of friends. We ate big fat steaks, and

drank beautiful red wine and toasted partners Mashama Bailey and John O. Morisano, who figure in my book.

How do you typically find places to eat on the road?

I obsess over where I’m going. I really hate squandering a meal. Oftentimes I know where I want to go when I land in a city, but not always. I use Twitter: “I’m headed to this town, nice people of Twitter, where should I eat?” In my profession, we practice honor among thieves, so all share touts.

Part of your work at the SFA is telling the story of how foodways in the South are evolving. Any new discoveries?

The Kurdish community in Nashville, represented by Azadi Market off Nolensville Pike, showcases that dynamism. Ava Lowrey, our documentary fellow at SFA, recently made a

film about Kurdish life in Tennessee. On my book tour, I gave a talk in Nashville and was asked to speak of the future of the South. The future is Kurdish. And Mexican. And Bhutanese. In a region like ours, a place with a tragic history of exclusion, recent immigrants chart an inclusive future.

For a lot of folks, travel in the South means barbecue. But nowadays you no longer have to go to Texas for good brisket or North Carolina for pulled pork. Where do you stand on barbecue crossing boundaries?

If you want to preserve Southern culture in amber, that’s when it dies. The act of preservation limits the South and limits its people. If you love it, know it will evolve and change. That evolution and change encompasses barbecue, too.

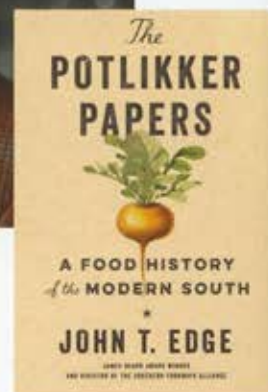


PHOTO BY JASON THRASHER



John T.'s picks

BABY SQUASH WITH ONIONS
Highlands Bar and Grill
Birmingham, Alabama

Classic French technique meets seasonal, local bounty at chef Frank Stitt's venerable dining room. Edge was wowed by the baby squash with onions that accompanied a trout dish. "It's reflective of the beautiful sourcing that Stitt and his staff do at Highlands. It reminds me, too, that Southern food need not be baroque."

CRAB CAKE

The Federal
Atlanta, Georgia

Steaks are the draw at this cozy bistro in Midtown, directed by Atlanta restaurant veterans Shaun Doty and Lance Gummere. And the pork schnitzel dressed with parsley, lemon, and roasted peanuts has its own fan base. But it was the crab cake that Edge still dreams about. "There's nothing to hide; it's all fat and luscious crab," he says. "I can't wait to go back and eat it again."

RIBEYE

The Grey
Savannah, Georgia

Built around a 1930s lunch counter in a once-segregated Greyhound station, the Grey figures in *The Postlikker Papers* for

its redemptive narrative. "Before a counter where blacks were once not welcome, Mashama Bailey stands tall, serving seafood, meat, and produce sourced from a network of local farmers, many of whom are African American." Edge calls it an important American restaurant, and "beacon of Southern possibilities." Plus, he says, it serves "a luscious hunk of steak."

SHRIMP AND GRITS
Narobia's Grits & Gravy
Savannah, Georgia

Edge rhapsodizes about his breakfast at this soul food cafe. Shrimp and grits here harken to the dish's origins as morning sustenance for shrimpers. "It's the kind of place where the owners seem to know everyone," he says. "This is gutsy cooking, without pretense. It's a diner, a coastal diner, and that earns you beautiful shrimp."

DRUM MEUNIÈRE
WITH LUMP CRAB

Upperline
New Orleans, Louisiana

He's a big fan of this classic Creole restaurant in the Garden District and its owner JoAnn Clevenger—"one of the most gracious and socially intelligent hosts in the business." Dinner was "a beautiful plank of drum with silky meunière sauce, topped with fat lumps of crab," Edge recalls fondly. "The welcome and the food combined to make it a magical night."

CACIO E PEPE NEW POTATOES
Pizzeria Mercato
Carrboro, North Carolina

Gabe Barker, the son of chefs

Karen and Ben Barker, built his business plan on pizza. That said, Edge loved this spin on the Roman pasta dish. "It's all the ingredients you associate with cacio e pepe: Pecorino Romano and black pepper, shellacked atop crunchy potatoes. It's playful food, which also happens to be delicious."



NASI GORENG CRAB FRIED RICE
Brewery Bhavana
Raleigh, North Carolina

Vansana and Vanvisa Nolintha opened Bida Manda in Raleigh as a tribute to their Laotian parents. Earlier this year, they opened this stylish brewery, flower shop, bookstore, and dim sum cafe. The Malaysian fried rice with crab and egg crepes resembles a "purse of eggs with a surprise inside," says Edge.

SHRIMP WITH
JALAPEÑO SPAGHETTI
Gray & Dudley
Nashville, Tennessee

At the restaurant inside Nashville's new 21c Museum Hotel, chef Levon Wallace mixes and matches genres and places. That tack translates as boudin-stuffed lumpia, smoked catfish dip with celery crackers, and this pasta dish, defined, says Edge, by the "beautiful, vegetal heat of the jalapeño spaghetti."

CRISPY SWEET POTATOES
WITH ANCHO CHILE SAUCE
AND PEANUT BRITTLE

Butcher & Bee
Charleston, South Carolina

From lamb tartare with smoked labneh to spicy carrots with yogurt and salsa verde, B&B presents imaginative takes on local ingredients. Edge was impressed with the subtle heat of ancho chile in this dish. "That sneaky fire makes the dish," he says. "And the resounding crunch of the peanut brittle surprised me."

ROASTED PORK BÁNH MÌ
Cali Sandwich & Fast Food
Houston, Texas

"I ordered a giant Vietnamese coffee and a roasted pork sandwich with pickled carrots, hoisin, sriracha, and French bread that was still warm from the bakery," Edge says. "At seven bucks, boy, that was that a great sandwich, a kind of future-tense po-boy."



PORK SHOULDER WITH
PICKLED MAGNOLIA LEAVES
AND BARBECUE-BAKED PEANUTS

home.made
Athens, Georgia

From crab boiled peanuts to peach gazpacho with pickled shrimp, owner Mimi Maumus is an "innovative thinker and chef grounded in the place she loves." For Edge, a pork shoulder, cured and smoked in the style of ham with pickled magnolia leaves and peanuts prepared like baked beans was especially memorable.