

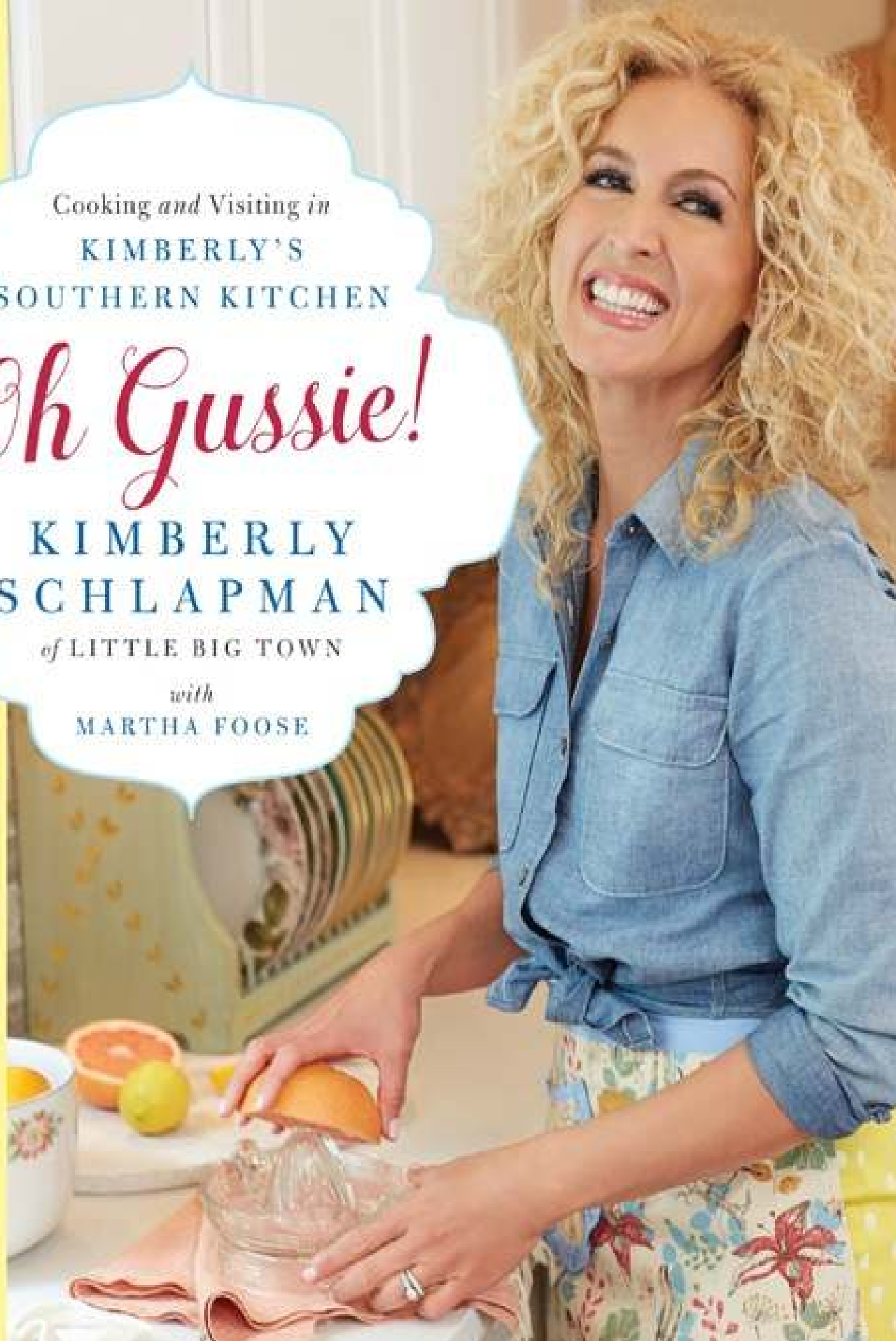
Cooking and Visiting in
KIMBERLY'S
SOUTHERN KITCHEN

Oh Gussie!

KIMBERLY
SCHLAPMAN

of LITTLE BIG TOWN

with
MARTHA FOOSE





Oh Gussie!

Cooking and Visiting in Kimberly's Southern Kitchen

KIMBERLY SCHLAPMAN

WITH MARTHA FOOSE


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DEDICATION

TO MY MAMA AND DADDY

I learned from the best. There are no two more loving and lovable parents! Mama is the greatest cook I know and taught me how to take care of the people I love through cooking for them. Daddy happily tasted every single dish we ever made—the good, the bad, and the scorched!

AND IN MEMORY OF MY BROTHER-IN-LAW ALLEN SCHLAPMAN

*who absolutely loved gathering around the table with family.
We miss you, Allen.*



EPIGRAPH

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

—PSALMS 16:11

I just believe in putting kindness into the universe.

—EMMYLOU HARRIS

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INTRODUCTION



I've been cooking as long as I've been singing, which is simply as long as I can remember. Singing at church and sitting counterside helping my mama and grandmothers cook taught me a lot about life. Those ladies were at the door of anyone around who had a birth or death in their family, got a promotion, lost a job, or just broke a bone—with some kind of casserole or cake in hand and with me and my little sister in tow.

Aside from learning to cook, I learned how important it is to share time in the kitchen with people you love, to nourish your family, and to foster friendships. Our families' kitchens were where I found my passion and my voice.

I love to see real emotion on people's faces as I sing a song. I adore hearing the pleasure in people's voices when I have cooked something that brings great delight to their taste buds or comfort to their hearts.

Growing up in the Appalachian foothills of North Georgia, we were taught to love simple pleasures, like Sunday rides in the country, a warm cobbler, the sound of children singing. Those are the things I remember from my childhood, and they still make me happy today. I like to take care of people, make people happy. I find such pleasure in filling up bellies!

My home is where my heart is, and my kitchen is the heart of my home. It's where I take care of

people. My desire is for you to show love to the people who mean the most to you through the recipes in this book. I am sharing my heart in the stories and memories that I hold most dear. I hope they spark memories in you and inspire you to love even deeper with every dusting of flour and tearing chopping of onions.

CHAPTER 1

Family



I come from a mixture of one-quarter old Hollywood glamour and three-quarters hardworking, God-fearing country roots. I attribute my slight addiction to stilettos and shiny frocks, along with a bit of my mischievous nature, to my Grandmother Burrell, on my mama's side. She grew up in a well-to-do household in Beverly Hills, California, dining out at The Brown Derby. She fell head over heels for my charmingly Southern grandfather from the hills of North Georgia. Papa Burrell had had a hard life and grew up working for every penny he was afforded. He even had to quit school as a boy to go to work.

My mama's folks met at a dime store in California when my Papa Burrell was stationed out west in the Army. He told his buddy right then and there, "Now, that's the girl I am going to marry." They fell fast and were married. After using up his furlough days, he even went AWOL to extend their visit to Georgia to see his parents. Since it was wartime and he was being sent to Hawaii, his forgiving superior officer turned a blind eye to the offense. He spent four years in the Army, where he served under the great General Patton and was awarded two Bronze Stars. I would sit, all ears, as Grandmother Burrell retold the hysterically romantic story of getting off the train in Georgia, walking

far up the dirt road in her stilettos, and losing a heel on her way to meet her new family. She was reverse Beverly Hillbilly! She came to the South with no experience at all in the kitchen—why, the first time she cooked corn for her husband, to her surprise it turned into popcorn right there in the pan. But she transformed into a brilliant homemaker.

On my daddy's side of the family, my Papa Bramlett met Grandmother Bramlett at a friend's birthday party in Demorest, Georgia. They were secretly married when she was sixteen. Her daddy did not want her to marry that young, so they snuck off to Walhalla, South Carolina, where you can still get married today if you're sixteen. I always thought that was so incredibly romantic! They were so very sweet. Papa was a farmer. He grew vegetables and drove them over two hours to sell at the farmers' market in Atlanta. Papa sang in a men's quartet and had the most charming welcome: whenever anyone would walk in the house, he would sweetly sing hello—I still hear his melodic greeting and even use his welcome a lot myself! Grandmother and he lived on a farm, where they would give the kids truckbed rides through the pasture on Sunday afternoons. There was a rickety old bridge over the creek that we swore was always about to give way, and we'd hold our breath every time we crossed it. He never worried, though. He drove over that thing like it was built of steel! My grandmother is one of the most loving people I know. She taught me to forgo handshaking and to just go on in for the hug. She exudes love and mercy. Her philosophy is "The more, the merrier—we can always make more biscuits!" We recently celebrated my dear Grandmother Bramlett's ninety-first birthday. I'm so grateful to still have her in my life. Her father, interestingly enough, also traveled with a gospel quartet. I think both those fine tenors would've really gotten a kick out of our band!

My parents met at school in Cornelia, Georgia. My daddy was a rough, mischievous yet adorable rascal, a bit like his own daddy. My mama was a prim, proper angel just like her mama. When she and my daddy started dating, she would make him call her as soon as he got home after their dates, not trusting him to go straight home. She clipped his wings a little, and that thrilled his mother and sisters, who constantly worried about his safety. My daddy's whole family fell in love with his gal! My folks were married young and had me first. Five years later, my sister, Paula, came along. I adored her instantly. Paula and I got along great. We never fought, and still to this day we don't fight. She's my best friend. But we did get ourselves into trouble a great deal. We joke that she and I just about killed one of the peach trees that used to grow in the yard because of all the switches that had to be taken from it to save us straight!

When I was seventeen, I went off to college to study music in Birmingham, Alabama. When my parents took me back to school after Christmas of my freshman year, they stopped at a pharmacy and unbeknownst to me, bought a pregnancy test. They bought the test there in Birmingham because had they bought it in our small-town pharmacy, folks would have thought it was for me! Nope! Mama was forty-one and had a baby on the way! In those days, a forty-one-year-old pregnant woman might as well have been Abraham's wife, Sarah. My brother, Joshua, was born when I was nineteen. He was incredibly cute, and we spoiled him rotten. I can't imagine what our family would be like today if it hadn't been for that little surprise.

Grandmother Bramlett was a wonderful cooking teacher, and Josh used to sit on the counter to watch her cook. He especially loved to watch her make breakfast in the morning. Once when he spent the night with her and Papa, he walked into my grandparents' room the next morning and announced, "Breakfast is ready! Don't know how to make coffee." That little fellow had cooked an entire breakfast! He was only five years old!

The dishes in this chapter are dishes we have shared in our family for years. Some I have tweaked

a touch, and others I would not change for a million dollars.



GOLDEN DELICIOUS COLESLAW



My uncle David loves pepper jelly! Whenever I come for a visit he foists his latest pepper jelly find on me. It has gotten to be a running joke between us. Try this slaw dressing with your favorite pepper jelly. I always look for interesting batches at roadside stands and farmers' markets. No two batches may ever be alike, but the slaw is always bound to be good! This colorful slaw combines mellow Golden Delicious apple matchsticks with a flare of hot pepper.

Makes 6 servings

2 CUPS THINLY SLICED GREEN CABBAGE

1¼ CUPS THINLY SLICED RED CABBAGE

1 LARGE CARROT, SHREDDED

2 GOLDEN DELICIOUS APPLES, PEELED, CORED, AND CUT INTO MATCHSTICKS

1 CUP MAYONNAISE

3 TABLESPOONS APPLE CIDER VINEGAR

¼ CUP APPLE HABANERO PEPPER JELLY (TEXAS PEPPER JELLY)

SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER

Combine the cabbage, carrot, apples, mayonnaise, vinegar, and jelly in a large bowl and mix well incorporate. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

SOUTHERN SIMPLE: This is a great make-ahead recipe. It needs to sit for at least an hour so the juice get released. The apple and veggies become a little soft but still have a nice crunch to them.

If the slaw is going to sit for an extended time, toss the apple matchsticks in vinegar to keep them from turning brown.

SOUTHERN SIMPLE: If you can't find apple pepper jelly at the market, substitute 2 tablespoons hot pepper jelly and 2 tablespoons apple jelly for the apple habanero jelly.

SOUTHERN MOTHER: A sweet hostess gift is a jar of apple habanero pepper jelly from my buddies over in Texas, tied up with a recipe card for this slaw. You can order their wonderful jelly at www.texaspepperjelly.com.

LAYERED SALAD



This colorful salad is a perfect “make ’n’ take” for a picnic or potluck, and it’s one of the recipes I turn to when I get together with my sister, sister-in-law, and cousins. Once it’s all layered up, the salad can hang out in the fridge while I hang out with my girls!

Makes 8 servings

- 2 HEADS ROMAINE LETTUCE, SHREDDED**
- 4 CUPS CHOPPED TOMATOES**
- 2 CUPS FINELY CHOPPED RED ONION**
- ONE 16-OUNCE BAG FROZEN PEAS, THAWED**
- 1 CUP MAYONNAISE**
- 1 TABLESPOON SUGAR**
- 2 TEASPOONS SALT**
- 2 TABLESPOONS CHOPPED FRESH DILL**
- 1½ CUPS SHREDDED CHEDDAR CHEESE**
- 6 SLICES BACON, COOKED AND CRUMBLED**

Layer the lettuce, tomatoes, red onions, and peas in a large glass bowl. Mix the mayonnaise, sugar, salt, and dill in a small bowl. Spread the mayonnaise mixture evenly on top of the peas. Finish with layers of Cheddar and bacon. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Toss before serving.

SOUTHERN SIMPLE: To punch up this salad for a speedy weeknight meal, add a layer of leftover diced cooked chicken or ham. Cooked salad-size shrimp makes a nice addition, too.

SOUTHERN SKINNY: Use fat-free mayonnaise and substitute turkey bacon and reduced-fat shredded cheese to trim a few calories off this salad.

CUCUMBER TEA SANDWICHES

These petite finger sandwiches have been a favorite of mine since I was a little girl. We always seemed to serve them on happy occasions, most of the time with only the ladies for baby or bridal showers, graduation teas, and luncheons. I remember Mama getting up early on Saturday mornings when she had a shower or meeting to go to and making these little goodies. I especially remember her carefully trimming the ends off the bread.

Makes 24 tea sandwiches

8 OUNCES CREAM CHEESE, AT ROOM TEMPERATURE

1 CUP SEEDED AND GRATED CUCUMBER

¼ CUP FINELY CHOPPED SCALLIONS

2 TABLESPOONS MAYONNAISE

1 TABLESPOON HOT SAUCE

SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER

24 SLICES WHITE BREAD

1. Mix the cream cheese, cucumber, scallions, mayonnaise, and hot sauce in a small bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
2. Spread an even layer of the cheese mixture on 12 slices of bread. Top each with the other pieces of bread to make 12 sandwiches. Trim the crusts off all the sandwiches, then slice each diagonally into triangular tea sandwiches. Arrange them on a platter.

SOUTHERN SIMPLE: You can make these sandwiches ahead, but be sure to cover them with a damp paper towel and plastic wrap or the bread will start to dry up and curl at the edges.

SOUTHERN SIMPLE: To seed and grate the cucumbers, slice them lengthwise, then use a spoon to scrape out and discard the seeds. Grate the cucumber flesh using a box grater. If using English cucumbers, there is no need to seed.

SOUTHERN SKINNY: To lighten this recipe, use 1/3-less-fat cream cheese (Neufchâtel) and fat-free mayonnaise or reduced-fat Vegemaise on thin-sliced low-calorie bread.

PAPA'S PEACHES AND COTTAGE CHEESE

My daddy's daddy loved peaches and cottage cheese. I created this dish with him in mind. It is wonderful just about any time of day but particularly delicious for breakfast. The peaches can be sweetened the night before and refrigerated while the nuts can be spiced and baked ahead of time and ready to go in the morning.

Makes 4 servings

3 PEACHES, PEELED, PITTED, AND ROUGHLY CHOPPED

2 TABLESPOONS PLUS ¼ CUP SUGAR

1 EGG WHITE

1 TABLESPOON WATER

½ TEASPOON GROUND CINNAMON

¼ TEASPOON SALT

1 CUP PECAN HALVES

2 CUPS COTTAGE CHEESE

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Toss the peaches with 2 tablespoons sugar in a large bowl. Let the peaches macerate at room temperature for at least 30 minutes and up to 1 hour to release the juices.
3. Meanwhile, whisk the egg white and water in a bowl until foamy. Add the remaining ¼ cup sugar, the cinnamon, and salt and whisk until the mixture is thick and opaque. Add the pecans and stir to coat thoroughly. Transfer the nuts to the prepared baking sheet, using a fork to space out the pecans and get rid of any excess egg white coating. (Discard the remaining coating.)
4. Bake the nuts, stirring every 5 minutes, until deep golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Cool completely on the baking sheet.
5. Spoon ½ cup cottage cheese into each of 4 bowls. Top with the peaches and spiced pecans.

SOUTHERN SIMPLE: The spiced pecans can be made up to 4 days ahead. Store the nuts in an airtight container at room temperature. The recipe doubles easily, and these sweet, spicy nuts are great to have on hand as an addition to a salad or just for snacking.

SOUTHERN MOTHER: This is a sweet way to get a bit of calcium and protein plus a serving of fruit to start the day.

NEW BRIDE'S VEGETABLE BEEF SOUP



When I was a new bride at twenty-one, my Grandmother Burrell mailed me this recipe. She had written it on little lined notepaper. I think she figured if I could make a good pot of soup I might do all right as a homemaker and wife. She was right. This one's easy, forgiving, and impressive—just like a good marriage!

Makes 6 servings

1 POUND GROUND BEEF

1 SMALL ONION, CHOPPED (ABOUT ¾ CUP)

TWO 10.75-OUNCE CANS CONDENSED TOMATO SOUP

2 SMALL RUSSET (BAKING) POTATOES, PEELED AND CUT INTO MEDIUM DICE (ABOUT 2 CUPS)

ONE 15-OUNCE CAN SLICED CARROTS, DRAINED AND RINSED, OR 2 CUPS CHOPPED FRESH CARROTS

ONE 15-OUNCE CAN GREEN BEANS, DRAINED AND RINSED, OR 2 CUPS FROZEN GREEN BEANS

ONE 15-OUNCE CAN WHOLE KERNEL CORN, DRAINED AND RINSED, OR 2 CUPS FROZEN CORN

ONE 16-OUNCE CAN NAVY BEANS, DRAINED AND RINSED

ONE 14.5-OUNCE CAN DICED TOMATOES

SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER

1 TABLESPOON CHOPPED FRESH PARSLEY

1. Cook the ground beef in a large stockpot over medium heat until it starts to turn brown, about 10 minutes.
2. Drain the fat from the pot. Add the onion and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato soup. Fill each can with water and add it to the pot. Add the potatoes, carrots, green beans, corn, navy beans, and tomatoes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Bring the soup to a boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40 minutes.
3. Just before serving, stir in the fresh herbs. Season with more salt and pepper if needed.

SOUTHERN SIMPLE: Some days around our house more people drop over than expected at dinnertime. When that happens, you can add one 8-ounce package of egg noodles to make this recipe go further. Cook the noodles according to the instructions on the package.

SOUTHERN MOTHER: One day when my daughter sets up housekeeping as a new bride, I'll mail her this recipe from my grandmother.

I'm a sucker for romance, and I have sung for more weddings than I can count. It's always cool to watch those moments from a special perspective. I am usually positioned in the front of the church chapel very close to the action. I must say one of my most memorable moments was while I was singing "The Lord's Prayer" at the Cornelia First United Methodist Church. I was probably sixteen. My friend and organist Bill Loyd and I were doing a classical rendition of this very reverent song, and as I reached the climax, the bride's little brother very quietly fell out! He fainted! I was standing on the platform right over him! Now, that was a first! What to do? There was a bit of a commotion, but Bill and I kept going—the show must go on! Bill recently reminded me that I leaned over to him when the song was over to cautiously ask, "Is he dead?" I know the mother of the bride could have fainted, too.



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