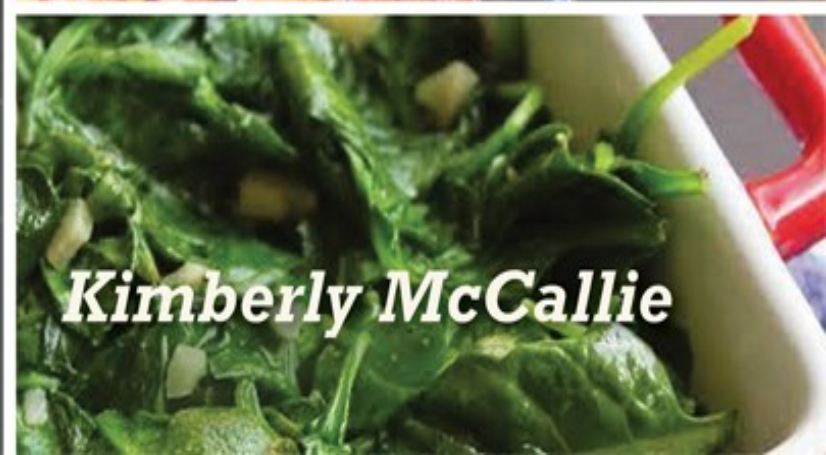




SOUTHERN on a SHOESTRING



Kimberly McCallie



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INTRODUCTION

The only images that some people have of life in the South are the beautifully and richly stylized photographs seen in Southern lifestyle magazines and cookbooks. As a Southerner, I too have been drawn in by the fantasy presented on those pages. But that is exactly what that lifestyle is—a fantasy. The reality is that the majority of people, no matter where they're from, are working with limited budgets and are simply trying to put a delicious yet affordable meal on the table for their families. With this cookbook, I hope to show readers that the spirit of Southern cooking can be captured regardless of location and without financial sacrifice. For me, the spirit of Southern cooking is defined in two ways: by the ingredients, and by the attitude in which the ingredients are used.

Throughout my marriage, I have been both a stay-at-home mom and a full-time working-outside-of-the-home mom. No matter which role I've played, I have always been

conscious of the cost of food and the amount of money that I spend on feeding my family. One of the main ways that I cut the cost of cooking is by keeping a full pantry of essential ingredients. These essential ingredients are different for everyone, based on the recipes that your family prefers. As you read through this cookbook, you will see that I use some of the same ingredients in many recipes. Those are the ingredients that I keep in abundance in my pantry. And because there is an abundance of those ingredients, I create as many recipes with those ingredients as I can.

My first approach, and one that I would encourage everyone to try, when reading a cookbook or trying a new recipe is to choose recipes that call for ingredients already in my pantry. Experimenting with new ingredients can be expensive if those ingredients aren't part of your normal shopping trip. However, there is always a sense of excitement when I splurge on new bottles of spices or sauces. These small indulgences can easily renew my interest in cooking and experimenting in the kitchen.

My goal with this cookbook is to create recipes that use affordable ingredients and are easy to create. Many of these recipes have been requested of me time and time again. May they become part of your repertoire as well.



APPETIZERS

Becoming the Reluctant Entertainer



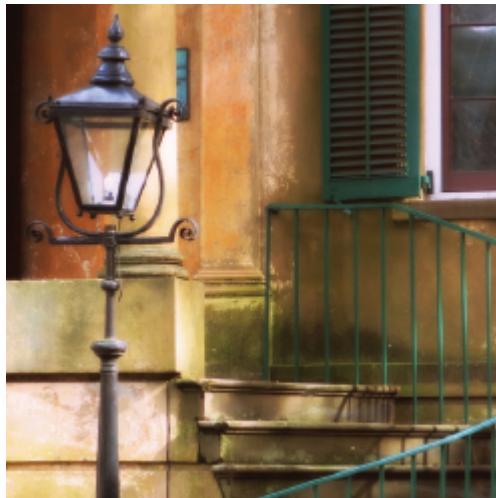


Arite of passage for many females is the first time we're allowed to attend a bridal or baby shower with our mothers. I remember being wedged on a couch between my mother and a cousin, anxiously waiting to see what would happen next or, more important, what food would be served. Small bowls of peanuts and pastel butter cream mints were placed strategically around the room to keep the wolves at bay until the food was ready to serve. I gravitated toward the mints, while my cousin stuck close to the peanuts. Every time I see a bag of those mints hanging in the candy aisle, it takes me back to my childhood and those afternoons spent with family and friends.

While my husband is able to remember when and where he was the first time he heard a song, I can remember the exact moment that I was introduced to certain foods for the first time. During one particular shower, my cousin and I were circling the refreshments when our eyes were drawn to a large orange ball covered in chopped pecans in the middle of the table. Yes, it was the first time either of us had ever seen a cheese ball. When I inquired about its

identity and was told it was a cheese ball, I decided to pass. Cheese is not my friend. My cousin, being a cheese fanatic, helped herself to a generous portion and regretted that move soon after. “I took too much. It’s really dense.”

Years later, I was a bridesmaid in one of my high school friend’s weddings and attended a shower hosted by her future sister-in-law, in her honor. At that shower, I was introduced to my friend’s relatives and the cucumber sandwich. The cucumber sandwich and I have remained close.



In these memories, food plays the main role. Unfortunately, I can’t always remember the guest of honor or the reason for the shower, but I can always tell you what food was served and if I enjoyed it.

While I do not consider myself an entertainer or a natural-born hostess, I do understand the importance of offering

delicious appetizers and finger foods at a gathering. The food, good or bad, is what will be remembered at the end of the event.

The recipes that I've included here have been eaten and requested many times over the years. Guests will remember when they ate these dishes and who prepared them.



BLACK-EYED PEAS

& Ham Dip

Many years ago, my coworkers and I decided that we needed more reasons to celebrate with food. We started hosting “festivals” on a regular basis in which we would bring various finger foods to the office and graze all day long. My friend Julia brought in this dip, and it’s one of my favorites. Warm and savory, it is one comforting appetizer.

8 oz. diced cooked ham

1 medium onion, finely diced

½ green bell pepper, finely diced

1 Tbsp. olive oil

1 jalapeño, deseeded and finely diced

2 (15-oz.) cans of seasoned southern-style black-eyed peas, undrained

1 cup mild shredded cheddar cheese

1 tsp. garlic salt

1 tsp. black pepper

2 Tbsp. hot sauce

2 pkgs. corn chip scoops

- 1.** In a skillet over medium heat, sauté ham, onion, and bell pepper with olive oil until vegetables are soft and caramelized, 8–10 minutes.
- 2.** Pour the ham and vegetable mixture into a slow cooker. Add the remaining ingredients except the corn chips.
- 3.** Stir to blend and cook on low until warmed through, at least two hours. Flavors improve the longer the dip cooks.
- 4.** Serve with corn chip scoops.

HOT BUFFALO CHICKEN

& Bacon Dip

I often try to re-create restaurant food at home. One of my favorite dips is from a famous chicken wing restaurant chain and features warm chicken, ranch dressing, and bacon. This recipe pays homage to that dish and saves money by keeping the family at home.

1 tsp. olive oil

2 boneless chicken breasts, cubed into small pieces

4 Tbsp. butter or margarine

½ cup hot sauce

2 (8-oz.) pkgs. cream cheese, softened

1 (1-oz.) pkg. ranch dressing mix

½ pkg. real bacon bits

5–6 green onions, thinly sliced (set aside one onion for garnish)

1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

your favorite corn chip scoops for serving

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

- 2.** In a small skillet, heat olive oil and add chicken. When chicken is golden brown and cooked through, add butter and hot sauce.
- 3.** Cook for an additional 2–3 minutes until chicken is well coated. Remove from heat.
- 4.** In a small mixing bowl, add cream cheese and ranch dressing mix and stir until well blended.
- 5.** In a small baking dish, spread cream cheese and ranch mixture.
- 6.** Sprinkle bacon bits and most of the green onions on top of the cream cheese mixture.
- 7.** Add the seasoned chicken on top of the bacon and onions.
- 8.** Bake in the oven for approximately 20 minutes, or until heated through.
- 9.** Add cheddar cheese on top of chicken and put back in oven until cheese has melted.
- 10.** Remove from oven and sprinkle on remaining green onions.
- 11.** Serve warm with scoop chips or crackers.





HONEY MUSTARD

Kielbasa Bites

The kielbasa is my favorite sausage. Whenever I find them on sale, I stock up and put several in my freezer. They thaw quickly in the refrigerator or microwave and provide me with a quick appetizer or dinner. This appetizer combines some of my favorite ingredients—kielbasa, bacon, and mustard—into satisfying little bites perfect for parties, tailgating, or just plain snacking.

1 (16-oz.) pkg. bacon, cut in half

14 oz. kielbasa sausage

SAUCE:

½ cup yellow mustard

¼ cup honey

¼ tsp. black pepper

1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce

1 tsp. balsamic vinegar

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

- 2.** To prepare sausage, first cut bacon in half and count the number of slices. Next, cut sausage into the same number of pieces as bacon. Wrap a piece of bacon around a sausage and secure with a toothpick.
- 3.** Line a large baking dish with foil and grease with cooking spray. Add wrapped sausages to dish and bake for 30 minutes.
- 4.** While the sausages are baking, prepare the sauce. Put all ingredients in a small bowl and blend until smooth.
- 5.** After sausages have cooked for 30 minutes, take them out of the oven. Drain off any excess oil.
- 6.** Pour sauce evenly over the sausage bites and return to oven for an additional 20 minutes. Keep an eye on sausages so they don't overcook.
- 7.** Immediately remove sausages from baking dish and put on a serving dish.

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