

Southern Cooking - Yankee Style

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by Lydia Lovell

Reviewing a collection of recipes belonging to a person who enjoyed an enviable reputation as one of the best cooks in town is almost like reading a personal diary. In every category are clues that provide added insight into the private life or family history of whomever assembled the recipes over the years.

This is just as true of Aunt Olivia's recipe file as it would be of any other collection. Evidence exists, for example, that her culinary ventures were not limited to those regional favorites found only along New England shores. Either family members or close and trusted friends (if not Aunt Olivia herself) must have done considerable traveling.

History bears this out, for some of the Lovells, like many another family on Cape Cod, were sea-farers. One advantage of going to sea was the opportunity to visit distant ports and discover new and different ways to prepare food. Travelers always came home with souvenirs just as travelers do today. Their souvenirs often included new recipes.

Aunt Olivia surely knew someone who sailed to southern ports for a classic Creole dish with the romantic name of Chicken Jambalaya is included in her files. Because chicken is a stand-by on nearly every family's menu, different ways to serve it are always welcome. Aunt Olivia prepared **Chicken Jambalaya** this way:

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| ¼ C. olive oil | 1 T. garlic, minced |
| 1 3½-4 lb. chicken,
cut up and boned | 1 T. paprika |
| 1 lb. Polish sausage,
diagonally sliced | 2½ C. long grain raw rice |
| 3 med. onions, thin sliced | 4 C. chicken stock |
| 3 celery stalks,
diagonally sliced | 1 bay leaf |
| 2 green & 2 red peppers,
seeded, cut in long strips | ½ t. salt |
| | Cayenne pepper, to taste |

Cut chicken pieces to bite size. Saute quickly in 1/8 C. olive oil over medium high heat in Dutch oven about 20 minutes, stirring and turning pieces to brown. Remove chicken from pan. Add remaining oil and saute sausage for a few minutes. Remove sausage from pan. Saute onions, celery, pepper strips until golden but not brown. Add garlic and paprika. Return chicken and sausage to pan and stir to mix with vegetables. Make stock from two chicken bouillon cubes and 4 cups boiling water, and add to pan. Bring to a boil; add rice, bay leaf, salt and pepper. Cover and reduce heat. Simmer, covered and without removing cover, for 40 minutes. When rice is cooked, jambalaya is ready to eat. Remove bay leaf before serving.

For extra texture and flavor, you may wish to add, after cooking is complete and just before serving, one large chopped ripe tomato, a cup of coarsely chopped fresh parsley, and one bunch of chopped green onions (scallions). Chicken Jambalaya in these proportions serves six people generously, and is a one-dish meal with which you might like to pass a tossed green salad bowl.



While we have no proof that Aunt Olivia, herself, ever traveled below the Mason-Dixon line, it's certain she knew people who did because among her recipes is one for Hush Puppies. Now if you've ever traveled much in the South, you'll have doubtless encountered what the menu describes as a Hush Puppy. It's been my experience, however, that most Hush Puppies restaurants serve should be tossed to the dogs, but a real honest-to-goodness Southern Hush Puppy is much too fine fare to give to household pets. Make your own **Hush Puppies**, and be your own judge.

- ½ C. flour
- 2 t. baking powder
- 1 t. salt
- 1½ C. white corn meal
- 1 sm. can evaporated milk,
mixed with equal measure
of water

- 1 egg slightly beaten
- 1 large onion, peeled,
chopped very fine
- 1 med. green pepper, seeded,
chopped very fine
- Oil for deep frying

Sift flour, baking powder, and salt together. Stir in corn meal. Gradually add milk-water mixture, the beaten egg, and finally the onion and pepper. Stir together.

In a large frying pan, heat oil to 350°. Dip a tablespoon first into cold water, and then fill with batter. Drop the batter into the fat. Repeat, dipping spoon first into cold water, filling it with batter, and dropping batter into fat.

Cook only a few hush puppies at a time so that fat temperature remains constant and batter does not become saturated with fat. As they cook, the Hush Puppies will float to the surface. Turn them to brown on both sides. When golden, remove with slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Serve hot. This quantity should yield about 30 Hush Puppies.

Finally, your Southern Home Cooking meal might be topped off with **Buttermilk Pie**. Aunt Olivia used fresh Bing Cherries as a topping for this pie, but I have found that frozen ones, thawed in the refrigerator, taste just as good.

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| 1 9" pie crust (either home-
made or frozen) | 2 T. flour |
| 1 C. sugar | 1 t. vanilla |
| 4 eggs | ½ package frozen Bing
Cherries, thawed in the
refrigerator |
| ¼ C. melted butter | |
| 2 C. buttermilk | |

Beat sugar and eggs together in medium-sized bowl. Add other ingredients and mix well. Pour into pie crust and bake 30 minutes at 350° or until custard sets. Silver knife blade inserted in center should come out clean. Allow pie to cool; serve topped with chilled cherries. You can make this pie ahead of time and freeze it; thaw before serving.

Imagining a New England sailing man making port aboard a coasting vessel, going ashore to conduct his business, or simply to look around and see the sights, and feel dry land beneath his boots once more. He steps into a restaurant or cafe for a bite to eat . . . that's how I picture it happening.

With a hearty Jambalaya under his belt, and a serving of Buttermilk Pie with Bing Cherries satisfying his hankering for something sweet for dessert, perhaps he stops on his way out to speak with the owner. Praising the food is always a fine way to open good relationships; the restaurateur calls his wife, the chef, and she shares in the kudos. Would she send the recipe back to Massachusetts, share it with the seaman's wife who waits for her husband's safe return? Of course she would!

And that's how Aunt Olivia came, eventually, to inherit recipes for traditional Southern cookery . . . or at least, that's how I imagine it must have happened. . . .