

FOOD FOR THE SOUL:

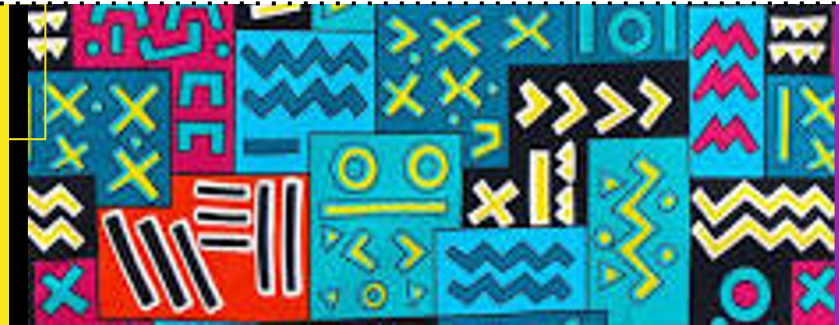
The Influence of African Culture on Modern Cuisine



WE CALL IT SOUL FOOD

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MONMOUTH COUNTY
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
A non-profit organization



T. THOMAS FORTUNE
FOUNDATION &
CULTURAL CENTER

Style has a profound meaning to Black Americans. If we can't drive, we will invent walks and the world will envy the dexterity of our feet. If we can't have ham, we will boil chitterlings; if we are given rotten peaches, we will make cobbles; if given scraps, we will make quilts; take away our drums, and we will clap our hands. We prove the human spirit will prevail. We will take what we have to make what we need. We need confidence in our knowledge of who we are.



NIKKI GIOVANNI | Poet



African American Soul Food

WE CALL IT SOUL FOOD!

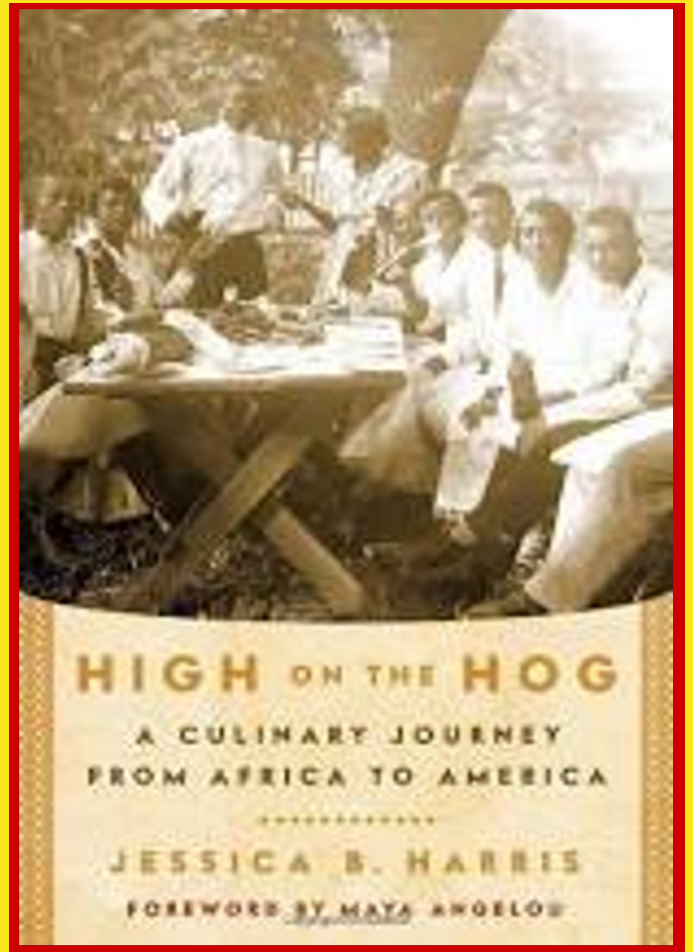


WHAT IS SOUL FOOD?

*We are the only people who named
our food for something you can feel.
It's transcendental.*

NETFLIX Series:

“High on the Hog:
How African American Cuisine Transformed America,”
based on the book by Dr. Jessica Harris

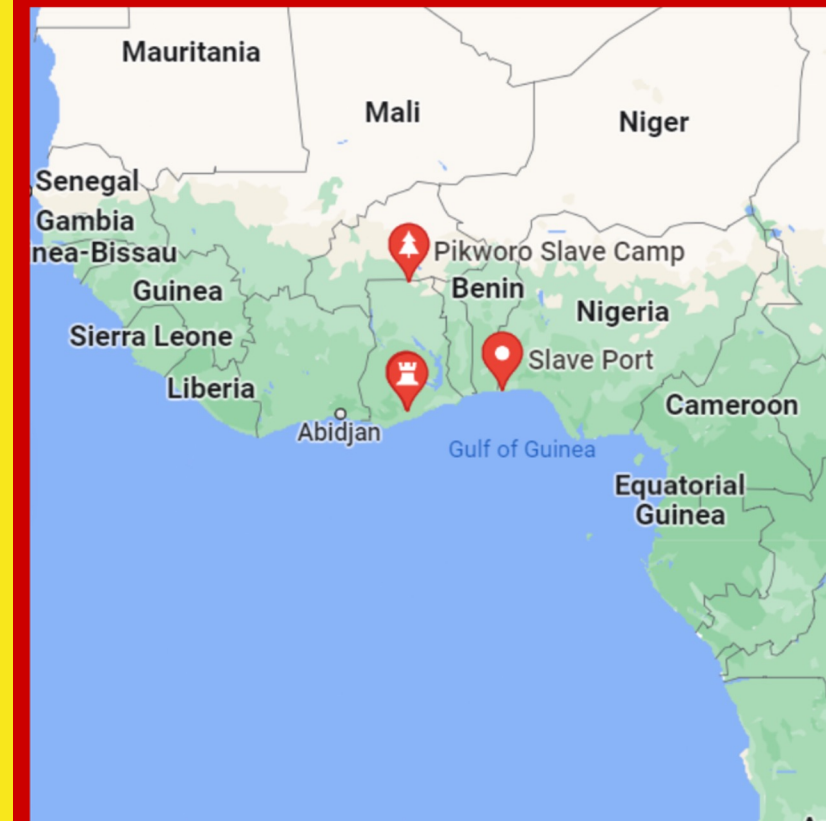


AFRICA EXPORTS TO AMERICA

The **principal export** before the mid-19th Century was always **slaves**. The volume of slave export was first small, but it increased rapidly in the second half of the 17th Century, when this area (**Benin, Ghana, Sierra Leone**) became known to Europeans as the “**Slave Coast**,” and remained high until the 1840’s.

What the enslavers also brought to America, were foods that made it through the Middle Passage to America, that were native to those captured and enslaved for life in the New World.

- Rice
- Black eyed peas
- Okra
- Watermelon



Benin was colonized by the French in the 19th Century until 1960.

The French word for Okra is **Gombo**. In America that translates into Gumbo.

In Africa, Okra was used as a flavorful thickening agent and is a main ingredient in American Gumbo.

OKRA



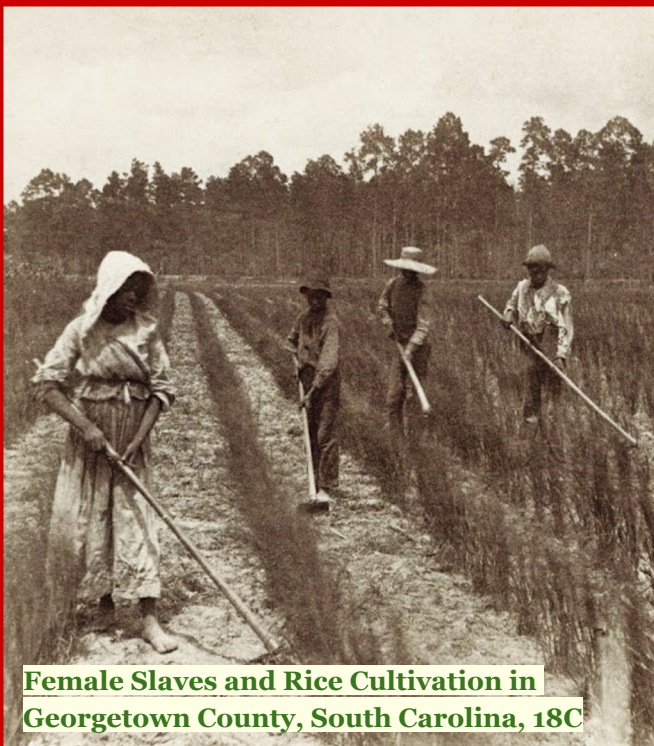
RICE

Africa's indigenous rice, *Oryza glaberrima*, was domesticated about 1500 B.C.E. along the upper Niger River.

It spread to West Africa, and when the first Portuguese explorers reached Guinea in 1446, they found extensive fields. Perhaps Carolina Gold descended from this area of Africa.

Factually, the two most important **cash crops in the South** were **cotton** and **rice**. The greatest number of enslaved people, who toiled in the rice fields of South Carolina, created generational wealth for whites, because the enslaved already knew the technique of cultivating rice, before landing on the shores of South Carolina.

Carolina Gold Rice made South Carolina one of the wealthiest states in the Union. In South Carolina, the enslaved outnumbered whites 9-to-1. There was an 80 percent decrease in rice cultivation after the Civil War.



Female Slaves and Rice Cultivation in
Georgetown County, South Carolina, 18C

Source: American Rice Out of Africa

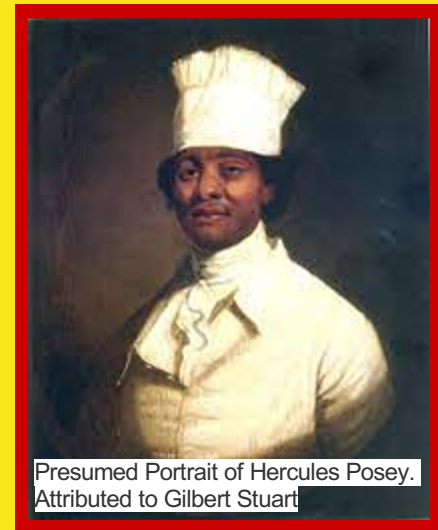




Out of West Africa, these little black bug eyed beige colored morsels were served to George and Martha Washington, by their enslaved chef, **Hercules Posey**. He made Black Eyed Pea Fritters for the President and First Lady. Hercules established a palette for a new Democracy with food as the binding agent for European and African cultures. It is from this exchange of food ways that American cuisine takes shape.

It is a tradition in 99.9 percent of all Black households to cook **a pot of Hoppin John New Year's Day**, a savory one pot meal, consisting of Black-eyed peas, rice, and seasoned with ham hocks, salt pork meat, or another version of cured pork, accompanied by a pot of collard greens. This meal serves as a good luck charm for the New Year.

BLACK EYED PEAS



Presumed Portrait of Hercules Posey.
Attributed to Gilbert Stuart

WATERMELON



This sugary dessert is an American summertime thirst quencher that is delicious to all palettes.

This plant dates back to over **4,000 years ago** and is depicted in an Egyptian tomb.

Its roots are in Northeastern Africa, Mediterranean and the **Kordofan melon** (light color green) is a native to Sudan.



Kordofan Melon





The technique of frying is not exclusive to Africans arriving on the shores of America. During the 1700's, with an influx of Scottish people settling in Virginia and the Carolina's, they introduced **frying** as a cooking technique.

However, it was those enslaved cooks who popularized the small yard bird, by perfecting the flavorful taste of fried chicken, relying on **spices from West Africa**, and breading the chicken before dropping it in **hot palm oil**.

Some plantation owners allowed their enslaved workers to raise chickens, since they were small animals.

Regionally, fried chicken gets its roots from the South and really didn't make its way into **Northern cuisine until the 19th Century**.

FRIED CHICKEN



Source: Albion's Seed

Macaroni & Cheese

James Hemings was Thomas Jefferson's Chef, who traveled with Jefferson and his sister, Sally, to Paris, France, where James was introduced to Macaroni and Cheese.

Jefferson loved it so much that he purchased a pasta machine and had it shipped back to Monticello.

While in Paris, James studied under the **French caterer named Combeaux**, who was assigned to Jefferson for his first year in Paris. James continued to hone his culinary craft with chefs at the **Chateau de Chantilly**, a five-star kitchen in **18th Century France**.



James Hemings

Macaroni & Cheese

It wasn't long before James was promoted, and though he received a salary that was half of his predecessor, to be **Chef de Cuisine at the Hotel De Langeac**, where Jefferson's private residence was located on the Champs-Elysees.

James is credited with having had great influence on the American palette, by introducing **macaroni and cheese, ice cream, whipped cream and French Fries** to America.

Source: The Food We Know



Collard Greens



Source: Bonnie Plant

One of the healthiest foods you can eat, just **one cup** of cooked collards provides you **1,045% of your daily Vitamin K** needs. It's true, along with **308% of your Vitamin A** and **58% of your Vitamin C**. They are rich in antioxidants and the phytonutrients found in collards are said to play a part in resistance to a variety of cancers.

Greens are **imbedded in African American foods and tradition**. They are a part of the cabbage, kale, and broccoli family, however, their arrival in America by way of Africa is still not clear, although the Southern way of cooking Greens is totally, African American and a part of plantation foodways.



Q&A?



SOURCES

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