



Mama's Christmas Cornbread Dressing

- 4 cups breadcrumbs from leftover biscuits
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- ⅓ cup butter
- 3 cups chicken or turkey broth
- 2 cakes (2 inches square) of cornbread
- 4 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- Small package of chicken livers, chopped
- Small package of chicken gizzards, chopped
- Sage
- Poultry seasoning
- Salt and pepper

Crumble breadcrumbs into large bowl. Sauté onions and celery in butter. Add vegetables to crumbs, along with 2 cups of broth. Crumble two cakes of cornbread and remaining broth into mixture. Add eggs, livers, gizzards, sage, poultry seasoning, salt, and pepper. Add more broth if necessary. Mixture should be very soft to allow for loss of moisture during baking. Pour into greased pan, and bake at 350° until done.

— Margaret Sampson, submitted by her daughter, Barbara Sampson Barton

Lumbee Living

A new cookbook crystallizes a culture through its food.

by MICHAEL GRAFF

photography and food styling by MATT HULSMAN

recipe testing and food styling by WENDY PERRY

HOW TO EAT LIKE A LUMBEE: For lunch or dinner or anytime, start with something greasy and some cornbread — or some greasy cornbread — and see where it goes from there. Cornbread is versatile and adaptable, but it is, was, and always will be cornbread.

If it's mixed with breadcrumbs, onion, celery, chicken livers, chicken gizzards, and hard-boiled eggs, it's part of a good Lumbee Christmas dressing. But it's still cornbread.

If it's fried up and used on the top and bottom of collards and fatback, it's the framework for a collard sandwich that's as Lumbee as any Lumbee meal can be. And it's still cornbread.

And even if it's just on the side to accompany fresh ham and fried turnips, or to chase down the gamy taste of squirrel or raccoon or dove or frog legs, it's still cornbread.

It's been on the standard Lumbee menu forever, as long as Lumbees have been Lumbees. Archaeological excavations have revealed signs of life along the Lumber River dating back to the end of the most recent ice age. The first written accounts of the Lumbee tribe date to 1754, but there's no telling how long their ancestors — the Cheraw — have been here. And no telling how long they've eaten this way.

Gloria Gates was born a Lumbee, grew up a Lumbee, and even though she moved away to the town of Graham, she remains proudly Lumbee today at 66 years old. She visits her family in Robeson County regularly, and on those trips, she began to realize the distinct food. And she realized that while some recipes have made their way into church cookbooks, nobody had ever put together a Lumbee cookbook.

It's true that we remember past people in buckets, as one culture or another, one gender or another, one race or another. The Lumbee tribe, in particular, has gone to great lengths in recent years to gain full federal recognition as an American Indian tribe.

Food is key to any of those buckets; how we eat is a glimpse into our cultural core. Gates wants Lumbee cuisine remembered throughout history. So she

published *The Scuffletown Cookbook, Lumbee Indian Recipes of Yesteryear: A Taste of Lumbee History and Dialect*.

"For people who aren't familiar with it, they'd never know about it," Gates says. "If I don't know about Mexican food, I can still go into a restaurant and buy Mexican food. But you can't go into a restaurant anywhere and say, 'I want some Lumbee food.'"

The recipes show the taste of a region and a culture. Some of the names are tributes to Lumbee heroes of the past, such as the members of Henry Berry Lowrie's crew. During the Civil War, Lowrie assembled a gang of Indian and black men who fought racial injustices by robbing plantations and distributing their loot to poor people in southeastern North Carolina. Lowrie is the Robin Hood of Robeson County, and the members of his gang appear throughout the cookbook. The collard sandwich, for instance, is named Boss Strong's Collard Sandwich after Lowrie's cousin.

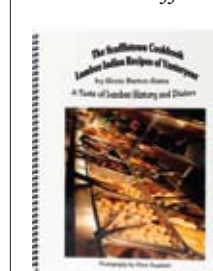
The name of the book, though, refers to Scuffletown, the original name of the town of Pembroke during the 18th century, before the railroad came through. In Lowrie's years, Scuffletown was as much an attitude as it was a name.

"They used to say that if you're coming through and you're not an Indian, you better scuffle on through the swamps," Gates says.

Gates recognizes that almost all of the recipes are greasy, and only a few are good for you. So she's beginning to work on plans for another cookbook, one with healthier foods.

But even then, she says, she'll make sure that each recipe is, was, and always will be Lumbee. 🍴

Michael Graff is the senior editor of *Our State* magazine.



The Scuffletown Cookbook can be purchased at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke bookstore, Cyna's Jewelry in Pembroke, or by contacting Gloria Gates at globird2@bellsouth.net or (336) 578-1188.

IMAGES OF BOOK BY BERT VANDERVEEN



Shirley's Fresh Baked Ham

1 large, fresh ham

Water

Place fresh ham in a large pot with just enough water to cover the ham. Boil about 25 minutes per pound, or until the meat is a minimum of 145 degrees. (When you pierce the ham with a fork, there should be no blood.) Remove ham from water. Cover the ham with one of the glazes below, and bake at 350° for about 30 to 45 minutes.

Molasses Glaze

Pour about 1 cup molasses in a saucepan. Add cinnamon to taste. As soon as glaze is hot, drip over the ham, and bake.

Cherry or Strawberry Glaze

In a saucepan, heat ½ cup Karo corn syrup and ½ cup strawberry or cherry jelly. Stir. When glaze is hot, drip over the ham, and bake.

— Shirley Gentry

Fried Turnips

Turnips

Water

Pinch of salt

Pinch of sugar

Bacon or fatback drippings

To prepare turnips for cooking, wash and clean them thoroughly. It takes several washings to get them just right. Cut up turnips. Heat bacon or fatback drippings in pan, and add turnips, ¼ cup water, and pinch of salt and sugar. Turn turnips once. As soon as turnips are done, remove from heat. Do not overcook. Turnips should be crunchy.

— Linda Blue Locklear





Squash Pie

- 2 cups yellow squash, cooked and drained
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup milk
- 2 eggs
- Pinch of salt
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla
- Cinnamon
- 2 pie crusts, unbaked

Combine all ingredients, except crust, in a food processor or blender, and puree until blended. Pour into two unbaked pie shells, and sprinkle with cinnamon. Bake at 350° for 45 to 50 minutes.

— Tammy Grubb

Boss Strong's Collard Sandwich

- Collards
- Cornbread
- Fried fatback

The secret to a good collard sandwich is really simple: Take some collards, chop fine, and place between two pieces of fried cornbread. The cornbread should be fried crispy. On top of the collard sandwich, place a couple of pieces of fried fatback. Wrap in tinfoil until ready to eat.

Collard sandwiches are good with a tall glass of buttermilk. The sandwich can be served cold or hot.

