

A South You Never Ate: Savoring Flavors and Stories from the Eastern Shore of Virginia

Bernard L. Herman

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Bernard L. Herman's exceptional foodography of Virginia's eastern shore, *A South You Never Ate*, is a blend of "plate, place, and conversation."

The southern tip of the Delmarva peninsula is bordered by the Atlantic on the east and separated from the rest of Virginia by Chesapeake Bay to the west. It includes abundant seafood, sheep-grazing islands, and a climate and soil perfect for kitchen gardens. Though isolated and small in size, it has drawn immigrants from around the world, resulting in a cuisine unlike any other.

Written with exuberance and utilizing hands-on research, each of the book's sixteen chapters focuses on a local ingredient, dish, or event. Topics include figs and oyster pies, cake carnivals, turtle parties, Guatemalan barbecue, and, of course, crabs. People are at the heart of every story, and Herman narrates as they fish, cultivate, prepare, and celebrate their favorite dishes. Appreciation for both the food and the people is everywhere apparent, amplified by color photographs.

Sixteen "Chef's Recipes for Home" feature local classics with a contemporary twist. Oyster pie comes in individual pies with rye crust, while blue crab tamales are garnished with poblano peppers and queso fresco. Lighter entries include figs wrapped in Surryano ham and greens with sweet-tart benne seed dressing. Over three dozen recipes from local home cooks cover everything from biscuits to clam fritters.

Herman adds a wealth of intriguing historic and food-related details along the way, reminders of the area's rich past and the hours of work it takes to cultivate, catch, harvest, clean, and sell the fresh, small-batch foods he's describing. Menus, notes on sources, and an index round out the book.

A South You Never Ate is a fascinating, mouth-watering biography of foods and recipes unique to Virginia's eastern shore.

SUSAN WAGGONER (September / October 2019)

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