

Dinner Déjà Vu: Southern Tonight, French Tomorrow

Jennifer Booker

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Even chefs want to save precious time and money on groceries, a tricky balancing act when dining standards are high, but Jennifer Hill Booker has blazed such a trail to the stove. Her second cookbook, *Dinner Déjà Vu*, blends both sides of her culinary background (Southern American with French classical training) with her concept of shopping once for ingredients to be used in two different treatments. With the detailed shopping lists at the end of the book, one can plan to make Southern style Pan-Seared Duck Breast with Whiskey Sauce one night, and use the rest of the bird to make Duck Confit in the French manner the next. The same principal applies to desserts, vegetables, and even cocktails, which is sure to please anyone with odd assortments of half-empty liquor bottles from trying out a new drink for a dinner party.

Booker sees many commonalities between Southern cooking and rustic French fare, including an emphasis on seasonal ingredients, use of game and fresh herbs, and simple cooking methods like braising and roasting to coax out maximum flavor. It is easy to compare the two cuisines with subsequent recipes and to see that both foodways share a love for such homey items as rabbit, pigs' feet, and chicken livers. The book cleverly denotes a French-inspired recipe with a blue fleur-de-lis in the top corner of the page, while Southern recipes get a white-on-red star.

The ability to save time in the kitchen depends on a well-stocked larder, and there are many recipes for kitchen basics, such as sauces and spice blends, and a chapter on pickles and preserves to fill it up. Many recipes are easy enough to follow, but for others involving trickier techniques, How-To Guides step in with multiple photos and detailed instruction on such things as how prepare and eat Blue Crabs or make Pork en Croute.

Color photographs by Deborah Whitlaw Llewellyn add extra verve. From her whimsical portrait of Booker with a bouquet of collard greens to shots of the chef's dishes served up in cast-iron skillets and vintage plates on worn wooden counters, these compositions evoke country cooking at its best, French or Southern.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (May/June 2017)

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