



Singing with their Supper

Grammy-winners serve it up Southern-style

BY AURORA NESSLY

Summer is in full swing. Daylight is lasting longer, evening festivities trail through the night and the world is opening up once more to the sweet smell of cut grass and the wafting scents of outdoor cooking. Its apt timing for the release of *Southern Ground; Recipes, Images, Lifestyle and Lore* by the Zac Brown Band (winner of the best new artist Grammy in 2009). For those unfamiliar with the country singer and crew, imagine a mixture of Jimmy Buffet and Johnny Cash, accented by some soulful Southern crooning. It's feel good music that will make a long drive a little kinder and pair nicely with a cold beer at the end of the journey.



Southern Ground
Recipes, Images, Lifestyle and Lore
From Zac Brown & Friends
(Ruffin Gillican, LLC; \$32)



Heralding PBR, fried chicken, and good ol' Southern values, this band sells an experience. You aren't just tapping your foot to a catchy tune or raising a toast to a night well spent. An evening with the Zac Brown Band is more like an invitation to a friend's backyard barbecue; a little more intimate with a lot of love dished out. No stranger to hospitality, Zac Brown owned a restaurant with his father called Zac's Place that served as the band's home base. Now the band holds "eat and greets" at their concerts where fans can sample Zac's signature dishes pre-show. The cookbook is an extension of these recipes and a chance to take the experience into your own home. Band members boast, "If you master every recipe in this book, then you will reach the heart of your guests straight through their stomachs." Bold words, but delivered with the simple charm that fills these pages.

Recipes cover classics like Southern Fried Chicken, Your Mama's Collard Greens and Revival Peach Cobbler (a remembrance of Zac's peach picking days with his grandma in Georgia). Some unexpected delights were the baked Vidalia onions with morel butter and boursin-stuffed filet with roasted garlic mashed potatoes and shallot cabernet butter. The 27 recipes are printed on index cards that can easily be removed for cooking in order to save the beautifully illustrated book from inevitable kitchen spills and drips.



Southern Ground's aesthetics evoke the look of a well-loved family scrapbook. Bound with a gray denim cover, meticulously adorned with graphics and illustrations and filled with evocative photographs depicting the lifestyle frequently referred to by the band, this book is beautifully designed. Vivid pictures capture the natural splendor of the Southern landscape, ranging from blooming dogwoods lining a dirt road to an image of the band sitting back and enjoying a campfire. Also included are poems, anecdotes, and reminiscences from the band members.

For the full Zac Brown Band experience, pour yourself a Mason jar full of sweet tea, flip their CD to track six, and make sure there's plenty of Louisiana hot sauce on hand. You can get the cookbook online at <http://bit.ly/SGCookbook1>, at the band's shows or in Cracker Barrel stores nationwide. **CP**



Photography courtesy of Ruffin Gillican and The Zac Brown Band



HUNTING CAMP by Zac Brown

Since the age of two, every other weekend I went to hunting camp with my dad and his rowdy friends. We had a lease on about 1,500 acres in Collodun, Georgia, where we used to hunt. The hunting group owned a couple of acres, where everyone put rundown trailers for camping. I remember so many things about our trips. I remember the county said that for the group to pay dues and occupy the land together, we had to have a company name and a business. The guys came up with Cullodun Fine Arts and Statuary Society.

So now the base camp was not just littered with 10 to 15 broken-down trailers but also a plethora of pink flamingos, quampies, a concrete Miss Piggy, and many other tacky statues. The base camp bordered a large farm that was run by the quintessential old farmer. He always wore his blue-green Dickies coveralls. His black horn-rimmed glasses distinguished his completely bald head. He supplied us with whatever fresh vegetables he was growing and hung all of our deer in his walk-in coolers. When that fresh produce arrived, we all gathered around a big table with our pocket knives and began making the slaw.



POCKETKNIFE COLESLAW

Slaw:

- 1 head of cabbage, 1/4 inch dice
- 1 large green bell pepper, 1/4 inch dice
- 8 green onions, 1/4 inch dice
- 2 ripe tomatoes, 1/4 inch dice (save 2 tablespoons for garnish)
- 1 tablespoon paprika, optional dusted garnish

Slaw Dressing:

(also makes a steak-dipping sauce)

- 2 cups Duke's or Sauer's mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons hot horseradish
- 2 tablespoons yellow mustard
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/3 cup white vinegar

- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon fine-ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

In a medium bowl whisk together slaw dressing ingredients. In a large bowl, stir slaw ingredients together and pour half of the slaw dressing on top; you don't want too much dressing. Keep in mind that as this slaw sits, the salt pulls the water from the vegetables and makes more liquid. Save some of the diced tomatoes to put on top of the slaw to garnish. You can also sprinkle the top of the salad with paprika or chile powder.

Yield: 12 servings • Zest Factor: Mild

SOUTHERN BLACK-EYED PEA FRITTERS

- 3 cups canned black-eyed peas
- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
- 4 scallions, sliced
- 3 tablespoons Louisiana hot sauce
- 4 ounces Monterey jack cheese, grated
- 3 cups vegetable shortening (for deep frying)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup flour

In a large bowl, mash about half of the peas with a potato masher or fork until fairly smooth. Add

the remaining peas and other ingredients and stir to combine. Heat shortening in a deep saucepan until the temperature reads 360°. Using a tablespoon measure, drop pea mixture into heated shortening. Cook, turning occasionally, till golden brown (about 2 to 3 minutes).

Yield: 4 (12 fritters) • Zest Factor: Mild

JALAPEÑO SQUASH CASSEROLE

6 summer yellow squash, sliced
2 medium yellow onions, sliced
1 (8-ounce) can pickled, sliced jalapeños
2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
3 eggs, whisked
2 pints heavy cream
salt and freshly ground pepper

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease a 2-quart casserole dish. In a medium-size mixing bowl, combine eggs, heavy cream, salt and pepper. Layer the squash, half the cheese, onion, egg mixture and jalapenos in the prepared casserole dish like you would a potato

gratin. Top with the remaining cheese and wrap with foil. Bake for 45 minutes. Remove foil and bake until top is golden and bubbly.

Yield: 8 servings • Zest Factor: Medium



YOUR MAMA'S COLLARD GREENS

½ stick unsalted butter
½ pound applewood-smoked bacon
2 medium Vidalia onions, diced
6 bunches collard greens, stems removed
⅓ cup white vinegar
⅓ pound dark brown sugar
4 tablespoons of your favorite hot sauce
1 cup chicken stock
salt and freshly ground pepper

In a large saucepot over medium high heat, melt butter and then render bacon till crisp. Add onions once bacon has cooked halfway. Next, add collard greens to hot

bacon-onion mixture. Cook until the greens are slightly wilted, about 15 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and cook for approximately 1 hour. Finish with salt and pepper to taste. Greens should be tender and not chewy. Serve and enjoy.

Yield: 6 servings • Zest Factor: Mild