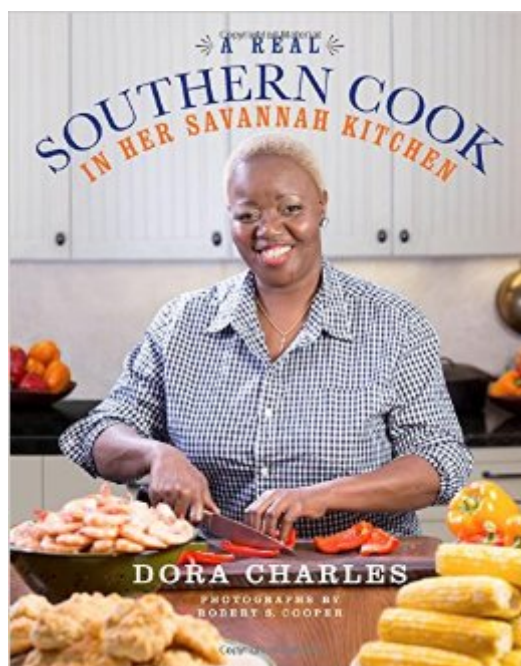


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# A Real Southern Cook: In Her Savannah Kitchen



## Synopsis

"Dora Charles is the real deal, and hers may be the most honest - and personal - southern cookbook I've ever read." - John Martin Taylor In her first cookbook, a revered former cook at Savannah's most renowned restaurant divulges her locally famous Savannah recipes "many of them never written down before" and those of her family and friends Hundreds of thousands of people have made a trip to dine on the exceptional food cooked by Dora Charles at Savannah's most famous restaurant. Now, the woman who was barraged by editors and agents to tell her story invites us into her home to taste the food she loves best. These are the intensely satisfying dishes at the heart of Dora's beloved Savannah: Shrimp and Rice; Simple Smoky Okra; Buttermilk Cornbread from her grandmother; and of course, a truly incomparable Fried Chicken. Each dish has a "secret ingredient" for a burst of flavor: mayonnaise in the biscuits; Savannah Seasoning in her Gone to Glory Potato Salad; sugar-glazed bacon in her deviled eggs. All the cornerstones of the Southern table are here, from Out-of-This-World Smothered Catfish to desserts like a jaw-dropping Very Red Velvet Cake. With moving dignity, Dora describes her motherless upbringing in Savannah, the hard life of her family, whose memories stretched back to slave times, learning to cook at age six, and the years she worked at the restaurant. Talking About boxes impart Dora's cooking wisdom, and evocative photos of Savannah and the Low Country set the scene.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

View larger Orphan One Hundred Cookies Makes about 100 cookies I got this cookie recipe with the wacky name from my Aunt Laura, who can't remember who gave it to her. So these

cookies have no home and no mama. They're chewy, crisp, sandy, rich, buttery, and light, all at the same time. It's hard to stop eating them, so it's a good thing the recipe really does make a hundred cookies. They have a secret ingredient: crunchy Rice Krispies.

**Directions** Set the oven to 350 degrees and adjust the rack positions to the top and lower thirds. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Mix together the flour, baking soda, cream of tartar, and salt in a bowl and set aside. In a large bowl, with an electric mixer on medium speed, cream the butter and the two sugars until light and fluffy, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the oil, egg, and vanilla and mix well. On low speed, add the flour mixture and then the remaining ingredients one at a time, beating until everything is mixed in well. Measure out a tablespoon of cookie dough, roll it into a ball, and place it on one of the cookie sheets. Repeat to make more cookies, leaving at least 1-inch between them. Flatten each cookie with a fork to about 1/8-inch thick. Bake, rotating the sheets at the halfway mark, until the cookies get slightly golden around the edges, 12 to 14 minutes. I like them chewy, so I cook them closer to the 12-minute mark; if you want them crisper, bake for 14 minutes. Don't over-bake. Cool the cookies on the pans for 5-minutes, then turn out onto a rack to cool completely. Let the baking sheets cool completely between batches and repeat with the remaining dough. Store in well-sealed tins.

**Tips** 1. The bigger the cookies are, the chewier and softer they'll be. 2. If you want to make smaller cookies, use a teaspoon of cookie dough rather than a tablespoon. The smaller cookies bake much faster; start checking at 9-minutes. 3. If your crisp cookies get soft, you can re-crisp them on a baking sheet in a 300-degree oven for about 5-minutes.

**Ingredients** 3 cups all-purpose flour 1 teaspoon baking soda 1 teaspoon cream of tartar 1/2 teaspoon salt 2 sticks (1 pound) butter, softened 1 cup white sugar 1 cup light brown sugar 1 cup vegetable oil 1 large egg 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract 1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats 1 cup sweetened coconut flakes 1 cup chopped pecans 2 cups (12 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips 1 cup Rice Krispies

This is the cookbook that I have been looking for all of my life! I am world travelled and simply love food - a true foodie. I have hundreds of cookbooks. But during the holidays I find myself in mourning. I've lost so many in my family - my mother, my grandmothers, aunts, and uncles. I am realizing that my generation has made a grievous error in letting the old ones go to their graves without learning the traditions. In today's society we praise the new and criticize the past. But past is not just prologue, it is history, it is tradition. On my mother's side (the side that hosted the holiday dinners) the people are from the South. The family settled in Cleveland, OH, by way of Florida, by way of Alabama (which they left because the Klan was after one of my great Uncles). As a child,

during the holidays, I travelled to the Midwest to eat food that was decidedly Southern. It was delicious. But that isn't the whole story. Nowadays when people speak of Southern food or Soul food, they do so with a grimace, labeling it as unhealthy, the cause of diabetes, etc. Ironically, most of MY old ones, born and raised on this food, lived into their 90's. But in many ways this unhealthy designation is just another form of cultural denigration, while at the same time, every chef on the Food Network is incorporating those foods and methods into their own, so called gourmet cooking. Therefore, because society dismissed the old southern cooking as "not good enough", many who were raised with this kind of cooking chose not to preserve the memory of it, and, tragically, the memories of those who prepared it. This is a grievous mistake and I thank Dora for helping me just a little on my course correction. This book is beautiful and actually made me cry. It is exactly how I remember my family cooking. The recipes look amazing. I'll update my review when I have tried some, but I know that they are good because they are EXACTLY as ours were prepared. A couple are identical to the few I was able to snag for posterity. Her spirit and approach are the real thing. Not some chef TRYING to cook Southern, but a Southern cook trying to put into words what comes naturally to her. And those words are amazing. This book is well written and tells a story that needs to be told in the way it should be told. One last thing, please try to come off the high horse that I've seen so many on when reviewing this cookbook. For instance reviewers have scoffed at her use of Accent, Lawry's, Biscquick, margarine, etc. She labels Accent as "optional" - it's only recently that we have discarded this chemical for health reasons. People cooked with it for many years to enhance flavor. Lawry's is simply a mix of seasoning - the proportions of which have been copywrited and sold. Biscquick is simply a stabilized baking mix. You could make it fresh if you want to, but many poor and busy people found it easier to buy it premade. Margarine, which I never touch, was put out as a HEALTHY alternative to butter a few decades back and an entire generation grew up using it as their butter and are accustomed to the flavor. I say this so that people see that many of these processed additives WERE a part of the organic evolution of black southern cooking. However if you read closely in the book, she sticks mostly to scratch. Finally, she talks about fry grease and people run for the hills. However if you'll stand still for a moment, all fry grease is is the grease that has been infused by the meat that was cooking in it. It is used as a flavoring IN LIEU of an unflavored oil. Ie: 2 tblsp of rendered bacon fat instead of 2 tblsp of olive oil. Not more fat, more flavor. At any rate, my point is not to convince anybody to eat Southern food. My point is that if Southern food was at all a part of your heritage, this book is for you. It is history as told by the cook. It is love through food. I might buy another copy just to give her the sale.

In the mail yesterday came this book. I have never felt like I was meeting an old friend for the first time. After reading her warm story of determination and love of cooking I immediately fell in love. Not only do we have this woman's story. We have her food. Food not only permeated with love but with deliberate seasoning and honed craft. Of the beautiful photographs the one MOST beautiful was that of her family. And what a lucky family they are. They are the first hand recipients of "Gone-to-Glory Potato Salad", 'Oven Baked Savannah Red Rice", and "Surprise Peach Cobbler". The peach cobbler was the first recipe I made. Dora's instructions are very clear even though she is an "intuitive" cook and doesn't write anything down. The cobbler was easy to put together, perfectly spiced and put me in mind of my grandmother from Natchez, MS. If I was a peach, this is how I'd want to end up. Very silky, buttery and ultimately special. Like my grandmother. I DEARLY hope we have MANY more books from Dora. I have learned much of what I cook and how I cook from Ina Garten...but Dora has my heart and my gratitude. Good luck, Ms. Charles. I wish you all the success in the world!!! You surely deserve it.

"A Real Southern Cook In Her Savannah Kitchen" is not just cookbook. Dora Charles comes from a family that has produced great cooks for many generations, from the days of slavery, and she shares stories that give the recipes historical and social context and meaning. She began learning to cook from her grandmother when she was six years old, the same age that her grandmother herself had taken a job as a cook's assistant and began learning to cook. In this book, Ms. Charles passes her knowledge on to the reader, just as her relatives and friends taught her and generations of cooks before her. The beautiful photographs of the author and her family, of the Savannah, Georgia area, and of course of the wonderful food she cooks, help bring it all to life. Even the organization of the book into chapters helps tell her story. Her anecdotes may bring a tear to the eye on occasion, but they are consistently full of joy, and that smile on her face is genuine. I had to chuckle when I read that she doesn't think that she has ever seen leftover deviled eggs, because it made me think about it, and I haven't ever seen any, either. Her confession of using Squeeze Parkay as a secret weapon to finish off a dish that needs a little something made me both laugh and cry a little, because that was something I often saw my grandmother do on the sly. This book is comforting. The recipes are mostly for traditional Southern country dishes, including some particular to the Lowcountry, and so there are readers who will recognize the details of the methods of preparation and seasoning. However, many of these recipes are rarely found in writing, even in the fundraising cookbooks published by churches and clubs, and I have never seen them so well-presented and accompanied by such good advice. It really seems as if you are right there in the

kitchen with her watching over your shoulder, ready with a helpful tip just when it is needed. There are also many of her own recipes, such as quick grits cooked for an hour and a half, as well as a few recipes for more modern dishes, but they all draw on the same culinary tradition and expertise and use of all the senses in making satisfying food. The author has had many decades of experience cooking professionally, and perhaps a book of her large-scale recipes for the professional chef will be forthcoming. I would also like to read her advice on making sweet tea!

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