

**CHRISTY
JORDAN**



southern plate

**CLASSIC COMFORT FOOD THAT MAKES
EVERYONE FEEL LIKE FAMILY**



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summer days and family reunions

nothing is more worthy of celebrating in the south than all of the family coming together as we do in the summer months. When I was a girl, we gathered at my Papa Reed's farm each summer for the Reed Family Reunion. Ladies would arrive in their Sunday best, toting casserole dishes, cakes, and plate after plate of deviled eggs. Papa Reed would hitch his big red tractor to a huge flatbed trailer and pull it up alongside the house. Ladies would then cover that trailer in tablecloths and bed sheets before setting out the spread.

The entire trailer would be filled to the brim, often times having to rearrange plates just to make room for our bounty. Jugs of sweet tea and lemonade would sit near the end along with a huge stack of sturdy paper plates. I tried not to be too obvious, but as everyone's head was bowed for

grace, I'd look to see where Mama had set her Mandarin Orange cake and how close it was to the deviled eggs with "red stuff" sprinkled on top so that I could make my beeline to the two things I wanted most that day.

Afterwards, folks would go back for seconds and thirds, many even fixing plates to take back home with them. Then we'd all sit in the front yard, while the more talented among us brought out banjos and fiddles to entertain. Kids took turns swinging in Papa's rope swing that hung from the old oak tree out front of his workshop and the border collies made their way around, taking turns getting loved on by all the visitors on this special day.

No fancy restaurant could have possibly offered up food as delicious as what we had.

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homemade banana pudding

i've always loved homemade banana pudding above just about all other desserts, but it took on a new meaning for me when I started Southern Plate. Mama used to make this and serve it up in her big avocado green mixing bowl. She'd let me and my sister layer the bananas and vanilla wafers, giving us a butter knife to cut them with so we couldn't hurt ourselves when we were younger, then she'd pour the thick pudding all over the top and let it sit a bit before supper so it had time to soak into all of the wafers. If we let her get it away from us long enough, she'd top it with a perfectly browned meringue. Oh my, it was heavenly.

Banana pudding was the first recipe I ever posted on my blog. I loved to write and I loved to cook and they both came together when I decided to show folks who had never had "real" banana pudding how to make it. I took photos of every step, sprinkled it with instructions and commentary, posted it, and Southern Plate was born.

Because of that post, Banana Pudding has given me an extended family of the most wonderful people a body could ever hope to meet and so my reverence for the dish is even greater now, because if it weren't for homemade banana pudding, you wouldn't be reading this book.

- ½ cup sugar (or Splenda)
- ⅓ cup flour
- 3 egg yolks (reserve whites for meringue)
- 2 cup milk
- 1 box vanilla wafers
- 5 bananas
- ½ tsp vanilla
- ⅛ tsp salt

Place a layer of vanilla Wafers in the bottom of a medium sized mixing bowl. Slice a banana over the top. Repeat two more times with another layer of wafers and remaining bananas. In sauce pot (or double boiler*) on medium low heat, add all ingredients except for vanilla. Stir well with wire whisk. Allow to cook, stirring constantly to prevent scorching, until thickened – about fifteen minutes. Remove from heat once thickened and stir in vanilla. Immediately pour over wafers and bananas. Let sit for about five minutes or so before serving, to allow wafers time to absorb pudding. Top with meringue, if desired.

**Using a double boiler ensures that your custard won't scorch and is great if you want to be on the safe side. Having said that, I never use a double boiler. I just use a sauce pot over medium heat and keep a close eye on it. I like to walk on the wild side that way.*

meringue

- 3 egg whites
- ¼ cup sugar

Beat egg whites with an electric mixer on high until foamy. Add sugar. Continue beating on high speed until soft peaks form. Pour onto top of pudding and spread to edges to seal well. Bake at 325 for fifteen minutes or until top is golden. Allow to cool completely and refrigerate before serving, if desired.

**Adding sugar while your meringue is still foamy gives it time to dissolve. It's important to spread the meringue so that it touches the edges all around, this keeps it from shrinking back during baking.*



baked ham

baked ham is always a treat, doubly so if it's your Mama who brings it because then you get to take the ham bone back home. To this day, my Mama usually has a hambone in her freezer, just waiting to surprise us by using it to season a big old pot of pinto beans.-

Even the smallest ham will feed a crowd but I usually get the biggest one I can find so I'll have plenty for leftovers. Ham and biscuits make a great breakfast, as do ham and cheese omelets. At my house, whatever is left after a few days in the refrigerator gets chopped up and put in bags to use in casseroles.

1 bone-in ham

1 cup pancake syrup

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line large pan with foil. Place ham in pan and using pastry brush, cover ham with syrup. Seal well with additional foil. Cook in oven for 30 minutes per pound. Open ham and brush with remaining syrup. Leave open and return to oven for another 20 to 30 minutes to let syrup form a glaze.

**"We're living
high on
the hog!"**

Have you ever heard this phrase? It stems from the old folks who normally had to scrimp, getting to eat the best cuts of meat from a pig, which were located in the upper portions.

Nowadays, this just means you're living comfortably or living the good life. Sometimes it is said in reference to a particularly good meal as in "We're eating high on the hog today!"

fried chicken planks

it's hard to believe nowadays but there did exist a time before chicken nuggets or even chicken fingers. That made mama practically a pioneer of innovation when she served up what she called “chicken planks” to us. They were one of our very favorite meals and to this day I haven't tasted a finer version of fried chicken. Of course, as with all of our family recipes, this one is pretty easy to make. Just don't go telling your company how easy!



- 4-5 **chicken breasts**
- 1-3 **sleeves saltine crackers**
- 2 **eggs**
- cooking oil**

Pour oil in large skillet to a depth of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Heat on medium while you prepare the chicken.

Place chicken in gallon zipper seal bag and beat out until $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick (No matter how kind and docile you are, beating this relieves stress). Crack eggs into bowl and beat with fork (again with the beating thing). Crush saltines and put in a separate bowl (you should have any hidden anger issues completely worked out by this point).

Cut each chicken breast into three strips and dip each piece first in egg mixture, then in cracker crumbs, being careful to coat completely. Drop each piece into oil and cook, turning once, on medium to medium high heat until browned on both sides. Drain on paper towel lined plate. Serve with comeback sauce.

comeback sauce

this is a good old classic sauce perfect for dipping chicken in. It also goes great with fries, sandwiches, and vegetables. My cousin, Cindy, introduced me to this recipe several years ago and it sounded so good that I made chicken planks that night just so we could try it. After one taste my husband and I were hooked. I cannot imagine an easier sauce to whip up at the last minute!

- $\frac{1}{2}$ **cup mayonnaise**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ **cup ketchup**
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ **tablespoon ground pepper***

Stir all ingredients together in a bowl until well blended. Can be served immediately but is best if refrigerated several hours.

**I know with all that pepper you're thinking this is going to be hot but it isn't at all. The pepper just adds flavor, not spice. My kids eat this and love it.*

daddy's rise and shine biscuits

biscuits are such a staple of the southern diet that its usually one of the first things folks think about when they think Southern food. Back in the day folks bought flour in 25 pound sacks and so biscuits and dumplings and such were a great way to make a meager meal more filling for the whole family. Often times, meals consisted of biscuits and a little milk gravy, made using some bacon grease for seasoning. This was a completely meatless meal that still managed to fill stomachs before setting off to a hard days work. My great aunt Louise often said "Many a family would have starved if not for biscuits and gravy". This is one of many reasons why biscuits still hold a revered place at Southern dinner tables. Still, a lot of folks end up disappointed in their biscuits as they turn out flat and tough. This method of preparation helps to ensure there is no over kneading and people who've never been able to make a light and fluffy biscuit have reported back that theirs turned out beautiful after trying this recipe.

**½ cup cold butter or margarine,
softened**

2¼ cup self rising flour*

**1¼ cup buttermilk (or whole milk
with a tablespoon of lemon
juice added)**

flour for dusting

**melted butter for brushing
baked biscuits**

Place flour in large mixing bowl. Cut butter in with long tined fork until crumbly. Cover and place in refrigerator for ten minutes. Slowly pour in buttermilk and stir just until moistened.

Turn dough out onto a floured surface and knead three or four times with hands, adding flour as needed to prevent sticking. With well floured hands, pat dough out into a rectangle about ¾ of an inch thick. Fold each side over into the center as if folding a letter. Repeat two more times, beginning with patting dough out.

Pat dough out a final time until ½ inch thick. Cut with biscuit cutter dipped in flour and place biscuits on lightly greased pan with sides touching. Bake at 450 for 12-15 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from oven and brush tops with melted butter.

**To make your own self rising flour, simply add 1½ tsp baking powder and ½ tsp salt for EACH cup of all purpose flour.*





springtime

come springtime, gardens are being planted and we're all itching for that first green tomato to bring in and fry up for supper. As much as we complain about the heat of summer, we sure are ready for it after just a few months of overcast skies and sweaters!

Spring hosts a slew of bridal and baby showers along with our special Easter dinners as well. Everyone comes out in their Sunday best to gather on lawns again amid picnic tables and daffodils and we're all hankering for a bite of something fresh and light to go along with our serving of sunshine!

Fruits, vegetables, and all manner of congealed salads are rolled out beneath the spring sunshine as we draw together once more to celebrate family and heritage with our favorite dishes of the day.