OASIS

OLDWAYS AFRICANA SOUP IN STORIES

Edited by Stephanie Y. Evans
with Sade Anderson & Johnisha Levi

A DISCUSSION OF BLACK WOMEN'S FOODWAYS

autumn.
a bonfire of leaves. morning peels us toward
pomegranate festivals.
and in the evening i bring
you soup cooled by my laughter.
~Sonia Sanchez

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OLDWAYS AFRICANA SOUP IN STORIES

“Cooking empowers us to choose what we want for ourselves and our families.”
- Oldways, A Taste of African Heritage Cooking Program

"Diabetes is not part of African-Americans' heritage. Neither is heart disease. What is in your heritage is a healthy heart, a strong body, extraordinary energy, vibrant and delicious foods, and a long healthy life."
- Oldways, African Heritage and Health Program

Oldways African Heritage & Health
oldwayspt.org/programs/african-heritage-health

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OASIS
Oldways Africana Soup in Stories

A DISCUSSION OF
BLACK WOMEN'S FOODWAYS

OASIS gathers culturally-informed soup recipes to expand nutritional knowledge and discussions of Black women's wellness. In this sampler of stories, Dr. Stephanie Evans and the Oldways African Heritage & Health leadership team present personal vignettes and recipes that explore identity, geography, health, and self-care.

Memoirs are an effective way to convey both technical knowledge and cultural heritage. This book project brings together 20 cooks, chefs, researchers, storytellers, foodies, farmers, nutritionists, historians, activists, food bloggers, and wellness workers to share stories about Black women's health. Stories and soup recipes are featured from around the African diaspora:

- Nigeria
- Eretria
- Guyana
- Brazil
- Tobago
- Barbados
- Washington D.C.
- Virginia
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Georgia
- Tennessee
- Boston
- New York
- New Mexico

Soup is a perfect meal that allows us to simmer down. So take time to share this bowl of wellness. Dish, wish, and reminisce in sisterhood and community. Enjoy this diaspora taster, get inspiration to record your own story.

Find more resources online at ProfessorEvans.net and Oldways African Heritage & Health to define and expand your own personal wellness menu!

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OLDWAYS AFRICAN HERITAGE & HEALTH

Inner Peace Soup: Finding *OASIS* in a Legacy of Self-Care

Stephanie Y. Evans
New Mexico

"There are other hungerings in man besides the eternal all-subduing hungering of his despotic stomach. There is the hunger of the eye for beauty, the hunger of the ear for concords, the hungering of the mind for development and growth, of the soul for communion and love, for a higher richer, fuller living--a more abundant life! And every man owes it to himself to *let nothing in him starve* for lack of the proper food."

~ Anna Julia Cooper (1892)

SEARCHING FOR INNER PEACE: MY JOURNEY

I have always been hungry for life. The above quote by Anna Julia Cooper from her classic book, *A Voice from the South, By a Black Woman of the South* captures much of my personal history and belief. My hungerings of the stomach eye, ear, mind, and soul are insatiable and I have been determined not to starve in any sense. I moved out on my own at age 16 as a self-emancipated youth, so mine has been a constant challenge not only to feed myself in a literal sense (to stay alive), but also to feed my compulsion to taste all the best things that life has to offer.

I have traveled much, met inspirational and gracious mentors, and collected many tips along the way. I'm a wayfaring stranger. Part of my childhood was very privileged: I traveled to many places as the youngest child in a military family. I was born in Washington D.C., but raised mainly in the southwest. We lived in six places before I was a teenager: D.C., New Mexico, California, Germany, Illinois, and Arizona. However, some of my childhood and much of my adulthood involved overcoming many challenges and, as a result of less-than-ideal conditions, I moved out as a teenager and have been on my own ever since. Once I found my stride and started college at the age of 25, the travel bug resurfaced so as a college student, graduate student, and now professor, I have wandered near and far. In addition to many places in the U.S., I've been fortunate to visit or work in several countries including Brazil, Tanzania, England, and France.

With life as with cooking, I had to learn to experiment in order to find the right measures for me. While I was most definitely not a motherless child, generations past did not pass down recipe books for Black womanhood or for cuisine. So, when I stepped out on my own right before my senior year in high school, I was starting with an assemblage of ingredients, but essentially starting from scratch.

I value lessons from my far-flung family and from my broad collective of "friends-and-kins." Since my young adulthood, countless teachers, professors, and friends have added ingredients and technique to my development. I especially love what others have shared about their perspectives of Black culture, appreciation for diverse cultural mixtures, and critical life lessons for survival. Most importantly, I value those who have passed on tidbits of knowledge about self-care, mental health, and wellness of mind, body, and spirit. Like millions of women—and especially women of color—I am a survivor of several types of sexual violence. Through the early years on my own, I struggled with non-stop anxiety about work, school, politics, and my basic ability to survive. As a young woman, I nursed a bleeding ulcer for several years; I struggled with anxiety and often felt lost and desperate for security or, at least, guidance. Reading historical Black women's narratives gave me peace of mind, calmed my nerves, and gave me clarity, hope, and confidence in my ability to choose a better quality of life for myself. Decades in Black women's studies has given me ample resources and enabled me to build networks, ask for help, nurture myself, trust in Spirit, and grow within positive relationships. Having a foundation of peace is an essential part of holistic health, which impacts *how well* you live in addition to *how long* you live. Artist Annie Lee's two most popular paintings are *Blue Monday* and *My Cup Runneth Over*; these paintings are the "before" and "after" of my journey to inner peace and bookend my quest to recover Black women's hidden legacy of self-care.

My academic career began by studying Black women's educational philosophies and has expanded to a study of self-empowerment beyond higher education—into lifelong learning. I have found philosophies of wellness useful in ways I've least expected, but needed most. For example, during the creation of this book, my step-mother passed away in November 2015, my mother in July 2016, and my father—six weeks later—in September 2016. Because I was steeped in wellness research and surrounded by a sister-circle of healers, I slowly have found my way to take each day one-step-at-a-time toward a lasting sense of healing and a deepened faith. For me, this book is a testament to how a family of so many different, disparate, and distinct ingredients can be blended into a network of caring friends-n-kins to make a most delicious stew full of unique, nourishing flavors. The story of my quest for inner peace and projects like this one focusing on health and heritage is a story of how—regardless of one's background—each person can fashion a menu made of recipes that can nurture and sustain far beyond expectation.

Though people on my journey have contributed to the flavor of my development, the most impactful aspect of my journey to healthy living has come through study of Black women's intellectual history. As a student and teacher of Black women writers, I have spent years collecting life stories as guides to health and wellness. Since 2013, my focus has connected intellectual history with mental health and I have investigated ways in which Black women who write their life stories define "inner peace." From words that shape body (Vivian Stringer's "clarity"), mind (Leslie Harris's "hope"), and spirit (Jan Willis's "choice"), I have begun to

understand ways we may give deeper meaning to holistic health (see "Inner Lions" article in Peace Studies Journal, 2014). I've collected information to provide a tapestry of voices that weigh in on definitions, public health strategies, psychological techniques, and historical lessons in Black women's hidden legacy of self-care. Like good books, good food has become an oasis in a desert of confusion and pain that too often permeated my early life. It is my desire that this book serve as a catalyst to begin, advance, and reignite formal and informal discussions between Black women about food, health, healing, wellness, and self-worth.

I am not a chef, but if I were, I'd be a SOUP CHEF! Soup was the first food that I learned to cook well consistently; I learned to toss stuff in a pot and tweak the recipes to my taste. That does not mean soup is easy…just a *little* too much of one seasoning can ruin the whole meal. But it makes sense that soup became my entre to cooking good food well because soup is the cornerstone meal of cultures worldwide. As my focus expanded from Black women's ideas of self-empowerment to include health and wellness strategies, soup also became my route to food and foodways study. In February 2016, I took a soup class at Cook's Warehouse in Decatur, GA from Chef Megan Moyer, a nutritionist and dietitian at Emory University. That night, we were introduced to four winter recipes: butternut squash and pork chili; Thai coconut Alaskan salmon chowder; African peanut stew (vegan); and chicken sausage, white bean and kale soup. Though the African peanut stew was amazing, I immediately ran home to make the salmon chowder because I love fish, and it remains my favorite. Using soup to enhance my understanding of food and culture, expand my research agenda, and as a means to become more proficient in the kitchen, has been all I had hoped and validated my desire to learn more deeply in one dish as a way to approach what had been a very intimidating universe of cooking and food study.

FEEDING SELF-EMPOWERMENT: BLACK WOMEN'S STUDIES, SOUP, AND LEGACIES OF SELF-CARE

This book is part of a wellness trilogy of publications to foster mental, physical, and spiritual health. The larger project includes an edited book to heal the mind titled, *Black Women's Mental Health: Balancing Strength and Vulnerability* (SUNY Press, July 2017) and a forthcoming book on spiritual mindfulness and longevity practices of 20th century foremothers who lived to be nonagenarians and centenarians. Center for Disease Control data are very clear on health disparities by race and gender, but there is a paucity of humanities-based research

that centers Black women's voices. This collection can inform social science and medical research in nuanced ways. For example, by normalizing "spirit" along with a "mind-body" focus of health research, the CDC and similar agencies can more clearly reflect Africana self-definition. OASIS can also offer a counter narrative to how mass media pathologize Black women, as *BWMH* co-editor Nsenga Burton points out in her work.

To expand our understanding about how Black women define the term "inner peace," Dr. Kanika Bell, psychologist, psychology professor, and co-editor of *BWMH*, surveyed 50 Black women mental health professionals. Her findings revealed nine techniques that are central to Black women's wellness, bolstering findings from memoirs and autobiographies and building on public health advocacy of the past several decades. In 1983 health activist Byllye Avery convened a conference at Spelman College which evolved into the Black Women's Health Imperative (BWHI), a national advocacy organization, and then spawned development of the Center for Black Women's Wellness (CBWW)—also in downtown Atlanta—in 1988. Avery's work has continued for decades and is a cornerstone of wellness teaching. In the publication titled, *Health First!: The Black Women's Wellness Guide*, BWHI identified five steps of self-empowerment that lead to wellness. These strategies, unveil practices that 19th and 20th century elders used to impact their health and longevity, even in the midst of challenges like enslavement, segregation, and other forms of systematic oppression.

BWHI's five strategies for wellness are grounded in empirical research and mirror themes found in Black feminist and womanist thought. The five strategies for self-empowerment found at the conclusion of *Health First!* are given further depth by Byllye Avery's elder wit and wisdom. Succinct messages can be derived from this knowledge and, in self-care workshops, I offer these five empowerment strategies along with concrete longevity lessons:

1)	self-ownership (awareness)	Be your own BOSS
2)	self-development (taking control)	Get your life in SYNC
3)	self-love (coalescing)	Keep CALM and carry on
4)	self-respect (transformation)	Don't be the weakest LINK
5)	self-determination (maintenance)	Put yourself in place (MISE en place)

As demonstrated by numerous 20th century women—whom I call "The Grown* Generation"—these five self-care strategies impact quality *and* length of life. Women of the "Grown* Generation," (late 19th and early 20th century elders), were central to racial and gender activism, but they also lived well into their nineties and one hundreds. In modern terms, women like Anna Julia Cooper (who lived to be 105) were not only "grown" Black women, but super-grown: aged and lively elders who died in peace, often asleep in their own homes. They left us a legacy of self-care that is largely overshadowed by the real challenges of oppression they faced.

Several long-living Black women took time to write their memoirs and tell their stories, leaving ample material to better understand the balance between self-care as an individual ethic and self-care as a community imperative. Harriet Tubman offers one of the earliest examples of self-empowerment narratives. As is widely known, Tubman was born enslaved and was physically abused, receiving a head injury at the hands of an overseer. She escaped only to return to the South as an emancipator, nurse, and Union Army spy. She made over a dozen trips to free over 70 enslaved, and famously led the June 3, 1863 South Carolina raid on the Combahee River in an operation that freed over 700 bondsmen. I contend that her story is well known primarily because she produced a memoir. Though "General Tubman" was not literate, she narrated her story to Sarah Bradford, which produced three editions of her 132-page memoir *Sketches in the Life of Harriet Tubman* in 1869, republished in 1886 and 1901. Tubman story exemplifies self-ownership (awareness).

Dr. Anna Julia Cooper's collected writings in *A Voice from the South* (1892) represent the earliest effort by a Black woman—who would become a centenarian—to record her reminiscences. Her writing reflects an ethic of self-development (taking control). Cooper was clearly not self-centered or selfish, and during a celebration of her 100th birthday, she attributed her longevity to living a life of selflessness and service to others. Yet, Cooper clearly demonstrated self-development by pursing education, insisting on spending time in

reflective activities like gardening, writing in her sunroom, or remodeling her home. She loved herself enough to reject the idea that she did not have a "right to grow." Her example of growth and self-nurturance impacted many indirectly, but also had influence on others, such as her nephew who became a professor of French, and also her namesake, Annie Elizabeth, Bessie, one of the well-known centenarian Delany sisters. Sara Delany, who lived to age 109, has the distinction of being the most senior Black woman memoirist. She wrote *Having Our Say* (1993) along with her younger sister Bessie, who reached 104. It is notable that the Delany sisters were also from North Carolina, were raised on the campus of St. Augustine's, and were well aware of Anna Julia Cooper's legacy. Cooper was a friend of their father, Henry Beard Delany, who was a student at St. Augustine's—he met his wife Nanny Logan there. The ten Delany children were raised on the campus of St. Aug's, where they knew Dr. Cooper, as many would come to know, "Sis Annie." The Delany sisters attributed their long lives to several factors including choosing not to marry (which they stated only half in jest), eating at least seven vegetables a day, and sustaining a forty-year practice of yoga and exercise. Their story reflects the values of self-love (coalescing).

The most recent centenarian memoirist of the twentieth century is Dovey Roundtree, a Civil Rights Movement lawyer who was instrumental in overturning the transportation segregation of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In fall 2016, she was still living at 102 years grown. Her commitment to demanding civil rights for African Americans as a group and building a career as an effective defense attorney as depicted in her autobiography *Justice Older than the Law* (2009), shows a sense of self-respect (transformation). Chef Leah Chase rounds out this list of powerful elders who are exemplars of BWHI strategies. With several cookbook memoirs including *And Still I Write* (2003) and *The Dooky Chase Cookbook* (1990), she definitely puts the "creative" in the Black women's studies principle of creative survival. Like Cooper, these twentieth century elders not only lived long lives, but lived well and took time to write memoirs as guides to future generations, in what Maya Angelou called, "letters to our daughters." Chef Chase, at the age of 93, can still be found in her New Orleans kitchen at Dooky Chase restaurant. Her life story was not only the subject of several cookbooks, but her desire to live a full life was also chosen as the center of Disney's first animated film with a Black female lead: *Princess and the Frog* (2009). Chase's story, like the Delany sisters' memoirs, also calls attention to the mind-body-spirit connection and the importance of the role that exercise and nutrition play in healing, living well, and getting one's life on track and in sync. Chase's determination to grow beyond what was deemed her subservient role exemplifies the empowerment strategy of self-determination (maintenance). Collectively, these historical and cultural narratives clearly present aspects of self-worth that resides at the heart of power: know thyself. Wellness wisdom from grown* women has altered the way I see aging, time, and health. With a vocabulary of "self," healthy skill sets, and these Five Elements of Self-Care, Black women from around the world can learn to breathe more deeply.

Like historians, 20th century health advocates and scholar-activists who founded the higher education field of Black women's studies identified several strategies to improve mind, body, and spirit—by placing Black women's voices at the center. In the early 1980s, a modern wave of Africana women's programs and curricula emerged, and addressed wellness issues. The section titled, "Creative Survival" in the book, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (1982) is a primary example. The authors of this section of a foundational Black women's studies text focused on strategies to survive (health, higher education, blues music, and womanist theology), and began to document how to formalize teaching these subjects. Decades later, much work still remains.

To expand research on life writing, I created the *AfricanaMemoirs.net* database which houses over 500 Black women's published narratives from the African diaspora. This online library of narratives has guided me to empowerment through education, community engagement, travel, mental health, and meditation. *OASIS* takes a small step to extend the knowledge base of Black women's memoir as well as to broaden study about

our complex narrative foodways. This community-based research collaboration is in the tradition of the women who I studied for my dissertation: Fanny Coppin, Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, Septima Clark.

Black women's wellness is an Afrofuturist idea and the connection to Oldways' visionary program is the epitome of what Dr. Cooper called REGENERATION: "we look back for wisdom, look inward to gather strength, and look forward for hope and faith." Much like renowned food historian Toni Tipton-Martin who collected hundreds of cookbooks to produce *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African American Cookbooks*, Black women's memoirs and autobiographies about education, empowerment, and health have been my Other Mothers. There is something sustaining and powerful about *writing* our stories…they will live long after we are gone. *I am not a chef, but I've learned to throw some good things in a pot and heal myself*. I hope my story might be of use to others in the future. Working with several food and health professionals has connected me to an ever-broadening network of healers like Clark Atlanta University Nurse Singleton and Tanya Leake (a certified health coach who also trained in the Oldways program), and my classrooms, campus, and communities are much better for it.

Refrigerator Soup

When I want to warm up my house, perk up my personality, and most in general give myself a feeling of good time, I have often gone to my refrigerator and made a refrigerator soup. The ingredients are a compilation of anything edible that will fit into a pot and will go with my frozen poultry stock. A pot of aromatic soup is great ammunition against depression.

~Maya Angelou. *Great Food, All Day Long* (2010)

We stand on the shoulders of giants, yet this topic of Africana soup is very fresh and innovative. While there is nothing new under the sun, there is still plenty of uncharted territory in foodways studies. For example, historical research shows the oldest African American cookbooks (Malinda Russell in 1866 and Abby Fisher in 1881) include soup as a cornerstone meal. Soup is also the first item on the Oldways African American Heritage menu developed by an extensive panel that traced foodways of "one pot cooking" in Africa (Peanut Soup), South America (Vegetable and Rice Soup), the Caribbean (Pumpkin Soup), and the United States South (Shrimp Gumbo). Soup is also a starting point for the four regional-based menus (South, Creole Coast, North, and West) at the newly-opened Smithsonian Museum's Sweet Home Café (via expertise of Dr. Jessica B. Harris and Carla Hall). As part of a digital humanities project, I have located over 100 soup recipes in Black women's cookbooks and mapped them using the Library of Congress Viewshare program. A survey of dozens of cookbooks that include life reflections offers inspiration for new ways to look at old soup. I have literally been giddy looking at soup recipes for the past few years while slowly developing this idea. I began writing about soup the same time I began to write about peace studies. No coincidence. From Maya Angelou's Refrigerator Soup to Leah Chase's Gumbo, we have much to teach and learn and soup is a cornerstone dish that has been virtually ignored in major food studies and popular discussions, even if given due respect by real foodies.

Oldways Africana Soup in Stories (OASIS) supports awareness of Oldways' A Taste of African Heritage Program (ATOAH), a 6-week community cooking program (based in Boston, but offered around the nation) that celebrates healthy foods and eating patterns of the African diaspora. *OASIS* also expands ongoing collaboration with organizations like the Black Women's Health Imperative and Center for Black Women's Wellness because *OASIS*, as an open-access online book, focuses on empowerment and moves beyond a deficit or reactive "illness" framework toward a balanced, preventative, and creative "wellness" model.

Like the recent African American Vegan Starter Guide (2016) by renowned public health educator Tracye McQuirter (author of *By Any Greens Necessary*), this discussion can help those who want to take the first step to enliven their eating habits but don't know where to start. *OASIS* can also help those who are already healthy foodies to up their game at the table. Emphasis is placed on exposing ethnic and geographical diversity within Black women's heritage and experiences and this is another way to address populations where many health disparities exist. These chapters show the heterogeneity of Black women and at the same time disabuse us of the notion that heart disease or cancer are "cultural norms." Soup is a great first step, no matter where you are on your path to health and self-knowledge.

I mindfully follow in the footsteps of many peace activists like Sonia Sanchez and those who have been on their foodways path for years. Like the dedication of the Sonia Sanchez peace benches to Clark Atlanta University's campus, I hope bringing my soup to the table adds a lasting monument to the ongoing feast of Black women's poetry and creative survival. I am grateful to the Oldways leadership team for embracing this out-of-the blue idea and championing its use as part of the already-vibrant ATOAH curriculum. I am also thankful to the many women in my sister circle with whom I have had the pleasure of collaborating over the years on various projects. As is recognized in many health circles, journaling is an effective tool to improve mental, physical, and spiritual health. Through the years, reading other women's memoirs and autobiographies has cleared the path for me to write my way to wellness. Hopefully, the food memoirs here will expand and inspire other authors to contribute life stories to the ongoing human library.

Black Women's Health Imperative has identified 9.5 million Black women in good health and the organization's president, Linda Goler Blount states the mission is to increase that number to 12.5 million by the year 2020. This collection is specifically designed to aid in that effort.

LONGEVITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE: SHARING OUR STORIES AT THE WORLD TABLE

Professor Sanchez
Said miso healed Japan's ills
Simmer peace she said
~ Stephanie Evans (2016)

This project originated from my desire to live a more healthy life and simultaneously learn more about Africana history and culture through a focus on foodways scholarship, history, and narratives. Specifically, this discussion sought to engage Black women in diverse discussions of foodways; to share experiences, perspectives, secrets, and insights; and to reflect on the diversity of Africana womanhood. The stories here evoke remembrance, imagine self, and conjure defiant mother wit.

OASIS soup stories highlights diverse ways in which food can be culturally, socially, politically, spiritually, and physically meaningful. Tracing Black women's life stories, we can see three main narrative themes: memory, self-creation, and activism. These stories are arranged geographically from Nigeria, Eritrea, Guyana, Tobago and Barbados, to Brazil, Virginia, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Washington D.C., and New York. These recipe-related stories reveal women practicing remembrance of their culture, recreating home, making meaning of their lives through creative food design, passing on their inherited or experiential knowledge, and railing against a world that too often dehumanizes Africana women.

This discussion about Black women's foodways offers a dedicated space to appreciate particular experiences located at intersections of race, class, gender, geography, and other identity markers like sexuality, motherhood status, occupation, or religion. Ingredients vary widely (re)introducing various meat combinations and providing an expansive pallet of vegetables. Here, we begin a dialogue about both the scores of traditional approaches to combinations as well as the infinite number of potential creations we might explore. To emphasize the imperative to increase our vegetable intake, I also invited health coach and emBODY Well founder Tanya Leake to share salad recipes. Her self-designation as a "Vegetablarian" is a perfect encapsulation of the Oldways African Heritage & Health message: we must feast on traditional foods that feed us best. Ms. Leake's use of meat as a condiment jibes perfectly with the Oldways African Pyramid (see Resources) developed by an outstanding panel of scholars. Her #findyoursalad challenge works and I recommend Maya Angelou's favorite "Refrigerator Salad," along with my Chicken Chile Chicken Stew recipe below as a means to move closer to the seven vegetables that served the Delany sisters so well. It is no accident that several of the contributions come from Georgia, as I have been fortunate to begin to build community in the state; it is also gratifying the several of the contributors have a connection to the Atlanta University Center in general and the Clark Atlanta University Africana Women's Studies in particular. We are proud to have trained several scholar-activists who are also creative wellness workers.

Chef Therese Nelson, founder of the Black Culinary History Network whose work anchors this collection, points out that only five percent of chefs in the professional world are Black and, though most commercially successful chefs are men, women play a central role in professional, community, and culinary leadership. Honoring women's intellectual history is one way to increase understanding of contributions. One of the core strengths of the Oldways African Heritage & Health program is its foundation on leading food scholars' contributions. Rooted connection—from the program's inception—to thought leaders like Jessica B. Harris, Toni Tipton-Martin, and Constance Brown-Riggs has ensured the possibility for institutionalization and widespread dissemination of *quality* knowledge about the African diaspora. As Chef Nelson mentions, this project also lifts up foremothers who have led the way, particularly Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, who passed in September 2016, one month before this publication.

With Oldways' development of such a grounded beginning of the program in November 2011, there are now countless ways to study, teach, and implement programming informed by the African Heritage Food Pyramid and accompanying materials. Black women are accustomed to lifting our voices in our communities;

there is a large and growing chorus of trained community food educators in the Oldways A Taste of African Heritage (ATOAH) program. This collection demonstrates, through a guided discussion of soup, how we can learn more about our health, history, and culture through storytelling and life writing.

Balance is a central theme of my work on inner peace and self-care, and I draw from ancient notions of spiritual philosophy, including Maat (Egypt) and Tao (China). When asked her definition of peace, Dr. Bell replied, "balance," so it makes sense that balance is the first step in our BREATHE model for mental health. Balance is also a fundamental benefit of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), an 8-week training session that teaches meditation for peace of mind. The practice of MBSR, founded at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Medical School (also called the OASIS Research Center), has connected the dots for me, personally and professionally, and has made the idea of balanced nutrition more palatable and practical.

The first part of my take-away message for this OASIS book is simple: *always be hungry for life*—the world is a big place ripe for your exploration. The second, polar opposite part of my message is this: *look inside* (yourself, your faith, your family, and your network), *and be satiated with what you have and where you are right now*. Essentially, OASIS uses cultural history to balance hunger and satisfaction.

Too many women struggle with anxiety, depression, poor health, and hopelessness on their journey to self-worth; *a luta continua*. The struggle continues, especially in a world that is so violent and hostile to Black people, women, and especially hostile to Black women. These stories and recipes in the following chapters are meant to lessen the barriers to healthy eating and guide the steps toward inner peace and world-wide connection in the diaspora. The Afrofuturist short story at the end of this book, *Chronicle of the Equator Woman: The Recipe for Justice Soup*, connects the ancient past with possible futures and amplifies the power of Black women's creativity in a time-space continuum. Our legacy of peace, care, and survival are needed today more than ever. Collectively, these stories are compiled to stoke your hunger for tasty, savory, and sensuous living, to encourage readers to warmly embrace Africana women's wellness, and to move the world toward justice, one bowl at a time.

Five Elements of Self-Care: Green Chile Chicken Stew

One pot meals like greens and soups have been my staple because, even though I love the coziness of home, I'm on the road a lot—or I'm writing. This recipe for green chile chicken stew is my ultimate go-to recipe when I have low energy and need some healing, homey, healthy comfort food. It is indeed, self-care soup, but even more satisfying when I get to cook it for my husband on the rare occasion he comes down with a cold. Green chile is high in vitamin C: one fresh green chile has as much as six oranges (Hatch green chile is the best). This soup is a sure-fire way to feed all of your senses and feel better when you need it most. You can tell by the ingredients and especially by the instructions, I have no formal food training whatsoever. That being said, I am grateful to all of the professional chefs in the world who make it look easy and who spend their lives as artists creating masterpieces we novices can enjoy. Thanks also to Jeff Henderson who introduced me to the term *mis en place* in his autobiography *Cooked: From the Streets to the Stove, from Cocaine to Foir Gras*. As indicated in several new publications, "put into place," is an extremely practical and applicable principle in everyday life.

As explained in detail by innovative health coach Deitra Dennis (chapter 10, "Southern Girl Soup"), we can become inspired by food colors in the *Body Ecology* spectrum—developed by Donna Gates. Color guides offer a fun way to explore vegetables. This soup includes all five color groups: Green (chile), Orange/Yellow (carrots and corn), Red (tomatoes), White (garlic, onions, potatoes), and Blue (blue corn chips—not pictured).

Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken
- 4 quarts low-sodium broth
- 3 potatoes
- 4 cans green chile (Hatch)
- 1 jalapeno
- 3 stalks celery
- 1 bag baby carrots (halved)
- 1 onion
- 4 roma tomatoes
- 1 tsp ginger puree or lemongrass puree
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp each basil, oregano, marjoram, and paprika
- mixed seasoning or salt to taste
- Serve with blue corn chips

Instructions

~ Mis en place: chop celery, potatoes, cut carrots in half, measure spices as needed.

~ Boil the chicken with bay leaves and garlic. (Substitute two bone-in chicken breast and two bone-in thighs if you do not want to work with a whole chicken.) While the chicken is cooking, grab some tea, wine, and chatter with a friend or family member. Chilax. Listen to music. Read. The chicken will cook, trust me. When chicken is done, take out and debone; remove skin.

~ Replace chicken meat and add all spices and vegetables. My husband Curtis Byrd (who grew up in the kitchen with his grandmother and who actually has one of his degree concentrations in hospitality/hotel-restaurant management) told me that celery takes longer to cook than other vegetables. Who knew?! Put those in first, take a sip of whatever soothes your nerves, then put in the other veggies.

~ Either while the soup is cooking or when you are sharing with others, talk about politics and make a plan to make a difference locally, nationally, and globally. The world is a mess and we need kitchen table solutions to sort all this out. That is the recipe for *Justice Soup*.

~ After dinner, when you are packing up lunch for the next day, make sure to pack an extra sample for someone at work. Ms. Claudia Combs, our Administrator for African American Studies, Africana Women's Studies, and History (AWH Department) at CAU, likes when I bring her my samples (*especially* if I bring some of Dr. Byrd's cornbread or banana pudding too).

~ Spoons up!

Finding Oldways African Heritage & Health

Sade Anderson
Washington, D.C.

How did I find Oldways? Actually, Oldways found *me* through a family friend who happened to be a volunteer teacher for the ATOAH program: *A Taste of African Heritage*. She was well aware of my academic and personal connection to history and culture of the African diaspora and nutrition and thought I would be a great candidate.

I consider myself a member of the global community but claim the DMV (Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia area) as home. As a result of growing up in the military abroad, I have fostered a loving relationship with Mother Earth and an appreciation for the origins of foods and cultures from around the world. During my undergraduate and graduate studies in History, Africana Studies and, currently, my PhD in African Diaspora Studies, I continue to explore the depths of African heritage through the peoples, cultures, and foodways.

Outside of academia, I have continued to engage in social justice work around issues of race, class, youth and political incarceration, birth injustice, and most recently food injustice in Washington, D.C. Through a fourteen-year journey to a plant-based lifestyle, I have come to appreciate food and its source.

As the Program Manager for the Oldways African Heritage & Health Program I believe that food and culture are powerful tools to reconnect with our ancestral past in order to heal ourselves from the inside out. *A Taste of African Heritage* is a positive resource to do so!

My Journey to Oldways African Heritage & Health

Johnisha Levi, Program Assistant
Boston

My journey to Oldways started with a love of food and a quest for the ever-elusive past of my ancestors. I grew up in Washington D.C., the youngest in a family of eleven siblings that spans an entire generation. My father, a World War II veteran and radioman in the South Pacific, was the same age as many of my friend's grandparents. Therefore, the "distant" past never felt that distant: I always asked a lot of questions as I was hungry to learn as much as I could about the faces, voices, and the stories of those who preceded me.

I began my professional life as a lawyer because the practice of law offered the chance to shape and mold a narrative while seeking the truth. As my father's namesake, I think subconsciously I wanted to realize his childhood fantasy: he'd speak with reverence and awe about sneaking into courtrooms to witness oral arguments in segregated Charles County, Maryland. Ultimately, though, my love for cooking, baking, and feeding people—for the shared pleasure of a beautiful meal and good company—won out.

Six years after graduating law school, I enrolled in culinary school to study baking and pastry. From there, I went to work in a variety of professional kitchens. A united kitchen is a communal space: your work is everyone's work and vice versa. You watch each other's backs, timers, and cookies. At Oldways, as the Program Assistant for the African Heritage & Health Program, I now get to combine all the things I hold dearest—community, cooking, and storytelling. In my current position, I'm so very lucky to engage with a diverse group of volunteer teachers who lead our six-week *A Taste of African Heritage* (ATOAH) course in communities across the nation, and to bear witness to both the tangible and intangible benefits of a culturally relevant, healthy way of eating. Our ancestors are present. Through heritage foods, you'll uncover their wisdom and, along with their stories, your own.

The Oldways Story

Sara Baer-Sinnott, President
Boston

I joined Oldways in 1992, after getting a graduate degree in land use planning and working for nine years at INC. magazine on special projects and conferences. I knew I was hired for my organizational and planning skills, certainly not for my knowledge of nutrition and food. That came later. After a few months I was smitten. What I quickly learned is that Oldways was much more than just a job—it became a passion, a lifelong mission. At the time, I was a mother of two young children, and Oldways' mission and our work melted my heart and soul. Food. Culture. History. Sustainability. Nutrition and health. I knew that this was work that would make a difference and last a lifetime.

For those not familiar with Oldways: Oldways is a nonprofit food and nutrition organization, with a mission to improve public health through cultural food traditions and lifestyles. The Oldways! We like to say, "Let the old ways be your guide to good health and well-being." To do this, we have a number of creative, practical programs that combine great food and solid nutrition to spread knowledge and instill excitement about cooking, shopping and eating the "old ways."

Oldways was founded in 1990 by K. Dun Gifford, a lawyer, a politician, a food activist, a restaurant owner, and an investment banker, who in the late 1980s became concerned about the loss of culinary traditions and ingredients, as well as the proliferation of what he called, "techno-foods."

The underpinnings of Oldways' vision—then as it is now—are these three thoughts:

- There is value in preserving cultural and culinary traditions for future generations
- Heritage foods and ways of eating are delicious, healthy and nutritionally sound
- And that these ways of eating are sustainable.

In other words—the old ways are *good* for history and culture, *good* for people, *good* for the planet—and therefore, *good* for the future.

The first illustration of this cultural diversity can be seen in our initial program, which centered on the Mediterranean Diet. There has been more research on the health benefits of following a diet inspired by culinary traditions from the Mediterranean Sea region than for any other diet. To bring it to life, Oldways organized an International Mediterranean Diet Conference in Cambridge in 1993. Working with the incredible team of Walter Willett and Dimitrios Trichopoulos at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), Marion Nestle of New York University, Antonia Trichopoulou from the University of Athens and Elisabet Helsing at the World Health Organization, we set out to describe the characteristics of the traditional Mediterranean Diet. Just before the conference, we realized it would be hard to communicate the ten points. The USDA had just

introduced their first pyramid, and so we took their idea. With the HSPH and with the help of an international group of scientists, the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid was born.

While the pattern of heritage, a mostly plant-based diet comprised of whole foods, is similar around the world, there are culinary and cultural traditions that make them different. Recognizing the healthy foods and cuisines of many cultures worldwide, in the following years we introduced other cultural models and created pyramids celebrating Asian, Latin American, Vegetarian and Vegan, and, most recently, African Heritage diets. This cultural relevancy also makes a difference in successfully helping people eat more healthfully. It adds heritage and identity as unique, additional motivators to live and eat well.

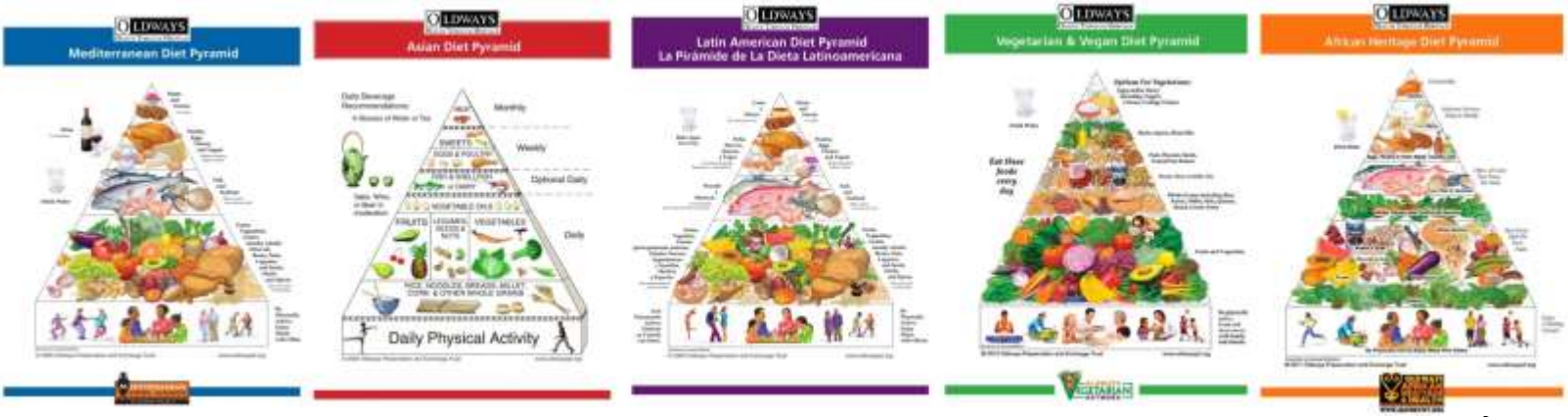
We've since extended the reach of our cultural food pyramids with materials that provide people the skills to apply the time-honored wisdom of food traditions. One of my favorites is *A Taste of African Heritage*, our curriculum that teaches cooking and nutrition based on the African Heritage Diet Pyramid—acclaiming the culinary traditions of the African Diaspora.

This cultural food pyramid—the African Heritage Pyramid—is now being taught in more than 150 communities, coast to coast with materials that provide people the skills to apply the time-honored wisdom of food traditions. The results are incredibly positive—in six weeks, 64% of participants lost weight; 33% saw their blood pressure decrease from one stage of hypertension to another; and over half of the students lost inches from their weight. They also changed their behavior—started cooking more, including more vegetables, and eating more vegetarian meals.

In addition to learning cooking skills and nutrition information, the component of cultural heritage has been a major reason the program is successful, empowering participants not only with healthy eating skills, but also with a very meaningful, positive message:

Diabetes is not part of your heritage.
Neither is heart disease.
What *is* in your heritage is a healthy heart, a strong body, extraordinary energy, vibrant and delicious foods, and a long, healthy life.
You have the power to claim all of this, using heritage as your guide.

That is the message of Oldways and our African Heritage & Health Program. Please join us!



Tasting *A Slice of Africa*

Chidi Asika-Enahoro
Nigeria

Africa is a vast continent made up of 54 individual countries. Each country has its own unique culture, language, style, traditional practices, religious groups and beliefs. The world has now recognized the continent of Africa as having the richest and the highest quality mineral resources. It has high grade gold, crude oil, as well as the largest (multi colored and clearest) diamond, platinum, and ore repositories. Africa is made up of all racial backgrounds.

Africa is home to many cultures because civilization originated there. The western part of Africa is largely inhabited by people of a darker pigmentation and kinky hair. This is where the infamous Atlantic slave trade thrived for many decades depleting the region of its most valuable and irreplaceable resources.

West Africa boasts an exceptional heritage that has yet to be fully exposed to the rest of the world. This area of the world is very rich in arts, crafts, fashion, music, agriculture and natural medicine. It has recently established a trans-world appeal with its culture and mystical celebrations. West Africans demonstrate their cultural heritage everywhere they find themselves; even during slavery.

A multitude of travelers (colonialists, traders, historians, missionaries etc) have come from far and wide to these regions to cultivate the generosity of the natives and leave with a piece of the culture. West African cuisines have had an implicit influence on the western world for centuries. A large number of the recipes are enjoyed in their original form throughout the West Indies, Australia, Louisiana, Haiti, Italy and all over the world. Some of these dishes have been adulterated and tempered down to suit other climates and tastes; but they still retain their West African fervor.

There's been a lot of misinformation and misrepresentation of lives and events in these parts of the world partially because the natives were primarily busy (surviving life), to record their own logic and histories. And existing histories are not widely disseminated. Outsiders and scavengers with limited research and understanding of cultures have consequently depicted West African people negatively. Never mind that West African people openly welcomed strangers into their midst because of our kind hospitable nature, only to be robbed and taken advantage of, even to the point of plowing our natural resources and engaging in crimes

against humanity in the horrific slave trade that nearly destroyed the region. West Africa was divided up to suit the needs of the colonialists of old with total disregard for the natives.

Consequently, you will find the same tribes (Ibos, Yorubas, Hausas, Fulanis, Edos, etc) in a variety of the West African countries. Each tribe was divided up and forced to cohabitate with other warring tribes under the logic of divide and conquer for the colonial masters. They figured that while the natives were busy and distracted squabbling amongst themselves, they would not notice the colonialists stealing and pillaging resources. This has invariably created confusing strife that has helped to perpetuate tribal discord in all of Africa.

For simplification purposes, this presentation will focus on one specific country, since most of the West African countries mirror each other culturally. The country of choice is Nigeria. Nigeria is the main focus here because in Africa, it has the most population, most land mass and is more ethnically diverse with a sizeable representation of all the other West African countries and people.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is geographically situated in the Western part of Africa. Nigeria was once colonized by the British. My father in-law (Chief Anthony Enahoro) made a motion in 1957 for the British to hand power back to Nigerians because we are capable of self rule and determining our own destiny. Of course, such a bold move landed him in jail with a bogus charge of treason.

Nonetheless, his motion got the ball rolling and eventually led to Nigeria becoming independent from the British in 1960. Nigeria currently has an estimated population of 187 million people. Nigeria has the largest number of black people in the world. The population of Nigeria is made up of diverse ethnic groups, of which the Ibos, Yorubas and Hausas are the principal tribes of over 50 tribes.

Each ethnic group has its own language with slight regional variations within some of the same tribes. Nigerians speak over 100 dialects. There is no national native tongue or language; therefore the people communicate in broken (Pigeon) English or regular English, often referred to as Queen's English. With the current world travels and cable television, many locals now speak all types of foreign international languages and phonetics.

There is a semblance of religious freedom as is typified by the different forms of worship prevalent in the country. The principal religions are Christianity, Islam, Animism, and Atheism. In Nigeria, a majority of the Southerners (Ibos, Edos, Effik) are practicing Christians and a majority of the Northerners (Hausas, Fulanis) are practicing Muslims. Pagans are in the minority in all regions. On the other hand, all regions hold strongly to traditional cultural beliefs, rituals and fetishes—in spite of the influence of civilization and organized religions.

Every so often (more so recently with the Muslim fanatic terrorist group Boko Haram), there are spurs of religious clashes (some really bloody and very tragic) where the fanatic elements of one sect or the other attempt to impose or oppress those with different beliefs. This type of discord led to the Nigerian\Biafran war that took place from 1966 to 1970. Over three million people were sacrificed and half of the country's infrastructure was destroyed, especially on the Biafran side. My family and I lived through the horrors of that three-year ordeal.

The current president Mr. Muhamadu Buhari is a retired military general who ascended the same presidential post in the 80s through a military coup. He's a strict Muslim disciplinarian whose mindset is still that of a military dictator and his antics are grounding the economy to a screeching halt.

Nigerians are highly intelligent and hardworking people who excel in any field they get into. They have set academic records in most universities round the world. They excel in medicine, law, music, arts, sports, business, architecture, literary art, and sciences. They have the second highest grossing movie industry in the world with Nollywood productions. Many Nigerians currently hold positions of influence and public political offices in many states and countries.

Nigerians are a very proud group of Black people and that irks those that feel that Blacks should be oppressed and held down. Nigerians also catch a lot of flak for the misdeeds of a few misguided fraudulent

elements. Truth be told, such unsavory elements exist in all groups of the world and should not define any people. All Italians are not Mafioso, all Colombians are not cocaine dealers, all white Americans are not KKK, all Irish are not alcoholics, all Arabs are not terrorists and all Germans are not Nazis and so on and so forth.

The climate in Nigeria is basically tropical with rainy, dry and harmattan seasons. The land mass of Nigeria is very fertile and rich in various natural mineral resources such as ore, groundnut, gold, diamond, copper, tin, rubber, platinum, coal, crude oil (world's third major producer). Nigeria has many other natural resources however oil is her major economic back-bone at the moment. Nigeria is a member of OPEC (Oil Producing Exporting Countries), United Nations, OAU (Organization of African Union) and many other international organizations.

Nigeria is recognized as the giant of Africa and plays big brother to other African countries. Nigeria is a very rich country with the total mismanagement of her resources currently threatening to destabilize the whole structure of the country. Nigerians are a very culture-conscious people. In their various original forms (albeit complex and diversified), Nigerians represent the pride of Africa in music, drama, art, black magic, spiritual beliefs, high fashion, and exotic food.

Nigerians are a fun -oving people who enjoy a lot of festivities and celebrations. They were once voted the happiest people in the world because of their world views and spiritual outlook on life. They strongly believe that God is in charge and whatever happens is well. So, they master the art of suffering and smile in the face of adversity.

All celebrations by Nigerians, wherever they are, call for an array of colorful dances, flambouoyant outfits (with a variety of group uniforms), and exotic cuisines. Everything requires an elaborate celebration: birth, death, graduations, birthdays, all types of anniversaries, marriages, promotions, retirements, and chieftaincy titles. And Nigerians are very hospitable. We always cook extra portions of every meal at our homes, in anticipation of unannounced guests. The first thing any guest is offered in our homes is food and drinks.

Nigeria herself has innumerable authentic dishes. My book, *A Slice of Africa*, reviews and presents a good majority of the dishes that are appreciated across the country irrespective of the tribes. Each tribe may have a slight variation of the methods of preparation or may even have fewer dishes on its menu. Whatever the case may be, there is a general consensus on the authenticity or originality of these recipes.

Some of the presented recipes may not have any English equivalent or derivative. Those items will be presented in one Nigerian language. There may be a name difference with other tribes due to the complexity in language; however the description should suffice. Some of the recipes I showcased may have distinctive resemblance to recipes from other parts of the world—given the fact that the world is so small at this time due to world travels, intermarriages, and high technology that can transport information instantaneously.

A Nigerian meal is usually comprised of a one-course dish. This is obviously due to the starchy and heavily-loaded nature of the recipes. The main courses also takes a long time to produce. This is partly because Nigerians cook with organic meats which take a long time to cook and tenderize. They also tend to cook with one pot at a time because there's a general saying that when you cook more than one pot at a time, one must burn up.

Although we cook with different types of meat in one meal (especially chicken, beef, goat), each meat is usually simmered individually in separate pots. Given the length of time required to prepare a dish, there is hardly any time left to prepare hors d'oeuvres and desserts. Some people still make the meals a three-course affair. They serve pepper soup or bread rolls with soup before the main courses and serve fresh fruits and/or ice cream as desserts.

Nigerians cook most meals with a combination of fish and meat in one type of sauce or another served necessarily with a starch. Most of the dishes are red hot spicy; however, one can always temper things to suit their palate and stomach. It's a good idea to always ask if the dish is spicy before tasting.

In *A Slice of Africa*, I fabricated a unique array of choice tantalizing recipes to produce a taste of the exotics. I simplified them for creative hosting and special entertainment. My careful selection of authentic exotic West African cuisine is presented with easy methodical cooking instructions so that one can "enjoy an exotic African adventure without actually traveling there."

A Slice of Africa provides useful and interesting tidbits on the West African people. Its original recipes from the heart of Africa appeals to health-conscious progressives, Africans in diaspora, specialty restaurants from all cultures, Afrocentrics, culinary art institutes and all other creative and adventurous food lovers. Most of the ingredients for the dishes presented in the cookbook can be purchased in a number of large supermarkets or at more specialized stores.

After publishing *A Slice of Africa*, I started catering events for friends. I was featured in the *Miami Herald* and *Broward Sun Sentinel* on my cooking skills. I was invited to cater city and county events, including Broward County Kwanza celebrations. My family recently relocated back to New York and I have started hosting and catering events for special occasions. My husband and I are putting finishing touches toward opening a state of the art African restaurant and jazz lounge where we plan to showcase *A Slice of Africa* and our cooking skills as well as other African arts and culture.

Nigeria prides itself on having a wide range of exotic fruits: pineapples, mangoes guavas, sugar cane, sour sop, cashew, coconut, paw paw, and velvet tamarind to name a few. These fruits in their various forms and mixtures represent the general dessert courses. Nigerians also have a wide variety of snacks and light meals made out of pastries, meat, fruits and certain vegetables. These double up as breakfast, midday, early evening or late night snacks.

The country has a massive economic impact on the world economy. The rest of the world is beginning to acknowledge it as a force to reckon with. Nigeria is a ripe market for any item in production. A population of one hundred and 188 million people, (who basically import everything foreign), has a strong hold on economies because of their high buying power. Nigerians are a very proud and extravagant people with an avid taste for the good things in life.

A Nigerian dish is an experience to remember. Most international cities (London, New York, Hamburg, Rome, Miami, Atlanta, Washington D.C., Los Angeles) have reputable Nigerian restaurants in their midst. Seek one out and have an exotic African encounter with your palates. Nigerians do not traditionally use timers to cook. One cooks to one's taste and preference, varying between tender and mild, or medium to well done.

Goat Meat Pepper Soup

This is a light, any-time-of-day appetizer or snack. It's very healthy, non-fattening and enjoyed all over West Africa. It's usually prepared without oil and with a lot of spices. As with all recipes, you may find slight variations from region to region depending on personal taste. This hot (pepper) soup is served as a stand-alone meal in bars and during celebrations. It's a good accompaniment for alcohol consumption and is also an expensive snack or appetizer. This is usually a mid-day or evening meal and a good hang-over or flu remedy.

Ingredients

- goat head (1)
- goat meat (1lb)
- Akanwu
- onion (1 medium)
- salt (1/4 tsp)
- crayfish (1/4 cup ground)
- bullion cubes (2)
- ginger (1 or 1\2 tsp powder)
- 4 hot peppers
- parsley (a pinch)
- Utazi (3 leaves or ¼ tsp ground)
- nutmeg (1 tsp or a pinch)
- sage (1/2 tsp)
- yam or potatoes (1lb)

Instructions

First, make sure the head is thoroughly cleaned and brought to a boil with a pinch of salt, Akanwu and ½ onion for 20 minutes in a medium pot. Then, remove the brain and discard or save for a different recipe (Ngwongwo). Chop up the rest of the head into small pieces (some butcher shop or animal farms will cut the goat head at the time of purchase. Then cut up the rest of the goat meat and other parts (intestines, if any), in small stewing cubes and make sure to thoroughly clean out with hot water.

In a larger pot, bring all of the meat to boil with a pinch of salt, with some parsley, and plenty of water (for 20 minutes). Clean out the crayfish (if not pre-ground). Grind up the pepper, ½ onion, utazi, ginger, nutmeg, sage and crayfish. Utazizi is a bitter vegetable (used sparingly), that cleanses the system. Bring the cooking temperature to simmer.

Pour all prepared ingredients into the pre-boiled meat, including the spices, broth (if any) or water (It is essential to add a lot of water), salt, bouillon cubes and cover to simmer for 20 more minutes (under medium heat) stirring intermittently, until ready. Some people also add cut up pieces of white yam or potatoes at this juncture, to thicken the broth and\or make it more of a meal. It can also be served on white rice or with pounded yam or eba.

Serves 10

Regenerative Health and Wellness

Selas Kidane
Eritrea

I am originally from Eritrea, which is a very diverse country located in Horn of East Africa, known as the Red Sea State. I'm a passionate healthy food developer and the founder of diversitycooking.com, a website designed to promote healthy eating and harmony through the art of food and culture. I studied at St. Louis Community College, where I earned my Associate degree in Accounting. I work full time as an A/R Analyst. I love working with numbers, but my true passion is food art and culture.

I have been a volunteer African Heritage & Health Ambassador since 2014, I have taught seven ATOAH (A Taste of African Heritage) cooking classes, including a year of monthly follow up classes at a local African Heritage & Health partner agency, known as Operation Pathway. I held six large seminars/presentations on behalf of African Heritage & Health and Oldways. I teach African Heritage & Health program with pride and joy because it is part of my passion and my history.

HOW I DEVELOPED MY PASSION FOR HEALTHY FOOD: THE SPECIAL WOMEN WHO INSPIRED MY CREATIVITY

My passion is a reflection of my Eritrean and African culture, which is a blessing I inherited from my family. Historically speaking, our ancestors grew their own food, ate a wholesome diet and lived healthy lifestyles. I even have a few childhood memories of the varieties of foods my grandparents grew, such as beans, legumes and whole grains, including barley, whole wheat, teff, sorghum and corn, vegetables and herbs. They also raised their own animals, such as cows, sheep, goats and chickens. So all the ingredients used in our traditional diets were whole food with natural flavors that are hard to find nowadays.

I was fortunate enough to have two creative cooks in my family: my mother and my grandmother on my father's side, who created countless delicious recipes with very limited resources. Their creative skills inspired me to develop an interest in food art at a very young age, which helped me maintain healthy eating habits and to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Neither my grandmother nor my mother knew terms like calories per grams of carbohydrates, protein or fats. However, they knew the difference between healthy and unhealthy ingredients, so they selected their ingredients very carefully to prepare healthy food for us, especially by restricting our sugar and salt intake when we were kids. They told us that salt and sugar, white bread, rice and pastas were bad for our health and we did not have a choice but to eat whatever they prepared for us. My mother and my grandmother were also known for their special skills in selecting the right flavors to create delicious recipes. Therefore, they were among the women who were selected to prepare the menu for special events, such as family and friends' weddings.

ERITREAN DIETS: SPICE BLENDS, HEALTHY COOKING METHODS, AND CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS

A verity of beans, whole grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds are grown in Eritrea, but farmers in certain parts of the country grow specific kinds of beans and legumes that are suitable for their climate zone. For example, barley, whole wheat, teff, sorghum, corn, flax seeds, chickpea, yellow and white sweet peas, along with fava beans are harvested and commonly used to make a variety of recipes in the area of Zeba Makel near Asmara, the capital city of Eritrea. Fresh beans, such as chickpeas, fava beans and sweet peas are also picked before they dry; they are known as Shewit meaning young/baby beans and are consumed fresh for snacks. Fully dried chickpeas are also well-known roasted snacks (known as Kolo), which is a generic name for roasted beans and grains mixed peanuts and sunflower seeds.

Instead of salt and sugar, our traditional diets use wholesome ingredients such as spices and herbs to flavor food. Also, less fat is used in Eritrean traditional cooking; frying food is hardly used as cooking method. There is a special method used in our traditional cooking that makes our food so attractive around the world; it is the secret to the aromatic flavors that are noticeable from far away. The secret to making the most flavorful health food starts with slowly caramelized onions and of course the special traditional spice blends.

The number one Eritrean must-have spice blend is called Berbere, which is a chili spice blend. Every family makes their own spice blend mix, which can be slightly or totally different from each other. Berbere is used in almost every single recipe, but it is especially famous and used in large amount for making spicy beef/chicken stew, spicy vegan stew made with a combination of skinless fava beans and skinless red lentils known as Timtimo. The second commonly used traditional spice blend is curry, which is a less spicy and more aromatic spice blend. Every family makes a different curry spice blend as well, which is mostly used in vegetable stews that are made with a combination of cabbage, carrots, and Yukon gold potatoes known as Alicha.

Culturally speaking, every single one of our traditional foods and beverages are made from scratch and cooking skills are common knowledge that every Eritrean woman is expected to have. Buying prepackaged food or taking your family out to eat is not a common practice in our culture. So every woman in my culture knows how to prepare food from scratch. Otherwise, in the minds of a conservative and traditional Eritrean man and his family, a woman who lacks cooking skill is less likely to be considered as a suitable potential wife and mother of his kids. Therefore, it is a common practice for Eritrean mothers to teach their daughters how to prepare food from scratch through step-by-step process, including the fermenting process for making traditional breads, selecting and making spice blends, in the same area, it may include making alcoholic beverages (known as Swa) which is mostly made for special events, from grains and other ingredients used to make beer.

DIVERSE CULTURE MATTERS: GETTING INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS

I spent most of my life outside of my home country and I lived in different countries, including Sudan and Kenya, when I settled in the U.S. in 1991. I love traveling to different countries, which gives me an opportunity to learn about different cultures. I enjoy analyzing nutritional values of food ingredients from different cultures and comparing different ethnic flavors with our traditional flavors. Throughout my journey, I have learned that our cultural backgrounds dictate our eating habit. While I'm grateful to know that my eating habits influenced by my cultural background made a positive impact in my life; some culturally influenced eating habits have the opposite impact on many others.

As my awareness of our diverse society and the consequence of unhealthy eating habits increased, I took my curious nature to the next level and enrolled in a Principle of Nutrition course, at a local community college. In this course, I did extensive research on nutrition and health-related articles. That is when I learned

how unhealthy most Western diets are. At the same time, I learned that the African ingredients used in our traditional diets were the most highly recommended healthy alternatives to modern Western diets.

Recognizing the many challenges that contribute to unhealthy eating habits and prevent people from adopting healthy eating habits inspired me to think beyond traditional cooking methods. I had over 100 recipes in my computer and I always had the desire to help people adopt healthy eating habits. However, I kept putting it off because I did not know where to start. Then, in April 2011, on Good Friday night, my community was hit with a massive tornado; I was in the middle of it driving in the highway. I remember my car spinning out of control and glass shattering (except for the driver side window). While I was thinking it would be my last day, my car was lifted on the air—that was the last thing I remembered. Then I woke up in a different location with my car facing in the opposite direction covered trash and broken glass. Miraculously, I had no injury whatsoever. The tornado incident changed my life. I never took anything for granted after that day. So at the end of 2011, I created my website, where I share my recipes for free. In addition, I started to think of ways to make preparing healthy meals less time consuming and more affordable. So I use my imagination to visualize my grandmother and my mother's creative skills to further transform my family recipes. I modify the traditional cooking techniques in order to reduce the preparation time, while maintaining the traditional flavor and enhancing the nutritional values.

Split Red Lentil Stew with Spinach and Carrots

Lentils have a special connection to Eritrean history. There are four stories that make lentils my favorite ingredient of all beans. First, lentils are historically specially served as part of a main dish on annually religious celebrations known as Nigdet. Second, lentils are served as a main dish during Lent, when animal products are prohibited. Third, lentils were also the main protein and at times the only protein food our freedom fighters had during the thirty-year war of Eritrean Struggle for our independence. Fourth, lentils are rich in protein and more convenient because they don't take long to cook and they complement any kind of vegetable dish.

The Split Lentil recipe below is an enhanced version of an Eritrean traditional lentil stew, seasoned with original spices and herbs to maintain the traditional flavor. The extra vegetables enhance the nutritional value and make the dish more colorful and appetizing.

Ingredients

- 1 cup red split lentils
- 1 lg onion, diced
- 2 lg garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup zucchini, chopped
- 1 cup carrots, chopped
- ½ lb fresh spinach leaves
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp curry spice mix
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped

Instructions

1. Peel and chop onion, garlic. Pre-heat olive oil in saucepan at mid-high heat
2. Rinse lentils and put a side, pre-heat oil in sauce pan at mid-high heat, then add onion, garlic and lentils, stir and cook till lightly toasted.
3. Add boiled water stir and cook for 20 minutes, stir frequently.
4. While your lentils are cooking, peel and chops carrots, rinse and chop zucchini, then add to the pan, stir and cover for 5 minutes
5. Rise and chop spinach and add to the pan, add salt, seasoning and freshly chopped cilantro, stir, cover for about 2 minutes and remove from heat

Nutrition (calculated from recipe ingredients based on Living Cookbook software)
Serving Size: 4 Total preparation and cooking time: about 30 minutes
Calories: 292; Calories from Fat: 87; Total Fat: 9.9g
Cholesterol: 0mg; Sodium: 330.2mg; Potassium: 611.9mg
Carbohydrates: 40g; Fiber: 7.5g; Sugar: 6.5g; Protein: 13.7g

Notes and Tips: This well balanced mouthwatering classic dish is the enhanced version of the Eritrean traditional spicy split lentil stew. This dish goes very well with "Enjera", which is Eritrean traditional flat sour dough bread, but it is also served with bread, with rice, or alone for a soup. A drop of fresh lime/lemon juice adds a wonderful flavor the soup, but it is optional.

A Mother's Thing

Luciane Rocha, Nésia Rocha, and Liliane Motta
Brazil

From an early age, our habits, customs and tastes are built by a culturally-socialized universe. Ways of being, thinking and acting are formulated by the social and racial groups in which we operate and identify ourselves. Such behaviors are externalized, structuring a multiplicity of cultural practices that are perpetuated from generation to generation. Therefore, we become heirs with the duty of perpetuating certain cultural practices. Often, this cultural transmission of habit and taste is invested by a process of individual stories that narrate its emergence as a cultural practice. In this article, we produce a small narrative that tries to rescue facts in the history of the Oliveira Rocha family and in the small Motta family—stories through yam soup with pork ribs.

NÉSIA ROCHA AND MATRILINEAL LEARNING

I learned to make the yam soup with my mother, Natalina Oliveira, a wise woman and a firm hand regarding raising her children. In addition to a cheap cost to cook this dish, the yam is rich in vitamins and is a natural laxative, so my mom cooked it periodically to feed her seven children. To encourage us to eat, my mother used to say it was good for the blood and that we would be strong. It worked! We all ate and liked it a lot.

I started working outside the home at a very early age and did not have the opportunity to learn many dishes with my mother. I do

not remember how I learned to do this one, but every time I do, I know that the smell is exactly the same as I sensed when I was a child.

I married, became a mother and grandmother, and yam soup has now already been part of my family menu for 38 years. I cook it at least once a month, maybe more in winter time. My husband Sebastião and my two children, Luciane and Alexandre, like it a lot and get excited when I make it. My daughter-in-law Gabriela and grandson Rafael also like it very much. He is greedy and always asks for more. However, my granddaughter Ana Luiza does not like. I look forward to her changing her taste and continuing with the tradition.

Yam Soup Day is an event here at home. I am proud to hear the sighs in each spoon brought to mouth. They directly warm the heart.

LUCIANE ROCHA AND THE TASTE OF HOME SICKNESS

In 2008, I moved from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to Austin, Texas to start the doctoral program, which would last six years. At this point I had two main concerns in life: Would I understand the native English? Could I cook even similarly to my mother? Both concerns were relevant because graduate school would be my first time living in another country and away from home for so long a period.

Because this is a quick dish to make, my mother used to prepare yam soup on Saturdays, which was always a busy day cleaning the house and going out for some fun. Usually, the dinner menu was decided at breakfast and, as soon as we finished, my father would leave to buy the ingredients. Sometimes I woke up a little later and he had already reached the supermarket and put the food on the table, so when I arrived in the kitchen, I knew it would be my favorite soup, which always made me happy.

Saturday was also the day in which, being away, I felt very homesick. I used to call home on Saturdays and Sundays and ask for a description of the dish of the day. The day I called and my mother said it was yam soup I cried so much with homesickness and longing. In my mind, I could see the steam rising from the pot, remember watercress wilting in the heat of the broth, and recall its delicious taste.

Whenever I was close to returning to Brazil on vacation, my mother would ask which dishes I wanted to eat during my home coming week. Yam soup was always on my list. It is special and is one of those dishes that only Mom can make!

LILIANE MOTTA AND MATERNITY

I first tasted this soup in 2011, when I was pregnant with my son, Miguel, who is now five years old. It was my 7th month of pregnancy when I visited my Luciane to have lunch with her and her parents, people that I consider part of my family. Her mother, Nésia, a great cook, had prepared for our lunch a soup, the yam soup. Until that moment I had never heard of yam soup with pork ribs, whose yams were kneaded, turning them into a real tasty broth. Some pregnant women have their eating habits changed both in quality and quantity, and this was my case, especially regarding the amount (LOL). She prepared lunch, we sat to enjoy the recipe, yam soup with pork rib! I will never forget this moment. I tried this dish and enjoyed the flavor, so I had to repeat it. And have repeated it again ever since.

The soup left in my mind a "wanting more." I lived thinking of such soup and always commented to Luciane that I needed to visit her to eat the soup made by her mother again.

A few years had passed, when I decided to try cooking it by myself and asked Nésia for the recipe to make sure I had the key elements of this delicious dish: both ingredients and method of preparation. So, I called Nesia who promptly shared with me the list and preparation process.

With purchased ingredients, I prepared the soup. It was delicious, so tasty that my son began to ask me to make once a week yam soup with pork ribs. I confess that I also felt an overwhelming desire in the mouth and memory—an immense desire to taste this soup…almost a food addiction.

There are days when I ask my son about the kind of dish he wants to eat and without hesitation—with complete certainty he replies, "Mother let's eat *that soup*." As a "shaman," I know what *that soup* is. I understand his desire. I know he refers to yam soup with pork ribs. Tasty and nutritious, it will always be very appreciated in my home.

***

The stories of three Black women were united in this narrative: mother, daughter and godmother. We share a bit of our history with the yam soup with pork ribs and we hope that you have great family moments cooking and eating it. When you do, remember this Black family in Brazil. Aproveitem!!!

Yam Soup with Pork Ribs

Ingredients

- 1 kg (1-2 lbs) ribs
- 2 large tomatoes, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- parsley and chive to taste
- vegetable oil or olive oil
- salt to taste
- tomato paste (optional)
- 2 kg (4 lbs) yams
- watercress

Instructions

1) Cut ribs into medium pieces, boil
2) Peel yams and set aside in water
3) In a pan with a little oil, fry rib pieces until dry
4) Once fried, add tomatoes, onion, parsley and chives and mix well the ribs. Then, add enough water cover ribs in the pan. When the water is gone, add the yam, mix well to involve them in the seasoning. For color, you can add tomato paste
5) Add water to cover yams. When the yams are soft, take out and mash until creamy
6) Add more water and add salt to taste
7) After getting the desired texture, add watercress. Fine stems can be placed directly in the soup; cut out thicker stems
8) Simmer to soften the watercress and it is ready.

Enjoy!! Aproveitem!!

Guyanese Food for the Soul

Chef Beee
Guyana

MEMORIES OF HOME

Being born in Guyana, South America, and growing up in Brooklyn, New York, Guyanese food has always been at the heart of almost every recipe that my mom and I created—either together or separately in our kitchens. Guyana is located in the north eastern part of South America. It is the only English-speaking country on the continent. Its blended culture strongly reflects African, Amerindian and East Indian ancestries, that have been there for centuries. My family immigrated to the United States when I was just about as high as twice risen bread. For diasporic people, Brooklyn is a little melting pot like no other, comprised of people from Africa, the Caribbean, South America and the West Indies. We all descended there at some point or another. Although I have now made my home in Atlanta, Georgia, I am intrinsically connected to these two special places: Brooklyn and Guyana.

I have fond memories of living in Brooklyn as a child. It was easy being from somewhere else and there at the same time. So many different cultures are intertwined in Brooklyn and simply being there helps those removed from their indigenous homes remain connected and rooted. Little borough enclaves also allow people to eat the way they would if they were back in their respective countries. The aroma and tastes of familiar pantry staples like achar, allspice, curry, garam masala, jeera (known as cumin to many), and homemade hot pepper sauces, could be found in neighborhoods like Flatbush, Bed-Stuy and Crown Heights. These flavors still remain important parts of how I identify with foods of Brooklyn and Guyana *and* what I use to create dishes for my own family today.

At the core of my many food memories and experiences, both Brooklyn and Guyana are right there. Fish Cakes, Bake and Saltfish, Okra Fry-Up, Rotis, Pastries, Sorrel, and Ginger Beer; these food dishes are buried deep inside of my soul. As a child growing up, I did not often get a chance to visit Guyana every summer like some of the other children I knew in the community. Instead, I relied on experiences in Brooklyn to create my version of Guyanese diasporic memories. My mother also implanted in me her memories of home by teaching me how to cook the Guyanese way. My mom also imparted her version of kitchen etiquette to me through funny stories she remembered from when she was back in Guyana, helping to prepare meals with family members.

One funny story that I can recall is of my mom telling me about one of my aunt's cooking *faux pas*. My aunt liked to sample her own food as she cooked. My mom tells me that my aunt started cooking a stew dish with meat and couldn't keep her hands out of her own pot. As soon as she checked the pot to see if the stew was done, she would take a piece of meat to try it. She did this so much as she cooked the stew that by the time it was done, there was no meat left and the stew just became soup. The message my mom wanted to convey to me is to set it, forget it and leave the pot alone—let it do its own thing. Be patient when you cook. There is no rush. When the food is done, it is done and you will know.

Cooking together served a larger purpose than just preparing food. It was an opportunity for a woman and her daughter to fellowship together and to develop a deep connection through something that they both loved to do. It was an opportunity for me to learn from my mother and for my mother to teach me something different each time. Sharing stories while cooking provided us much needed play time together, something that was hard to come by for a hardworking single mother. Coming of age in a place like Brooklyn with my mom was beautiful and I will always cherish those times. Though far away from my birthplace, learning to prepare food with my mom provided refuge and access to delicious Guyanese cuisine that I still defer to today.

A VEGAN/VEGETARIAN APPROACH TO FAMILIAR FOODS

Sundays were a special time of the week, because it meant mommy and me time in the kitchen. I loved this because I was given my most precious culinary tutelage then. My mom would say, "Natasha, chop up deez garlic and onions," "soak deh black eye peas," "grate the coconut," "season deh chicken," and "gut deh fish." I learned all that I knew about cooking during those times. This time also gave her the chance to explore in the kitchen, making dishes like Black Pudding, Curry Chicken and Roti, Cook-up Rice, Stew Fish with Provisions, Barley Porridge, and other Guyanese favorites. I must say, much of the foods that I grew up with were made for carnivores. Though I'm now a vegetarian, many of the dishes I grew up with were primarily prepared with beef, poultry, or seafood. I mean, don't get me wrong, these foods were delicious, fresh, and made with lots of love, but certainly not made with vegans or vegetarians in mind.

Over the years, my lifestyle and health goals have evolved, which means that many of these traditional dishes are now made primarily with vegetables so that just about anyone can enjoy them. Today, as a vegetarian, with a huge desire to make many of my cultural foods, I try to recreate them with the hope of expressing a different take on Guyanese food: it can be meat-free, healthy, and just as tasty! As I rework many of these traditional dishes, my goal is to infuse healthy, entirely plant-based ingredients into them. My version of Guyanese cuisine now is from a vegan/vegetarian perspective. One type of Guyanese food that I make primarily plant-based is soup.

The role of soup in Guyanese cuisine is very important. There is at least one day out of the week that is set aside to indulge in a good hearty bowl of soup. In our home, preparing soup represented warmth, comfort, and patience. My mom could easily take all day to make a pot of soup. She took her time to prepare her meals. Soup would just simmer all day on the stove until it was ready and all of those flavors blended together nicely. Particularly in the long grueling winter months of New York, soup is a dish that can warm you to the bones. Soup brings with it welcomed familiarity. Soups are like a one stop pot for ingredients. Some of the soups I am familiar with were like gumbo -- just one pot full of different ingredients that gets your mouth talking to your tummy and the roof of your mouth all at the same time. Soups I grew up with had ingredients like chicken, cock feet, oxtail, and tripe. Today, my soups include ingredients like bok choy, callaloo, cassava, corn, okra, and yams. A soup tells a lot about you, by the types of ingredients you put inside. Do you like simple flavors? Or, do you like your flavors bold and complex?

This preference for flavor can all be reflected in a pot of soup. Our family opted for the latter choice in our soups - bold and complex. To create rich and bold tastes, many of our soups start with coconut milk or creams as a base, while other soups start with vegetable or chicken broth including minced garlic, seasonal

herbs, onions, and celery. Many of the soup dishes that I prepare these days are also low in sodium, which is also a departure from their traditional preparations. Personally, I don't believe that you have to sacrifice flavor by not including a lot of sodium in your foods. I use plenty of fragrant herbs to achieve amazing flavor. Today, many diasporic Africans living in America suffer from health ailments including hypertension and diabetes. In addition to stress, it has been shown that many of these ailments are attributed to the foods that they eat. One of my dreams is to address this by creating delicious, guilt-free Guyanese inspired foods for my people to indulge in. I am so thankful that I have been blessed with the love of cooking. It is truly a healing experience for me every time I am in the kitchen. My memories and experiences in the kitchen will carry me the way.

Guyanese Style Daal with Millet Un-Fish Cakes

One soup dish that is dear to me and super simple to make is called Daal. This dish was and still is a staple on my family's dinner table. My mom and I prepare it about once a week at our home. Daal is super quick to make and very versatile - Just about anything starchy can be added to it. As mentioned earlier, Guyanese cuisine is heavily influenced by three main cultural groups, African, Amerindian, and East Indian. Daal is a dish given to Guyana by East Indians that came that way in the early 1900s.

The Guyanese version of Daal is a split-pea based soup cooked with tiny salted beef cubes and is traditionally served with white rice and can even be served with cod fish cakes on the side. My version of this traditional dish includes organic ingredients and I have even modified the recipe by using lentils instead of split-peas. Split-peas are easier to cook and do not require overnight soaking. With lentils, you can achieve very similar flavor and texture, but they have a lot more vitamins and minerals than split-peas. In the search for a healthier substitute for white rice, I have considered other whole grains. I have found that millet to have a similar texture like rice and has wonderful vitamins and mineral. Using millet, I make an un-fish cake as a substitute for the traditional fish cake that can be served on the side. I will first give a description of how to make the daal, followed by how to make the un-fish cakes.

Ingredients

- 1 cup of organic yellow split peas
- 2 ½ cups of filtered water
- 1 tbsp of thyme leaves
- 1 tbsp of Himalayan sea salt
- 1 tbsp of course black pepper
- 2 tbsp of Jeera powder (cumin powder)
- 1 yellow organic onion diced finely
- 4-5 cloves of fresh garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp of Jeera seed (cumin seed)
- ¼ cup good olive oil

Instructions

In a medium sized pot, bring 2 ½ cups of water and split peas to a boil on a medium flame. While boiling, add salt, pepper, thyme, and jeera powder. Boil until split peas have dissolved and contents are a soup-like consistency then turn the heat to low and cover pot. Be sure to stir periodically so that contents don't stick to the bottom of the pot. Next in a small bowl, finely chop onions and garlic and then reserve to the side. Next, in a small bowl, heat olive oil on a medium flame. When oil is hot, sauté the garlic, onions, and jeera seeds for

about 4-5 minutes. Take all the contents of this pot and add it to the split peas and stir vigorously. Turn off the heat and let rest. Pour in a bowl and enjoy!
Serves 4

Millet Un-Fish Cakes

Ingredients

- 1 cups of organic millet
- 2 ½ cups of filtered water
- ½ tbsp of Himalayan sea salt
- 1 cup of organic chickpeas (garbanzo beans), soaked overnight
- 1 stalk of celery, chopped finely
- 1 cup of mushrooms, chopped finely
- 2 tbsp of olive oil
- Panko bread crumbs (optional)
- 1 tbsp dulse flakes
- 1 pack of seaweed, crushed finely
- 2 green onion stalks, chopped finely
- 4-5 cloves of fresh garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp of course black pepper

Instructions

In a medium sized pot, bring 2 cups of water and 1 cup of millet to a boil on a medium-low flame. While boiling, add a pinch of salt. Boil until all water is gone and millet is plump and has rice-like consistency. If millet is not fully cooked, add a little water to pot lid and then add to pot with millet and cover. Turn stove flame to low, and steam for another 10-15 minutes. Once millet is done, remove from heat and fluff with a fork.

In another medium sized pot, boil soaked chickpeas until they are tender. Drain the chickpeas in a bowl and use a fork to crush them completely then reserve. Pre-heat oven.

In a sauté pan that is heated with olive oil, add mushrooms, green onions, and celery. Add salt and pepper to taste. Once the veggies are done sautéing, add to the bowl with chickpeas. Next, add the dulse, crushed seaweed, and panko bread crumbs. Finally add fluffed millet to bowl with other ingredients and mix all contents very well. Take a small to medium ice cream scooper and press millet un-fish cake mixture inside to form small balls, then flatten to small cakes. Place in a preheated oven on a baking sheet at a 350 °F oven. Brush cakes with olive oil and bake for about 25-30 minutes or until the cakes are brown. Remove from oven and let cool. Add these on the side of the daal or place them in the soup for added texture and goodness. Plate and Enjoy!

Traveling Home

Tracey Ferdinand
Tobago

PART I

"Would you like some vegetarian chili?" Kalema asked me quietly. Her soft, melodic voice in sharp contrast to her daughter's playful laughter. Her little girl, a five or six-year old, galloped about the cozy South Philadelphia apartment on all fours making loud animal noises. Tiny braids flopped around her face as she stopped to flash us a mischievous smile showcasing a missing front tooth. Kalema and I met at a Kemetic Yoga workshop in North Philadelphia the previous fall.

It was around the same time that I'd conceived The Creative Wellness Project. As a self-identified wellness advocate, I had been brainstorming concrete ways to encourage people (particularly women of African descent) to take better care of their health. Black women expend so much time and energy mothering communities. By the time we're done taking care of everyone else, we barely have time to take care of ourselves. To survive and thrive, I knew one thing to be true, we had to make time. I'd also started writing for an organization called Black Girl In OM that educated black women on the importance of self-care. So I'd started The Creative Wellness Project as a way to encourage Black women to focus on self-care and self-love.

After poring over academic articles and ruminating on my own experiences, I also knew that if it wasn't fun it wouldn't be done. People needed creative ways of conceptualizing exercise and healthy eating so that self-care didn't become a boring chore. So I decided to interview Philadelphia-based creative artists (singers, poets, painters, photographers, dancers etc.) who were also committed to cultivating good health and wellness. I was hoping to collect words of wisdom from people whose art encouraged imagination and innovation. Kalema seemed like the perfect fit since she was both a painter and vinyasa yoga teacher. Her apartment walls were covered with her paintings. Most of them were portraits of women painted in vivid, tropical colors with flowers in their hair or stars in their eyes. Like spirit warriors, each portrait showed women in fierce communion with nature watching over us.

A large, sleepy, grey cat, stretched out on top a cream colored kitchen cabinet, also watched over us. "Yeah, sure. I'll try some chili" I replied. I wasn't a chili fan but I was hungry. And I didn't want to be rude. I was welcomed into her home to take her picture and interview her for a project that she wasn't getting paid for. The least I could do in return was try her homemade chili.

Kalema's hospitality brought up memories of home: Tobago. I left the West Indies and moved to America when I was eleven years old. Yet the habit of serving guests lingered at thirty. Caribbean social etiquette required good hosts to serve their visitors light refreshments upon arrival. When guests were settled comfortably in our gallery (an outdoor seating area attached to the house) we immediately served them sweet biscuits (cookies) and a cold beverage (mauby, lime juice, or Peardrax soda) on a serving tray.

Kalema heated up a bowl of chili for me. Then she sprinkled a bit of grated cheese over the top. Placing the bowl in front of me on the round glass table where I sat, she then turned to stand, hands on hips, facing a narrow unlit hallway. Her daughter had disappeared toward the back of the apartment. It was now suspiciously quiet. Kalema called out and reminded her daughter that she had not finished eating her dinner. The little girl sauntered back to the table sulking. I smiled knowing that in a few years if she went away to college, she'd probably view her mother's home cooked meal as a rare gift.

The chili was delicious! It had just the right combination of spicy, salty, and sweet. Bits of kale that weren't overcooked complimented the beans that weren't mushy. "Could I have the recipe for this? It's so good!" I praised, my mouth still full of food. Her chili used as its main ingredient the art of enjoying a meal with others. Her gesture reminded me that, "Food is meant to be shared, and so is good health." This was the foundation of a proper Oldways African Heritage Diet. The herbs and spices, greens, beans, and sweet potatoes were all secondary ingredients. Her one-pot cooking allowed a complex melding of flavors brought together with a spirit of collectivity.

Chili was not a dish my grandmother cooked when I was a little girl. But that wasn't the main reason why I wasn't a big chili fan. Chili was usually too spicy and I avoided spicy foods religiously. My aversion was probably due to an unfortunate childhood incident involving peppers. One afternoon in Tobago, my sister and I were in our back yard garden picking scotch bonnet peppers (a pepper known to be extremely hot) for my grandmother. When we were done I raced back inside to play with a doll and nonchalantly picked my nose. My left nostril began burning. I hadn't washed my hands after picking the scotch bonnet peppers. The residue must have rubbed off of my fingers and into my nose. I remember crying in a panic because my left nostril burned all afternoon. I don't remember whether or not I told my grandmother.

My grandmother was a quiet, pious woman with a fierce spirit. My memories of her always include the exquisite things she created. They were household decorations that today's scholars would probably refer to as "folk art." She loved working with everyday items. All around our house were creations that gave testament to the idea of taking the old and creating something new. A doll dress adorned with confetti covered sea shells, colorful plastic bottles cut into small flowers, and paintings of birds and plants were just a few of her creations.

Her imagination was not confined to household art decorations. She also let her creative joy free in her kitchen. She especially loved baking. Humming turned into full on renditions of church hymns when she baked. She owned a little blue shop on Store Bay Local Road across from Bon Accord Government school (a primary school my siblings and I attended). So she'd prepare her shop goods to sell throughout the week. Coconut drops, coconut tart, sweet mango, or roli poli, they all had one main ingredient, the mighty bay leaf. It infused every dish with a distinct floral herbal flavor. Bay leaf was a symbolic representation of my grandmother's cooking.

I left my grandmother and moved to the US in January after the blizzard of 1996. New Jersey was a cold, cardboard world. Dirty snow lined the streets. Cold air stung my face whenever I tried to step outside the small, red brick house. Trees with no leaves and crooked, widow fingers for limbs pointed at me accusingly. Accustomed to running wild and barefoot about the yard in Tobago, my sister and I were suddenly forced to stay indoors all day for fear of frostbite. America became a hostile place that mocked my idea of home. My big brother was right, its streets were not paved with gold. "Did you live in a hut?" "Did people run around wearing grass skirts in Tobago?" or "Why did you come here?" are the only questions kids asked me. In algebra

class, a boy with cold blue eyes said to me matter of factly, “This pen is worth more than your life.” He held up his father’s pen. I lowered my head.

I picked fruits from the basket in my mother’s kitchen instead of the trees in my back yard. My favorite fruit was the red apple. While riding home from school on a crowded bus, I pulled out my red ruby and bit in, delighted as she crunched out Ah-Meh-Rih-Cah. Just then, a freckle-faced boy wearing an orange vest and scowl—the fifth grade hall monitor—strutted up the isle. He barked, “You’re not allowed to eat on the bus!” I slowly placed the apple back into my lunch bag. Ashamed because there were so many rules I didn’t know.

I hated bland American food most of all. In Tobago, the food was vivid and flavorful like the colors saturating nature. Here the food tasted like cardboard. My mother didn’t cook authentic Caribbean food because she didn’t have access to authentic Caribbean seasoning. Most of the real Caribbean spices were sold in Philadelphia. She was extremely suspicious of the city. She was not a particularly adventurous woman despite her decision to move from the Caribbean to America on her own. So she ventured into Philadelphia only when it was absolutely necessary. Instead, she settled for the seasonings and spices she could purchase at the local suburban Acme supermarket.

I eventually lost touch with Caribbean culture and gradually stopped talking about home. Tobago became a hazy memory extinguished by my tween inspired desire to fit in. My grandmother developed Alzheimer’s disease. She moved from Tobago to Trinidad to live with her youngest daughter. I tried not to remember the salty Tobago breeze, crab and dumplings at weddings, and cheese paste sandwiches at Vacation Bible School. These memories became too painful to remember. My grandmother didn’t remember me. Slowly my longings for roti, curry chicken, and callaloo died away. By the time I started college my palate grew accustomed to American cuisine like pizza, meatloaf, fries, and chicken pot pie.

PART II

After our mini photo shoot, I thanked Kaleema for helping me out with my Creative Wellness Project idea. She then gave me a Tupperware container full of her chili to take home. I thanked her again before bundling up and bracing myself for the cold. I’d lived in North America now longer than I’d lived in Tobago but my bones still hated the cold. I slowly made my way to my car parked across the street next to a mound of snow. On my drive back home to South Jersey I got a bit lost. My mind was distracted by the creative possibilities of my new venture. I managed to find my way after getting on a highway I was very familiar with. It was the same highway I used to take when traveling home from Ursinus College. Even though I had a terrible sense of direction and hated getting lost, I always admired how I had often steer myself to the right place at just the right time.

During my junior year at Ursinus College, for example, my friends enrolled in study abroad programs and left campus. I neither had the money nor the desire to spend a semester in London, Spain, or Australia. Instead, my heart steered me toward an exchange program at Howard University. A historically black college located in Washington DC, my brother referred to it as “The Mecca.” When finalizing my academic schedule, my Ursinus advisor talked excitedly about Howard’s Shakespeare courses. I shook my head “No” as I sat across from him staring at the course catalogue. He was a tall, thin young man with a long nose, and slightly British accent. I wanted to take classes that weren’t generally offered at Ursinus College. So I enrolled in Black Women in America, Contemporary Black Poetry, Black Psychology, African American Theatre, and Caribbean Literature. I knew I would never get an opportunity to take those courses again in that setting.

I moved to Washington D.C. a few weeks before Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. Living minutes away from the White House, at the epicenter of US politics, my interests in civic engagement and activism were electrified. Kanye West’s bold public statement about President Bush not caring “about Black people” was felt deeply across campus. The student body quickly organized a massive call to action to collect water, blankets, food, and other supplies to send to Katrina victims. I was immediately impressed by Howard University students’ dedication to the collective community.

At Ursinus College, the pervading attitude among many Black students was not to take risks or stand out too much. At Howard, every student believed it their innate right to not only stand out but show out in style! On "the yard" (a large patch of grass and interconnecting walkways surrounded by several academic buildings) they walked with confidence. They talked with pride. They were creative, entitled, intelligent, and audacious. It was infectious. Everyone saw me. I was nonchalantly acknowledged as an equal. I had gotten so used to being unseen and moving in the shadows. This revelation, that my voice mattered, was overwhelming. I slowly began to develop my own brand of Howard confidence. I even bought my first pair of black Converse sneakers (a Howard University staple) and sauntered down U Street.

Each of my classes gave me information that helped me to better understand my lived experience as a young, Afro-Caribbean woman living in the suburbs of the United States. I came to learn terms like intersectionality, structural racism, and Afro-centricity. In my Black Psychology course, Dr. Boykin encouraged students to form group study sessions. Instead of academic competitiveness, my professor encouraged community building. I teamed up with an outspoken scholar named Heru. He seemed well read and dedicated to his studies. One afternoon, he invited me to eat at a restaurant called Soul Vegetarian Café on Georgia Ave. I ordered a Garvey burger and couldn't believe it was vegan. It had a rich texture and was incredibly flavorful. Soul Vegetarian Café quickly became my go to place to eat when I didn't want Howard's cafeteria food.

I fell in love with idea that healthy didn't have to mean disgusting eating. Heru encouraged me to read "Heal Thyself for Health and Longevity" by Queen Afua. Between the information shared by Heru and Queen Afua's book, I got used to the idea that I could create healthy meals for myself without sacrificing taste. I also began making crucial connections between the Black community, culture, food, and health. I returned to Ursinus College with new eyes. Conscious about the food I ate, I had a new appreciation for wellness and the African diaspora.

After graduating from Ursinus College, I worked for several small, private, medical practices before attending graduate school in the south. On August 23, 2010 I matriculated into the only Africana Women's Studies program in the nation at Clark Atlanta University. Studying warrior women writers like Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, and Layli Maparyan challenged me to critically examine the contours of Black womanhood. Once forced to move like a ghost through ivory academic spaces, I was once again flesh and song studying at an HBCU. I was muscle connected to tendons, connected to bones; hip-hop connected to jazz connected to calypso.

I also secured a job as a Graduate Resident Director on campus. I lived in a residence hall with over one hundred young Black women. The soul work was exhausting. I had applied for the position with a strong desire to help cultivate self-love and self-care with young Black women. Living closely with one hundred and ten restless, brilliant, caring, and at times cruel young Black women brought on a tsunami of emotions. They challenged me every day to live my scholarship.

I enrolled in a womanism course with Dr. Layli Maparyan during the last semester of graduate school. The course reminded me that cultivating a mothering spirit was integral to the broader mission of eliminating oppression. One of her assignments encouraged me to purposefully seek out the tools I needed to mother myself. I began to reimagine self-care as an extremely important concept to help black women fight for the right to live authentic lives. Self-care was intimately tied to activism. Mothering, self-care, self-love and social justice were closely related. I decided to teach yoga in the basement of my residence hall and offered weekly classes to all the RAs on Clark Atlanta University's campus. I experimented with Coltrane, Zap Mama, and Bob Marley soundtracks to make the gentle yoga flows I sequenced a bit more creative.

PART III

After I got home, I put away Kaleema's tupperware of chili in the refrigerator. While waiting for the photos we took to upload from my camera's memory card onto my computer, I reread my write up on *The Creative*

Wellness Project:

> I want to explore, challenge, and expand upon the idea of creative wellness. Dear reader you're probably thinking, "What does creative wellness even mean? Is that even a real thing Tracey Coretta? Or did your womanist, poetess, wild woman, writer brain just make it up on the fly?" It is actually a term that's used in the wellness and mental health community but here's my very own definition: Wellness is the process of becoming aware of and taking responsibility for improving and maintaining your wellbeing. The six common wellness dimensions include social, occupational, physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional health. Creative Wellness takes it a step further by finding new ways to explore this mind, body, and spirit connection. When you become acutely aware of the interconnectedness of each dimension and how they all contribute to your health you're going to be more likely to find exciting and innovative ways to engage in holistic wellness practices. Creative wellness requires you to think outside the box. Case in point, if running isn't something you enjoy that doesn't mean you should sit on your couch every day and give up on physical activity. Creative wellness encourages you to explore other avenues such as an African dance class with live drumming. There's often a strong sense of community fulfilling the social aspect of wellness and the drums and music help connect with the spiritual aspects of wellness. Creative Wellness puts the fun back into your health practice (think running around all day as a kid with your friends) and helps you view your self-care not as a chore but as something to enjoy doing on a daily basis.

I smiled as I thought of all the dimensions of wellness that the first photo session of my Creative Wellness Project fulfilled. My emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical wellbeing were well fed. I promised myself that I would get creative in the kitchen and make my own version of Kaleema's vegan chili. I would throw a bay leaf or two into my one-pot recipe in honor of my grandmother. I would master it so that my children would have something delicious to miss when they leave home.

Vegetarian BBQ Chili

Ingredients

- 1 lg sweet potato, peeled, chopped (1 inch cubes)
- ¼ tsp salt
- tbsp olive oil
- 1 large carrot, chopped
- 1 rib celery, chopped
- ½ large red onion, chopped
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- garlic cloves minced
- tsp dried oregano
- tsp ground cumin
- lacinato kale leaves cut into thin strips
- cayenne pepper to taste
- 1 can (15 oz) diced tomatoes, with juice
- 1 box (13 oz) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 box (6 oz) kidney beans, rinsed, drained
- 1/8 cup G Hughes Sugar Free BBQ Sauce, to

taste
- tbsp chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 bay leaves

Instructions
Place sweet potato in pot and cover with vegetable broth. The potatoes will cook while you're prepping your other ingredients. In another pot, warm the olive oil then add the celery, onion, carrot, and ¼ tsp of salt. Stir occasionally for about 7 minutes. Add garlic, cumin, and oregano. Stir constantly for about 1 minute. Add diced tomatoes and juices, black beans and kidney beans.

By this time sweet potatoes should be cooked. Pour one cup of the vegetable broth from the cooked sweet potatoes into pot of onions and seasoning, then add the barbecue sauce, kale strips, cooked sweet potato, and bay leaves. Stir to combine, then bring the mixture to a boil and continue cooking, stirring occasionally. Add BBQ sauce and reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Remove pot from heat and add chopped cilantro.
Enjoy!

Farmer J~

Jamila Norman
Georgia

I am Jamila Norman, an urban farmer in the city of Atlanta. I was born in Brooklyn New York in 1979 and grew up with my two sisters and three brothers in Queens, New York with my Maternal Grandmother and my Caribbean parents: dad from Trinidad and mother from Jamaica.

My grandmother immigrated to New York by way of England and bought a brownstone apartment that hosted many family members and their family as they migrated from Jamaica to America. My parents met in Brooklyn, New York and though they both grew up Christian, they both converted to Islam, which greatly affected and changed their diets, meaning that they no longer ate beef or pork and we grew up not eating it at all.

I am 37 years old and people cannot believe that I've never had a pork chop or eaten a hamburger, or bacon, or any other beef or pork item. Now being Caribbean we did eat goat and, because of Islam, we also ate lamb, but those were rare occasions usually associated with a holiday or religious celebration. My diet growing up was mostly vegetarian, which I came to realize was not the norm.

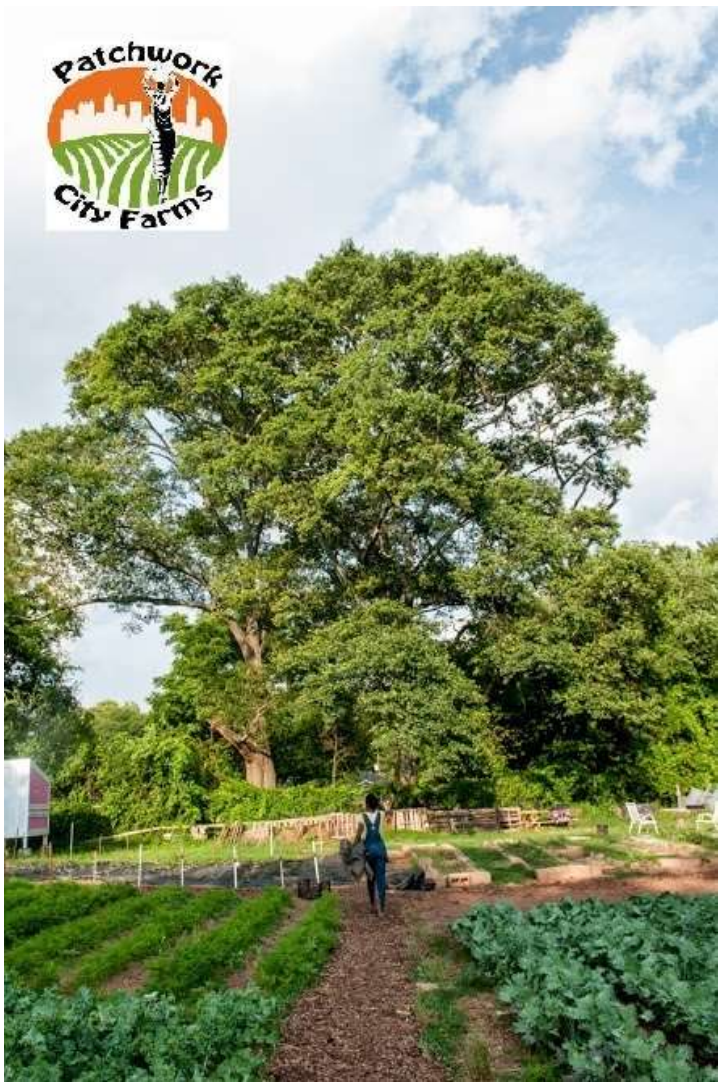
In my younger years, my family and I traveled back and forth between New York and Trinidad living a total of about two years collectively in a tropical island where food was everywhere. We climbed mango and tamarind trees, and ate fresh sorrel pods off the bush. The backyard was teaming with lots of tropical fruit trees and we shopped at local markets for other fresh foods. There is a thing about Caribbean men where they are amazing cooks. My dad was one of them. His mother (although from Trinidad) lived in and operated a

restaurant in Venezuela and growing up he helped her and transferred that skill to managing a restaurant in New York. My father also shared with me how everybody grew their own food and how he helped his mother and grandparents in their garden. The food traditions of Trinidad are influenced by the Native Americans, Africans, and Indians that were brought to the island to work. My father loved spices and pepper which were a little too spicy for some of my siblings, therefore my mother cooked most of the time. When he did cook, it was a special treat and was usually dishes that did not require too much pepper. I remember and loved his curry pumpkin and bake for breakfast, fish head soup—which was eaten for breakfast as well and slightly peppered, and is the unrivaled equivalent to chicken noodle soup should anyone become ill. We both shared a love of okra, more than the rest of my siblings so naturally I loved cou cou, which is a dish made with cornmeal, coconut milk, and okra and that serves as the base for a stew. I also loved his sweet potato pone, which is a dessert made with a Caribbean sweet yellow yam.

We moved to Connecticut and eventually to the South, because as my mother would put it, "She was tired of the city and wanted some country living." I moved to Atlanta in the 8th grade and then went to the University of Georgia (UGA), where I majored in Environmental Engineering. I loved nature, the environment, and had a passion for environmental protection and being part of the solution. During my study at UGA, I had three children and was married. We lived in Athens, Georgia for about nine years before moving back to the City of Atlanta in 2006 to find better career opportunities. We moved to the West End neighborhood of Atlanta, where I had frequented as a high schooler and during my college years and loved for its cultural richness and because it reminded me of New York. We bought our home and I set about getting involved in our community. The first thing I did, literally the first week of moving in, was to walk down to the church in my neighborhood where I saw they were growing a big garden and ask how I could help. Now, I have to tell you that during my years of visiting the West End, I would always drive by this lot which was about three acres with a small church on it and daydream of a garden being there. I had never gardened or farmed when I approached Miss Lizzy Turner at the Good Shepherd Community Church Garden, but I dove in, and my one hour that I began to volunteer turned into four hours. I got lost in the work and Miss Lizzy had a way of getting more out of you than you planned to give. I was hooked!

I have to tell you about Miss Lizzy. She was about 80+ years old, lived in and lived for that garden. She gave me life when I went out there. She grew up on a large farm in South Georgia and this is what she was doing in her retirement. Even though she had really bad arthritis, on my way to work I would see her out in the garden and on my way back she would still be there. Now I say garden but she cultivated and maintained one full acre on the three-acre property right in the city of Atlanta. I wanted every bit of it. Soon after, I met a Kenyan sister by the name of Cecilia (Ceci for short) who owned a home in the West End as well and lived only a few blocks from me. We both found ourselves working in the garden with Miss Lizzy and Ceci had an amazing garden in her front yard that she decided to cultivate instead of a lawn. I was awed and amazed by how much she was able to grow in a really small space. We started to help out the church more and helped them take their produce to local markets. That experience really exposed me to the effects of growing fresh food and what it meant to people. At the market located at Piedmont Park in the city of Atlanta, customers were so appreciative of the freshness of the food. They were also excited to hear that it was grown in the city by people of color. I cherished the support of older African Americans that came by the farm booth and were so nostalgic about the produce and encouraged us to continue what we were doing. They shared the joys and struggles of growing up in the south and were happy to see young black people picking up the torch to get back to farming irrespective of the legacy of slavery in the South. While I was still an engineer with the state of Georgia, performing duties in support of environmental protection, I wanted to affect change in my community at the most impactful level. I came to realize farming was the answer.

Atlanta is known as the "City in the Forest" and within the city landscape there are a lot of green spaces. Farming and growing food in the city in the community where I lived addressed so much. It helped the environment, attracted bees, birds, butterflies, beautified spaces, freshened the air and provided fresh food to our families and to our communities. Fresh food can reverse the trend of diet-related diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. It was a no-brainer and Ceci and I felt a calling, we had to do it. So, still working fulltime as an engineer, married and raising three boys, I started an urban farm in the city of Atlanta by the name of Patchwork City Farms with my friend and Business Partner Ceci in 2010. Ceci's family was from Kenya and she too came from a family of deep agricultural connections.



Starting Patchwork City Farms was a labor of love. Ceci and I poured all of our time and energy growing fresh, organic produce on one acre of land leased from the City of Atlanta Public School which was also the site of Brown Middle School. We grew all kinds of fruits and vegetables: from greens such as collards, kale, and rainbow chard, arugula, Asian baby greens mix and lettuces to standard vegetables such as okra, tomatoes, potatoes, eggplant, carrots, peppers, beets, radishes onions and garlic. We also grew strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries and had a fruit orchard with apples, plums, figs, pears, persimmon, paw paw, pomegranate and a mulberry tree. We had a student garden where we worked with the middle school students after school in the garden club. We also dedicated a portion of the farm space to a community garden for community members to grow their own food with our help and support. The farm was magical—and tiring—and all encompassing. We harvested our produce and took it to local farmer's markets that were popping up all over the city. We also sold to local farm-to-table restaurants where chefs were really excited and cherished the freshness, flavor and variety of our offerings. The farm took on a life of its own. We were a rare site as two young women of color in the blossoming urban farming field. Working on the farm was so transformational for me. We really felt connected and felt a calling. The farm opened many doors and took us many places, but it also came with its fair share of heartbreaks. Ceci started a family and eventually it was too taxing to balance raising two young babies and farming, so we parted ways. Being in the City also exposed us to people who didn't feel that farming or growing food was the best idea, so at the end of 2015 the lease on the land we operated on was not renewed. I was heartbroken. The experience of Patchwork City Farms was, for me, a microcosm of what generations of African American farmers endured as they tried to make a living in agriculture in the South. Working on the farm really connected me to the struggles my people endured and also to the joys it brought and why, after slavery, so many still wanted and tried to earn a living off the land.

My mother's family in Jamaica were farmers. She was raised by her grandfather who raised bulls and her grandmother who was a farmer who made her own coconut oil that she sold at the market in the big city. They lived in Porters Mountain, a tiny town not known to many in the Westmoreland Parish. They terraced the hillside to grow food. My mother paints the most vivid images of her childhood growing up in Jamaica with her grandparents and it always centered on the farm and food. Her cooking tradition is different than my dad's. She was not as heavy on the pepper and did the bulk of the cooking. I remember and love her curry chickpeas and potatoes (Trinidadian influence), coconut spinach rice, red bean soup with coconut dumplings, ackee and salt fish and fried dumplings for breakfast, provisions (boiled yams, green banana, plantains and coconut dumplings) with fish stew and her famous carrot pineapple cake. Having moved to the US when she was fifteen to live with her mother she was influenced by the melting pot of culture that is New York City. So, eggplant parmesan, homemade baked beans (still haven't been able to replicate) and the lentil soup would be mixed in with traditional Caribbean meals.

Lentil soup was a mainstay of vegetarian cooking. I just have really fond memories of my mother preparing it and us eating it. We loved it when it was prepared and it was different depending on what was available or where we were or who we entertained. Sometimes it was flavored with curry. We sometimes added potatoes and carrots to it. After visiting a very close friend of my mother in New York who was also Muslim and mostly vegetarian, she shared with us that she drizzled honey on top of her lentil soup, so naturally that entered the rotation at our house. It was usually served with Trinidadian bake, bread, or biscuits and a salad. Now the biscuits used to come from a can, but after moving to the south our biscuits were homemade. The lentil soup was always better the next day. It thickened in the refrigerator and we would thin it with a little water before we reheated it the next day. As I grew up and raised my family I looked forward to the cooler weather when I would start to make soups and stews. Lentil soup is a definite standard dish in my repertoire.

Georgia's climate, although really hot in the summer, lends itself to at least three growing seasons, spring, summer and fall, and a fourth (winter) if you don't take a break. I take a break for myself and for the soil. On the farm, as the cooler weather comes, it's time to harvest the summer planted hard squashes and pumpkins. Farms in the city are generally not large; they run from 1/8th to two acres, so space is a premium. For that reason, I didn't grow the Caribbean pumpkin which is a vigorous vine, takes a lot of space, and produces large pumpkins. I grow butternut squash, a vine as well but a prolific producer of many squashes per vine and smaller sized fruit. I actually started making my creamy pumpkin/butternut squash soup ten years before I started growing it. It was something I found I could make with pumpkin/butternut squash in addition to pumpkin pie and the Caribbean dishes I was used to making around the holidays. It became a tradition I started that my family really looks forward to when we gather. Since I started farming I swear the soup tastes better and my mother loves to let the guest know that I grew it myself in the city along with over half of the dishes prepared during the holidays. I actually prepare this soup year-round because it's really easy and relatively light. It also freezes really well, so I'll make a big batch and freeze it in portions and reheat when needed. I've made it many different ways, but my favorite is slightly sweet and spiced with lots of ginger, cinnamon and star anise. It's usually served with homemade biscuits, cornbread or grilled cheese and a light salad.

I never lived in Jamaica, but did have the opportunity to visit with my children and husband to celebrate my great grandmother's 100th birthday in 2011. It was really special. She lived a simple life connected to the earth, growing food and raising ten children, countless grandchildren, and great grandchildren. We returned two years later to celebrate her homegoing at the age of 102. My mother was so proud that I had the opportunity to go to Jamaica and connect with her grandmother and close the loop on growing food. Some of her fondest memories are growing up in Jamaica with her grandmother. She always says, "We were organic before there was organic." It was just the way of life and I am honored to be part of

the new wave of young growers that are returning to the old ways. It is what has sustained civilizations for thousands of years and it is how we will sustain ourselves in the future. I grow food because I love myself, my community, and the earth. My other love is cooking food and in cooking I want the best and freshest ingredients to feed my family and my community. So I decided to grow it myself. Food for me is about energy and medicine for our bodies as well as forging connections, sharing love and culture. For that reason Patchwork City Farms will reopen in the spring of 2017 on 1.2 acres in the city of Atlanta. I purchased the property and am so excited to be planning the next chapter of my life and the Farm. Four generations later and I am happy to carry on the tradition of farming.

Thank you for allowing me to share with you a part of my life and my food and farming journey.
Without further ado, here are my soup recipes.

Creamy Pumpkin Soup

The Caribbean pumpkin used is called Calabaza and you find it sold in wedges at a good farmers market (a whole pumpkin is rather large). You can substitute Butternut Squash or another richly flavored deep orange-colored flesh pumpkin or squash such as kabocha.

Ingredients

- 2 ½-3 lbs. pumpkin or squash, seeded and cut in half or large wedges
- 1/2 cup olive oil/coconut oil or butter
- 1 cup onions chopped
- 2-3 cloves garlic chopped
- ¼ cup minced/grated fresh Organic Ginger*
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 star anise
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- ½ -1 cup of cream/ half-half/soymilk/almond milk*
- 2 tbsp maple syrup or brown sugar
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

Preheat oven to 375°F. Sprinkle pumpkin or squash with a drizzle of oil and season with salt and pepper. Place cut side down on an oiled baking sheet and place in oven to bake until fork tender, about 45 - 60 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Heat remaining oil in a soup pot or Dutch oven and sauté onions garlic and ginger with a sprinkle of salt for about 5 - 7 minutes until fragrant and translucent. Add the cinnamon stick and star anise and the stock and bring to a simmer.

Remove the flesh of the cooled pumpkin or squash from the skin and add to the soup pot and continue to simmer over low heat for about 15 - 20 minutes.

Remove cinnamon stick and star anise from the soup and using an immersion blender blend the soup in the pot until creamy. Reduce heat to low, add your dairy of choice, maple syrup and season to taste with salt and pepper. Simmer on low heat for 5 minutes to let flavor mix and remove from heat.

Makes 8 servings

*In my experience organic ginger has the best flavor. If it is possible to find, Jamaican Ginger is equally excellent as well. If not using organic or Jamaican ginger, double the requested amount for the flavor to come through.

*If using a nondairy milk/creamer select plain unsweetened.

Brown Lentil Soup

Just about every time I make this soup it's a little different. Lentils are versatile, do not need soaking and cook fast. They come in many colors and are a mainstay in my household. Enjoyed many times growing up in many different ways. Just delicious!!

Ingredients

- 1 cup chopped onions
- 2 tbsp minced garlic
- 3 tbsp minced ginger
- 2 tbsp Caribbean curry powder
- 1 tbsp Paprika
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 2 cups brown lentils rinsed and drained
- 2 cups diced potatoes
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 5-6 cups vegetable stock or water
- ½ cup olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

In a soup pot or Dutch oven heat olive oil on medium heat and add the onions, garlic and ginger with a pinch of salt and sauté for about 5-7 minutes until they are fragrant and the onions are translucent. Add the curry powder, paprika and cumin and sauté for another 5 minutes mixing periodically with a wooden spoon. Next add the potatoes carrots and the lentils and mix to coat then pour over the stock and bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat to medium and simmer the soup for 30 minutes until the vegetables are tender and the lentils are soft. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Enjoy!!!

Southern Girl Soup

Deitra Dennis
Georgia

The traditions of the African American culture are centered around family and the sense of community. I feel that having grown up in Georgia, one the southern states, the aforementioned is very evident in community. I know that I truly cherish the time with my family especially during Thanksgiving. It is during the holiday season when I have the opportunity to sit with my aunt Mary, cousin Gwen and my mama Nellie to reminisce about their childhood and some fond food memories. These ladies share recipes that my great grandmother and great aunt prepared. It is really intriguing to hear about the creativity of some recipes that were made by my elders. The delicious dishes had a great impact not only on my family but on the entire community, so much so, that people today still talk about what great cooks my great grandmother and great aunt were. Of course, my aunt, cousin and mom still prepare some of the delectable dishes today. The one recipe that comes to mind is vegetable soup. "It is good for what ails you"; translation, it is able to cure any problem or illness.

Being a true Southern girl, I can remember during winter months my mom and aunt Mary would make some vegetable soup and, dare I say, it is not only good to you but good for you! As I am sitting here writing about it, I reminisce about a time of going over to my aunt Mary's house and I could smell the aroma of something delicious cooking as I walked up to the door. As I entered the door, I was immediately drawn to the kitchen to see what was being prepared for the day. I knew that whatever it was, it had a lot of love in it; that is the only way to cook, per my aunt Mary. When I peeped around the corner into the kitchen and saw that turquoise cast aluminum Dutch oven on the stove, I got excited because I knew whatever was in that pot was going to be finger-licking, bread-sopping and slap yo' mama goooood! I have to say that turquoise cast aluminum Dutch oven has never let me down in the past because it has been where the spaghetti, roast, soups and stews have been made. I must mention that the turquoise Dutch oven is still going strong today, fifty-two years later. Being the inquisitive person that I am, I asked what we are having for dinner (I dared not go up to the stove to take the lid off to see what was cooking). The response was vegetable soup. I almost melted because I could just taste every aspect of the soup by the mere mentioning of it.

In anticipation, I kept walking back and forth from the living room to the kitchen, wondering, "When is this soup going to be ready?" The time had come, when the announcement was made to go wash our hands so we can eat. Honey, let me tell you, when that soup bowl was placed in front of me with some saltine crackers, I could not contain myself. I knew that the soup was hot but I could not wait, I had to take it all in; burning the roof of my mouth didn't even matter. Aunt Mary and the turquoise cast aluminum Dutch oven did not disappoint, the soup was all of that and a bag of chips. As I ingested the soup, it felt like a big hug as it went from my mouth to my stomach. I had a similar experience when my mama cooked the vegetable soup and instead of saltine crackers she paired it with cornbread…all I can say is OMG! It made me ask where had that

soup and cornbread together been all of my life? Needless to say that now, I only eat the soup with cornbread. The vegetable soup is certainly Love and Goodness in a bowl!

But I digress. Going back down memory lane had me a little sidetracked in sharing how the vegetable soup is good for what ails you. Let's get back on track and begin with how the vegetable soup can maintain or restore you to health. The name says it all; this soup is full of many *vegetables* that have health benefits. My explanation of the health benefits must start with the original eating plan. In the beginning our creator said, "I give you every seed bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food" (Genesis 1:29, New International Version). Hippocrates said it this way, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." Further, science provides evidence of health benefits of the original eating plan: phytochemicals.

The Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) shows phytochemicals are substances that naturally occur only in plants. PBH further states that eating a variety of colorful phytochemical-rich fruits and vegetables has been associated with a lower risk of some chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease. Let's explore colors in the vegetable soup and health benefits according to Disabled World and Oldways' A Taste of African Heritage:

BEGIN WITH ONIONS

The white color group

The white color group reduces risk of colon, breast, and prostate cancers, balances hormone levels, and reduces the risk of hormone-related cancers (Disabled World).

MIXED VEGETABLES: OKRA, GREEN BEANS, LIMA BEANS AND CELERY

The green color group

Food in the green color group reduces cancer risks, lowers blood pressure and LDL cholesterol levels, normalizes digestion time, supports retinal health and vision, fights harmful free-radicals, and boosts immune system activity (Disable World).

CORN AND CARROTS

The orange and yellow color group

Food in the orange and yellow color groups reduces risk of prostate cancer, lower LDL cholesterol and blood pressure, promote collagen formation and healthy joints. (Disable World)

TOMATOES

The red color group

The red color group (including beets, strawberries, and watermelon), reduces the risk of prostate cancer, lower blood pressure, reduces tumor growth and LDL cholesterol levels and supports joint tissue in arthritis cases (Disable World).

POTATOES AND WHOLE GRAINS: TWO OPTIONS TO ENHANCE THE SOUP

Tubers are a family of potato-like root vegetables that grow underground. They are high in fiber and complex carbohydrates, have shown extremely positive health benefits, including helping to prevent certain cancers, like colon and breast cancer. They also help maintain optimal weight and heart health (Oldways).

Eating whole grains such as rice or noodles gives your body extra vitamins, minerals, fiber and other disease-fighting nutrients, all of which are essential to good health. Adding whole grains to your diet can significantly lower your risk of chronic diseases and conditions such as: stroke, diabetes, inflammatory diseases, heart disease, high blood pressure, and some cancers (Oldways).

***

As a certified health coach, it is my passion to guide women of color to discover their healthy self; therefore, I would be remiss if I didn't provide tips on how to maintain traditional and generational recipes with a healthy twist. This point relates to another story I have to tell: how I introduced a modification to my grandmother's famous pound cake recipe. It all began when my Uncle Herman (my daddy's brother) asked if I would present some health information during our family reunion in 2015. Of course I agreed. In preparing for the presentation, I asked my Aunt Annie (my daddy's sister) if she would share grandma's pound cake recipe as well as asked permission to modify the recipe. Those of you who know anything about a generational recipe, you must get approval to make any changes to the original. My sweet aunt gave me her okay and I swore her to secrecy not to share with anybody what I was doing because I wanted their reactions at the reunion to be authentic. The following substitutions were made: whole wheat flour for the all-purpose flour, vegan butter for regular butter, sugar in the raw for regular sugar, egg whites for whole egg, and cashew milk for whole milk. The updated pound cake recipe received rave reviews by all family members. You know that I was holding my breath as each person tasted their sample of the cake and it was truly a sigh of relief when each of them enjoyed and asked for more.

I would love for you to have the same experience to create a family recipe that is both good to you as well as good for you. I would also like to add eating healthy does not mean you have to sacrifice flavor; this dispels the myth that healthy eating equals bland taste. You will see below some recipe substitutions for heart healthy cooking as documented in the *Heart Healthy Home Cooking African American Style Recipe Book*, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The authors of this guide encourage the following suggestions to lower saturated fat and calories in your favorite recipes. Adding herbs and spices instead of salt to enhance flavor is also recommended.

Recipe Calls For	**Substitute**
Whole Milk	▪ Fat-free or low fat (1%) milk
Cream	▪ Evaporated fat-free milk ▪ Mix equal amounts low-fat (1%) milk and fat-free evaporated milk
Sour Cream	▪ Fat-free or low-fat sour cream
Mayonnaise	▪ Fat-free or low fat mayonnaise
1 cup of butter	▪ 1 cup tub margarine ▪ 1 cup vegetable oil
Oil (for baking)	▪ Equal amounts of applesauce or puree
Oil (for sautéing)	▪ Water ▪ Nonstick cooking spray ▪ Low-sodium broth
1 whole egg	▪ ¼ cup egg substitute or 2 egg whites
1 egg to thicken	▪ 1 tbsp flour
Ground beef (all types)	▪ Extra lean ground beef or turkey (10% or less fat) ▪ Turkey (10% or less fat)
Sausage	▪ Turkey sausage (10% or less fat) ▪ Vegetarian sausage
Salad dressing	▪ Fat-free or low fat dressing ▪ Flavored vinaigrette ▪ Flavored vinaigrette (made with olive oil, water and vinegar, or lemon juice)

Cream soup	▪ Fat-free or low-fat canned cream soup ▪ Homemade broth after removing the fat ▪ Fat-free broth mixed with fat-free milk or fat-free evaporated milk

As Oldways African Heritage & Health states, good health is not just about food. Now that I have shared ways to create healthy, traditional meals, let's talk about other ways of living healthy. My role as a Community Health Advocate with the Association of Black Cardiologists is to participate "in heart disease prevention, education, detection and lifestyle changes that can improve the cardiovascular health status of all communities, primarily those with a majority of African Americans residents who remain at higher risk for heart disease and stroke when compared to white Americans."

You will find below some useful information that will help you follow the 7 Steps to a Healthy Heart – a patient resource guide, a publication presented by the Association of Black Cardiologists:

Step 1 Be Spiritually Active and Reduce Stress

Coaching Questions

Do you consider yourself spiritually active?
Do you have a positive outlook about life?
Do you find a reason to have a belly laugh every day?

Step 2 Take Charge of Your Blood Pressure

Coaching Questions

Do you know what a normal blood pressure is?
When was your last blood pressure reading?
Do you know what your last blood pressure reading was?

Step 3 Control Your Cholesterol

Coaching Questions

Do you know what cholesterol is and how it affects your body?
Do you know what is a normal cholesterol?
What was the results of you last cholesterol level?

Step 4 Track Your Blood Sugar (even if you have not been diagnosed with diabetes)

Coaching Questions

Do you know what the blood sugar range results mean?
Healthy Normal
Pre-Diabetes or Diabetes
What was your last blood sugar result?
If you are diagnosed with Diabetes, what was your last Hemoglobin A1C result (Hemoglobin A1C is a test that measures the blood sugar level over a 12-week period)

Step 5 Eat Smart and Enjoy Physical Activity

Coaching Questions

Are you making smart eating choices?
Are you enjoying physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day for most days of the week? (walking, dancing, gardening, etc.)
Are you maintaining a healthy weight?

Step 6 Don't Use Tobacco
Coaching Questions
Do you use tobacco?
Are you thinking about quitting tobacco?
Do you have a "Quit Plan"?

Step 7 Access Better Healthcare
Coaching Questions
Do you have access to health brochures and other materials regarding your health?
Do you see your doctor at least once a year?
Do you know what questions to ask your doctor about your health?

It has been such a pleasure to share my soup story with you and *"…I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well"* (3 John 2, New International Version). I encourage you to take charge of your health one step at a time. Jonatan Martensson said it best: "S*uccess is not a big step in the future, success is a small step taken right now."* What step will you take NOW? Do you feel you need support in taking that step? If you answered yes, visit www.fullcirclehealthcoachingllc.com or email info@fullcirclehealthcoachingllc.com.

Vegetable Beef Soup

This hearty soup can be enhanced with cornbread, saltine crackers, or a grilled cheese sandwich.

Ingredients
- 1-1/2 tbsp butter
- 1 lb beef stew meat
- ½ lb ground beef
- 1 medium Vidalia onion, chopped
- 1 (32 oz.) gag frozen vegetable soup mix
- 1 (28 oz.) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 cup uncooked elbow noodles
- 4 cups water (cover the meat/vegetable mix)
- 1 tbsp seasoning salt
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Place butter in the stockpot/Dutch oven over medium heat
2. Add beef stew meat and ground beef. Bown, stirring constantly to prevent the meat from sticking
3. Add onion
4. Mix the ingredients well
5. Add water, crushed tomatoes, seasoning salt, salt and pepper, frozen tomatoes
6. Cover the pot and bring to a boil
7. Add elbow noodles
8. Bring to another boil; cover, reduce heat and simmer for 1 hour
9. Stir occasionally
10. Cook until noodles are tender

Substitutions	
Healthier	§ Replace butter with vegetable, olive or grapeseed oil § Replace ground beef with lean ground beef or ground turkey § Replace elbow noodles with whole wheat elbow noodles § Replace seasoning salt with a mix of garlic powder, onion powder, and paprika
Vegetarian	§ Replace butter with Earth Balance Vegan Butter § Replace beef stew meat with Gardein Homestyle Beefless Tips § Replace ground beef with Gardein Beefless Ground § Replace water with 2 Edward & Sons Not-Beef Bouillon Cubes + 4 Cups of Water (this will enhance the flavor)

The Nation's Bean Soup

Vanessa McAdams-Mahmoud
Georgia

I graduated from Oberlin College in 1975 with a degree in psychology and received my 'X' from the Nation of Islam in the same year. The letter that arrived from Chicago and the headquarters of the Nation of Islam had its flag as part of the letter head, the crescent moon and star on a field of red. It informed me that the letter that I had handwritten requesting to be admitted to membership had been accepted and I was now Vanessa X. I was to report to the Temple in Atlanta and begin regular attendance there.

I was excited about this momentous change in my life. I joined in the year of transition from the leadership of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad to the leadership of Imam W.D. Muhammad, his son and spiritual heir. I was already attending the Temple regularly and reading the Holy Qu'ran. I observed the monthly three-day fast and was looking forward to completing my first Ramadan. However, as important as the talks on Wednesday and Sunday were (given by Minister Na'Im Akbar and Minister Aquil), the most loving experience for me was attendance of the weekly Muslim Women's Development Class. This class was mandatory for all Muslim women. In it we learned from one another. The more experienced sisters taught the younger, less experienced sisters skills and philosophies which were designed to help us make our homes little oases of paradise in the world of the not yet awakened Black communities in which we lived.

In these classes I met phenomenal women. These were women who could sew and cook and keep a beautiful home. They were women who were well read in Black history and in politics, who had been active in revolutionary and evolutionary change in the Black community for many years. They were active in home schooling their children before it became fashionable, and in the forefront of independent Afrocentric schooling of children through the development of their own school system. They studied and taught nutrition and healthy eating: no white bread, no white rice, no "denatured or slave food" of any kind. Certainly, no pork.

The Nation of Islam had grown under the leadership of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad and contained many people who had been influenced earlier in their lives by Marcus Garvey. The groups that led up to the Nation of Islam were the United Negro Improvement Association founded by Marcus Garvey and the Moorish Science Temple founded by Noble Drew Ali.

Garvey was heavily influenced by Islamic thought and the possibilities inherent in black people once again identifying as Muslims. In one of the most famous hymns of his movement were the words seeking blessings upon Garvey which ask: "Father of all Creation, Allah Omnipotent, Supreme o'er every nation, God Bless our President." The Nation of Islam has always considered itself to be a nation within a nation, with its own culture, its own values, rules, folkways and healing ways. It had begun in the 1930s, but was based on the religion of Islam, which it considered the original religion of Black people. This is why we thought of ourselves as the lost-found Nation of Islam. We had been lost but now we had re-discovered and re-claimed our original faith. Certainly, many of us were descendants of African nations which practiced Islam prior to being subjected to European enslavement.

At that time, the practices of African-American Muslims were not based on the Sunnah or tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, in the same way that our ancestors had practiced. The way we practiced then was a hybrid of Islam and a set of behaviors and values designed to challenge and change behaviors that were linked to our enslavement. This desire to emancipate our people from the bonds of mental slavery was a prime directive for the rise and development of the Nation and remains so.

We were challenged and expected to be self-supporting, self-determined and loving of other black people. We were expected to change the way we dressed, (modest and covered), studied, (respect scholarship), and respected one another, (no backbiting or gossip). We were expected to support our

businesses, avoid interaction with non-Muslims and people who did not share our values. We were also expected to marry, after a properly chaperoned courtship and to be chaste until we did.

Muslim men attended the F.O.I. or Fruit of Islam classes. Men taught men in those classes and the two F.O.I. and M.W.D.C. classes were designed to complement each other and reinforce the values of mutual respect between the genders, promote family values and encourage the growth of the community. Muslims, by practicing Islam were promised that these values would ensure that members would have, "money, good homes, and friendship in all walks of life."

During those days, I felt protected and respected by the men in my community. This was very important to me for many reasons. I am sure I missed having my father active in my life, and the ways in which I interacted with these men was very positive and nurturing. It was not long before I was being sought for marriage by some young men in the Temple. They did so by informing my designated "Captain" that they were interested in me and if I was also interested, we would have dinner together under the watchful eyes of the community. It was really very sweet, and it is how I met my husband of 40 years.

However, before I took that step, I was learning and spending a good deal of time in the kitchen of the temple, under the watchful and fussy eyes of the good cooks who ruled there, like the queens they were. I cannot tell you how many fish I cleaned, how many meals I prepared, and how humble I learned to be under their tutelage.

Part of the culture that grew out of the Nation was its cuisine. Besides not eating pork, we were persuaded to "eat to live." The books by the Hon. Elijah Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Vol. 1 & 2*, were our guides. We were told to eat whole wheat bread and avoid most "white" foods. We were encouraged to eat mostly vegetables and fruits. We were instructed to not eat any beans except the navy bean, as most other beans, we were taught, were more suited for the digestion of animals, than humans. We were taught to eat more fish, but in particular, "clean" fish that came from the deep sea, like whiting. There were many other teachings on this issue but in this discussion I will focus on these two.

With just these two foods, the navy bean and whiting fish, a whole cuisine was born. The fish was made into fish sausage, fish patties, fried fish, baked fish, fish stew, fish gumbo and so forth. The navy bean gave birth to the now famous bean pie and the staple of every Muslim home at that time, bean soup.

Every woman had her own version of bean soup. Some were puréed, some soups almost a stew, and others a traditional middle-of-the-road hot soup. These soups were nutritious and economical. Most families could afford them and they fed a lot of people. They were delicious and tasty. No Muslim dinner was complete without bean soup.

We traded recipes, learned from one another, tasted each other's attempts, made helpful suggestions, and wrote our own cookbooks. Not everyone could master the bean pie, usually because of the crust challenges but almost anyone could eventually learn to cook bean soup.

All Muslim men were expected to sell a certain amount of newspapers, which contained news about the Nation of Islam and were the primary mode of exhorting people to join. This process was called "fishing." The men would sell the papers, and bring the "fish" back to the Temple. In the Temple, all could find a good meal. That meal often consisted of the whiting fish that was sold and distributed by Muslims, healthy and tasty vegetables, and a hearty bowl of bean soup, with whole wheat bread.

Many of the single men in the community ate at the Temple any chance they could get, especially when they knew certain sisters had prepared that night's meal. It was a lot of fun cooking and serving these brothers along with my sisters. We laughed and enjoyed one another and often got into deep discussions about the most recent lecture.

It was also a chance to socialize in an acceptable, chaste way and to get to know the other gender, their character, their industry, their faith and to get opinions of them from other sisters. I am sure they were assessing the women in the same way.

We were young and excited about nation building, in 1975. We dreamed of a time when our communities would grow along with our schools and institutions. We were thirsty for spiritual knowledge and for the knowledge that our study of our history continued to awaken in us, no matter how painful the study of our oppression might be. We also began to study our freedoms and to measure our freedom in different ways than we were taught in public school settings.

Our community began the changes which brought us in line with the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam, P.B.U.H., and our daily practices began to reflect the universal customs of traditional Islam (i.e. five daily prayers, observing the fast of Ramadan, going on pilgrimage to Mecca, etc.)

We loved our community and grew along with it. Our growth included learning our prayers in Arabic, and then progressed to becoming fluent in Arabic, the universal religious tongue for Muslims from any country, as Latin used to be for the Catholic Church. Under the leadership of Imam Muhammad, we began to send our children to Muslim countries in Africa, to sit at the feet of scholars there. Now they have returned to teach their elders and their children both the knowledge of their religion and the rich history of their people, including the sacrifice of their elders who helped create the community.

Some communities have thrived, and others have not. The community in Atlanta has grown exponentially and continues to astonish. There are those in that community who have become world reknown scholars and Hafiz of the Holy Qu'ran (those who have memorized the Holy Qu'ran by heart, in Arabic). Many of the graduates of the Muhammad Schools have gone to the best colleges in our country and in the world. They are now doctors and lawyers and engineers and business people. They are Sufis and world travelers. They are authors and mothers and fathers of children who are surpassing their parents.

What I love most about our community, besides its God-Consciousness or taqwa, is its sense of place and history. The young people are careful to honor their elders, while raising their children, with eyes and minds continuing to improve upon their foundation for the next generation. When the children of the Muhammad schools enter the musallah, or sanctuary, they first greet their elders before seating themselves. These little etiquettes help to establish in their minds the place their elders should have in their hearts. Now that I am an elder, it gives me the opportunity to look in their lovely faces and give them hugs. It nourishes us all.

Building sustainable healthy communities, learning to be more cooperative and knowledgeable about producing food and reducing food deserts, while continuing to be conscious about nutrition and exercise are key strategies emphasized by this generation. They are truly seeking knowledge "from the cradle to the grave," and bringing it home to their community to foster growth.

Our community is now international. At the top of the old *Muhammad Speaks* newspapers used to be an image of one black man in Africa reaching across the world to a black man in the Americas, clasping hands. I have lived to see this become an everyday reality.

With my grandchildren, I find myself cooking these old recipes and telling them the history of the foods I am serving and why they were important. These foods become a story unto themselves, and are more than tasty meals. They are distillations of their history and heritage.

With these reflections I offer my recipe for the Nation's Bean Soup.

Nation's Bean Soup

Ingredients

- 2 cups navy beans, cooked and softened
- 4 medium onions, diced
- 1 (14oz) can of diced tomatoes
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 3 stalks celery, diced
- 1-2 garlic cloves, diced
- 2-3 bay leaves
- 1 tsp paprika
- ½ cup of olive oil
- black pepper and salt to taste

Instructions

Add all ingredients to large pot. Add water to cover ingredients and to make soup as thick or thin as desired. Cook on moderate flame until vegetables are softened. Stir gently. Add salt to taste at end. Serve with a good brown bread and butter.

Thick as Thieves:
Food, Family, and Foodways in the Central Savannah River Area

Chef Cassandra Lotflin
Georgia

The Central Savannah River Area

There is something special about living on and around a river. The Central Savannah River Area, better known to locals as the CSRA is a 13-county region that stretches across the states of Georgia and South Carolina. On a geographical map, the 13 counties on paper appear to be scattered across a two-state area, divided by a river. However, in the minds and hearts of the area's residents, the 13 counties are connected, not divided by the Savannah.

I am from Augusta, Georgia, the largest city within the CSRA on the Georgia side of the Savannah River. Augusta is a key component of a culture that is rich in hospitality, dining, and entertainment. Attendees of the famous Masters Golf Tournament often brag about experiencing a moment in sports traditions, but more often they speak in awe of the cultural ways surrounding traditions, food, and hospitality in the area. What visitors experience is almost inexplicable, and almost impossible for a non-native to verbalize. James Brown, our patron saint and hometown hero attempted to define the fused Georgia-South Carolina cultural identity in his song, "Georgia-Lina." Gracious hospitality, remarkable service, and outstanding cuisine have mesmerized visitors since tourism first began in Augusta. It is a region marked by traditional African foodways that gave birth to the Southern cookery of that area, it is topped with splashes of Lowcountry cooking influences due to the early rail lines and the proximity of Savannah, GA.

The Georgia-Lina Girl and Her Hidden Culinary History

My entire family was born and raised in the CSRA. Growing up, my maternal great-grandmother, Grace Wimberly, my grandmother Mary Watson, and my mother, Clara Loftlin were incredibly talented cooks, more than I ever realized. These women upheld prodigious reputations for the meals they produced. I forever lived in their shadow, forever relegated to washing dishes, emptying trash, and carrying groceries. Their creations were so secret, so elaborate, it was rare that a recipe was known by more than one individual. Growing up, people around town would rant and rave about Mrs. Wimberly's cakes and pies: "So light and fluffy you could lay on them like a pillow," my Great Grandfather would say. People my Grandmother worked with looked forward to retirements, holidays, and birthdays because my Grandmother was sure to whip up a Lemon Crème, Red Velvet, German Chocolate, or her sought after Humming Bird Cakes. My mother was (and still is) famous for her dinner parties…still. I knew my foremothers were good cooks, but I didn't know how they did what they did or why.

There is a story in my family that will bring anyone to tears of laughter when retold at any family gathering. Unfortunately, I am the center of this laughter. I was a junior at the University of South Carolina, I

came home for Christmas Break and my mother was literally begging my grandmother to make oxtail soup. Three things dawned on me: 1) I have never had oxtails, 2) I have never heard anyone in my family speak about oxtails, and 3) What are oxtails? In the middle of my confusion, I interrupted my mother and grandmother to ask: "If you just make the soup using the tail of the ox, what do you do with the rest of the ox?" The laughter in the room erupted like thunder. My grandmother, who before I spoke, was facing the oven, basting the turkey. She was now doubled-over the stove, laughing, gasping for air, tears, real tears, streaming down her face. My mother, who was standing in the center of the kitchen making her plea for oxtails, was now screaming, hollering and screaming, laughing, and hardly breathing. This went on for at least ten minutes. Once my grandmother collected herself, she said "Baby, an ox is a male cow," then they both erupted yet again, and again and again. I had so many questions. Why did I not know this? I cooked with my grandmother and my mother on countless occasions but didn't know anything about oxtails. At that moment I realized how disconnected I was from food and my cultural roots.

I began to listen, intently each and every time I came home. I listened for hidden history and what seemed to be secret or hidden foods, for foods they ate but didn't ever bother to feed to me as a child. Then, one day, I heard it. One Sunday, when we were leaving my grandmother's house, my grandmother asked my mother to make her some catfish stew. "Catfish stew???" I thought to myself. "What is that?" But I dare not open my mouth to only once again to become the subject of ridicule. I returned to school before that catfish stew was made. Wrapped up in my studies, I forgot all about that Sunday, the catfish and the stew until this opportunity to participate in the *OASIS*: Oldways Africana Soup in Stories project landed in my lap.

Birth of Chef

After finishing at the University of South Carolina, I packed by bags to move back to Georgia. However this time I was in search of a higher education in Atlanta. I enrolled at Clark Atlanta University (CAU) to study Africana Women's Studies with the goal of eventually earning a Doctor of Arts in Humanities and entering the world of academia. Originally, I wanted to study the representation of women in Traditional African Religions, however, my advisor, department chair, and mentor, the late Dr. Josephine Bradley had other ideas. At her suggestion, I began to study health disparities in Africana Women. In my research of the health issues of students on campus, I discovered something shocking. Many students were battling chronic illnesses. This was not the case when I was working as a student affairs professional at USC; there, we were more concerned about STDs in our student population. Of the top ten illnesses that the student population at CAU faced, nine out of ten were related to diet. After my initial survey, I went on to do research in a small village outside of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in a village called Kisarawe with the Centers for Disease Control. While the chronic illnesses among youth in the village were not the same as those faced by students at

CAU, nine out of ten were related to diet and nutrition or risk-taking behaviors. Ranked differently on the charts than those of students at CAU, the illnesses again, were related to food and nutrition. Now here is where we have to take a pause. My grandmother has a saying: "There is what happened, and then…there is the story about what happened." I am going to tell you what happened and save the "story about what happened" for another day. Shortly after I returned from Tanzania, I decided to enroll in culinary school to attack the issue of food-related health disparities from another perspective that I thought at the time would have a broader effect.

Once I enrolled in culinary school and started working in restaurants, my hidden history slowly revealed itself. Chefs and chef instructors would ask: "Who taught you how to make merengue like that?" and "Where did you learn how to fillet fish?" All things I learned from my mother, my grandmother, and from my great-grandmother. For someone that had never cooked in a restaurant, I had that which people pay to learn: technique. But how? My great-grandmother did domestic work, my grandmother has had several careers, including the job title of cook, but in reality, I will argue that they are both chefs within their own right. My mother was, and still is a great culinary spirit and socialite and can pull together a dinner party within a moment's notice. She learned from these experiences and continued to study on her own. Being a chef is in my blood, further back than I even realized in those early moments in culinary school. Over the years and even now, my culinary history is still unfolding.

Thick as Thieves

It is interesting that I am writing this piece on my mother's birthday. She and I are twins, joined at the hip. When I am away from her, I miss her like my own skin, but if you ever asked her about the relationship that I have with my grandmother, her response would be: "Oh…those two? They are thick as thieves," and she is correct. My grandmother and I are similar in many ways and in spirit, something that has been talked about since I was born. What I didn't realize, until today, is that my mother and great-grandmother had a similar relationship. I called my grandmother this morning to get the exact recipe for catfish stew and her words were: "Oh you are going to have to call your mother for that …great-granny used to make it, but I hated it, she used the whole catfish, too many bones for me. The catfish would turn to mush and there would be so many bones in the stew…" And in an instant, by tracing the keeper of the recipe, a relationship, a bond was revealed. My great-grandmother loved the finer things in life, clothes, furniture, makeup or rouge as she called it, and fine jewelry, especially ear-bobs, or what we would call earrings. My mom loves all of those things, plus more. My great-grandmother adored company. She loved to cook and entertain. In that same regard, my mother cannot get enough of company, she is the most gracious hostess,

anticipating a guest's every need. In her honor, in honor of the relationship between her and her grandmother, I present "Thick as Thieves Catfish Stew." The first version is an adaptation of my great-grandmother's original version, designed to suit my grandmother's palate, not an easy feat by any account. The second version is an original creation my mother prepares for house guests, a dressed-up version that is a nod to her passion for rustic French cookery. Both soup recipes are a representation of my multifaceted family history in the CSRA: what it means to be an unrecognized chef in a particular space, place, and time, what it means to remember and to be remembered, what it means to serve, what it means to cook, and most importantly what it means to cook for those you love.

Mrs. Clara's Thick as Thieves Catfish Stew (for Granny)

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp of vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion diced
- salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 large potato, washed, peeled and cubed
- 32 oz stewed seedless tomatoes
- ¼ cup of water (plus some)
- 1 scant tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tsp or clove of garlic, minced
- 2 sprigs of thyme
- 1/8 tsp-dash of cayenne pepper or 1 *scosche* (tiny, tiny pinch) of chili flakes
- ¼ tsp of smoked paprika
- 1 pinch of oregano
- 2 lb fresh, never frozen catfish

Instructions

In a heavy medium-sized pot, heat 2 tablespoons of oil over medium high heat. Once the oil is hot, add onions and a dash of salt. Turn heat down between medium and medium high. Once the onion begins to get slightly soft (after two or three minutes) add diced potatoes. Add a dash of salt and a dash of pepper. Cook on medium for 7-9 minutes. Stir often so that nothing sticks to the pan. Add minced garlic, stir continuously and cook for no more than two to three minutes. Turn heat back up to medium low and add stewed tomatoes, brown sugar, thyme, oregano, cayenne pepper, paprika, and cook. Turn heat down to medium low, add catfish. You can cut it in chunks or leave it whole. Cover with a lid and let simmer 10-15 minutes until the catfish is opaque white. Serve immediately.

Serves 6-8

Mrs. Clara's Thick as Thieves Catfish Stew (for Company)

Ingredients

- 16 oz fish or shellfish stock
- 1 large potato, washed, peeled and cubed
- 2 medium onion, diced
- 2 tbsp freshly chopped parsley or 1 tsp dried parsley
- 1 tbsp freshly chopped oregano or 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp freshly chopped rosemary or 1 pinch dried rosemary
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 16 oz white wine
- 1/8 tsp plus a dash of cayenne pepper
- ¼ tsp paprika
- salt and black pepper to taste
- 2 lb Fresh, never frozen catfish cut into 1 inch pieces
- *cornstarch and cold water

Instructions

In a heavy, medium-sized pot, heat shellfish stock over medium high heat. Do not boil. Add potatoes, onions and garlic powder. Add a pinch of salt and a dash of pepper, adjust to taste. Simmer potatoes over medium high heat for 10 minutes or until tender, but not soft. Once potatoes are tender, turn heat down to medium and add white wine. Let simmer for 8-10 minutes. If you are using dried herbs, add them now. Turn heat down to medium low and add catfish pieces and fresh herbs. If you are using freshly chopped herbs, let simmer an additional 7-8 minutes. Remove pot from heat. Taste and adjust seasonings to taste. If a thicker stew is desired, mix one tablespoon of cornstarch and one tablespoon of water in a small bowl. Mix until there are no lumps. Add a splash of cornstarch slurry to stew and stir and wait a few minutes to see if desired thickness is achieved. Continue to add more slurry until desired thickness is achieved, careful not to add too much so that the stew is like jelly. If this happens, add a little more wine or water to thin soup.

Serves 6-8

Yesterday's Kitchen for Today

Marsha Thadison
Georgia

Here at Yesterday's Kitchen 4 Today, I am here to encourage the next generation by getting back to the basic skills of cooking, as their great-grandparent did. Many of our younger mothers do not know or never had the privilege of learning the skills of canning, baking fresh bread, making fresh butter, and homemade soups.

My mission, as a mother and grandmother, is to bring back the stockpot into today's kitchen. Many years ago in American communities, you would see butcher shops where people would go get their meat. At these mom-and-pop butcher shops, they would sell soup bones. These soup bones were sold with meat on the bone and mothers would buy and take them home to properly make homemade soup for their family to stretch a meal.

Meat stock from bones is extremely nutritious coming from healthy animals that are grass-fed and pasture raised. The meat stock contains the minerals from bone, cartilage, and marrow. Putting in vegetables for electrolytes and adding vinegar during the cooking process draws minerals, calcium, magnesium and potassium into the soup stock. Many of our great grandmothers used soup for healing a cold, flu and recovering from illness. It was also an inexpensive way to feed one family.

The wonderful thing about making soup stock is you can use fish head, shrimp, beef, and chicken from scratch with love and care for your family. This stock can be used in making gumbo and soup, for making rice and casseroles, or just drinking for healing properties for the body.

When you buy meat, make sure it comes from an organic farm that sells free range fresh chicken or beef that has not been injected with antibiotics and that your fish is wild caught. Once you finish eating the meat, save the bones or fish heads (red snapper is the one I use). For any farm fresh animals that are grass fed and pasture raised, keep the bones to make bone broth. Let me share with you a chicken stock recipe that is very easy to do, adapted from a book that I love, *Recipes from Nourishing Traditions* by Sally Fallon.

Chicken Stock

Ingredients

- 1 whole free range chicken (2-3 lbs. bony chicken parts: neck, back, breastbone, and wings)
- gizzards from one chicken
- feet from the chicken
- 4 quarts cold filtered water
- 2 tbsp vinegar
- 1 large onion coarsely chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 3 celery sticks coarsely chopped
- pinch of parsley

Instructions

If you are using a whole chicken, cut off the wings and remove the neck, fat gland, and the gizzard from the cavity. Use chicken feet if you can get them- they are full of gelatin. (Jewish folklore considers the addition of chicken feet the secret to the successful broth.) Even better, use a whole chicken, with the head on, (we waste nothing). These are often found in Asian markets.

Use farm raised, free range chicken to get the best results. Much battery–raised chickens will not produce stock that gels. Cut chicken parts into several pieces. If you use a whole chicken, remove the neck and wings and cut them into several pieces. Place chicken or chicken pieces in a large stainless steel pot with water, vinegar, and all vegetables except parsley.

Let stand 30 minutes to 1 hour. Bring to a boil, and remove residue that rises to the top. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 6 to 24 hours. The longer you cook the stock, the richer, and more flavorful it will be.

About 10 minutes before finishing the stock, add parsley. This will impart additional mineral ions to the broth. Remove whole chicken or pieces with a slotted spoon. If you are using a whole chicken, let cool and remove chicken meat from the carcass. Reserve for other uses, such as chicken salads, enchiladas, sandwiches, or curries. (The skin and smaller bones, which will be very soft, may be given to your animals.) Strain the stock into a large bowl and reserve in refrigerator until the fat rises to the top and congeals. Skim off fat and reserve the stock in covered containers in your refrigerator or freezer.

For more information, visit our website at www.yesterdayskitchen4today.com or email info@yesterdayskitchen4today.com.

Black Girl Fly High

Sanura Weathers
Virginia

The teasing was unbearable. Every morning and afternoon, I boarded a bus to face kids greeting me with the n-word, insults about my full lips, broad nose, my African-inspired name, color of my chocolate skin and the tiny tight curls that were washed and hot combed straight every Thursday evening.

If there was a summer break needed from school, then I was the kid who needed it the most. Every few years, mom brought down suitcases from the attic for a flight to visit San Diego, California, where our maternal grandmother, Aunt Gloria and cousins lived. Mom shopped for special play and church clothes with new shoes. The night before the flight, Mom washed, pressed and wrapped our hair around spongy pink roller sets. We wore satin night caps to bed. Back in those days, people dressed up for airline travel, and we looked like princesses coming on board. The airline stewardess gave us airline branded pins, playing cards and other toys. Free snacks, a full meal and drinks were served. After five hours of flying high, the plane landed in a sunny airport as we waved at Grandma, Aunt Gloria and cousins from the airplane's window. As we exited the flight, the hugs were tight. The kisses were wet.

They loved our pressed hair, the color of our skin and smiles. We could do no wrong. It seems as if every minute of the day, they complimented Mom on our beauty. Aunt Gloria loved seeing my sister and I reading books, and she would say, "...they're so smart… they're going to be publishers, they're going to own… be bosses…" Grandma filled our rooms with cookies, candies and toys. Mom asked Grandma and Aunt Gloria to slow down on the gifts, because the suitcases were full. Grandma nonchalantly replied, "...we can mail them…." And, she continued buying more gifts, cooking soulful dishes of hot cakes, collard greens, tacos and fried fish.

At Grandma's house, we could be ourselves. We were loud Black Women and young girls living carelessly free. Jokes and playful fights broke out between Aunt Gloria and Mom. Aunt Gloria's "grown folks" jokes made my sister and I laugh till we cried. After one long flight, Mom walked into the kitchen, let loose her elegant composure to obnoxiously yell for Grandma to make chitlins. My sister and I were confused at Mom's strange behavior, as we had never heard of chitlins.

Grandma's house is on top of a hill, and the driveway has a steep incline lined with peach trees. The front and back verandas are filled with potted plants. A small garden space located in the front of the house had rose

bushes and cactus plants. Our cousins, sister and I played among the peach trees, finding snails and other insects. In later years, at my Grandmother's funeral, a cousin recalled us rolling down and running up the hill. Located in the back of the house was the vegetable garden, and it grew mostly collard greens, which Grandma slow-simmered with a hog's foot and served it with cornmeal hot cakes.

The flight home back to the east coast seemed as if it took a long time. We always returned at night. On one return trip, Grandmother insisted Mom pack frozen collard greens in the suitcase, but the five hours of heat spoiled them. Mom had a good friend, who was a white Spanish lady, pick us up from the airport. The spoiled greens made the car smell terrible. On the way home, the greens were tossed onto the side of the road. The windows were rolled down to air out the car. The tone of Mom's voice returned to being pleasantly perky as she apologized for the smell. The beauty of Grandma and Aunt Gloria's loud laughter dimmed with the thousands of miles between us.

Late Summer, the kids teasing and school restarted. Presently, I now know the neighborhood kids didn't understand the diversity of beauty. To those kids, I was an odd-looking brown girl, but in my mind, I was beautiful. The kids' words stung, but Grandma and Aunt Gloria's opinions were my shield. They wouldn't lie to me.

Academically, I excelled at being slow. After being held back in fifth grade, I cried. To further my disappointment, my friends not only advanced to the next level, but most of them were relocated to a newly built school. On my first day back to school to repeat fifth grade, I casually noticed being the only Black girl in class. Adding to the misery, speech therapy classes took me out of class for an hour a week. Art became one of the few joys in school, but the teachers focused on improving my math and reading levels. Despite a growing interest in art, I knew it was important to obey my teachers' silent communication: You're not good enough.

Other kids left class for another special program. They excelled in math, music or art. To learn that students were hand-picked for an afternoon of art was music to my ears. I asked the teachers how to get involved in the special arts program. They coyly smiled to tell me, such classes were meant for the other special kids, "You wouldn't do well in those classes…." I got it: Work at your level, Black girl. In later years, I learned in African-American history class, the gifted classes were created to prevent wealthy white families from leaving the public school system after the Supreme Court's Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954 made segregation illegal.

One day I overheard the music teacher talking with the Art teacher about how it's impossible to get me to sing. The music teacher wanted empathy. Instead, my art teacher said I was one of the best art students. However, there was one girl, Tina E. Her art projects were phenomenal. She was one of the gifted art students leaving class for those special afternoons. She was the competition. I thought, "If I can do better artwork than her, then someone in the school would recommend me for those special art classes." Her artwork was effortless as I tried hard. Even at a young age, I knew of her special advantage, because she spent afternoons doing artwork and being inspired by other artists.

Art finally woke me up from sleepwalking through school. After being held back twice, I was starting to become more cognizant of the importance of doing well in other academic courses. Tina E. wasn't competition, she was inspiring. And, I wanted to be friends with her. Here's the moment that prevented Tina E. and I from being friends. It was the end of a school day. We were lined up to march to our buses to take us home. That's when Tina E. and friends giggled and started to make fun of my name to call me "Sanuba." I was devastated my inspiration was making fun of me. I paused to take a calm breath, "Tina, please stop calling me that…" In my thoughts, I wanted to be friends with Tina, but I didn't want to be teased in class. It's already difficult to deal with the teasing on the bus. Tina E. continued, "Sanuba. Sanuba…" I asked her the second time to stop and thought, "...I have to deal with teasing on the bus. I can't take this in class, too…" Finally, I told Tina to stop. She boldly repeated, "Sanuba." And, she and her friends laughed. Without a thought and with anger, I slammed my lunch box onto her head.

Dead silence. Her beautiful face crumbled as tears rolled down her face. I was unapologetic. After all, I politely told her to stop three times and stood my ground. But, the stress from being the different kid in class

was too much to handle. The slow kid. The ugly kid. There's only so much a kid can take before breaking down. My sadness came from knowing we would never be friends, for we both shared a common passion.

The afternoon was a blur. It was going to be an ugly night. My stomach turned into knots. The first of many calls started at 6 pm. My mother closed the door to have a private conversation with the teacher. I slid to the floor beside my bed to cry about the afternoon, the other kids' continuous teasing me on the bus and the thought of Mom dealing a heavy hand on me.

My heart stopped as Mom comes into my room. She pulled me onto my bed to sit next to her, and she gave me a lingering hug. "You're beautiful. It doesn't matter what anyone says. All that matters, is you're beautiful." My beautiful face crumpled as tears rolled down my face. It was a horrible day.

Although there is no memory of the next morning's bus ride, the feeling was dreadful. I walked into class an unexpected hero. The teasing shifted from me to Tina E. She would be the girl the kids teased in class, but the teasing on the bus continued.

For the rest of my school years, I would take art classes as extra courses. Hampton University accepted me into their business program. After taking an art history class as an extracurricular course, my major changed to art. My art professors encouraged me to scribble outside the black girl stereotype, think big and move fast. Opinions about my physical appearance transitioned from being ugly to a normal girl in undergraduate school. Suddenly an occasional admirer wanted my attention.

Here's an assessment of being teased as a child: It made me stronger, and there are no regrets. I learned to believe in myself regardless of people's opinions. It also enabled me to look beyond beauty to discover a passion for art, reading, writing and cooking. Mom once said intelligence is more important than beauty. Today's media discussions about school bullies are comical (unless a bully is physically being abusive). A good friend later told me of how Tina E. was mercilessly teased for being a white girl with full-lips. If she was teased for her looks, why would she tease me for being different?

Aunt Gloria and Grandma passed away a few years ago. For each death, our family flew across the country to attend their funerals. New security rules made arrivals cold, for people reunited in the luggage area. For Grandma's funeral, we arrived at night. Aunt Gloria previously passed away two years before, and no one greeted us at the airport. We rented a car. The peach trees were long gone because of a fire started by neighborhood kids. The front lawn was fragile because of rodents' tunnels. The kitchen was unkempt, dusty and unclean. The next day, Dad's mourning process started in the kitchen. Besides offering Mom support, he would spend the week cleaning and cooking.

Grandma and Aunt Gloria never made Peach Soup with Whipped Vanilla Cream. It is a recipe developed in memory of them. Juicy peaches return childhood summer memories of flying across the country to see Grandma and Aunt Gloria. The recipe is a healthy dessert soup that is honey sweet with a hint of spice. Whipped vanilla cream adds an airy texture to the soup. Substitute the whipped cream for unsweetened yogurt, coconut milk or nut milk to meet personal dietary restrictions. Occasionally, the soup can be frozen into ice pops.

It was Aunt Gloria who recognized my love for books. She also loved Art, but never professionally pursued it. Today, I'm a professional graphic designer and food writer focusing on creating recipes for home cooks. The beauty of Grandma, Aunt Gloria and Mom was being unapologetically loud, beautiful, Black women fiercely loving their children. They taught us to navigate life using our passion and talent. Because of them, I beautifully soar high.

Peach Soup With Vanilla Rose Whipped Cream

Ingredients

- 4 to 6 ripe peaches (about 1 lbs.) unpeeled and sliced, discard pit
- 2 tbsp honey (adjust amount to the sweetness of the peaches)
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground cloves
- 1/4 tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- A pinch of sea salt
- 1/4 tsp cardamom
- 1/2 cup cold coconut water (more or less, consistency of the soup is a personal taste)
- The juice of one lime
  1 tsp vanilla
- Serve with vanilla whipped cream (see recipe below) or vanilla and/or pistachio ice cream

Instructions

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with foil. Place sliced peaches in a medium bowl. Drizzle peaches with honey and toss in all the spices. Roast peaches for 30 minutes. Remove peaches from the oven and turn off the oven. Set peaches aside to cool for about 30 minutes.

Place roasted peaches in a food processor and purée until smooth.

Place a fine strieve strainer over a large bowl. Pour purée over the strainer. Use the back of a spoon or spatula to press solids against the sides. Discard solids. If necessary, work in batches, and repeat this step until there's no more purée to strain.

Stir coconut water, lime juice, and vanilla into strained peach purée. If necessary, adjust sweetness by whisking in a little more honey.

Tightly cover bowl and refrigerate until cold.

Ladle soup into individual bowls. Serve with dollop of Vanilla Whipped Cream or ice cream.

Vanilla Whipped Cream

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp sugar

Using an electric mixer, whisk all ingredients until light and fluffy.

Parable of the Old Wood Stove

Sherie Labedis and Coretta Simmons
South Carolina

I'm Lucille and my internal clock is eternally set to the rhythms of my grandmother's wood stove. Every morning a clang as she opened the fire box to add wood disturbed my slumber. Then the rasp of the metal plates as she lifted them to spread out the coals got me stretching in my box bed of straw just behind the wall behind the stove. Finally the soft thunk of those plates settling back into the ledges of the round holes got me moving.

Almost seventy years made my Gram more "on time" than any electrical device. Only on Sundays was the stove quiet—still loaded up with some wood on the coldest days of winter, but not for cooking. Saturdays were filled with preparation for a day of rest and worship, because, as Gram always said, "It's not fittin' to cook on the Lord's day."

Rest came hard for my grandparents working the cotton fields near Pineville, South Carolina. By the time my grandfather—I always called him GP—was a great grandfather, he had a standard question if one of the grandchildren complained about how hard something was.

He'd shake his bald head and say, "You ever pick cotton?"

They'd answer, "No, sir."

He'd say, "Then you don't know what hard is."

His days *were* hard picking and chopping cotton, picking corn, tending to their vegetable patch, and solving all those endless little problems that occurred. But, Gram was always up first. She set the fire and prepared breakfast so we were in the fields at first light.

Breakfast was always grits. Grits with butter, grits with bacon, grits with scrambled eggs, grits with sausage. Usually just grits with dry toast. Cotton pickers earned two cents a pound in 1965 and though Gram could pick 200-250 pounds of cotton in a day and GP 350 that would give them almost $12 a day, that counted up to less than $300 for themselves and some of the fourteen grandkids who were often on loan from parents trying to make ends meet in some faraway big city. My city was Oakland, California, but I was mostly raised in Pineville until I was ten.

As soon as I could walk, the wood stove fascinated me. It had all those cubby holes and it made sounds like a living thing. Gram, usually a quiet and patient soul, searched for ways to stop me from touching! When I was too little to know better, she put an old rope with one end around my waist and the other tied to the door knob on the other side of the room. But folks would trip on that rope.

Finally, in her practical way, she said, "This stove is always hot, Lucy Baby. You don't ever want to touch it. You got to take care." Of course, I had to test her words and I reached out with the tip of my finger and believe me, I never touched it again!

As I grew older, I started to help cooking things on that stove. Gram had a real gift for keeping the temperature steady and by the time I was ten I could cook grits and even pancakes.

We had very important guests that summer of 1965 when white South Carolina was, like the rest of the South, sweltering with anger over the Civil Rights Movement. Colored Americans wanted the right to vote and the end to segregation. Adults were talking about the dangers of registering to vote – the possibilities of bombings or beatings or losing your job. Food assistance could end if someone's name appeared on the registration list. But I was young. It was all over my head and I didn't care.

I didn't care, that is, until I saw four new faces in our all-black town. They were white! Three ladies and a man came from California to register local voters. People argued about them. It was scary to have them around because of the Ku Klux Klan. Some said those white people would help us and there would be good changes. Many adults said we couldn't trust them because they were white and white folks were responsible for slavery and Jim Crow.

But behind all the talk there was the power issue. If pastors were the only people in the church who could read and write and vote, then they had power over their congregations. But Gram said those white folks from California were bringing education and self-determination. For many years she had belonged to a small community improvement group of men and women that met on Thursday evenings. They helped those who were even poorer. They read official documents for folks who couldn't read or write. They wanted the equality that all Americans deserved, but they knew that change would probably not happen in their lifetimes. In the meantime, they took care of others.

Five years before, Gram and another woman were the only two members of the group who had actually attempted to register to vote when a civil rights lawyer from Charleston asked the group to see what would happen. The two women put on their Sunday best and went to the courthouse expecting to be turned away, but they were registered since they could read, write and sign their names. The lawyer said that the registrar probably thought that, if these two were registered quietly, no one would pay attention since so few colored folks could read and write. "That's a fool waste of time, woman," GP had said. "They never gonna count your vote. Or mine. Or any other black face in this county."

Now, five years later, here was a white lady knocking on our door one evening. She looked like maybe she was in high school or not much older. She had on a sweat-stained orange dress with no sleeves and dusty shoes and nylon stockings. Those shoes had high heels but what was most amazing to me, she had long straight yellow hair.

I only saw white people when I sometimes rode GP's wagon into town, so I hid behind GP's big chair clutching my rag doll and watched her. She really didn't look scary as she talked politely with Gram while they sat on two old rocking chairs on the stoop and sipped water from jelly glasses.

I was nervous, but very curious about this white lady and I finally edged out and sat on the top step. She asked me my doll's name and asked me about my school. I had never talked to a white lady before, and I suddenly blurted out, "I ain't never touched a white person afore. Can I touch you?" Gram raised her eyebrows up almost to the top of her head, but she didn't say a word.

The white lady said, "Please do."

I reached out timidly and touched her arm lightly. Nothing happened so I rubbed my hand down her forearm. She felt just like me!

She said, "Well now, Lucy, now that we have gotten to know each other, please call me Miss Sherie."

We usually only saw Miss Sherie and the other white people at church, but there was talk about them. They went door to door talking to older people about registering to vote. Most of them refused because they were afraid, but they also refused because they couldn't read and write and they felt bad. I didn't think there was any reason to feel bad. I couldn't read or write very well and Miss Sherie liked me anyway.

One day Miss Sherie came by to talk to GP about registering to vote, but she gave up after about ten minutes trying to convince him. If nothing else, he was stubborn. She asked if he might be interested in going to the freedom school at night. I bet she thought he refused to register because he couldn't read.

She was right; he had never gone to school. When he was a boy, colored folks didn't have a school. "No!" was GP's flat answer to the question about learning anything from this white lady. The only reason Gram could read and write was because she had helped a colored midwife lady named Maude Callen who worked in Pineville. Miz Maudie said Gram was smart and should be able to read the Bible so she taught her something every day.

Miss Sherie arrived at supper time one day so grandmother invited her to eat with us.

"You think we got so much to eat we can feed those damn white folks?" I heard GP's not-all-that-quiet whisper from the back room. I think Miss Sherie heard it, too, but she just looked at the straggly zinnias by the front steps and said how pretty they were. Gram came from the back and with a bigger smile than usual, set an extra place at the table. We were having our usual supper: cabbage soup.

Cabbage soup was Gram's "signature" dish, partly because she favored it and partly because it didn't require a single store-bought thing. She said it was good for me and we grew everything needed to make it in our vegetable patch. It varied with the season, sometimes more carrots or celery or corn or squash, but the base was always cabbage. In the summer there were plump, fresh tomatoes in the soup. In the winter Gram added the stewed tomatoes she put up in old mayonnaise jars on summer Saturdays.

Sometimes there was enough baking powder and evaporated milk from the store to make cornbread and cabbage soup and cornbread made a filling meal. It was my favorite. There were times when cabbage soup was all we ate, but it sure was better with the cornbread. Gram would come from the cotton field, find and carry wood to stoke up the fire again and set about making the cornbread. By the time the cabin was filled with the aroma of cornbread baking and cabbage soup simmering, GP would be home from the field.

Sometimes Gram would spoon grease out of the old soup can of bacon grease that sat on the window sill next to the stove and turn that soup into a stew with some pieces of chicken or even some raccoon. Not the time Miss Sherie was there though. The soup was thin even with some fresh okra stirred in and there was no cornbread at all. But Miss Sherie praised the soup and kept up a cheerful chatter about the weather, and the registration's progress and the zinnias in an old milk bottle in the middle of the table.

GP sat at the table, but was absolutely silent. "You can't trust white people," I heard him tell Gram later that night. "Not a one. Not as far as you could throw em."

That very night we heard that two white men in a pickup truck threw gasoline in bottles at my school and they were like bombs that set it on fire. That scared me. Was my school gone? After church on Sunday we rode past it in the wagon pulled by our mule, Bud. The school was mostly okay, but I was confused and sad. Why would white people do this?

A week later it was worse. Much worse. GP woke me up in the middle of the night. "Put on your clothes, chile," he said. We went out on the front porch and the sky looked like it was on fire. GP, Gram and I walked down the road to see what was happening. This time it was our church and even from far away we could feel the heat on our faces. The whole building was crashing to the ground in fits of flame. The next day, nothing was left but embers and a brick fireplace. I sobbed in GP's arms asking why God had taken our church.

"God didn't take our church," he said with quiet fury. "It was those damn white people!"

"You mean Miss Sherie burned our church?" I asked through my tears wondering why she would do this.

"Maybe she didn't do it," he said,"but it's her fault. It's all her fault."

It took me a long time to fall asleep and when I did my dreams were full of fire and white faces swirling and one of those faces belonged to Miss Sherie. I cried out and Gram came. "Why did Miss Sherie get the church burned?" I asked.

Gram held me tight and rocked me back and forth for awhile. Finally she said sadly, “Aw, baby, ya know how ah sets the stove on fire?”

“Uhhuh,” I managed through my tears.

“You know the stove gets hot when I start the fire and how it can burn you?”

“Uhhuh.”

“This is the hard part, baby. I start the fire. The stove gets hot. You get burned. If I didn’t start the fire, then you wouldn’t get burned. Is that true?”

“I guess.”

“Some folks would say that you get burned because I start the fire. Do you see that?”

“A little.”

“Miss Sherie came here to start the fire of freedom. Some people get hot and angry because they don’t want us to have our freedom. Those people burned down the church.” She paused and played with one of my pigtails. “So, because Miss Sherie is a good person and wants to help, some bad people burned down the church. GP doesn’t want white people here and so he blames her for making white people mad.”

In time this would make sense to me. I knew Gram and GP disagreed about white people, but I remember when he began to agree more with her.

After the church burned we began going to Our Lord Redeems nearby. I missed our church but I loved celebrating the Lord so this new place was a good place to spend Sunday mornings. Our Lord Redeems had one purpose our church didn’t have: active voter registration drives.

Each Sunday, after taking care of God’s business, the church settled down to talking about the freedom business. Registration talk was about the time my grandfather found reason to go out to the car – and stay there. Like I said, Gram had registered, so she could see the relationship between God’s business and registering to vote. How could God help us have a better life if we refused to register? Registering was the way God was offering us to move up. Gram couldn’t canvass because she had to be out working in the fields with GP and me but she could take her turn to cook for the four civil rights workers on a Sunday. She knew GP would be angry, but even so, when the paper was passed around she wrote her name for supper the next Sunday and began wondering what she would fix for Miss Sherie and her friends.

You would think that you could trust the people at church, especially on Sunday, but someone told about the list and about whose name was at the top. We had no idea until Wednesday that her offer was dangerous, but I overheard GP talking real mad with Gram when they thought I was out getting the eggs.

“I was just walkin home,” he said,” and this damn red pick-up truck flying the damn Confederate flag raced up like they was gonna run me down.” I knew he was really really mad because GP never said swear words.

“They stopped maybe five feet from my boots,” he said. “The barrel of a long gun was right against the damn windshield. This old wrinkled white man leaned out of the window and said, ‘Boy, get your ass over here, and what could I do?

“I was shakin’ so hard inside, but I tried not to show it. Then he said, ‘Your woman signed up to feed them God damned communists who are here causing trouble. You tell her that honest white folks will take revenge if those nigger lovers come to your house. This is the only warnin you’ll get.’”

I sat as still as a stone even though I was shaking inside myself.

“Woman, what in God’s name has you done?” GP thundered. “I just had to stand there with my hat in my hands and my eyes on the damn road and take that. Just stand there and take it while that damn cracker tells me you havin’ them white workers to supper on Sunday. Is it true?”

“It is true, George.”

“You are so crazy about those folks you bring the Klan to our house?”

“I never thought…”

“No? Well now you gots to tell ‘em not to come. That damn cracker he say the revenge would be on me. And probably the whole family.”

There was a long tense silence and I edged into the kitchen. Gram was motioning GP to sit at the old table. She ladled some cabbage stew into a cracked bowl and put it on the table in front of him where he slumped into the chair.

“Lucy baby,” she said to me, “go pick a big bag of beans. I need to take some to Mrs. Gilliard this evenin’.” I knew she didn’t want to talk about the Klan in front of me. I wanted to know more, but I picked up a basket and went to our vegetable garden and picked beans as quiet as ever I could, but their voices were too low to hear.

I don’t know what Gram told GP. I think she probably talked about the Lord and how when we pray for a better life, the Lord often answers with an opportunity that is too frightening to accept, so we pass on the possibility out of fear. She might have told him how the wood stove, without any wood, is only a shell of what it could be. Colored folks, without freedom and equality are only a shell of what we can be. I do know that at supper the next day she asked me what I would pick to fix for Miss Sherie and her friends on Sunday.

I looked at GP nervously, then asked, “Won’t you be mad if they come?”

“No, honey, that white man jus’ scared me, that’s all. He gots no right to tell me what to do in my own house.”

“But what about the Klan?”

“Well, chile, if the Klan comes, this free grandfather will worry about it then. What do you want for supper Sunday?

“Gram’s good cabbage stew, I reckon,” I said.

“All right,” said GP. He even helped by shooting a possum. Our menu was possum stew (with lots of cabbage, carrots, okra and onions from the vegetable patch), collards, rice and a special lemon pound cake made with some lemons and extra sugar from church ladies who weren’t brave enough to have white folks to dinner, but still wanted to help.

Gram always said the cabbage soup was good, but stew was the best for special occasions. This was a very special feast for us and Gram stayed home from church to make sure the firebox was just right for fixing dinner. She said she was honoring the Lord through her cooking that Sunday.

The aroma of the stew filled the house when the four white civil rights workers arrived and they obviously found it compelling. I was surprised when they called GP and Gram Mr. and Mrs. Butler and I found out those white people didn’t have any more food than we had. They ate grits for breakfast, honey buns for supper and rice for dinner. They didn’t even have Gram’s cabbage soup and sometimes even cornbread for supper. Nothing remarkable happened at that dinner except that four white folks sat down to supper in the home of three black folks in Pineville in 1965 and they all lived to tell about it.

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That summer of 1965 was my last in Pineville. By that time my parents had found a small cottage in East Oakland, so we finally had our own home. For ten years, I didn’t have the money to go visit so I could only write to Gram and GP. However, in the spring of 1975, I took my new husband, John, to Pineville to meet them. I planned to fix them a nice big batch of cabbage soup using a wonderful Italian sausage with fennel seeds and garlic I’d found in a gourmet shop in the East Bay. I froze it and wrapped it in about ten layers of foil and newspaper so it wouldn’t melt and spoil.

I had forgotten how June mornings simmer in South Carolina and when Gram lit the stove before dawn I fought to sleep in. Drops of sweat were already forming on my upper lip and ran down from my forehead when I finally entered the kitchen. And as I thought about chopping the cabbage and scraping the carrots and browning the onions over that hot old wood stove, I suddenly knew that I couldn’t use that sausage, no matter

how special it was. I did bring some San Francisco sour dough bread and thought I would use it as a special treat in place of cornbread.

However, the wood stove was silent that morning and my memory had to suffice. Gram was there in her green headscarf. Gray and white spirals of hair escaped from the edge of the head wrap and she smiled that bright warm smile of hers. Two years before she was putting cornbread in the stove when she burned her hand on the side of the oven. Remembering the lesson she taught me, "This stove is always hot, Lucy Baby. You don't ever want to touch it. You got to take care," she figured that it was time to retire her old friend. The stove still ruled the kitchen on its squat legs but there was a new refrigerator to keep things cold and her strawberry ice cream frozen.

I did notice the old stove had a very important use, however. There were some opened letters from me and from Sherie. There were special pictures of Sherie's baby daughter, Lucy—named for me!--propped up against the back. My Aunt Trena lived next door and Gram and GP would make the walk past the vegetable garden to sit on the porch with her before meals. "We has to keep our old bones movin'," she would say. "Once ah stops, the Lord will be comin' for me."

The four of us had a supper of red beans and rice. I felt very comfortable sharing the sour dough bread though they were not as delighted as I had hoped. It tasted strange to a cornbread tongue. I don't know if red beans and rice are as healthy as cabbage soup, but they sure were tasty. Perhaps, Gram, GP and I had outgrown cabbage soup. We would never outgrow the love we shared with one another and the old wood stove. And I would never forget Gram's words about the fire of freedom.

Southern Cabbage-Tomato Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 head of cabbage (small to medium)
- 3 bacon slices *(optional):* 1 tbsp bacon fat
- pinch of sugar
- salt to taste
- pepper (black, cayenne, or red) to taste
- 14.5oz can stewed tomatoes,
- ¼ cup chicken or vegetable broth (or stock)

Optional: Add other diced vegetables, such as, carrots, celery, corn, etc. based on personal likes

Instructions:

Clean and cut cabbage leaves (chopped into bite-sized chunks). Rinse once more and let drain by using colander. Cook bacon completely, and set aside. You can cook the bacon in a skillet on the stove top, in the oven or in a microwave, whichever you prefer. *Optional: Reserve up to a tablespoon of bacon fat to later add to cabbage for flavor. Or you may skip the bacon all together for a vegetarian version of this dish.* Put cabbage into a saucepan or Dutch oven. Add stewed tomatoes and broth. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally. *NOTE*: While cooking, cabbage will shrink a lot. Cook until cabbage is desired tenderness. Add bacon fat, (if desired) salt, pepper and sugar to taste. Add more broth, if desired.

Grandma Hattie's Christmas Soup

Bernetta Thorne-Williams
North Carolina

My mother, Ruth, was raised in rural North Carolina during the 1930s and 40s. She was the daughter of sharecroppers. According to my mom, the family had very little, not that she realized they were poor, because all those around her lived in the same conditions. Despite the everyday toil, mom looked forward to the Christmas holidays. The children would receive an apple, orange and perhaps a few nuts in their Christmas stockings, depending on how well the crops did that year. But the magic of the holidays came from attending church and the amazing food my grandmother Hattie would spend most of the week preparing. This was the one time of year when there seemed to be plenty of food to go around. There were sweet potatoes, country ham, barbecue pig (which was cooked outside over an open pit), fresh collards, fried chicken and cornbread. But, mom's favorite food was the Christmas soup.

Her mother, Hattie, only made this soup once a year. Mom said the one time she asked her mother why they could not have the soup year-round, she said her mother smiled at her and replied, *"Because it would take all the magic out of it."* Mom would recall how Grandma Hattie made the soup in a large cauldron outside. The process to make the perfect soup required a lot of patience. However, that patience was rewarded with an incredible, mouthwatering soup. The soup's delectable aroma could be smelled for miles. Mom said the smell of the soup was oftentimes responsible for a few extra folks around the dinner table. Hattie had a simple rule; no one ever came to her house hungry and left the same way.

By the time mom was twelve, she was cooking for the folks that owned the land, making the same dishes her mother made, but never the Christmas soup. Grandma Hattie told her that making biscuits and frying chicken was one thing, but that the making of the soup came from the heart and that was not something one should lightly share with others.

The Christmas soup was a tradition my mother kept when she married and left North Carolina behind for new horizons in Washington, D.C. Like my mother before us, her four children looked forward to Christmastime and the feast we would have. Gone were the simple pleasures and excitement of an apple,

orange and nuts replaced with the modern luxuries of a record player, football and Julia doll (based on the character Diahann Carroll played in her sitcom from 1968 to 1971).

I don't recall any of my mother's four children asking her why the soup was only made once a year. I guess because, for us, it added a special magic to the holidays and we just accepted it at face value. Some traditions stand the test of time and Grandma Hattie's Christmas soup is one of them. Gone was the cauldron, replaced by a black metal soup pot, suitable to be used on a gas stove. Mom would start the soup on Christmas Eve when she arrived home from work. Prior to midnight she would have added all the ingredients and with this task completed she would lie down on the couch, set the alarm to go off every hour and get up to stir the soup. Mom said the secret to a great Christmas soup was love and allowing the soup to simmer to release all the favors. "*Patience*," she would say, was the difference between having a good soup or an incredible soup.

My mother was a believer that all women should know how to cook. She encouraged her sons to learn how to prepare a meal, but for the girls it was not an option. By the time I was fifteen, it was time for me to do a solo meal. What this meant was that mom would be in the kitchen to provide moral support and guidance, but she did not cook. Because the rest of the family was known to be critical, she would not reveal who prepared the dinner until the meal was over.

I can remember my first time preparing the Christmas soup. You have those moments when everything seems to go wrong. And for some reason those frustrating times seem to cling to you longer than the times when you are successful. I tried to slice off part of my finger while cutting the potatoes, the beef was tough, my seasoning was off and then there was the getting up every hour to stir the blasted soup. That was the year we almost went without Christmas soup. I did not have the patience to stay up most of the night cooking a meal, any meal. My mother asked me in that quiet, yet firm voice of hers, *"How are you going to accomplish other things in life, truly important things if you are going to let a simple soup get the better of you?"* Simple, I remember repeating over in my mind. That darned soup had more moving parts than a freight train; which I felt like I had been hit by (a lack of sleep will do that for you).

By the time Christmas morning arrived, I was tired and irritable because I was sure I had ruined the soup. The rest of the meal went off without a hitch. I can make yams and stuff a turkey with the best of them. As we prepared the table for dinner and I once again stirred my soup a strange thing happened. When I removed the lid, the contents looked like that of soup. I was somewhat taken aback, not sure what I had expected to find in that pot. I am a believer in miracles. I am also a believer in a mother's love. There was no way, without a little motherly assistance that my first soup turned out to be not only edible, but good.

The soup and cornbread was always the first course, followed by the other scrumptious foods. Throughout dinner, family and guests complimented mom on the meal. Once dinner was completed and before the guests could leave the table, mom informed them that dinner had been prepared by me. Of course at that moment, my brothers pretended to develop a stomachache. They have always been pains in my backside, but for the most part, good-natured pains.

After the dishes were washed my mom pulled me aside to critique the meal. The only thing that she said about the soup was that the white potatoes should be diced a little smaller the next time. I asked her if she had intervened to salvage the soup. My mother insisted she did not. Her words of encouragement not just about cooking, but her outlook on life helped to shape me into the confident woman that I am today.

My sister and I still make the soup yearly for our families at Christmastime. My brothers, although good cooks in their own right, never really grasped the finesse of cooking the Christmas soup. They typically just manage to drop by during the holidays to mooch a bowl or two. Through the years my sister and I have made little tweaks to the recipe. The original recipe called for fatback which is a food I never liked and one that I used to pick out of my soup. My sister still cooks her soup with the fatback and through the years she has added sweet peas.

In 2009, the last Christmas I was blessed to still have my mom here on earth with me (she is one of my guardian angels there in heaven) she gave me the biggest compliment. After dinner she told me that my soup was almost as good as hers. 'Almost' is big praise when you are judging your cooking next to that of Tempie Ruth Bullock Thorne. My mom was an amazing cook and an even more amazing person, mother, and friend.

For the most part, the Christmas soup is the same today as it was seventy years ago. Nowadays, people would refer to it as Brunswick stew. Cooking for my grandmother and my mother was a labor of love; a love that they passed on to my sister and me. Neither of us was blessed with daughters, by birth. In fact, my mother was blessed with seven grandsons. The recipes that have been handed down from generation to generation will probably be lost. Our daughters-in-law (I'm hopeful someday to be blessed with two amazing daughters by marriage) will come into the marriage with their own traditions and recipes, which means things like Grandma Hattie's Christmas soup will probably become a lost art. Unless, my sons can impress upon their future wives the importance of their heritage and the Christmas soup being a part of that heritage. Recipes and cooking together are all a part of a shared history that helps to hold a family together.

Beef, Chicken, Pork & Bean Stew

Ingredients

- 1 medium pack of stew beef
- 1 pack skinless chicken breast (2 to 3 breasts)
- 1 pack boneless pork chops (4 to 5 medium)
- 2 cups country ham pieces
- fatback (optional)
- 3 cups fresh butter beans (frozen is fine)
- 3 cups kernel corn (frozen is fine)
- 4 cups white potatoes (diced small)
- 1 (28 oz) can tomato juice (substitute V8)
- 1 large can of crushed tomatoes
- 1 can of tomato paste
- ½ green cabbage (cleaned and cut)
- 1/4 cup of sugar
- salt to taste
- red pepper to taste
- 1 (14oz) can of creamed corn

Instructions

Wash all meat and vegetables. In large soup stock pot, place stew beef (cover beef with water – pot should be approximately ½ full of water). Bring meat to a boil on medium heat. Allow beef to cook for one hour then add the chicken, pork, ham and fatback (optional). Allow all meat to cook another three hours or until meat is nice and tender. Remove meat from pot and shred. Place meat back in pot and add potatoes, lima beans, tomato juice, crushed tomatoes and tomato paste. Cook for one hour. Add cabbage, corn, sugar, salt and pepper. Cook for one hour. Add creamed corn, reduce heat to simmer for six or more hours. Stir hourly.

The longer the soup simmers, the better it will taste.

Serve with cornbread or corn muffins.

The Sweetness of Soup

Alice Randall and Caroline Randall Williams
Tennessee

The week my daughter turned twenty-five she decided to write a cookbook. We were standing in a bookstore in Oxford, Mississippi when she made the announcement. We were surrounded by dazzling cookbooks, thoughtful cookbooks, well-researched cookbooks, beautiful cookbooks but there was nothing on the shelf that she could buy and gift to the students she had been teaching in the Mississippi Delta that would help them cook tasty, easy, health-sustaining, identity-honoring, meals on a SNAP or food stamp budget shopping out of Walmart. She wanted to write that book and she wanted me to help her do it.

I was quickly persuaded. She had just achieved her quarter century, I was just past my half century and writing the cookbook seemed a wonderful opportunity to poke through our foremothers' kitchens. And it seemed an even better way to get to know each other as grown women who each had something the other didn't—me almost a decade teaching foodways at Vanderbilt University, she almost a decade of cooking for herself every chance she got—have to add to the pot.

We quickly divided the labor, I would handle the research and much of the writing of the memoir sections of the cookbook. Caroline would handle the recipe development and the writing of the headnotes that led into the recipes.

Caroline would later say the recipes were her love letters to me, and the memoirs were my love letters to our foremothers. She watched me struggling with my weight and wanted to offer me forgotten healthy family dishes to sustain me in the struggle. I wanted to honor the women in the family who had fed me with so much love even as I sought to find a new food way forward that didn't keep me anchored at a weight above two hundred pounds. We were determined to put health and history on a tasty soul food plate and share that plate with others, particularly children.

It took us most of the fall to get the proposal together. We were several days into cooking a Christmas feast for over one hundred of our close friends and family, on what might have been the third or even fourth run to the grocery store of the day, when Caroline, instead of zipping from her truck to our kitchen, sat stock still in her seat staring at her phone while I, toting a heavy sack of pears, fumed and glared back at my

daughter reading email when there were kitchen chores to perform. Finally, she rolled down her window and sang out, "We sold the cookbook." Minutes later we were dancing together in our driveway. The road before us would be long and winding.

We reached so many mountaintops: learning that my grandfather did most all of the cooking for my grandmother but allowed her to claim it as her own; discovering the name of the Black-owned fish market where our family in Detroit placed their weekly orders for fresh perch and snapper in the 40s and the 50s; discovering from archaeological records evidence that enslaved Africans often ate fish they could catch in secret and bake in leaves and that the fish might be accompanied by wild berries also collected in stealth and happening onto back issues of *The Message*, the Black Seventh Day Adventist magazine and discovering a treasure trove of vegetarian recipes. The highest peak was the week we photographed the covers of the cookbook collection her grandmother Joan had left Caroline in her will and paged through the books to discover scrawled on notecards some of the secrets of her life.

And there were valleys. We learned that too many, at least three, of our foremothers had been conceived in kitchen rapes. We learned that our forefathers and foremothers associated home grown vegetables with not being able to vote and fruit hanging from trees with lynching. We learned that the hardest thing about being a domestic servant in freedom or in slavery had nothing to do with kitchen work.

Before it was all over Caroline had a profound respect for my fear of the kitchen and all the inherited stories that explained why I found it so hard to cook for my family—and I had an even more profound respect for her absolute unwillingness to be afraid of the kitchen. She wasn't ignorant, she was brave; she was defiant. We were no longer working on recipes, we were working on cooking up a revolution, saving black lives that mattered dearly to us, by becoming kitchen sink Amazons. To honor the foremothers she would take her kitchen back—and feed her black mother superbly from it.

And so she did. I have never eaten better and I will never eat better than I did the summer of 2013, the summer Caroline spent cooking her way through the eighty recipes that make up the cookbook *Soul Food Love.* Most of the proteins she fed me came from beans, peanuts, chickpeas, chicken and fish. That summer she cooked no pork or beef and only once cooked lamb. There's a simple explanation for this.

One branch of the family is Seventh Day Adventist and so there was from the beginning a strong vegetarian leaning to the book. As part of our focus was from the beginning to create affordable recipes—that pulled her even further from the world of meat toward the homemade peanut butter and humus, toward the one-pot stews and soups that are the cornerstone of the *Soul Food Love* kitchen.

Soup sustains. We love all kinds of soups. Soups can begin meals, end meals, and be the meal. Soup can be breakfast, lunch, dinner, or snack. It fits in where it gets in, it does what needs doing. Give you an appetite or fill you up. It can be stretched with water, or concentrated to become more portable. It is as versatile, hardworking, and varied as the black women who create it.

We love soup. A big soup pot on the back of the stove was a tradition in Caroline's Nana's house, Joan's house, and it is a tradition in many black families.

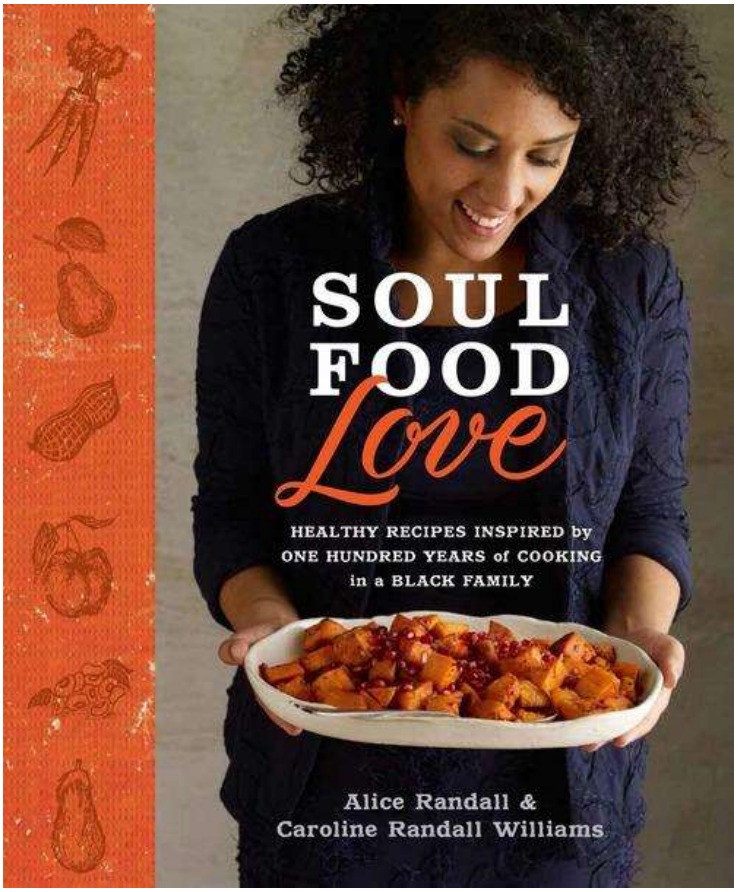
Soul Food Love looks at 100 years of cooking and eating in one black family. It stretches from 1913 the year my grandmother Dear started her first kitchen in Selma, Alabama, to 2013 the year Caroline and I spent an entire summer in Nashville, Tennessee with our pots and pans and pens re-mixing our culinary inheritance. Along the way we started to think about our foremothers in terms of the soups they made and ate.

Caroline's maternal great-grandmother, Dear, born about 1898, didn't serve fried chicken, she served a dense yardbird soup, stewed chicken, cooked in a tin pot with tomato and okra, meat so tender it would fall off the bone, into the self-thickening, highly-peppered broth she ladled out to whatever family members dropped by or were working at the dry cleaners she owned and ran with her husband in the Black Bottom neighborhood of Detroit.

Caroline's paternal great grandmother, Grandma Bontemps, born in the early days of the 20th century loved a shrimp stew she could serve to the clubwomen and faculty wives she entertained on the Fisk University campus in some of her pretty china.

Grandma Bontemps daughter, Caroline's Nana, librarian Joan Williams, who created a kitchen for the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville, was famous for her chili that helped fuel the sit-ins but she also collected recipes for exotic cioppino that she hoped to, and eventually did, make in brighter days to come.

Me, I love, sweet potato broth. Caroline and I invented it, sweet potato broth, inspired by George Washington Carver. I love that it's something new and delicious and I love the more complex stews we can make using it as a base, though it can be sipped on its own or turned into chicken and peanut soup—or our sweet potato black eye pea and collard green soup.



Caroline's favorite soup is the first soup I ever cooked with her: carrot soup. I will let her tell you a little about it. This is an excerpt from Soul Food Love:

The first time I remember making this soup, I was cooking with Mama for our mother-daughter book club. I was about ten. We'd read Ella Enchanted, a book that ultimately inspired Mama and me to share with a larger world the black fairy-tale princess, B.B. Bright, we had begun creating when I was very small. Carrot ginger soup is the kind of thing the heroine of The Diary of B.B. Bright, Possible Princess would eat. It makes me want to shout out with gratitude to Shireen Dodson, the African American mother who wrote The Mother-Daughter Book Club and inspired us to start a book club of our own. (It is wild to imagine that some mother-daughter pair somewhere may read this book in their meeting.) Most recently, I made this soup at Easter….This soup has an amazing color, and is a perfect addition to any celebration table. ~Caroline Randall Williams From *Soul Food Love* (2015)

Carrots are cheap. They will keep in the refrigerator for over a month. And if you use this recipe you can turn them into a beautiful soup, bright orange and jewel-like, that it can be almost anything you need it to be: breakfast, lunch, or dinner. We use chicken stock in this recipe so that it can stick to the ribs and be a meal. But you can serve just a little bit in a shot glass and it's an elegant appetizer. If you want to stay vegetarian, substitute a vegetable stock for the chicken broth.

The sweetness of the soup comes from the everyday miracle from the shared memories and comes from that which is buried underground. Invisible, carrots grow full of nutrients, vibrant orange and beautiful.

Some people, many recipes, push carrots off to the side and want them to be supporting cast for showier, fancier, more expensive vegetables. We love our carrots front and center as a way of honoring all who have been pushed to the side. The taste of a good carrot soup is the taste of the making of magic out of simple things. We've cooked this soup for so many Easter tables. It is worthy of that spot. But we also have pulled this soup out of the back of the January fridge for many a last-minute dinner when all we had time to do was pour some in a mug and zap it in a microwave. There is nothing like the sweetness of soup, the sweetness of when what is good for you, is also good to the tongue. The earthy sweetness of the carrot that reminds us we may be invisible to some but we are growing, we are becoming sustaining, we are sweet enough for the center of the table, and we will be delicious magic when we get there.

Carrots are not indigenous to Africa. We love yams and sweet potatoes, and the soups and stews Black women have made with them across time and the globe. Love them with a passion that eclipses our admiration for carrots. We appreciate profoundly those yams that were with us in Africa, with us in the Middle, Passage, with us in the rural South, and migrated with us to the urban North. But carrot soup has this pride of place, it is proof that we did not just make do, *we made new*, we, black women, made new wonder, in the New World.

And we wrote cookbooks. From *What Mrs. Fisher Knew About Old South Cooking* 'til now. Cookbooks that talked about feeding people other than ourselves and cookbooks that explored cooking for us, just us, and us and others. When we were deciding on the final recipes for the cookbook, I was almost surprised that carrot soup was still in the running. It shouldn't have been. But, it's perfect for just us and us and others.

Our cookbook began with Caroline's wish to empower her students in Mississippi and her exhausted mother with tools, with recipes, that would allow us to eat healthier, with more delight, and rooted to African-American identity, tradition, and innovation. This Carrot Ginger soup is all of that. No bag of chips needed.

Carrot Ginger Soup

Ingredients

- 2 large yellow onions, chopped
- ¼ cup grated peeled fresh ginger
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 4 pounds carrots, roughly chopped
- 1 ½ quarts Chicken Broth
- 1 tsp grated lemon zest
- ½ tbsp salt

Serves 8

From *Soul Food Love: Healthy Recipes Inspired by One Hundred Years of Cooking in a Black Family* by Alice Randall and Caroline Randall Williams. Clarkson-Potter.

Instructions

Step 1. In a large pot, cook the onions and ginger in the olive oil over medium heat until the onions soften, about 5 minutes. Add the carrots, broth, lemon zest, and salt, and simmer until the carrots are soft enough to pierce easily with a fork, about 25 minutes.

Step 2. Pour the contents of the pot into a blender or food processor, and whirl until smooth. Return the soup to the pot, bring to a simmer, and then serve.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Vegetablarian: A Salad Memoir

Tanya Leake
Barbados

Let me tell you the story of my evolution. From a daughter in the traditional Black family that enjoyed rich, traditional soul food meals during special occasions, holidays and sometimes Sundays…to the self-proclaimed "vegetablarian" (that everyone assumes is a vegetarian). From a curious problem solver by nature and engineer by trade…to the certified health and wellness coach, consultant, educator and founder of EmBODY WELL…

My salad story lies in how I evolved and discovered I *could* bridge the gap between how I grew up eating (and what I learned) and how I now eat (and what I teach).

I STARTED EARLY

I grew up in a household where most of our meals were homemade. For our family, like many others, meals were a time for celebration not only of occasions (Sundays, New Year's, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) but also of the outstanding cooks in the family. Consequently, I learned my early lessons in cooking well (and eating well) from the outstanding cooks in my family: my stepmother and a few of my aunts (on my father's side). My stepmother did all of the cooking in our house and she was (and is) well known in the family for her cooking. The aunts I learned from were also traditional women that did most of the cooking in their households and had signature dishes they were known for. From these women, of course, I learned to cook traditional soul food dishes like collard greens, black-eyed peas, candied yams, cole slaw, fried chicken, chitlins and BBQ ribs as well as other cultural dishes such as eggplant and chicken parmesan, sweet and sour shrimp, linguine and clam sauce, stuffed baked pasta shells and yellow and red rice with all types of beans. I took a particular interest in cooking partly because it was expected and partly because I enjoyed eating good food and, given my curious nature, needed to know what went into the dishes I enjoyed. As you might imagine, salads were not a huge part of these meals. If they were, they were very basic. These cooks didn't tend to experiment as much with salads as they did with the other dishes that they experimented with and varied to make their own. As a result, I developed the early perception, as most do, that salads were boring, lettuce-based dishes with a few standard ingredients that required a good dressing to make them stand out.

I also grew up in a household with a father who was very focused on and stressed the importance of education. As part of this early academic encouragement, as early as 3rd grade, I was enrolled in a special academic enhancement program and, by 6th grade, I transitioned from the nearby Catholic school uptown to a private school downtown in order to take advantage of additional educational opportunities. During this time, I

took particular interest in science and practical applications, particularly in chemistry, physics and biology. This eventually led to an engineering degree at Stanford University and a consequent career as a software engineer and consultant for almost twenty years. I was excited about exploring challenges at various clients and problem solving on a day-to-day basis. However, even as I enjoyed my work, I began suffering from various health problems largely as a result of indulgent food and constant travel.

I DISCOVERED NATURAL (FOOD) MEDICINE

I saw a number of doctors for my health issues with limited success in resolving them. As fate would have it, during this time, I bumped into an old friend who looked radiant and amazingly healthy. I asked her for the secret to her radiant health, which led me to seek the advice of a natural health practitioner and African medicine woman. After working with her for 6 months, I began to see significant improvements in my health condition. Needless to say, I was excited and, as you would expect given my curious nature, I wanted to learn more! This led to my own research and studies in the area of holistic health and, eventually, various certifications and trainings in health coaching, natural health and nutrition therapy. In addition, I was learning how to change my cooking to make my food more healthful *yet retain flavor* that made it (in some cases, even more) enjoyable. My cooking also became more experimental as a result, enabling me to explore old favorites as well as new taste/flavor combinations.

MY CAREER PATH TOOK A TURN

While my interest and education in health, wellness and the food to support it was increasing steadily, my consulting career was also continuing to progress. In fact, I reached a critical point in my career when I was in the position to be promoted to partner at my consulting firm. As I was guided into the promotion process, I came to understand that, as a partner, I would be *much* less hands-on in the problem solving activities that I so enjoyed. I decided to continue with the process and make a decision if and when the opportunity was offered.

Well, the promotion happened…sort of. All signs pointed to yes - I received a call of congratulations from a partner AND was *not* notified that I had *not* been promoted (the standard process before for those who had actually been promoted were notified). I then received a call from my sponsor who told me that I had been promoted **but,** due to budgetary changes at the last minute, it had been rescinded! I went through a range of emotions: anger, confusion, sadness, frustration, disappointment…

I decided to take a leave of absence to get my emotions together and decide on next steps. During that time, I went through a self-exploration process guided by the book The Artist's Way (by Julia Cameron). It helped me explore, assess and identify my strengths and the types of work activities that provided me a pleasant, engaged and, above all, meaningful life. This eventually led to my decision by the end of my

leave to pursue my passion for health and wellness full time, found EmBODY WELL and my current pursuit of a Master's Degree in Clinical Nutrition and the RD credential.

I DEVELOPED MY APPROACH: VEGETABLARIANISM AND #FINDYOURSALAD

Once I left consulting, I had the privilege of educating and coaching clients and consulting organizations, including the state and county health departments, on disease prevention, using nutrition, physical activity and wellness interviews and interventions. With that came the opportunity for me to talk to hundreds of people about their perspectives on health, including both health information consumers and health professionals. This is when I coined the term "vegetablarian."

It was partly my response to the question I always got: "Are you a vegetarian?" todescribe my approach to eating but mostly a way to convey what I believed was the most impactful change anyone can make to their diet, i.e. focusing on vegetables as much as possible. Simply put, my plate, shopping list, cart and pantry are always at least half full of vegetables. Once I started teaching about "vegetablarianism," I got an overwhelmingly positive response that it was a uniquely accessible healthy eating approach, even to those most resistant to or confused about "eating healthy." At the same time, I began to realize the narrow and limiting misconceptions about eating healthy, particularly vegetables, specifically salads.

Since my goal is to tell you my salad story, let me focus on how I talk to individuals, groups and organizations I work with about salads. One of the weekly EmBODY WELL challenges I give to my clients and students is called the #findyoursalad challenge. #findyoursalad first and foremost is a challenge to redefine one's concept of salad, starting with the general misconception that all salads start with lettuce. #findyoursalad then becomes a challenge to explore a variety of combinations of *any* of your favorite vegetables (primarily) and herbs with the fruits, proteins, grains and healthy fats that you most enjoy. (You will see from the salad recipes below that salads can take any number of forms with or without lettuce—or dressing!)

A few additional salad concepts that I stress to open up greater possibilities (and dispel myths) as you #findyoursalad…

Your salad…

⇒ …can contain leafy vegetables but does NOT have to (think about fruit salad, pasta salad)
⇒ ...can include raw or cooked ingredients or BOTH
⇒ ...can be served chilled or moderate temperature or BOTH
⇒ ...can have an optional wet or dry "dressing"
⇒ ...can be any part (appetizer, side, main or dessert!) of any meal (breakfast, lunch or dinner!)
⇒ …can be eaten in any season

I BRIDGED THE GAP: THE #FINDYOURSALAD FORMULA

To support #findyoursalad, I "engineered" a formula for "constructing" salad (and dressing). My salad formula became a great vehicle for me to bridge the gap between my engineer-consultant-cook side that wanted to solve the challenge of making healthy, great tasting food and my vegetablarian-health coach side that wanted to make sure she gets her vegetables. The formula does just that, giving enough guidance for a novice cook (or aspiring vegetablarian) to find their own great tasting salads while, at the same time, offering suggestions to the seasoned cook (or veteran vegetablarian) to find new salad options.

THE FORMULA FOR SALAD

BASE INGREDIENTS
[VEGETABLE(S)
+ (optional) PROTEIN(S)
+ (optional) DAIRY/CHEESE
+ (optional) WHOLE GRAINS
+ (optional) FRUIT(S)]

DRESSING
OLIVE OIL
+ (optional) DRY (HERB/SPICE) SEASONING
+ (optional) LIQUID (VINEGAR/CONDIMENT/JUICE) SEASONING
+ (optional) GARLIC/ONION

* EVOO = extra virgin olive oil

No formula would be complete without examples to prove and demonstrate the way the formula works. Here are a few of my favorite salad recipes that I discovered using the formula as a guideline.

Eggplant Tomato Basil Salad

I discovered this salad as I was looking for ways to enjoy eggplant in a different way than the eggplant parmesan my stepmother used to prepare (fried and smothered in cheese). I first sampled this at a board meeting for a cancer clinic that I served with and I asked for the recipe immediately after having my first bite! What I like about this salad is it is a year-round salad. The warmth and heartiness of the eggplant stands up well in winter, while the crisp, lightness of the basil and tomatoes keeps it cool for summer. This is also such a colorful salad and color matters when you are going for table appeal no matter the season!

Ingredients

- 1 (1lb) eggplant, cut into slices
- olive oil
- 2-3 tomatoes, chopped (2 cups)
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh basil

Optional

- 2 tsps capers
- 1 cup of chopped romaine or arugula

Dressing Ingredients

- 1-2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1-2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 tsp EVOO
- 1-2 tsp dried oregano
- salt and
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- hot sauce to taste

Instructions

1) Lightly brush both sides of eggplant with olive oil.
2) Roast or grill eggplant until tender (roast: 425°F for 7-10 minutes each side; grill for 5 minutes each side). Cool and cut eggplant into chunks.
3) Combine eggplant, tomato, feta, and basil and any optional ingredients in a large bowl.
4) Combine dressing and optional ingredients into small bowl and whisk. When blended, add to large bowl and toss gently.
5) Refrigerate for at least 1 hour to allow flavors to settle and mix.
6) Sprinkle additional basil, feta or oregano on top when serving (I do all of the above!!!).
Serve as a main dish with some protein or with pita chips for a hearty snack.

Collard Cabbage Slaw

I have been making and loving cole slaw since I first discovered vinegar slaw. In my opinion, slaw is the king of summer salads: easy to make and always refreshing with its crispness. One day, I had both cabbage and collards sitting in my vegetable bin and decided to combine the two…so glad I made that decision! I have been enjoying it regularly in the summer ever since. The vinegar softens both the cabbage and collards to the perfect slaw texture *and* keeps it fresh! I usually make a *huge* bowl and eat on it for days as a main and side dish.

Ingredients

- 1 head of cabbage (red or green (or a mix!!), thinly sliced
- 1 bunch of collards, thinly sliced
- 1-2 carrots, shredded or thinly sliced using a peeler

Optional

- 1 sweet onion, thinly sliced
- 1-2 Granny Smith apple(s), thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp fresh herbs (I like cilantro or tarragon)

Dressing Ingredients

- 1/4-1/3 cup raw, organic apple cider vinegar
- 1/4-1/3 cup EVOO
- 1-2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- black pepper to taste
- hot sauce to taste

Instructions

1) Combine cabbage, collards and carrots (if using) in large bowl.
2) Combine dressing ingredients in bowl and add any optional ingredients to soak in dressing for 5-10 minutes.
3) Pour dressing and optional ingredients into large bowl and toss well.
4) Refrigerate for at least 1 hour to allow flavors to settle and mix.
5) Sprinkle anything additional on top when serving - I sprinkled feta cheese one day and chopped sardines the next. You can mix and match for additional protein, fat or other.

Black Bean Corn Mango Salsa

I LOVE this salad! According to my formula, once you add enough to the salsa, it becomes another versatile salad option. Cilantro is the key flavoring that stamps it as a "salsa-d." I have to admit, sometimes, I can be heavy with the lime because I love the flavor of lime! And when you combine the sour lime and sweet mango, it is really amazing! And, when you balance it with some heat – jalapeños – you can take it to yet another level!

Ingredients

- 2-3 ears of corn (in husk)
- 1 mango, cut into chunks
- 1 can (15-18 oz) black beans, rinsed
- 1 ½ tbsp chopped cilantro (approx. 1/2 bunch)

Optional

- 1-2 jalapeños, diced
- 1 cup chopped arugula
- ½ small red onion, chopped
- ½ small red bell pepper, chopped

Dressing Ingredients

- 1/4 cup EVOO
- 3 tbsp fresh lime juice (approx. 1 lime)
- hot sauce to taste

Instructions

1) Roast or grill corn in husks until fork goes through easily. (Roast: 425°F for 20-30 minutes). Cool, de-husk and cut corn off cob.
2) Combine corn, mango and black beans, cilantro and any optional ingredients in a large bowl.
3) Combine dressing ingredients into small bowl and whisk. When blended, add to large bowl and toss gently.
4) Refrigerate for at least 1 hour to allow flavors to settle and mix.
Serve with lime tortilla chips for maximum flavor.

Others to enjoy…

Cucumber Tomato Salad

Ingredients: cucumbers+tomatoes+red onion+salmon+feta
Dressing: Olive oil+lemon+mustard+mustard seed+dill+parsley

Avocado Quinoa Salad

Ingredients: arugula + avocado + quinoa
Dressing: olive oil+balsamic vinegar+lemon+garlic+cayenne

I hope you enjoy at least one of these salads in the coming weeks and find ways to make them your own! I love hearing about others' explorations and variations – share with us by posting "your salad" to social media with the hashtag #findyoursalad!

FINAL WORD

Soup as a Lens into Black Foodways

Black Culinary History Network

Chef Therese Nelson, Founder

New York

I am an American chef. It has taken me over a decade in the trenches and a lot of soul searching to find personal meaning in that title, but I am fully entrenched in the truth of my life as a chef. I am also a Black woman which is a much more complicated an identity and, in many ways, informs my life and work much more profoundly. This has not always been the case. When I first started my career there was no room for my ethnic identity in my professional life. Part of the reason stemmed from working for chefs and in professional spaces that had no tie to Black foodways, but the major reason was that blackness (rather, the food of the African diaspora) had no cachet in the culinary world. Our foodways were boiled down to the exotic spices of Morocco, maybe the finer more accessible points of Ethiopian cuisine, and, as it related to American foodways, blackness boiled down to a marginalized and stereotypical offering of soul food. It makes it hard to explore your ethnic identity when the depth and breadth of that contribution is proscribed before you cook one dish, so I decided to shift my professional focus.

I knew that there was more to our culinary legacy than what the culinary world had on offer and that the proof was in books like Edna Lewis's *Taste of Country Cooking*, and Dr. Vertamae Grosvenor's *Vibration Cooking*, and Dr. Jessica B. Harris's *High on the Hog*. I had these brilliant culinary scholars pointing me toward the truth. Their work, and the entirety of the food of the African diaspora, offer us the recipes and traditions that become more than just our foodways, but a rebuttal to history's marginalization of our humanity; a culinary legacy that offers us hundreds of years of ancestors in kitchens across the globe creating culture and restoring our humanity through recipes.

My work is evolving but, but here are a few things I know for sure: first, America owes whatever culinary progress it's made as a nation (in large part) to the bodies and talent of Black people from all across the African diaspora. From the slave trade to the spice trade we see Africa in too much of what we eat to try and deny the African hand in the global culinary pot. It occurs to me that it's through the foodways of Black people across the diaspora that we are able to begin to craft what will be the narrative that will define American cuisine. Secondly, recipes are much more than just food; they are life. A well-crafted recipe will tell you much more than how to make a dish. It can tell you the socio-economic status of the writer, the culture from which they come, even the time from which the writer is from so that the recipe actually becomes a kind of time capsule defining culture in tangible ways much more eloquently that most other cultural markers. Recipes become our ancestors' voices telling us how they lived and giving us building blocks on which to build.

The voices and building blocks make this project so appropriate because looking to seemingly simple soup recipes offers a one-pot journey into our heritage.

Too often the story of the food of the African diaspora is a stilted narrative that paints a monolithic picture of poverty, ignorance, subjugation, and strife. If we were to believe this narrative we would be left seeing little value in studying and revering these recipes, but the power of food and the power of our culture is that the proof is in the pot. From complex spice blends, brilliant cooking technique, and carefully crafted heirloom recipes preserved and passed down, we know that our foodways influenced global cuisine and that the black and brown people that bequeathed us this delicious culinary legacy are begging for their stories to be told. By cooking simple recipes that offer us a lens through which to evaluate global African culture we are giving voice to our ancestors and fortifying our future with the truth.

The recipes I offer are ones that I use fairly often and are rooted in the American South as well as the global spice trade. I make both recipes with George Washington Carver in mind because he was influential in the cultivation of both sweet potato and peanut crops, and he was a culinary pioneer that never gets his due (and was a low key feminist), so I hope you enjoy my take on Sweet Potato Bisque and Groundnut Stew.

BLACK CULINARY HISTORY

Sweet Potato Bisque

Ingredients

Croutons

- 3 slices brioche
- 2 ozs melted butter
- 2 tsp cinnamon

Soup

- 2 lbs sweet potatoes
- 1 medium onion
- 4 stalks of celery, diced
- 2 apples, preferably golden delicious, peeled cored and diced
- 4 cloves garlic
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tbsp cardamom pods
- 6 c apple juice
- salt and pepper

Ginger Cream

- 4 ozs coconut milk
- 2 tbsp grated ginger (or 1 tsp ginger powder)
- 1 tsp salt and pepper

Instructions

1. For Croutons: in a medium bowl combine the bread with the melted butter and cinnamon and toast on 400 F until brown and crispy. Reserve for later.
2.Heat oven to 400°F.
3. Prick the potatoes with a fork, place on a baking sheet, and roast until tender, 40 to 45 minutes.
4. In a medium Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the onion, celery, cinnamon, cardamom, garlic and apples and sauté stirring occasionally, until soft, 10 to 12 minutes.
4. Halve the potatoes, scoop out the flesh, and add to the saucepan.
5. Add 6 cups apple juice, 2 tsps salt, and 1/2 tsp pepper. Cook until heated through, 8 to 10 minutes.
6. Puree the soup in the saucepan using a handheld immersion blender (or, working in batches, a standard blender). Add more apple juice, if necessary, to reach the desired consistency.
7. For Ginger cream: In a small bowl combine the coconut milk, ginger, salt and pepper until thoroughly blended.
8. To serve, drizzle the soup with the ginger cream and a few cinnamon croutons.

Serves 6 entree or 10 appetizer portions

Groundnut Stew

Ingredients

- 1 lb bone-in chicken thighs, skinned and diced
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 5 tbsp olive oil
- 3 tbsp tomato puree
- 2 large onions, minced
- 1 sweet potato, medium dice
- 1 bell pepper, medium dice
- 6 cloves garlic, chopped
- 6 ozs peanut butter
- 1 qt chicken stock
- 1 Scotch bonnet pepper scored with three slits

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, mix the chicken pieces with the salt and pepper
2. Heat the olive oil in a medium Dutch oven over a medium heat and brown the chicken on all sides.
3. Remove the chicken and reserve.
4. In the same pot add the tomato puree and sauté until the paste begins to bloom and sizzle evenly.
5. Add the diced onion, sweet potato, bell pepper, and garlic to the sizzling tomato paste and sauté until the onions begin to wilt and are evenly coated in the tomato paste and the onions begin to brown (about 10 minutes). Add the peanut butter and stir to incorporate.
6. Whisk in the chicken stock and bring mixture to a strong simmer.
7. Add the Scotch bonnet pepper and the reserved browned chicken.
8. Reduce heat to a low simmer for about 25 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce has reduced slightly.
9. Adjust seasoning with additional salt and pepper and serve with any garnish from white rice to roasted peanuts, mango relish or fresh lime.

Serves 4 entree or 6-8 appetizer portions

About the Editor

Stephanie Y. Evans, PhD is Professor and Chair of the Department of African American Studies, Africana Women's Studies, and History (AWH) at Clark Atlanta University. She is author of two books about empowerment education: *Black Passports: Travel Memoirs as a Tool for Youth Empowerment* (2014) and B*lack Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-1954: An Intellectual History* as well as a co-edited book, *African Americans and Community Engagement in Higher Education* (2009). Her articles in *Peace Studies Journal* and *Journal of Poetry Therapy* established Black women's intellectual history and life writing as resources for a balanced and culturally-relevant approach to mental health practice.

Dr. Evans, along with Dr. Kanika Bell (a psychologist and psychology professor), and Dr. Nsenga Burton (a media scholar and editor of *The Burton Wire*), edited *Black Women's Mental Health: Balancing Strength and Vulnerability*, a forthcoming volume that brings together interdisciplinary scholars and practitioners to expand this important conversation (SUNY Press, 2017). Dr. Evans researches Africana memoirs to exemplify how autobiographies can serve as mentoring tools. Her work on health and wellness are practical outgrowths of research on Dr. Anna Julia Cooper's self-empowerment and human rights legacy. Professor Evans served as AWH Department Chair for six years and is founder of the W. E. B. Du Bois Legacy Project at Clark Atlanta University. Her forthcoming book focuses on inner peace and 20th century Black women's legacy of self-care. Her full portfolio and contact information is online at www.professorevans.net.

About the Oldways Editorial Team

Sade Anderson is an African Diaspora Specialist and Oldways African Heritage & Health Program Manager. She considers herself a member of the global community but claims the DMV (The Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia area) as home. As a result of growing up in the military abroad, Sade has fostered a loving relationship with Mother Earth and an appreciate for the origins of foods and cultures from around the world. During her undergraduate and graduate studies in History, Africana Studies and currently African Diaspora Studies, Sade continues to explore the depths of African Heritage through the peoples, cultures, and foodways of the African Diaspora. Outside of academia Sade has continued to engage in social justice work around issues of race, class, youth and political incarceration, birth injustice, and most recently food injustice in Washington, D.C.

Through a thirteen-year journey to a plant-based lifestyle, Sade has come to appreciate food and its source. She is a health coach, food educator, personal chef, garden educator, fitness instructor and now the Program Manager for the African Heritage & Health Program. Sade believes that food and culture is a powerful tool to reconnect with our ancestral past in order to heal ourselves from the inside out! Sade enjoys dancing, reading, cooking, yoga, and sharing vegan meals with her young son. Contact: Sade Anderson & 512-230-2078.

Johnisha Levi is a trained pastry cook who has worked in catering, at a farmstand bakery, and most recently at the restaurant Farmstead Table in Newton Centre. Before working in kitchens, she spent six years as a practicing litigation attorney. She enjoys recipe testing and has experience as a tester for baker/cookbook author Peter Reinhart and through an internship at America's Test Kitchen. She's also an avid collector of cookbooks and a bit of a culinary history nerd who likes learning the origins of dishes and the traditions behind them. When she moved to Boston from the D.C. area, she started researching multi-generational communities of African American New Englanders and their culinary and agriculture contributions to the region. As the African Heritage & Health Program Assistant, she's excited about engaging with A Taste of African Heritage teachers and helping them in their mission to educate folks about both the cultural significance and health benefits of African diaspora foods. Johnisha has a BA in English and American Literature and Language from Harvard College and a JD from New York University. Contact: Johnisha Levi & 617-896-4801.

About the Authors

Chidi Asika-Enahoro grew up in Nigeria, West Africa in an environment where culinary art is a major celebration. She was born to the Ibo tribe in the eastern part of Nigeria. She has an extensive catering experience and can consequently create delectable dishes from various cultures. Her family owned and operated a highly patronized restaurant/ night club, throughout her teenage years. She spent many holidays cooking and helping to host events at various venues. Chidi lived the first decade of her life in Nigeria. The second decade was spent in England and Europe where she also attended a Finishing School for young ladies. Chidi has a Bachelor's degree from Quinnipiac University and a Master's degree from University of New Haven, Ct. Chidi is a Rehabilitation Consultant and a Motivational Speaker. She is a certified Senior Disability Analyst; a certified Hypnotherapist; a certified Trainer, a certified Reiki Healer, a certified Master Life Coach and a certified Yoga Teacher. Chidi is an avid reader and a prolific writer who has published five acclaimed books; (*A Slice of Africa; Innocence Interrupted*; *Till Cheating Do Us Part; Lifeline* and *Hear Me Out*); all available on www.amazon.com and her websites: www.lifelinemiracle.com, www.innocenceinterrupted.com, and www.loveandbalance.com

Natasha Brewley, better known as **Chef Beee**, is owner of Quiche & Tell, a subsidiary of Nyansapo Holistic & Educational Enterprises, Inc. The mission of Quiche & Tell is to promote wellness practices to others and to help them make healthy food and lifestyle choices. She is training to become a Certified Holistic Health Coach at The Institute for Integrative Nutrition. During her training, she has been exposed to several dietary theories, practical lifestyle management techniques, and innovative coaching methods with some of the world's top health and wellness experts. Chef Beee strives to help people achieve optimal health and true wellness through her coaching practice. In addition to coaching, Chef Beee is an Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Georgia Gwinnett College. Although Chef Beee has always incorporated healthy eating and exercise in her lifestyle, she became even more dedicated to wellness when she had to make personal changes to her diet after the birth of her son. Quiche & Tell also supports individuals transitioning to a plant-based diet by offering healthy food demonstrations around the city of Atlanta. Find out what Chef Beee is doing around the city of Atlanta, online at www.quicheandtellatl.com, or on social media: Facebook, search @quicheandtellwithbeee, Twitter: #iamchefbeee. Instagram @iamchefbeee.

Deitra Dennis is a Registered Nurse and Certified Health Coach. Deitra was recognized by a premier managed care company for her outstanding coaching skills in guiding patients to make healthy behavior changes during her role as a disease management nurse/health coach. As a disease management nurse/health coach, Deitra had the opportunity to coach clients with chronic conditions such as: diabetes, cardiovascular disease, congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma. Deitra is also the owner of Full Circle Health Coaching LLC, a wellness solution offering a choice of evidence-based health services that specializes in disease prevention in women of color.
The evidence-based health services include individual/group coaching, cooking classes, grocery store tours and in home kitchen check up to name a few. Visit www.fullcirclehealthcoachingllc.com for more information.

Tracey Ferdinand holds a bachelor's degree in English from Ursinus College and a master's degree in Africana Women's Studies from Clark Atlanta University. She is also a certified vinyasa yoga teacher. Her writing inspires lifestyle transformations guided by self-love and self-care. Her mission is to encourage women and girls to cultivate vibrant lives by exploring creative wellness practices. She advocates taking small, sustainable steps toward developing long term healthy eating, exercise, and emotional habits. You can visit her website at www.TraceyCoretta.com.

Selas Kidane, currently lives in St. Louis MO. She is originally from Eritrea, a very diverse country located in East Africa. She has lived in different countries, including Sudan & Kenya before she settled in the U.S. in 1991. She studied at St. Louis Community College, where she earned an Associate degree in Accounting. She works full time as an A/R Analyst. She loves working with numbers, but her true passion is food, art, and culture. She loves traveling and learning about different cultures and traditional diets. She is curious by nature and enjoys comparing different ethnic flavors and analyzing the nutritional values and health benefits of different ingredients used in different ethnic foods.

Sherie Labedis grew up in Shingle Springs, California. A high school English teacher ignited her passion for Civil Rights when he asked students what they were willing to die for. In 1964, when Labedis was a freshman at Berkeley, she heard Martin Luther King, Jr. speak. "Meeting him was the most influential event of my life," she says today. She was eighteen during 1965's "Second Freedom Summer." Far from her sheltered white middle-class life, she found herself in a rural black community beset by poverty, illiteracy, and the Ku Klux Klan. She subsisted on grits and rice and felt the heat of the flames when a nearby black church was torched. Fellow volunteers were dragged from a car, beaten and thrown through a glass door on other occasions. Labedis is a high school teacher and public speaker passionate about righting wrongs. She used her journal about that life-changing summer of 1965 to write a remarkable book, *You Came Here to Die, Didn't You.* Labedis tells **this** story from the point of view of Lucy, a little girl she knew in Pineville. She wrote the lead essay in *Chicken Soup for the African American Woman's Soul*. Labedis lives in Roseville, California.

Cassandra Loftlin writes her life in this way: "My life is a story of professional growth and development into unexpected realms." In 2007, she decided that cooking was more than a hobby for her, and she switched careers to attend culinary school full time. While the coursework was demanding, she found a fulfilling career, a world of amazing colleagues, and a personally rewarding work life. Now in 2016, she is on the verge of another major transition in her career as she continues to expand her career to focus on the health, wellness and food ways of Africana women around the globe. As a chef, she enjoys bringing together all of the elements that make for a wonderful event and as an aspiring academic, she thrives on being able to make a tangible impact on the lives of individuals in her community on a daily basis.

Vanessa McAdams-Mahmoud is a clinical social worker who has been active in the field of clinical social work for the past 30 years. She has spent the past few years working as a behavioral consultant and embedded behavioral health provider first, in Germany, and now at Fort Stewart, for the United States Army. She is the director/owner of Mandala Psychotherapy Associates in Atlanta, Ga, a busy private practice. She is also a former director of Counseling Services at Spelman College in Atlanta and was director there for 11 years. Prior to that she was a coordinator of Family Therapy in the Recovering Professionals Program at Ridgeview Institute, a private psychiatric hospital in Atlanta, Ga. She also has served as a clinical social worker and consultant for community mental health clinics, and the National Football League. She has been a contributing author in a number of books and articles and serves as visiting faculty at the Multi Cultural Family Therapy Institute in New Jersey. She is the proud mother of three absolutely beautiful daughters and 5 gorgeous grandchildren. She has been married to her husband Robert Muneer, for the past 40 years.

Liliane Motta was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1979. She has a master degree in Social Sciences, focusing on Sociology and Education. She is also a Pedagogue and a high school teacher. The love of her life is her son Miguel Motta. She loves reading, writing, working out, cooking, and to enjoy the weekends with Miguel. She recognizes herself as being a devoted and zealous mother, passionate about her son. She shares her story through this recipe, which is learned from Nésia Rocha years ago and became one of the most enjoyed dishes in her home.

Therese Nelson is the Founder and Culinary Curator of Black Culinary History.com, a website and social networking space focused on preserving the legacy of black chefs in American cooking, celebrating the present work of black food folks across culinary disciplines, and helping to foster the careers of the young people who will make up our culinary future. In addition to Black Culinary History Therese is a Johnson and Wales graduate with dual degrees in Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management, and works as partner and culinary director of the Lifestyle Collective, a NYC based culinary lifestyle brand. www.blackculinaryhistory.com. Twitter and Instagram: @blackculinary

Jamila Norman is an urban farmer in the city of Atlanta. She was born in Brooklyn New York and grew up with two sisters and three brothers in Queens New York with their Maternal Grandmother and Caribbean parents: a dad from Trinidad and mother from Jamaica. Her grandmother's brownstone hosted many family members and their family as they migrated from the islands to America. Her parents converted to Islam in Brooklyn before she was born and also ate a mostly vegetarian diet. That meant that they no longer ate beef or pork and the children grew up not eating it at all. She is 37 years old and people cannot believe that she's never had a pork chop or ate a hamburger, or bacon or any other beef or pork Item. Being Caribbean, the family did eat goat and because of Islam also ate lamb, but those were rare occasions usually associated with a holiday or religious celebration.

Alice Randall is the author of novels *The Wind Done Gone, Pushkin and the Queen of Spades, Rebel Yell*, and *Ada's Rules*. Born in Detroit she grew up in Washington, D.C. As a Harvard undergraduate majoring in English she studied with Julia Child as well as Harry Levin, Alan Heimert, and Nathan Huggins. After graduation Randall headed south to Music City where she founded Midsummer Music with the idea she would create a new way to fund novel writing and a community of powerful storytellers. On her way to *The Wind Done Gone* she became the first black woman in history to write a number one country song (XXX's and OOO's); wrote a video of the year (*Is There Life Out There*); worked on multiple Johnny Cash videos (The Chicken in Black) and wrote and produced the pilot for a prime time drama about ex-wives of country stars (XXX's and OOO's) that aired on CBS. She has written with or published some of the greatest songwriters of the era including Steve Earle, Matraca Berg, Bobby Braddock, and Mark Sanders. Four novels later, the award winning songwriter with over twenty recorded songs to her credit is Writer-in-Residence at Vanderbilt University and Faculty Head of Stambaugh House. Her core courses include courses on Country Lyric in American Culture, and Soul Food as text and in text. Randall lives on the University grounds with her husband, David Ewing, a ninth generation Nashvillian who practices green law. Her daughter Caroline Randall Williams graduated from Harvard in 2010 and from Ole Miss in 2015. In addition to being Randall's favorite co-writer, Randall Williams is visiting Writer-in-Residence Fisk University. After twenty-four years hard at it Randall has come to the conclusion motherhood is the most creative calling of all and health disparity is the dominant civil rights issue of the first quarter of the 21st century. Photo credit Alice and Caroline, Ashly Hylbert. For more, visit www.alicerandall.com.

Caroline Randall Williams, a native of Nashville, Tennessee, is a poet, cookbook author, and young adult novelist. She has a bachelor's degree from Harvard University, and received her MFA from the University of Mississippi. While completing her MFA, she co-authored the Phillis Wheatley Award-winning young adult novel, *The Diary of B.B. Bright, Possible Princess*. In January of 2014, she was named by Southern Living magazine as one of the "50 People Changing the South in 2015." February saw the publication of *Soul Food Love*, a cookbook written by Randall Williams and her mother, the novelist Alice Randall, that goes beyond basic recipes to cover the past, present, and future of a misunderstood cuisine. Her debut poetry collection, Lucy Negro, Redux, came out early in 2015. A Cave Canem fellow, her poetry has been featured in several journals, including *The Iowa Review*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender*, and the *Black International*. For more, visit www.carolinerandallwilliams.com.

Luciane Rocha came to earth in 1979 proudly for being Nésia's first daughter. She loves to travel and meet other cultures, sports, cooking, reading and meditation. She earned a Ph.D. in Anthropology and African Dispora Studies and currently is conducting post-doctoral research in Anthropology and Criminology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Her doctoral research focused on Black Mother's Activism after having their children killed by the police and now she is focusing on the Public Defense engagement with the mothers.

Nésia Rocha is a retired seamstress shining this world since 1948. She began working when she was 14 years old to help her parents to raise the other kids. Although this fact would have brought to her life sadness for loosing many opportunities, she was able to make the best in her life, always with a smile on her face. Nowadays she spends time taking care of her grandchildren, watching Youtube videos about natural black hair and dancing in the samba school Grande Rio. She loves samba, colorful skirts and to travel.

Coretta Simmons is the daughter of Civil Rights activists, the late George and Martha Simmons, and native of Pineville, South Carolina. She earned a Bachelor's degree from the University of South Carolina; Masters degrees from Webster University; and most recently her Culinary Certificate from the Culinary & Wine Institute program at the University of South Carolina. Her primary profession is as a Senior Paralegal. However, she is also an Adjunct Professor at Midlands Technical college. Love of cooking evolved from spending time with her dad in the kitchen, as he was her first cooking instructor. It was from these experiences that she came to realize cooking for family and friends was the ultimate expression of love and appreciation. Her culinary axiom is: Try her food, and you will be able Smell, See, Taste and Feel the Love.

Marsha L. Thadison is owner of Yesterday's Kitchen 4 Today, LLC started the business in December 2005. She is the mother of three beautiful young ladies and a grandmother of two. She lost her husband in 2007 due to MRSA infection. She gave birth to Yesterday's Kitchen 4 Today out of desperation to see family and friends heal and set free from sickness and disease. Several in her family have been impacted by sickle cell, high blood pressure, obesity, and several have succumbed to cancer. Yesterday's Kitchen 4 Today's mission is to educate and re-educate consumers on the healthy styles of cooking. Marsha writes, "Remember the "good ole days" when our grandparents cooked with love...creating mouthwatering meals full of vitamins...remember the smell of fresh baked bread milled from whole grain or the taste of homemade pancakes made with buttermilk cranked from a churn or better yet the wholesome goodness of fresh fruits and vegetables canned and preserved to perfection?" YK4T seeks to educate this generation on how to do the same. Yesterday's Kitchen sells new style and old style equipment including butter churns, hand crank mills, canning jars and supplies. They also have a resource of books and natural cures, how to bake bread and many helpful books to guide families into a healthy lifestyle. They host many healthy workshops on canning, fermenting, making homemade butter and much more. Find out more at www.yesterdayskitchen4today.com.

Bernitta Thorne-Williams was born and raised in Washington DC. She graduated from North Carolina Wesleyan College as an English and Criminal Justice major and it was there that she met my future husband. They have been married for over 30 years and have been blessed with two amazing sons. They reside in North Carolina. Crafting a good story has always been her passion. Throughout high school and college, she was encouraged to pursue writing, but the realities of life and work took first place. So she put her dreams, and thus, the characters that were begging to see the light of the day on the back burner. She is sure other writers can attest to having a similar experience. Now years later, it is time for her to share her stories with others. She is grateful for the support of her family and friends who have encouraged her every step of the way. Visit her Amazon Authors page: www.amazon.com/Bernetta-Thorne-Williams/e/B00V2NW66A and blog: luminousinspirations.com. Also view the literary showcase company that assists new and established authors with promoting their books: luminousexpressions.org.

Sanura Weathers is as American as apple pie. She was born in Chicago, grew up in Virginia and went to graduate school in the Big Apple. She currently lives in Brooklyn earning her "whole-grain bread and fancy butter" as a Graphic Designer during the day. She works the dough in her spare time creating recipes for her sweet, savory, buttery, green and healthy food blog at www.MyLifeRunsOnFood.com.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Oldways African Heritage & Health/ATOAH
oldwayspt.org/programs/african-heritage-health

Stephanie Y. Evans, PhD
professorevans.net

Black Women's Health Imperative bwhi.org

Center for Black Women's Wellness cbww.org

Health First! The Black Women's Wellness Guide Kindle Edition

CDC Presentation by BWHI Improving Black Women's Health

NIH Health Tips for African Americans https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/weight-control/improving/Pages/improving-you-health-tips-for-african-americans.aspx

Tracye McQuirter African American Vegan Starter Guide

emBODY WELL embodywell.com

Full Circle Health Coaching www.fullcirclehealthcoachingllc.com

Black Culinary History Network blackculinaryhistory.com

Afroculinaria afroculinaria.com

Kwanzaa Culinarians www.KwanzaaCulinarians.com

Best Food Facts www.bestfoodfacts.org

Body Ecology Donna Gates

Sonia Sanchez soniasanchez.net
Cover Poem: "Tanka," from *I've Been a Woman* (1978) and *Shake Loose My Skin* (1999)

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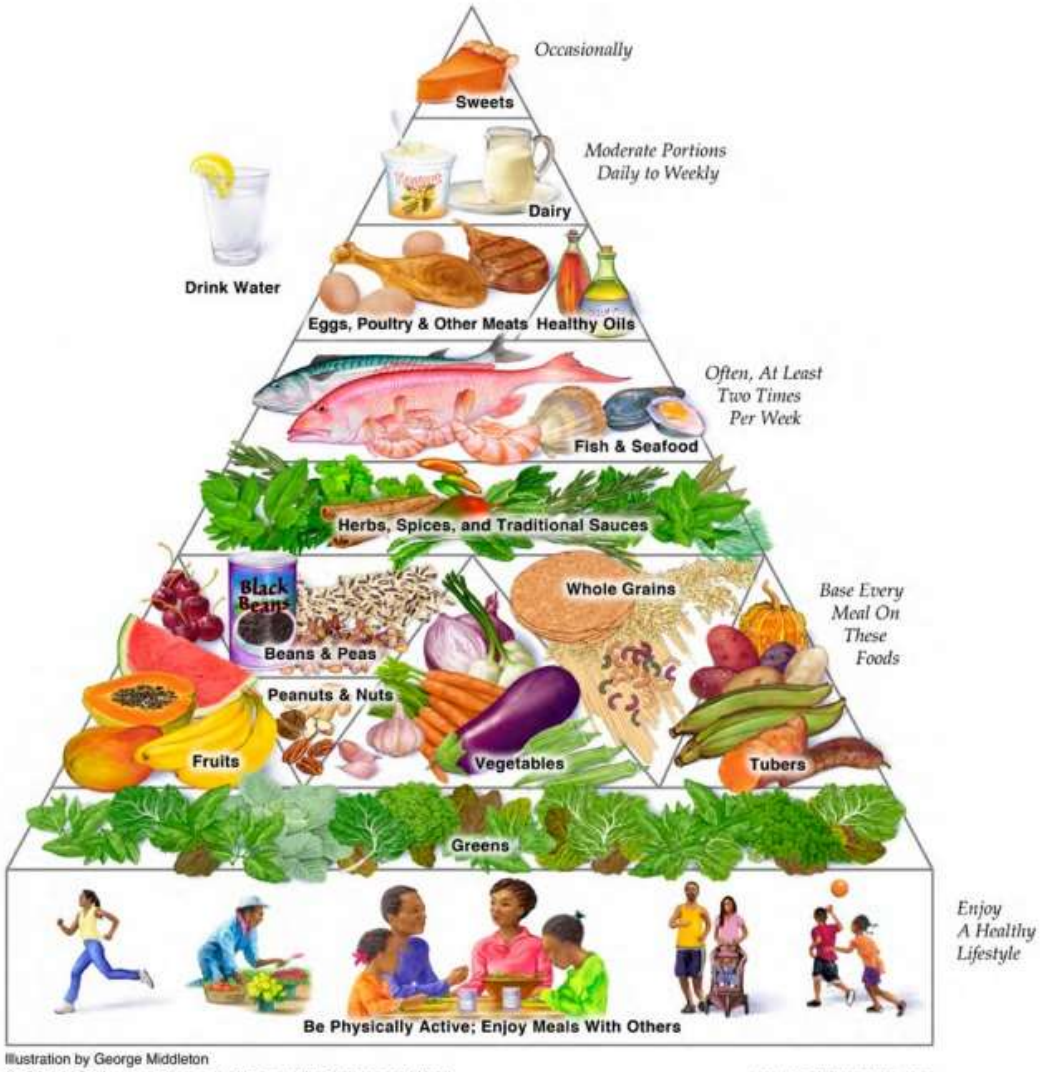
OLDWAYS
HEALTH THROUGH HERITAGE

African Heritage Diet Pyramid



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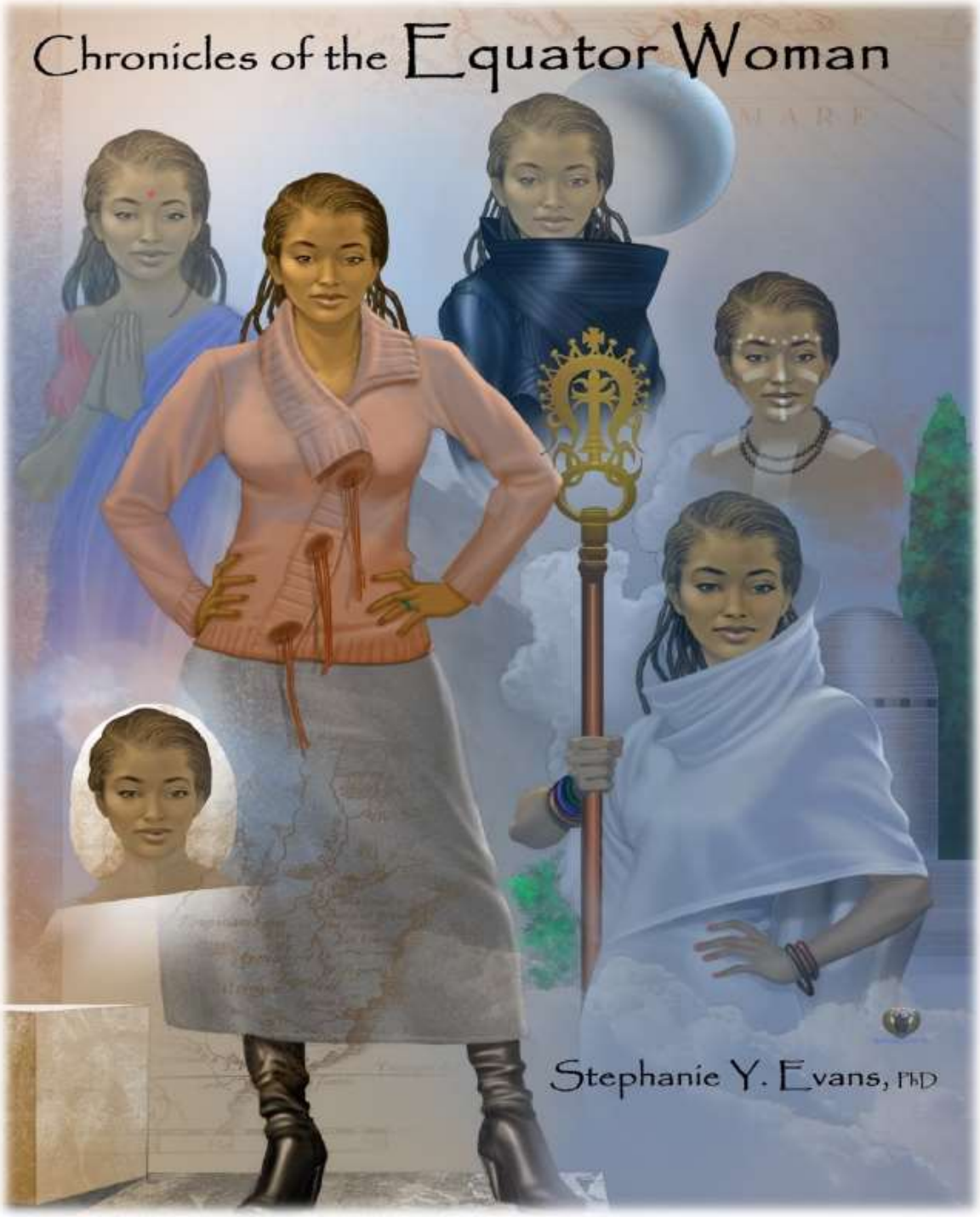
Chronicles of the Equator Woman
Stephanie Y. Evans, PhD

Equator Woman is the autobiography of a time-traveling Black woman who saves planet Earth. The author, Axis Heart, provides a provocative glimpse into how the past impacts the future. Her reflections on adventure, soup, and self-defense reveal complex identities of females born in the African diaspora. This scribe chronicles life as an "Equator Woman"—a Black woman from Africa, India, Australia, Brazil, the United States, and beyond—to KeplerPrime, a human-inhabited planet in the Lyra constellation. The story begins in 10th-century BCE Ethiopia, from where readers follow Axis to several continents during six flavorful lives.

As a United Nations GalaState mediator, Axis finds herself pitted against violent forces that perpetuate fear and ignorance in order to control social and natural resources. In an epic struggle to bring balance to the home planet, she joins a group of creative activists to fight humanots and to tip the scales in a faceoff against the relentless Captain G. By challenging readers to "follow your heart" in order to solve human problems, these travel memoirs pose important questions about attitudes, behaviors, and choices we embody. This is the tale of an ancient "sassy" Black girl who learns to negotiate power through trade, technology, and law. Seasoned with experience, her soulful recipe for community building is clearly embedded in the text. As publisher of this narrative about a 3,500-year quest for justice, Dr. Stephanie Evans presents a timeless story to nourish booklovers and activists far and wide.

To download PDF of full story, visit
http://www.professorevans.net/books.html

Artwork: Mshindo Kuumba

Equator Woman: Preface

There are three things you need to be successful in life: a wishbone, a jawbone, and a backbone. You need a wishbone for goal setting, a jawbone for speaking out, and a backbone for perseverance.

~ Inez Emerson, Ohio Senator Nina Turner's Grandmother

My name is Axis and I am a seeker. I am not from anywhere, I'm from everywhere. I am a nexus of place and time. In my final life, I was born in 2669 CE in the province of Atalanta, on the planet you will come to know as KeplerPrime. Atalanta was the Greek goddess that Pan-African philosopher W. E. B. Du Bois used as a metaphor for the city of Atlanta, Georgia, in his classic book *The Souls of Black Folk.* As with Atalanta the goddess and Atlanta the city, colonization of Kepler planets represented a chase for the riches of progress. Like much in Greek mythology and the African tales they mimicked, life is an endless search for balance between honoring history and preparing for the future. The ultimate objective is to not get distracted by shiny objects in one's path, and to keep an eye on the goal of reaching our full human potential. I am a seeker in that timeless quest for balance.

I am not a witch, I am not a thief, and I am not a killer. I have been called all these things. I am definitely not a vampire or a zombie. True, I have experienced some level of immortality, but I am alive, not undead. Yes, my "superpowers" have developed to a high level, but all humans have powers, if we only take time to identify and nurture them. I am simply a woman who has been places and seen things that some of you may have forgotten, never knew, or have yet to know about. I am a Jane of all trades, not really an expert at anything but being myself. Sometimes that puts me in good favor, other times being myself has gotten me into a whole lot of trouble. Reading my travel memoirs should take no longer than it does to make a good pot of gumbo, so let your pot simmer and I will explain.

This is a story of my six lives, a time span of more than 3,500 years. It is also my confession of innocence. I am humbled by human history and know my telling does not capture the whole truth or even present the most complete record. But to honor my Ancestors, this story must be told. My oldest grandmother, G'ma Seta, taught me several important lessons: travel as much as possible, remember where you come from, and never underestimate the power of a good pot of soup. These lessons—skills really—have helped me make sense of the world and I have carried them with me throughout my long journey. Stories of adventure, soup, and self-defense are all that I've ever had; they have been more than enough to sustain me.

G'ma's lessons have guided me through the endless perils of being a mobile Black woman. Because of her teachings, I have always felt empowered to explore. "Follow your heart," she would whisper with encouragement, "make the world better with your joy." As a result, I love to eat and I love to travel to find fun in unexpected places. But, because of the enduring reach of human cruelty, my path to joy has been rocky. As some women elders used to say, I have been to sorrow's kitchen and licked the pots clean. But I have also been to the most luxurious kitchens and licked those pots clean, too. Women's survival is funny that way… at its best it becomes less about survival and more about enjoying the thrills of life.

In the past, present, and your future, I have seen continents develop and civilizations collapse. I also witnessed the Lyra system inhabited and colonized… with the same human flaws that existed on Earth. Old-World problems did not disappear simply because we created new worlds. As the controversial 25th-century scholar Ananja Bethuna wrote, "Heritage is life. Human destiny is infinite possibility, but without heritage, a humane destiny an impossibility." Identity and heritage are the heart of humanity. That is the crux of my story: I write from the standpoint of a Galaxy Era African who has intimate knowledge of her

distant past. Many dates and places have slipped through my fingers, yet I grasp fully my identity: a Black woman with a sense of wonder and clarity of purpose.

Humans as a species continue to amalgamate, yet ethnic variance and cultural distinctiveness remains. Identity markers (race, sex, gender, religion, social class) have never disappeared, and creation of humanots (humans genetically engineered on planets KeplerPrime and Lucy) made heritage debates and questions of *which* human traits to replicate even trickier. Gestures were made to "unite" humans into sameness as we colonized planets and encountered other plenary beings, and laws were even enacted to ban teaching about race, but cultural memory has persisted as a positive force in our human spirit. Despite legal efforts to prove otherwise, heritage is a birthright. Sometimes, living in Atalanta, I have felt displaced because the planet does not have the Earth's Sun as a guiding light. But the suns of other worlds shine brightly, nonetheless, and I know who I am by looking inward. My heritage is my compass.

In some places, an autonomous woman poses a threat, and exercising my freedom on a consistent basis has marked me *persona non grata*. By simply existing and by discussing the ordinary facts of my Black womanhood, I am an outlaw in many districts. But, despite the fallout of my immediate past that requires writing my autobiography at this moment in time, I am actually fighting on the side of good. I did, after all, save planet Earth from implosion. (Yes, a Black transnational, interplanetary woman saved Earth. Really, how many times must an American man save our home planet before those old Hollywood stories lose all plausibility?) I am not masquerading as a superhero; I am just stating my utility or, at least as is necessary in this case, claiming my innocence. My gifts have brought humans together, even if some have tried to twist my message to tear us apart.

In the end, this story is a mostly-true account of my life exploring food and searching for peace. For you to understand the source of my passions, we must start at the beginning…my first life. I value brevity, so most stories I have gathered during six lifecycles are short enough to fit on a recipe card. But telling of my first life requires a little more preparation because that is where it all began. In the full view, my life book is not a novel, long and contemplative, but not a short story either, truncated and abrupt. My life story is about the length of a novella, relatively quick, uncomplicated, and practical—like African Fisherman's Hotpepper stew.

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OASIS

OLDWAYS AFRICANA SOUP IN STORIES

A DISCUSSION OF BLACK WOMEN'S FOODWAYS

OASIS gathers culturally-informed soup recipes to expand nutritional knowledge and discussions of Black women's wellness. In this sampler of stories, Dr. Stephanie Evans and the Oldways African Heritage & Health leadership team present personal vignettes and recipes that explore identity, geography, health, and self-care.

Memoirs are an effective way to convey both technical knowledge and cultural heritage. This book project brings together 20 cooks, chefs, researchers, storytellers, foodies, farmers, nutritionists, historians, activists, food bloggers, and wellness workers to share stories about Black women's health. Stories and soup recipes are featured from around the African diaspora:

- Nigeria
- Eretria
- Guyana
- Brazil
- Tobago
- Barbados
- Washington D.C.
- Virginia
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Georgia
- Tennessee
- Boston
- New York
- New Mexico

Soup is a perfect meal that allows us to simmer down. So take time to share this bowl of wellness. Dish, wish, and reminisce in sisterhood and community. Enjoy this diaspora taster, get inspiration to record your own story. Find more resources online at ProfessorEvans.net and Oldways African Heritage & Health to define and expand your own personal wellness menu!

Oldways African Heritage & Health oldwayspt.org/programs/african-heritage-health
Stephanie Y. Evans www.professorevans.net

OLDWAYS AFRICAN HERITAGE & HEALTH