



Mrs. Wilkes' Boardinghouse Cookbook: Recipes and Recollections from Her Savannah Table

Sema Wilkes

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In 1943, a young and determined Sema Wilkes took over a nondescript turn-of-the-century boardinghouse on a sun-dappled brick street in historic downtown Savannah. Her goal was modest: to make a living by offering comfortable lodging and Southern home cooking served family style in the downstairs dining room. Mrs. Wilkes' reputation was strong and business was brisk from the beginning, but it was the coverage in *Esquire* and the *New York Times*, and even a profile on David Brinkley's evening news that brought Southern-food lovers from all over the world to her doorstep. Sema is now 95 years old, and four generations of Wilkeses help her keep the tables laden with platters of her legendary fried chicken, pork ribs, and biscuits, while friends and strangers pass bowls brimming with her sublime butterbeans, collard greens, mashed sweet potatoes, and banana pudding. The line snakes out the front door and down the street, where along with the locals and visitors, it's not uncommon to find Jimmy Carter or Roy Blount Jr. among other familiar faces waiting for their turn at Mrs. Wilkes' table. With over 300 recipes and culinary historian John T. Edge's colorful telling of Mrs. Wilkes' contribution to Savannah and Southern cuisine, this rich volume is a tribute to a way of cooking—and eating—that must not be forgotten.

- Recipient of *Southern Living's* Reader's Choice Award 2000.
- Mrs. Wilkes won the 1999 James Beard "America's Regional Classics" Award.
- Mrs. Wilkes' self-published recipe book, *Famous Recipes*, which became the foundation for MRS. WILKES' BOARDINGHOUSE COOKBOOK, has sold over 250,000 copies.
- Illustrated throughout with over 50 black-and-white photographs from Mrs. Wilkes' Boardinghouse and 25 color photos of her classic recipes.

From the Hardcover edition.

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