



A TASTE OF
LOVE
LANGUAGE
of the
SOUTH

STACY LYN HARRIS

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INTRODUCTION

First, let me say that I'm thrilled you are part of my life. Sharing what growing up in the South was like and how it shaped my life brings me so much joy, and I'm excited to share it with you. I'm blessed to have lived in a place where hospitality, kindness, genuineness, and service were at the heart and soul of my community. Don't get me wrong—I certainly wasn't shielded from the real world and the evil in it. But somehow the love of the South and the love from the Southern people overrode the wrong in my world.

I believe that we as individuals can help people “override” the wrong in their worlds by practicing a little Southern hospitality towards them. You and I can practice the Southerner's love language—delicious and comforting food—to the people in our neck of the woods, wherever that may be, and know it is making a difference.

In this small supplement, *Taste of Love Language of the South*, I share a few stories and recipes that didn't make it into my new book. It's funny how every story I write brings up memories of food. Gymnastics and chocolate go hand-in-hand in my mind, just as a healthful, nutrition-packed salad goes hand-in-hand with modeling.

Food strengthens memories and relationships with people. I believe that's part of why I love homemade soup, fried chicken, and fried cornbread. Yes, it's delicious, but for me, it's all in relation to my Granny. Her hands prepared those dishes for me in love. I feel her love through them even though she isn't here any longer. I still receive the same comfort I experienced from her when I eat the iconic dishes she inspired.

Thanks for being a part of my Southern journey!

Stacy Lyn

CREOLE FRIED CATFISH TACOS

WITH BLACK-EYED PEA, CORN, AND AVOCADO
CHUTNEY & FRIED PICKLED OKRA

Catfish Ingredients

- 5 CATFISH FILLETS
- 2 CUPS CORN MEAL
- 2 CUPS ALL PURPOSE FLOUR
- 2 TBSP YELLOW MUSTARD
- 2 EGGS, BEATEN
- 2 TBSP CREOLE SEASONING (CREOLE KICK)
- 1/2 CUP HOT SAUCE (FRANKS RED HOT SAUCE)
- 1 TBSP PAPRIKA
- 1 TBSP BLACK PEPPER
- 1 TBSP GARLIC POWDER
- 1 TBSP ONION POWDER
- 1 TSP CAYENNE PEPPER (OPTIONAL)
- VEGETABLE OIL, FOR FRYING

Chutney Ingredients

- 1 CUPS BLACK-EYED PEAS, COOKED & DRAINED
- 1 MEDIUM GREEN BELL PEPPER, SEEDED AND CHOPPED
- 1 MEDIUM VIDALIA ONION, CHOPPED
- 1 CUP FRESH CORN
- 1 AVOCADO, CHOPPED
- ¼ CUP RED WINE VINEGAR
- 2 CLOVES GARLIC, MINCED
- ½ TEASPOON SALT
- ¼ TEASPOON PEPPER
- PINCH OF GRANULATED SUGAR
- 2 TABLESPOONS EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

Yogurt Topping Ingredients

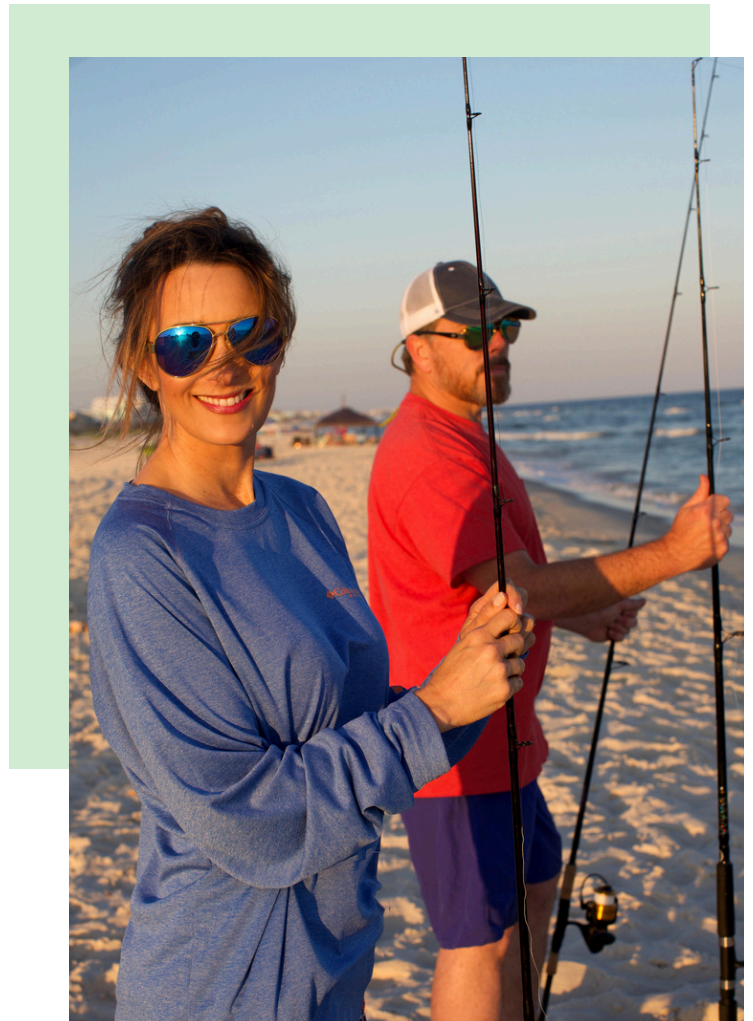
- ½ CUP PLAIN YOGURT
- JUICE OF ½ LEMON
- 2 TABLESPOONS EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- ½ TEASPOON KOSHER SALT
- FRESHLY GROUND PEPPER

Okra Ingredients

- VEGETABLE OIL, FOR FRYING
- 1 CUP YELLOW SELF-RISING CORNMEAL
- ½ CUP ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- 1 TEASPOON CAJUN SEASONING
- 1 TEASPOON SALT
- ½ TEASPOON BLACK PEPPER
- ¼ TEASPOON GROUND RED PEPPER
- 12 WHOLE PICKLED OKRA (OR YOU CAN USE PREPARED PICKLED OKRA)
- 1 LARGE EGG
- 1 TEASPOON HOT SAUCE

Taco Ingredients

- 8 FLOUR TORTILLAS
- LETTUCE



CREOLE FRIED CATFISH TACOS

WITH BLACK-EYED PEA, CORN, AND AVOCADO CHUTNEY & FRIED PICKLED OKRA

Fried Catfish

In a large cast iron skillet, add oil halfway up the side. Heat oil to 375 degrees.

In a medium bowl, add 1 cup of cornmeal and one cup flour.

In a small bowl, add paprika, black pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, and cayenne pepper. Stir until thoroughly mixed. Add 3 Tablespoons of the spice mixture to the flour cornmeal mixture.

To make the wet mixture, in a medium bowl, add remaining cornmeal and flour, mustard, eggs, hot sauce, and the remaining spice mixture and mix thoroughly. Add the fish fillets to the wet mixture and completely coat each filet.

When oil has reached 350 degrees, coat 2 filets with flour cornmeal mixture. Place the filets in the hot oil and cook until fish is golden brown and cooked through, about 7 minutes. Remove filets to a cooling rack placed on top of a cookie sheet.

Repeat with the remaining filets and drain on the cooling rack.



CREOLE FRIED CATFISH TACOS

WITH BLACK-EYED PEA, CORN, AND AVOCADO CHUTNEY & FRIED PICKLED OKRA

Chutney

In a large bowl, combine black-eyed peas, bell pepper, onion, corn and avocado.

In a medium bowl, add vinegar, garlic, salt, pepper, and sugar. Continuously whisk ingredients as you drizzle in 2 Tablespoons olive oil.

Pour vinaigrette over the black-eyed pea mixture and gently stir until well combined.

Fried Okra

In the same skillet you cooked the fish, heat oil to 350 degrees.

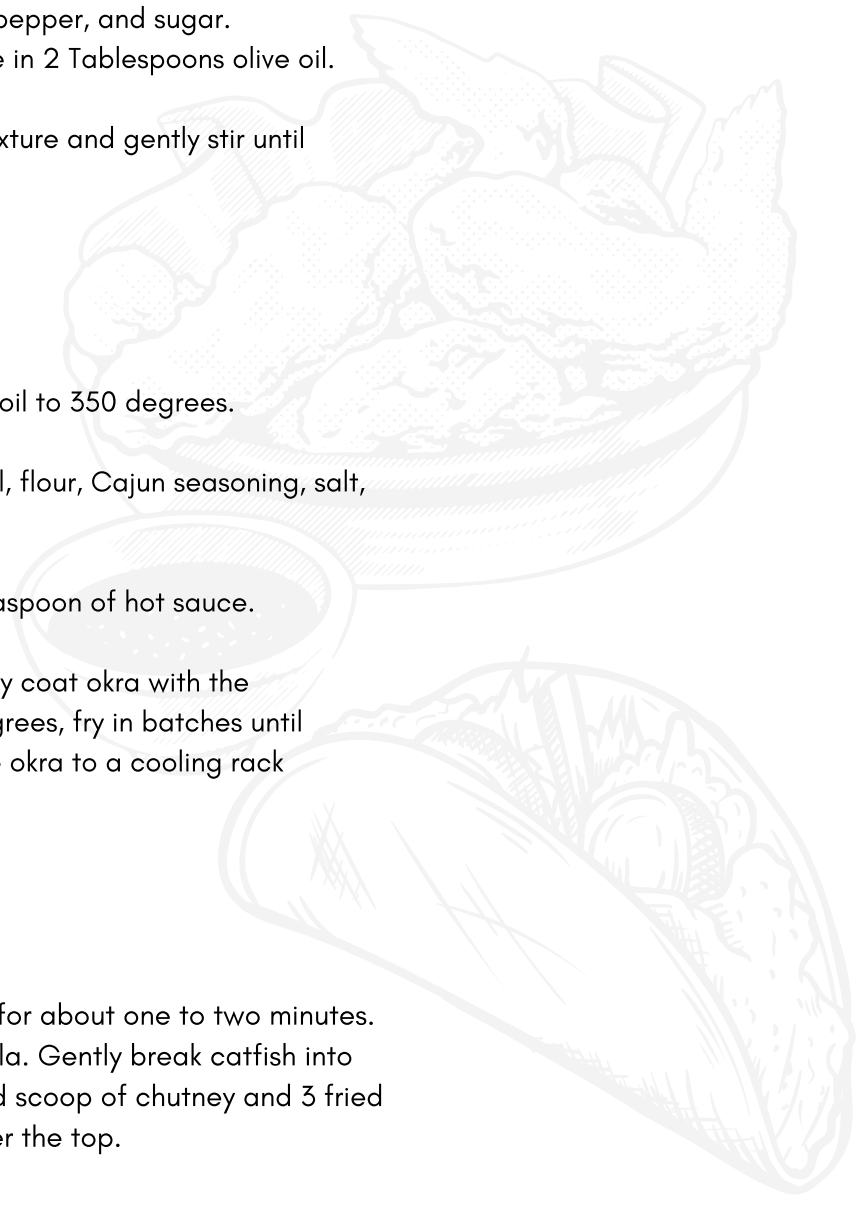
In a shallow dish or plate, combine cornmeal, flour, Cajun seasoning, salt, pepper, and red pepper.

In a small shallow bowl, whisk eggs and 1 teaspoon of hot sauce.

Coat okra with the egg mixture, then liberally coat okra with the cornmeal mixture. Once oil reaches 350 degrees, fry in batches until golden brown, about 1 to 2 minutes. Remove okra to a cooling rack placed over a baking sheet.

To Build the Taco

In a dry hot skillet or grill pan, heat tortillas for about one to two minutes. Add shredded lettuce to the center of tortilla. Gently break catfish into pieces and place on top of the lettuce. Add scoop of chutney and 3 fried okra pieces, then drizzle yogurt topping over the top.



MODELING

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

Like most college students, money is an issue. I worked at several jobs during my college and law school days, but none that my parents would call “real jobs.” I can’t tell you how many times my parents would say, “You really need to get a real job.” That sounded like pure torture to me, and if I’m honest it still does. I worked as a youth director, a model, and eventually after law school, a lawyer. I even worked in a bank for a day! I made way more money working less time as a model than as a lawyer. So naturally, I continued to take modelling and acting jobs during the four years my husband was in dental school.

Those four years were...well, let’s just call them “interesting.” It was certainly an eye-opening and valuable experience. I saw so much good, a little bad, and a whole lot of ugly. But I must say, I had quite a few truly heartfelt, moving conversations with all kinds of women, many of whom I still hold in high regard today. Models are known for their beauty but, unfortunately, have less-than-stellar reputations when it comes to brains and superficiality. As a rule, I found models to mostly be high-achievers, overly competitive, and quite brilliant. I met accountants, entrepreneurs, and architects just for starters. Although the reputation does hold true for some, just as in any line of work, there are those lovely, kind people that want to make a difference in life and care about others as much as they care about themselves.

Back during my brief but eventful foray into the industry, I had the pleasure of doing a show with a delightful and beautiful girl who is now changing people’s lives in ways I’m sure she never dreamed of. Katherine is one of the most beautiful people inside and out that I’ve ever met in my life. We became close during our time together as models, but I lost touch with her after she moved to California to pursue acting. Around that time, she gave birth to her first child, but tragedy struck soon thereafter, when, at the age of 26, she unexpectedly suffered a stroke. After 40 days on life support and years of rehab spent recovering from the medical emergency that left her body disabled, it would have been easy for Katherine to just give up on life. Her outer beauty had always been evident; it had given her career opportunities that so many people want but only few can attain. And with all of that gone in an instant, what was this former model to do? Instead of giving up, though, Katherine brought out a different side of herself that all the photoshoots and auditioning sessions could never capture: her inner beauty. Katherine drew on this newfound strength to tell her story, and though she may have lost the modelling talent that helped her catch many an eye back in the day, the beauty of her character, and her inner strength, outshine any vain ideals that were lost. Together with her husband, Katherine has written a phenomenal book, *Hope Heals*, which has given hope to so many people around the world who struggle with feeling hopeless. Last I heard, Sony Pictures had optioned *Hope Heals* for a movie. I really hope one that movie gets made, because I think the world is made a better place by people like Katherine telling their story. I know I’m a better person now because I met Katherine, and I wouldn’t have that chance if it wasn’t for modelling.

I met so many other Katherines while modelling—beautiful, elegant, strong, resilient, hard-working women—and I wish people could see this side of the industry. I developed so many life-long friendships during this time, on the sets of commercials, photoshoots, runway shows, and during the countless hurry-up-and-wait times in-between sets. Of course, I did encounter a few bad apples who managed to live up to the reputation that befalls models. Onstage before a show one time, I found myself in the middle of a catfight between two models from different agencies. I'm not sure exactly what had inspired such hatred between these two, but they proceeded to cuss each other out over me, like I wasn't even there! As if this vitriol wasn't enough, in their attempts to upstage one another, I was almost pushed off the stage! Though I developed several of my best friends on the set of commercials, photo shoots, runways, and during those hurry up and wait times, there do exist those that live up to the reputation that befall models.

Another ugly truth is that insecurity runs high among models. The pressure of being perfect is more than most can handle. As you know there are no perfect people, and impossible expectations of perfection from the agents, clients, and the models themselves are enough to make a grown man cry. The feelings of not being good enough were ever present in my life, not just in modeling, but in every area. Naturally, I began to try to control my environment, schedule, and even the food I allowed myself to eat, which led to an unhealthy relationship with food that I had to overcome.

What got me out of it? Something very simple, actually. I had to find out the hard way, but eventually I did grow to accept it: I am the only me! That is good enough, and that alone makes me unique. If I go by the world's fickle standards, then some might be "better" than me one day, and on another day some will be "worse" than me. The world's standards for beauty, success, and love are always changing. No one may be perfect, but I can be the perfect "me" in the world! There was and always will be room for improvement, but as a whole, I learned long ago to accept myself, idiosyncrasies and all. Once I accepted that, I became free!

I began to see food as the life-giving energy I needed to carry out my purpose. I began eating nutrient packed real foods that kept me fit and healthy. Health was the key. Much the whole and real food that I began eating for health and fuel to my body way back then inspires the food I now make for my family. This kind of diet has been flavorful and delicious and has helped me regain my shape after giving birth to seven children. Power salads, spaghetti squash with roasted cherry tomatoes, pine nuts topped with skirt steak, seasonal soups, lettuce wraps, Filets with Herb Butter, and hearty roasted cauliflower with green goddess dressing were high on my favorites during my modeling days and are still some of my family's staples today.

By the way, I still don't have that "real job" my parents wanted me to have!

A top-down view of a dining table. In the center is a white plate with a colorful salad of chicken, strawberries, blueberries, orange slices, and nuts. To the left is a glass of blue drink with cucumber and lime. Above the salad is a white plate with a green dressing bottle. To the right is a bowl of pecans and some jewelry. A green banner with the text 'POWER SALAD' is overlaid on the left side.

POWER SALAD



POWER SALAD

WITH LIME MARINATED CHICKEN & GREEN GODDESS AVOCADO DRESSING

Chicken Ingredients

- JUICE FROM 3 LIMES, PLUS THE ZEST OF 2
- 2 TEASPOONS CILANTRO, CHOPPED
- 1/4 SOY SAUCE
- 1/4 CUP OLIVE OIL
- 1 TEASPOON LIQUID SMOKE
- 4 CLOVES LARGE GARLIC, FINELY CHOPPED
- 1/4 TEASPOON FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER
- 1/8 TEASPOON CAYENNE PEPPER
- 1/4 CUP WATER
- 1/4 CUP BROWN SUGAR
- 2 POUNDS BONELESS CHICKEN BREASTS

Instruction

In a medium bowl, Combine all but the chicken and mix well. Add the chicken and incorporate the brine all around the chicken breasts. Cover with plastic wrap and chill in the refrigerator for 8 hours.

Remove from the refrigerator and heat grill pan, or cast iron skillet on high heat. Grill chicken for about 8 minutes on the first side. Turn over and cook for another 5 minutes or until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 160 degrees F. Remove chicken to a cutting board and allow to rest for about 10 minutes.



POWER SALAD

WITH LIME MARINATED CHICKEN & GREEN GODDESS AVOCADO DRESSING



Salad Ingredients

- 1 LARGE HEAD OF ICEBERG LETTUCE, RINSED AND CHOPPED
- 1 CUP SPINACH LEAVES OR MIXED SEASONAL GREENS
- 1 1/2 CUPS STRAWBERRIES, SLICED
- 1 1/2 CUPS ORANGE SLICES
- 1 CUP PECANS, TOASTED
- 1 CUP RED ONIONS, CHOPPED
- 1 CUP DRIED CRANBERRIES
- 1 CUP GOAT CHEESE, CRUMBLED
- LIME MARINATED CHICKEN, SLICED

Instruction

In a large bowl, toss together all ingredients except the chicken. Slice the lime marinated chicken across the grain and place on top of the salad.

Dressing Ingredients

- 2 RIPE MEDIUM AVOCADOS, CUT INTO CUBES
- 1 CUP GREEK YOGURT
- 1/4 CUP WATER
- 2 CLOVES GARLIC, CHOPPED
- 1 TABLESPOON RED ONION
- 1 TABLESPOON LIME JUICE
- 2 TABLESPOONS FRESH PARSLEY
- 1 TEASPOON KOSHER SALT

Instruction

In a blender, place all ingredients and blend until smooth. Drizzle dressing over the salad. I like to use a squirt bottle for this.



SHRIMP AND GRITS



SHRIMP & GRITS

Ingredients

- 4 CUPS WATER
- 1 TABLESPOON KOSHER SALT
- 1 TEASPOON FRESHLY GROUND PEPPER
- 1 CUP STONE-GROUND GRITS
- 3 TABLESPOONS BUTTER
- 2 CUPS WHITE CHEDDAR CHEESE, SHREDDED
- 1 POUND SHRIMP, PEELED AND DEVEINED
- ½ CUP TASSO, CHORIZO, OR THICK CUT BACON (TASSO OR CHORIZO PREFERABLE)
- ¼ CUP ONIONS, DICED
- ½ GREEN BELL PEPPER, DICED
- 1 LARGE GARLIC CLOVE, MINCED
- 1 TABLESPOON WHITE WINE
- 1 ½ CUPS HEAVY CREAM
- SHRIMP STOCK, IF NEEDED TO LOOSEN GRAVY
- ½ CUP SCALLIONS, SLICED
- KOSHER SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE

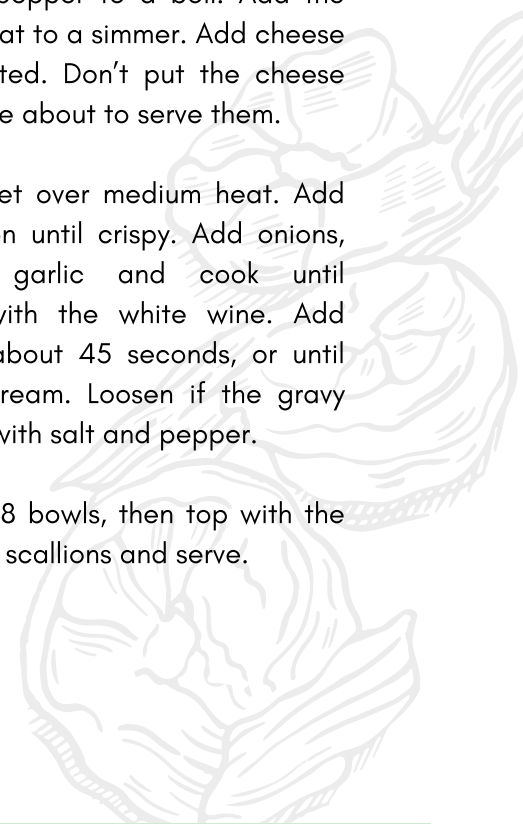
Instruction

Bring water, salt, and pepper to a boil. Add the grits, stir, and reduce heat to a simmer. Add cheese and stir until incorporated. Don't put the cheese into the grits until you are about to serve them.

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add Tasso, chorizo, or bacon until crispy. Add onions, green pepper, and garlic and cook until translucent. Deglaze with the white wine. Add shrimp and sauté for about 45 seconds, or until pink. Slowly add the cream. Loosen if the gravy looks too thick. Season with salt and pepper.

Divide the grits among 8 bowls, then top with the shrimp mixture. Top with scallions and serve.

Serve with crusty bread.





SWEET POTATO BISCUITS

Ingredients

- 2 CUPS ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- 1 TABLESPOON BAKING POWDER
- 1/4 TEASPOON BAKING SODA
- 1 TEASPOON KOSHER SALT
- 6 TABLESPOONS UNSALTED BUTTER FROZEN
- 3/4 CUP BUTTERMILK
- 1 CUP BAKED MASHED SWEET POTATO (ABOUT 1 MEDIUM TO LARGE POTATO)

Instruction

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees. Combine dry ingredients in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, mix milk and sweet potatoes until combined.

Cut frozen butter into small cubes and blend into the flour mixture using your fingers. Take care not to melt the butter (handle as little as possible). Add wet mixture into the dry and lightly mix dough with your hands to combine. Bring the mixture together and once together turn out onto a floured surface (the dough will look very shaggy). Press it into a 9 x 6 rectangle (approximately 2 inches thick). Cut the dough into rounds. Gather leftover dough, and repeat until you have 8 large biscuits. If you want a lot of small biscuits, roll dough out to 3/4 inch thickness and cut biscuits using the size cutter you would like.

Place biscuits in a skillet and bake until bottoms turn golden brown, about 12 - 15 minutes.

HI, I'M STACY LYN

AND I'M A CHOCOHOLIC...BUT THAT'S OK

My mother weathered quite a few storms while raising my crazy behind and, as a result, swore off ever having another child. Now that I think about it, she always used to tell me I was lucky I got here when I did. In her stories, you can hear about me flipping from one side of the uterus to the other during pregnancy, and then from one side of my bedroom to the other as a small girl. She complains that I haven't stopped yet—even to this day telling me "You've been going full speed since conception!" As if the world needed video proof, I have myself observed old footage of a young Stacy Lyn jumping on an ottoman for 20 minutes straight.

My kindergarten teachers reportedly saw "potential" in that same hyperactive child and allowed me to go to dance lessons during nap time. I'm pretty sure it was rather that they saw an opportunity to get me out of class so the teachers and other kids could have a little rest. Mother saw how well that worked and promptly enrolled me in ballet, jazz, tap, baton, and gymnastics classes after school so she could have enough time to get off work and come pick me up. Time is a sacred resource for parents, and my mom had very little of it. She was doing what she could to make her tough schedule work, but she made it work to her advantage, and I ended up getting involved in activities that helped me grow in so many ways.



Each year, I'd get worn out from the classes and drop one of them. By the time I was eight, all I had left was gymnastics. And I loved every second of it.

I focused on gymnastics until I became part of the best team in Alabama, the Majestics. For three years, I worked out five hours a day, plus some Saturdays. Practices were rigorous and demanding, and our coach, aka Mr. Universe (no, I'm not kidding), was incredibly tough. I remember one day where I failed to point my toes correctly during a bar routine, and Mr. Universe made me sit in a chair with pointed toes for an entire hour. It was grueling, but I felt so free at practice, content that I was working to be a part of something bigger than myself.

The interesting thing about gymnastics was that, during our meets, the only food we were allowed to eat was Hershey's chocolate bars! If I have to pick a moment when my love affair with chocolate began, it'd probably be a safe bet to say one of our Majestics meets. Maybe putting such constraints on the diet of a still-developing athlete's body is a little ill-advised, but Hershey's was then, and is sometimes now, all I need. Even still, my mom would take me out for a meal of my choosing after each meet, probably recognizing that her daughter needed some real Sustenance.

You can probably guess that the chances of getting to eat out were hard to come by in our household, so each choice carried immense gravity for my young impressionable self. This is why it's so surprising to me now when I look back that I almost always settled for a plain old BLT. I could have had anything—sizzling hot fajita plates, exorbitant lunch buffets, bowls overflowing with gravy, stacks of meat and cornbread—but I settled for a BLT?? It's surprising, yes, but I think about all the BLTs I make when my first tomato harvest comes in—those gorgeous, bursting red tomatoes that scream at you to pick them off the vine—and know I was onto something as a little girl. Now, when the tomato harvest finally arrives—a cheery reprieve from the oppressive July heat—and I make the celebratory BLTs and sink my teeth into them, I'm transported back to the gymnasium, where I'm standing on the podium having a gold or silver medallion placed around my neck. What a feeling.

CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE

WITH CHOCOLATE GANACHE & WHITE CHOCOLATE DRIZZLE

Oreo Crust Ingredients

- 22 OREO COOKIES
- 1/4 CUP UNSALTED BUTTER, MELTED

Cheesecake Ingredients

- 8 OUNCES SEMI-SWEET CHOCOLATE, COARSELY CHOPPED
- 4 OUNCES MILK CHOCOLATE, COARSELY CHOPPED
- 3 PACKAGES (24 OUNCES) FULL-FAT CREAM CHEESE, SOFTENED
- 1 CUP SOUR CREAM
- 1 CUP GRANULATED SUGAR
- 1/4 CUP LIGHT BROWN SUGAR, PACKED
- 3 TABLESPOONS UNSWEETENED COCOA POWDER
- 4 EGGS PLUS 2 EGG YOLKS
- 1 1/2 TEASPOON VANILLA EXTRACT

Ganache Ingredients

- 8 OUNCES SEMI-SWEET CHOCOLATE, FINELY CHOPPED
- 1 TEASPOON INSTANT COFFEE GRANULES
- 1/2 CUP HEAVY CREAM
- 1/8 TEASPOON COARSE SALT
- 3 TABLESPOONS OF BUTTER, ROOM TEMPERATURE

Drizzle Ingredients

- 8 OUNCES WHITE CHOCOLATE, FINELY CHOPPED
- 2 TABLESPOONS OF BUTTER
- MILK CHOCOLATE SHAVINGS (OPTIONAL)





INSTRUCTION

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Wrap a 9-inch springform pan heavily with heavy-duty aluminum foil. Coat the pan with non-stick cooking spray.

For the Oreo Crust

In a food processor, whiz Oreos until fine crumbs result, then add melted butter and pulse until combined. Add the crumbs to the pan and press crumbs evenly over the bottom and up the sides about an inch. Bake the crust for 15 minute. Remove and set aside.

For the Cheesecake Filling

Reduce oven temperature to 325 degrees F. In a medium saucepan half filled with water, place a bowl that will fill the pan but not touch the water. Place the semi-sweet and milk chocolate in the bowl on top of the saucepan. Bring the water to a boil. When the water reaches a boil, reduce the heat to simmer. Don't walk away from this step; the chocolate can burn quickly. Stir the chocolate as it melts with a silicon spatula. Remove the saucepan with the bowl still over the top from the heat once the chocolate is completely melted.

In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, add room temperature cream cheese and sour cream and mix until smooth. Add sugars, cocoa powder, eggs and egg yolks one at the time and blend after each egg addition. Try not to over mix the batter.

Add vanilla to the chocolate mixture and stir well. Stir the chocolate into the filling mixture until well combined.

Pour the batter into prepared crust in the springform pan, then place the springform pan in a roasting pan. Pour hot water that comes up about 1 1/2 inches around the pan and. Place in the 325 degrees F oven for 1 hour and 10 minutes. The middle of the cheesecake should be jiggly, but as it cools it will set. Remove the pan from the oven and to a cooling rack and allow to cool completely. Loosen the foil and take the tip of a knife around the sides of the pan. This will keep the cheesecake from cracking. Once the cake has cooled, place it in a refrigerator leaving it in the pan for at least 6 to 8 hours

For the Chocolate Ganache

In a medium bowl, add chopped chocolate and coffee granules.

In a saucepan over medium heat, bring cream to a simmer. Add half of the cream to the chocolate and whisk until incorporated. Slowly add the remaining cream and whisk until well incorporated. Add a tablespoon of butter at the time and whisk until combined. Add the salt and mix.

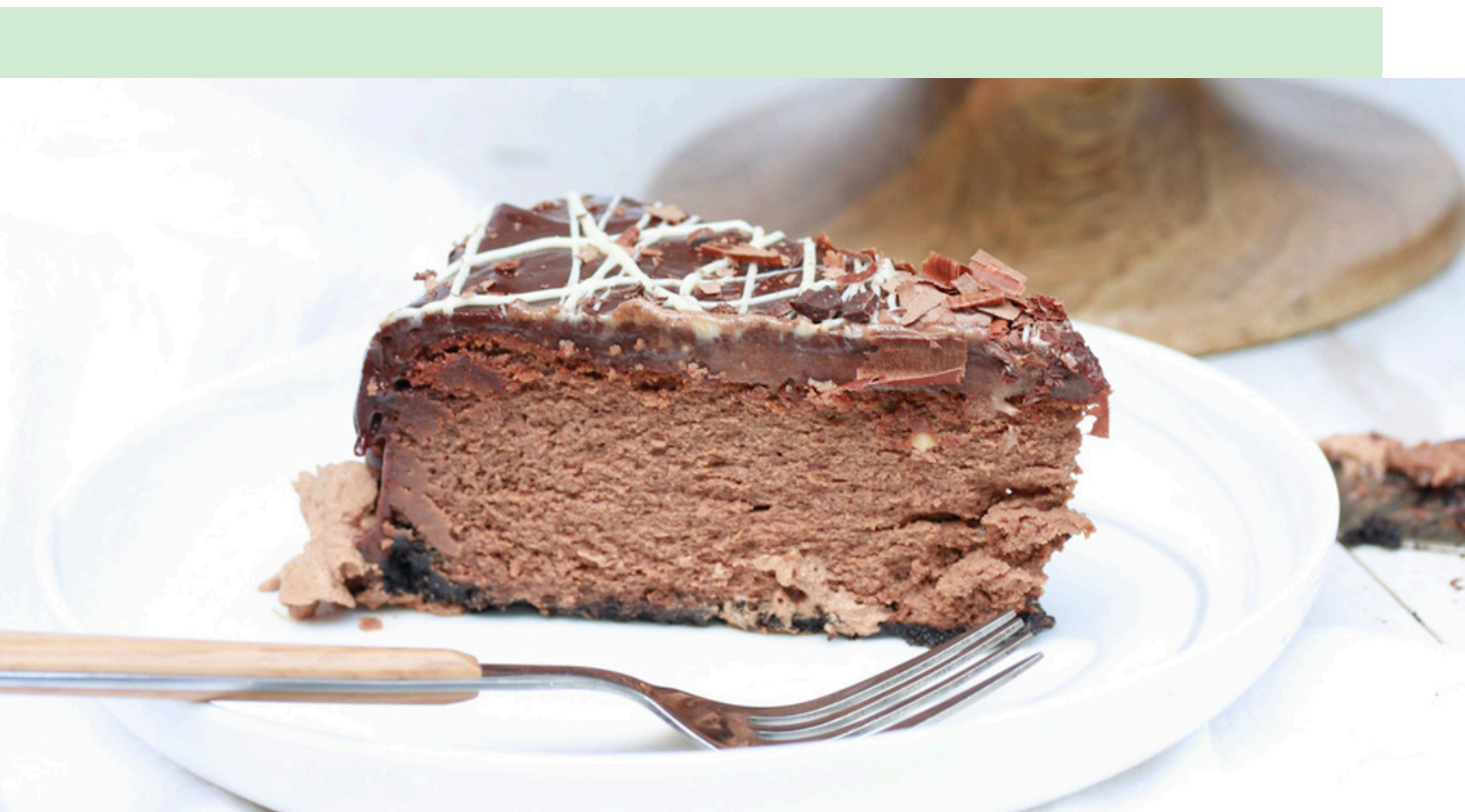
Remove cheesecake from refrigerator and remove cheesecake from the springform pan onto serving dish or cake stand. Pour ganache over the cheesecake. Place cheesecake back into the refrigerator for an hour while you make the with chocolate drizzle.

For the Drizzle (Optional)

In a medium saucepan half filled with water, place a bowl that will fill the pan but not touch the water. Place the white chocolate in the bowl on top of the saucepan. Bring the water to a boil and immediately reduce to simmer. With a silicone spatula, gently stir until melted. Once melted, remove the saucepan and bowl off the heat.

Remove the refrigerated cheesecake and ganache and drizzle white chocolate over the top.

With a vegetable peeler or very sharp knife, thinly shave milk chocolate curls and place over the top of the cheesecake.



LOVE LANGUAGE *of the* SOUTH

THANKS FOR PRE-ORDERING!

I hope you've enjoyed *A Taste of Love Language from the South!* You'll find even more great recipes and stories inside the book when it arrives in early March. You'll get some of favorites like my Old Fashioned Pound Cake, Squash Casserole, Watermelon Lemonade... and so much more! When you get your copy, I hope you'll share the photos of what you make first. I can't wait to hear what are YOUR favorites!

Let's get cooking!

