

Eat Your Way Through the USA

By Loreé Pettit

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Written by Loreé Pettit

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate *Eat Your Way Through the USA* to my grandmothers, Ophelia Stewart (Nanny) and Evelyn Ledkins (Maw). Thank you for giving me such fond childhood memories of watching and helping you in the kitchen and for passing down your love of cooking and hospitality.

Acknowledgments

To Mom, Dad, Marty, and Chalane – Thank you for patiently enduring my early trials and tribulations in the kitchen.

To my husband, Ralph – Thank you for eating the fried chicken when what you really wanted was a bologna sandwich.
(Yes, there is a story behind this.)

Special thanks to James T. Ehler, chef, editor, and publisher at FoodReference.com for permission to use some of his fun food information.

Eat Your Way Through the USA

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Introduction

I can remember coming home from school one crisp fall afternoon when I was 8 or 9 years old and my mother greeting me at the door with a big surprise. My parents were taking us to Six Flags over Texas the next day! Now, I had been dreaming of going to Six Flags for years and was absolutely beside myself with excitement. I was so excited that I spent the whole evening trying to think of a way to thank my parents. As I finally drifted off to sleep that night, inspiration struck. Pancakes! I would make my parents from-scratch pancakes and serve them breakfast in bed before we set off on the three-hour drive to Dallas. The fact that I had never actually made pancakes didn't deter me; I'd seen Mom do it lots of times. I wasn't fazed in the least.

At 4:00 the next morning I woke up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. Visions of my parents joyfully eating stacks of pancakes were flitting through my mind as I entered the kitchen ready to dive into my first culinary endeavor. I carefully assembled the necessary ingredients and utensils on the counter and began mixing. Keep in mind that I didn't have a recipe, so I simply put in how much I thought was needed. Never having actually worked with pancake batter before, I didn't know that it was supposed to be of a pourable consistency. Mine was more like thick dough.

Tingling with excitement and anticipating my parents' joy, I began to heat the cast-iron skillet – on high. You can imagine my father's shock and dismay when he walked into the smoke-filled kitchen to discover countertops that looked like a grenade had exploded and a platter of extremely thick “pancakes” that were burnt to a crisp on the outside and yet completely raw on the inside. Needless to say, he was less than impressed, and the dream of my parents' euphoria fell flatter than the charred pancakes. Mom was a little more understanding – after the mess was finally cleaned up – and the following Saturday cooking lessons began in earnest.

Why have I told you that story? Because children love to cook. And they enjoy working in the kitchen with their parents. Integrating food into your homeschool is an excellent opportunity to teach not only life-skills, but also to learn about foods from other places or time periods. It also gives practical, real-life application for math skills. While *Eat Your Way Through the USA* is not written as a how-to cookbook for children, I encourage you to bring the children into the kitchen with you as you prepare meals from around our great country. What a fun way to learn geography!

Regarding Recipe Selections

Researching the way we eat was quite an adventure. Our country's eating habits are as vastly different as our terrain! I tried to choose traditional recipes that summed up each individual state as a whole, but for some states that proved to be quite a challenge. Many states have several traditional dishes, that vary by region within the state, and *Eat Your Way Through the USA* is designed to include only one meal from each state. (Some states do have bonus recipes for breakfast or snack foods.) Another element that I considered was whether the state was a leading producer of a certain food. As you can imagine, for several states I had to choose from among many possibilities. I hope you're not disappointed!

One dish that I purposely stayed away from was barbecue: beef versus pork; tomato, mustard, or vinegar-based sauce. So many states or cities claim to be the best that I decided to stay out of the debate.

Several of the recipes from the southern states are old family recipes that have been handed down from generation to generation, some having been written down for the first time. My husband and children certainly enjoyed the writing-down process as I had to make the dishes to figure out the measurements to write down.

It is my sincerest hope that you and your family enjoy the recipes as much as I enjoyed researching and compiling them.

Bon appétit!

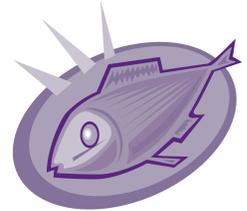


Alabama

Fried Catfish

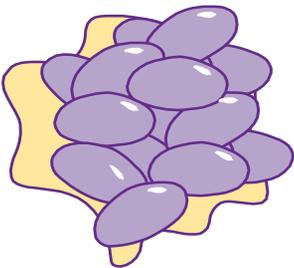
- 1 cup flour
- 1 T salt
- 2½ cups cornmeal
- 2 tsp black pepper
- 4 lbs catfish fillets
- 1 cup buttermilk or evaporated milk

1. Combine flour and salt in a large shallow dish. Combine cornmeal and pepper in separate large shallow dish.
2. Dredge fillets in flour mixture. Dip in milk. Dredge in cornmeal mixture.
3. Fry in hot oil (360°) until golden. Drain on paper towels.



Baked Beans Southern Style

- ½ lb bacon, cooked medium well, drained, and cut into pieces (save some bacon grease)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 small green pepper, chopped
- 4 16-oz cans pork and beans
- ¼ pound ground beef, cooked
- ¼ cup ketchup
- 2 T mustard
- ½ cup brown sugar



1. In a medium frying pan, sauté the chopped onion and green pepper in the bacon grease until limp.
2. In a large bowl, mix the pork and beans, onions, green pepper, cut-up bacon, ground beef, ketchup, mustard, and brown sugar. Mix well until completely blended.
3. Bake, uncovered, in a 350° oven for about 1 hour; stir every 15 minutes. Turn oven down to 300°; cover and bake for at least another hour. Turn off oven and allow to sit an additional hour, covered, to get the full flavor of all the ingredients.

Peanut Butter Pie

1 envelope unflavored gelatin
½ cup boiling water
4 oz cream cheese, softened
1 cup powdered sugar
⅓ cup smooth peanut butter
8 oz non-dairy whipped topping
1 graham cracker crust

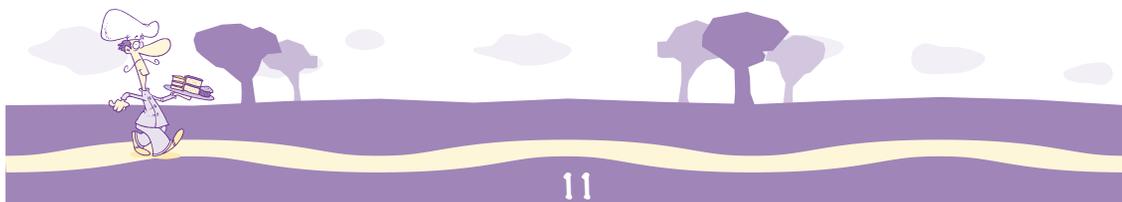


1. Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Cool to lukewarm.
2. Whip cream cheese until soft and fluffy. Beat in sugar and peanut butter. Slowly add gelatin, blending thoroughly. Fold in whipped topping.
3. Pour into pie shell. Chill 2 hours.



FOOD FACTS

- African American botanist George Washington Carver discovered over 300 uses for peanuts and 118 uses for sweet potatoes while teaching at Tuskegee University.
- The pecan is the official state nut.
- Americans consume over 4 million pounds of peanuts a day.
- In a year we eat enough peanut butter to cover the floor of the Grand Canyon.
- There are more Turkeys per acre in Alabama than any other state in the U.S.





Alaska



Crustless Salmon Quiche

4-5 oz smoked salmon, flaked
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
1 medium onion, chopped (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
2 T all-purpose flour

4 eggs
1 cup milk
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt
 $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp red pepper sauce

1. Toss salmon, cheese, and onion with the flour. Spread in greased pie pan.
2. Beat eggs slightly, then beat in remaining ingredients. Pour over salmon mixture.
3. Cook uncovered in a 350° oven 35-40 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Let stand for 10 minutes before cutting.

Broccoli and Cauliflower Salad

1 T vinegar
1 T sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp hot sauce
1 cup mayonnaise
1 tsp salt
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sour cream
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper
1 bunch broccoli, chopped
1 head cauliflower, chopped
3 radishes, thinly sliced



1. Combine all ingredients except vegetables in a bowl.
2. Add vegetables.
3. Toss and chill.

Alaskan Blueberry Coffee Cake

1½ cup all-purpose flour
¾ cup sugar
2½ tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
¼ cup vegetable oil
¾ cup milk

1 egg
1½ cup blueberries
⅓ cup all-purpose flour
½ cup brown sugar, firmly packed
½ tsp cinnamon (or more to taste)
¼ cup butter

1. In a medium mixing bowl, blend together 1½ cups flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, oil, milk, egg, and 1 cup blueberries. Beat thoroughly for 30 seconds and spread in a greased 9-inch round pan or an 8x8x2-inch pan.
2. Combine ⅓ cup flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, and butter. Sprinkle over batter and top with remaining berries.
3. Bake in a 375° oven for 25–30 minutes, until done. Don't overbake.
4. Serve warm with butter or honey.



Snow Cream

½ cup whipping cream
1 T sugar
2–3 drops vanilla
1–3 cups clean snow



1. In a separate bowl, mix cream, sugar and vanilla.
2. Slowly add snow to desired consistency.

FOOD FACTS

- Alaska is the world's largest supplier of salmon.
- Alaska's most valuable agricultural product is milk.
- Alaska's growing season is short, but the long days and cool temperatures help produce fruits and vegetables that are larger than normal.
- Because of the high vitamin C content found in potatoes, miners actually traded them for gold during the Alaskan Klondike gold rush.

