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Just a Few Miles South: Timeless Recipes from Our Favorite Places

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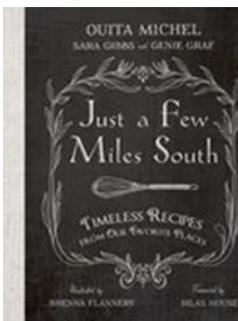
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REVIEWS

Just a Few Miles South: Timeless Recipes from Our Favorite Places



Ouita Michel
 Edited by Sara Gibbs
 and Genie Graf
 Lexington: University Press
 of Kentucky, 2021
 ISBN: 9781950564095
 200 p. \$24.95 (Hbk)

Ouita Michel maintains that “food is love.” She says it all the time and signs letters that way. As Silas House says in the book’s foreword, “love is present in every recipe in this book, whether she is talking about her mother’s sandwiches or the profound attachment she feels to Kentucky.”

Ouita Michel is a six-time James Beard Foundation Award nominee, including nominations for Best Restaurateur and Best Chef Southeast. She was a guest judge Bravo’s Top Chef series. She operates restaurants in Kentucky: Wallace Station near Midway, Windy Corner, off the scenic Paris Pike in northern Fayette County, both sandwich shops, and the Midway Bakery and Café. Many are recipes served at Smithtown Seafood and Zim’s Café, a diner but began at the Holly Hill Inn, Chef Michel’s first restaurant.

For this book, Sara Gibbs, a chef as well as a recipe writer and editor who lives in Central Florida, tested, and re-tested recipes making sure that they would work in a home kitchen. The recipes went to a group of folks who were asked to prepare the dishes in their home kitchens. After feedback, the process was repeated until the result was a group of recipes that were well tested, rock solid, and readily consumed. Brenna Flannery’s illustrations, were inspired upon the recipes and from whence they came.

Genie Graf is the special projects director at the Ouita Michel Family of Restaurants and lives in Midway, Kentucky.

All the recipes reflect the influence of the author’s Kentucky. The breakfast recipes are most enticing. The buttermilk biscuits (recipe in book) are a tradition and served at all meals, not just breakfast. They would be delicious, and with country ham, and with sorghum butter (recipe in the book), a great counterpart to the saltiness of the ham.

Another recipe that reads as something enticing is a country ham, apple, and cheddar quiche. With an all-butter pie crust, freezing the crust eliminates the need to blind-bake. Having country ham and apples on hand, the quiche is easy to put together quickly (and is something this reviewer is longing to taste).

Another recipe that would be scrumptious during summer is Chef Michel’s Bourbon Tomato Jam. This version uses canned tomatoes so one could have it all year round. The flavors of bourbon and tomato are compatible. This would pair well with country ham, meatloaf, and turkey on biscuits or sandwiches.

No cookbook review would be complete without including a burger and a description of some desserts. Wallace Station’s Big Brown Burger was reviewed briefly by Guy Fieri on his series, Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives on the Food Network. He rated the Big Brown Burger as one of his top 5 burgers of all time. While the burgers are cooking, lay the bun out and cover both sides with two tablespoons of Mornay sauce. Cover one side with one ham slice and the other side with two strips of bacon. Warm both sides in a skillet, meat side down until the Mornay sauce melts. To the bottom half of the bun, add a burger and two tomato slices. Cover with the top burger and serve immediately.

The desserts offered include the Glazed Lemon Bars, Danger Brownies, to which customers say it can take them two days to finish a Danger Brownie, eating a little square at a time, Cheesecake Brownies, the very interesting Cranberry Streusel Bars, and the Chocolate Bourbon Pecan Pie Bars. There are also recipes for pies, but this reviewer is too gorged from reading to describe them here.

Please do yourself a favor and look at the book itself, or better yet, purchase it.

J. W. McRee, Florence County Library System