



The Cracker Kitchen: A Cookbook in Celebration of Cornbread-Fed, Down H

Janis Owens

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Though our roots are in the Colonial South, we Crackers are essentially just another American fusion culture, and our table and our stories are constantly expanding -- nearly as fast as our waists. We aren't ashamed of either, and we're always delighted with the prospect of company: someone to feed and make laugh, to listen to our hundred thousand stories of food and family and our long American past.

Crackers, rednecks, hillbillies, and country boys have long been the brunt of many jokes, yet this old Southern culture is a rich and vibrant part of American history. In *The Cracker Kitchen*, Janis Owens traces the root of the word *Cracker* back to its origins in Shakespeare's Elizabethan England -- when it meant braggart or big shot -- through its proliferation in America, where it became a derogatory term to describe poor and working-class Southerners. This compelling anthropological exploration peels back the historic misconceptions connected with the word to reveal a breed of proud, fiercely independent Americans with a deep love of their families, their country, their stories, and, most important, their food.

With 150 recipes from over twenty different seasonal menus, *The Cracker Kitchen* offers a full year's worth of eating and rejoicing: from spring's Easter Dinner -- which includes recipes for Easter Ham, Green Bean Bundles, and, of course, Cracklin' Cornbread -- to summer's Fish Frys, fall's Tailgate Parties, and winter's In Celebration of Soul, honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

Recounted in Owens's delightful and hilarious voice, the family legends accompanying each of these menus leap off the page. We meet Uncle Kelly, the Prince of the Funny Funeral Story, who has family and friends howling with laughter at otherwise solemn occasions. We spend a morning with Janis and her friends at a Christmas Cookie Brunch as they bake delectable gifts for everyone on their holiday lists. And Janis's own father donates his famous fundamentalist biscuit recipe; truly a foretaste of glory divine.

The Cracker Kitchen is a charming, irresistible celebration of family, storytelling, and good old-fashioned eating sure to appeal to anyone with an appreciation of Americana.

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