

Who's Who In The Kitchen

# "House-Husband" James Baldwin Shares Views On Food, Politics, Life

By Audrey C. Lodato  
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In traditional households, the man goes out to work, and if anybody stays home, it's the woman—and even that's not too common any more. But then, no one has ever accused James Baldwin of being traditional.

Baldwin attracted some attention not long ago when he ran in the Democratic mayoral primary—not so much against Gantt, he says, but for mayor.

Content in his role as "house-husband," Baldwin does most of the domestic chores while his wife, Anita, brings in the couple's income from her job at Southern Bell. As he puts it, "I don't let her work here because she works all day. I've told her if I ever let her do the housework, she should put me out."

The one exception is cooking. Baldwin was the middle of five children. While his parents were out working, his two older brothers bullied him into performing their chores, he says, which included doing the cooking when he was still so little he had to climb up on a chair to reach the stove. To this day, he resents that; so Anita is the family's chief cook.

Nevertheless, Baldwin can cook, as he demonstrated when he recently prepared "Okra, Zucchini, and

Tomatoes AuGratin" for company. He is especially fond of cajun cooking. "We eat Italian, Mexican, and a lot of Oriental, just about everything; but Louisiana cajun is my number one. And my favorite dish is backbones and turnips, an old country-style dish."

Baldwin enjoys simple foods. He remembers most his mother's pinto beans and the "best baking powder—not baking soda—biscuits." He also recalls the time she brought home a whole hog's head with the eyes and bristles intact. "It scared me to death!"

He doesn't care much for pork anymore and rarely eats red meat. "I'm a fish and poultry man these days," he reveals.

The recent political candidate grew up in Charlotte and graduated from West Charlotte High School in 1969. He says he had an offer to play basketball at Fayetteville State but decided to go into the Marines instead.

After his discharge, Baldwin attended CPCC and Johnson C. Smith University, where he majored in psychology. He didn't stay to graduate, he says, because he felt a need to get on with his life.

He still enjoyed playing basketball until a year and a half ago, when he underwent back surgery. Now pastimes include gardening ("I've

always had a green thumb; anything I put in the ground will grow"), fixing up the house, watching his pet praying mantis, and keeping an eye on the political scene.

Even if he never runs for office again, Baldwin intends to become "a political watchdog."

The 34-year-old Democrat has no regrets about his run for the mayoral nomination. Friends and neighbors were encouraging, he says, and told him, "I'm glad you did what you did, even if you didn't win, because you gave us a choice."

Baldwin garnered 1,733 votes—which is 1,733 votes more than he would have gotten if he hadn't run! And, he states, he was prepared for the negative reaction of many toward his campaign.

Overall, he found it to be an enjoyable experience. "If you don't take yourself too seriously," he notes, "you'll come out ahead, win, lose, or tie."

Among the issues Baldwin raised were housing for the poor, greater support for minority and women businesses, greater development on the west side of town, and seeking alternatives to a payroll tax—all issues which other politicians are now addressing, he points out.

He also wants to see some kind of trade-off of the water bond issues, which will remedy problems in the southeast, for solutions to problems in the west, such as increased development and more jobs for people on the west side.

Baldwin has an eight year old daughter; Anita has a 13-year-old son. The children spend summers in the Baldwin home and visit some weekends during the year.

The couple hopes to eventually sell their home after they've finished fixing it up and buy a house with more room for a family, reports James. Meanwhile, he's happy with things the way they are.

"There's more between Anita and me than materialism," he says. "She's a very patient woman, and she's my best friend."

"I'm not ashamed of my emotions," he adds. "If you're not in touch with your emotions, you can drive somebody insane. People sometimes try to play on my emotions, equating working with manhood. You can be a man without ever having to fit into roles society provides for you."

While family members were not understanding of the couple's untraditional roles at first, "they've come around," Baldwin says.

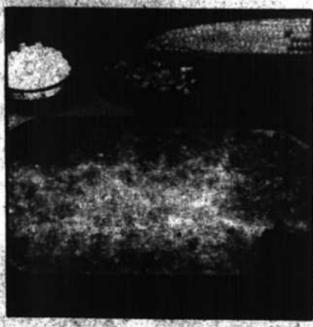
Here are a few of James Baldwin's favorite recipes.



Baldwin digs into his "Okra, Zucchini, and Tomatoes Au Gratin," filled with vegetable goodness and cheesy protein. The dish is easy to make and pops in and out of the oven in no time. (Photo by Audrey Lodato)

## Indian Dish Is Filled With Corn

The Indians taught the early settlers of Jamestown and Plymouth how to plant and cultivate corn. A favorite way of using the corn was for fresh corn pudding. In the recipe here the pudding is thickened with corn starch, and has been tested with fresh, frozen, and canned corn.



Corn Pudding

Stir in corn and margarine until well mixed. Pour into prepared dish. Place in large shallow roasting pan. Pour enough hot water into pan to come up as high as corn mixture. Bake in 350 F. oven 50 to 60 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Makes 6 to 8 servings. Note: 2 1/2 cups drained canned whole kernel corn or thawed frozen corn kernels may be substituted for fresh corn kernels.

### AMERICAN CORN PUDDING

- 4 to 6 ears fresh corn on cob, husked
  - 2 Tbsp. Argo corn starch
  - 1 Tbsp. sugar
  - 1 tsp. salt
  - 1/4 tsp. pepper
  - 3 c. milk
  - 1 c. light cream
  - 4 eggs
  - 1 Tbsp. corn oil margarine, melted
- Grease 11 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 2-inch baking dish. Using a sharp knife, cut corn kernels from cobs. Measure 2 1/2 cups. In large bowl, stir together corn starch, sugar, salt, and pepper. Gradually stir in milk and cream until smooth. Beat in eggs until well blended.

### CHICKEN ERICASSE WITH RICE (Serves 4)

- 3 lb. fryer
  - 3/4 c. flour
  - 1 envelope garlic salad dressing mix
  - 2 Tbsp. chili powder
  - Salt & pepper to taste
  - 1/4 c. oil
  - 1 med. onion, diced
  - 1 green pepper, diced
  - 1 c. canned tomatoes
  - 1 c. raw rice
  - Boiling water
- Cut the chicken into serving pieces, put the flour, garlic mix, chili powder, and salt and pepper in a large bag. Drop in the chicken, close the bag and shake it vigorously to coat all the chicken pieces evenly. Fry the chicken in the hot oil, browning on all sides. Add the onion, pepper, and tomatoes and stir briefly. Add the rice and just enough boiling water to cook it (1 1/2 to 2 c.). Stir, cover, and simmer until the rice is done (about 30 mins.) Add more boiling water while cooking if necessary to keep chicken and rice from drying out.

### BACKBONES & TURNIPS

- Roux
    - 1 c. bacon drippings
    - 1 c. flour
- Pour drippings in large pot. After the oil is well heated over a slow fire, add flour. Cook the flour slowly, stirring constantly. The flour must be a very dark brown, but not burnt.
- 1 c. onion, chopped
  - 1 c. bell pepper, chopped
  - 1 c. celery, chopped
  - 2 c. parsley, chopped
  - 2 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce

- 2 1/2 - 4 lb. (pork or beef) back bones (browned)
  - 6-8 c. turnips, chopped
  - 1 c. sauterne wine
  - 3 tsp. salt
  - Enough water to cover
  - Hot pepper to taste (Red cayenne)
- Add to Roux onion, bell pepper, celery, and parsley. Cook until tender. Add back bones, and turnips; do not stir. Pour sauterne over back bones. Pour enough water over to cover turnips. Add salt. Cook 4 hours over med-low heat. Serve over rice with garlic bread.

### OKRA, ZUCCHINI & TOMATOES AUGRATIN

- 1/4 lb. zucchini
  - 1 Tbsp. chopped onion
  - 1 Tbsp. butter or margarine
  - 1/2 c. cooked or canned tomatoes
  - 1/2 tsp. salt
  - 1/4 c. shredded cheddar cheese
  - 1 can okra (or 1/4 lb. fresh)
- Wash zucchini and cut into

- 1/2-inch pieces. Cook onion in butter in a saucepan until soft.
- Add zucchini and cook slowly 5 mins. Stir frequently. Mix in tomatoes and okra, salt and a few grains pepper; cover and cook about 5 mins. Turn mixture into greased baking dish and sprinkle cheese over top. Heat in a 350 F. oven until cheese is melted.



Simple pear accompaniment

## Pickle A Peck Of Pears

If Peter Piper, with his taste for pungent foods, had picked a peck of Western winter pears, he'd surely have enjoyed this piquant side dish. Pleasantly zesty, yet not overly tart, Peter Piper's Pickled Pears do their namesake proud.

The ingredients for this simple-to-do accompaniment go together quickly. Juicy quarters of Western winter pears are marinated in a mixture of lime or lemon juice, oil, green onion, parsley, oregano and pepper, then refrigerated for several hours to allow the flavors to "marry."

The cool, marinated pears, with their delightful blend of flavors, keep well and make a marvelous and unusual complement to a wide range of entrees, from ham or pork to sausages, cold cuts, hamburgers, or chicken. Or, serve on a bed of crisp greens for a refreshing salad course.

**Safe Microwaving**

To microwave safely with aluminum packing, Keane E. Meader, manager of product development for Del Monte, offers these tips:

- Frozen dinners may be heated in aluminum trays when following certain procedures. First, foil covering must be removed.
- Morton recommends that consumers place the tray back in the carton and into the microwave oven.
- Do not microwave an aluminum tray in which the product has been partially removed. The amount of aluminum should be in proportion to the volume of food.
- Be sure that aluminum is kept at least one inch from the disc of the microwave oven.
- Follow the guidelines from microwave oven manufacturers about cooking with aluminum.

Western winter pears add a dash of refreshing flavor and fresh color to winter tables. Among the best known winter pear varieties are the Anjou, Bosc and Comice. The spicy-sweet Anjou, usually available from October into June, has a greenish-yellow skin and smooth-textured white flesh. The Anjou is excellent for salads and cheese trays, as well as fresh eating.

The aristocratic Bosc, easily recognized by its long, slim neck and rich russeting over a golden brown skin, is excellent for baking, poaching and preserving, as well as for eating out-of-hand. The chubby, crimson-blushed Comice, at its best during the holiday season, is delicious eaten fresh.

### PETER PIPER'S PICKLED PEARS

- 3 Tbsp. each lime or lemon juice and oil
  - 1 Tbsp. minced parsley
  - 2 tsp. chopped green onion
  - 1/4 tsp. oregano, crushed
  - 1/4 tsp. each pepper and salt
  - 3 fresh Western winter pears, quartered and cored
- Combine all ingredients except pears; mix well. Pour over pears; marinate in refrigerator 6 to 12 hours. Serve as meat accompaniment or salad. Makes 4 servings.

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