

Journalist Karen Mulford Tracks Down Historic Eating

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

What could be grander than dining on Lobster Thermidor amidst stained-glass windows of another century? Or how about a slice of sawdust pie in an 85-year-old eatery that was once a haunted house? Imagine the exotic experience of Scotch eggs and Werk bread, laced with Guinness Stout, served at Number 10 Downing Street?

This combo of history and fine cuisine was an everyday experience for Southport's Karen Mulford over the three-month period in which she and her co-author, Dawn O'Brien, put together their book, *South Carolina's Historic Restaurants*. The recent revised edition followed an 1984 publication by John Blair, Publishers, offering 130 recipes gleaned from that state's most historic and renowned eating places.

"Sometimes we visited three restaurants a day," Mulford said, "but we usually just sampled dishes. We couldn't eat that many full meals."

The above-mentioned threesome of restaurants were among 50 included in the book. The alleged "haunted house" is now the Piazza Tea Room in Spartanburg; that funny bread was baked in a handsome 156-year-old mansion whose back lane bears the name "Number 10 Downing Street;" and a Brunswick

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County neighbor, Parson's Table in Little River, boasts the stained glass windows and the elegant lobster dish.

How did Mulford and O'Brien select this winner's circle? "We were looking first and foremost for old structures, not businesses," said Mulford. "The building had to be at least 50 years old." She quickly added that good food was important, too. "We traveled the state, talking to chambers of commerce, visitors bureaus, and getting tips by word of mouth."

The two women split South Carolina down the middle and each researched one half, meeting only in Charleston, that diner's heaven where they had difficulty confining their selections to 17 restaurants to be included in the book.

"It was a lot of fun and very interesting, too, to meet chefs and

restaurant owners," Mulford said. "Of course, some chefs didn't want to share their recipes, but most of them were very helpful."

The selection, historic research and food sampling were only part of the task. Every recipe had to be tested in the Mulford or O'Brien kitchen, and descriptive essays were written to reveal each restaurant's background and present characteristics. The end result is an attractive 200-page book that reads well, instructs, and tempts the palate. It is also enlivened by line drawings of all restaurants from the pens of Bob Anderson, Patsy Faires and Debbie Hampton.

The gracious, unassuming woman who brought Low Country cuisine to life in her Southport kitchen is primarily a journalist who was introduced to diverse dining through travel. "I was an airline stewardess for five years," she said, "and lived in so many different areas of the country."

She and her husband Jon moved from California 15 years ago to the Carolinas, where she began soon after writing for the *Charlotte News*. "I have done features and travel pieces for them," she said, "and a lot of restaurant reviews."

It was a natural, then, that when she met Dawn O'Brien, who had written *North Carolina's Historic Restaurants*, she should be asked

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Some Sample Recipes...

EAST BAY TRADING COMPANY'S CAROLINA BLUE CRAB AND SCALLOP CAKES

1 lb. backfin crabmeat, cleaned
6 ounces scallops, cooked and chopped
1 Tbsp. celery, chopped
1 Tbsp. bell pepper, chopped
1 Tbsp. parsley, chopped
1 Tbsp. basil, chopped
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 Tbsp. mayonnaise
1 egg, beaten
½ cup saltine crackers, ground
3-4 healthy dashes Tabasco sauce
1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tsp. Old Bay seasoning
2-4 Tbsp. butter for sauteing
Combine all ingredients except butter in a large bowl, stirring to mix thoroughly. Shape into cakes and saute in butter until brown on both sides. Serves 4-6.

JOHN CROSS TAVERN'S SEAFOOD ST. HELENA

6 Tbsp. butter
6 Tbsp. flour
3 cups milk
1 Tbsp. sherry
10 ounces claw crabmeat, drained
10 ounces small shrimp, peeled and deveined
1 cup grated cheddar cheese
4 slices toasted bread
Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add flour, stirring until lump-free and blended. Add milk

a little at a time and stir until mixture thickens. Add sherry and seafood. Stir until well mixed. Pour mixture into an ovenproof dish and sprinkle cheese over top. Broil until cheese starts to brown. Serve seafood with toast. Serves 4.

RICHARD'S SEAFOOD SAUSAGE

8 ounces fresh flounder
4 ounces shrimp, peeled and deveined
4 ounces scallops
3 ounces clams
1 egg white
1 Tbsp. heavy cream
2 Tbsp. vermouth
1 medium shallot, minced
1 green onion
pinch of salt
dash of white pepper
dash of cayenne pepper
½ Tbsp. sesame seeds
½ cup all-purpose flour
1 cup cooking oil
Finely chop flounder, shrimp, scallops and clams. Incorporate seafood with remaining ingredients in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Let stand in refrigerator for 30 minutes. Portion approximately 3 ounces of mix on one edge of a 12 X 12-inch sheet of plastic wrap. Roll tightly and form into sausage-sized roll, using the film at end of roll to tie off and tighten sausage. Repeat until mixture is used up. Poach in simmering water for 30 to 35 minutes. Refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours. To cook, remove wrap and dust seafood sausages lightly with flour. Heat cooking oil in medium-sized saute pan until slightly smoking. Place sausages in oil and heat until golden brown. Turn off heat and cover for 5 minutes.

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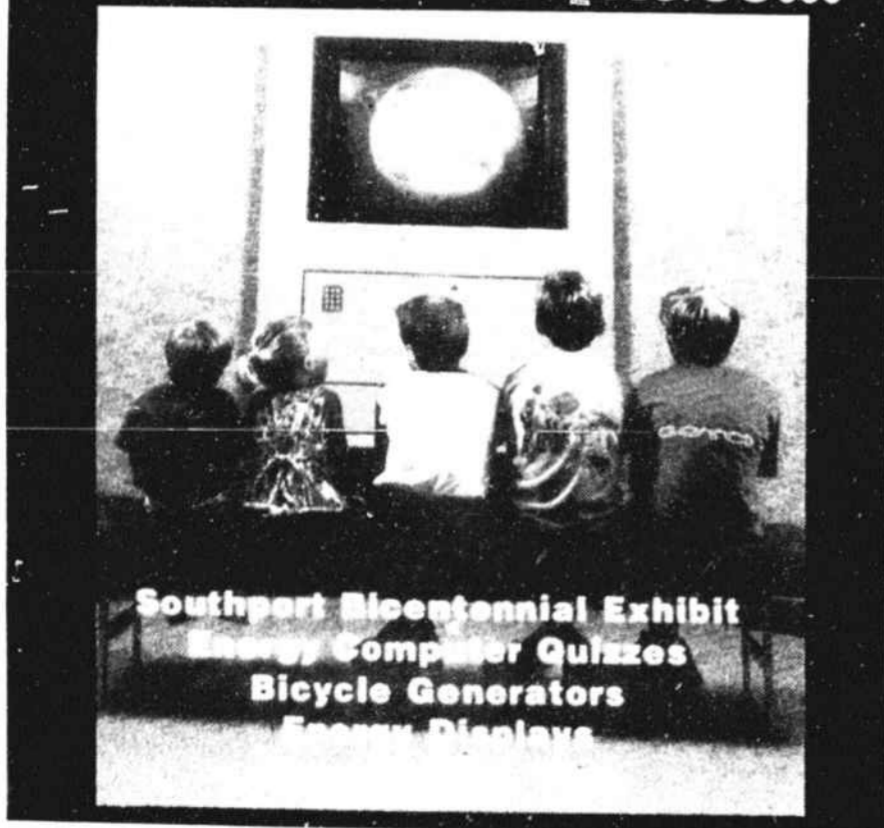
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