



Savory Memories

L. Elisabeth Beattie, Editor

Discussion Guide



KENTUCKY
HUMANITIES





Kentucky Reads

Kentucky Humanities has selected *Savory Memories* for this year's Kentucky Reads.

In previous years, a novel by a single author has been chosen including Wendell Berry's *Hannah Coulter*, Crystal Wilkinson's *The Birds of Opulence*, Bobbie Ann Mason's *Dear Ann*, and, last year, Fenton Johnson's *Scissors, Paper, Rock*. In a shift from that trend, *Savory Memories* is an anthology of highly personal recollections about food and family from more than 20 Kentuckians, past and present. Published by the University Press of Kentucky and edited by L. Elisabeth Beattie (now Linda Elisabeth LaPinta), this collection is a veritable smorgasbord of delights. Featuring recipes and memories from writers

such as Joy Bale Boone, George Ella Lyon, Ronni Ludy, Ed McClanahan, Sena Jeter Naslund, and Richard Taylor, this is both a cookbook and a compendium of sentiments. This warm and enjoyable blending of essays, illustrations, and recipes is leavened with humor and laden with nostalgia. As much as the food, these writers celebrate the personalities who lovingly prepared and provided their favorite dishes, sustaining life and helping to shape the personas of the authors themselves.

Savory Memories will serve as a focal point for local book discussions across the Commonwealth that promote a shared literary experience and celebrate the voices and stories that shape Kentucky's rich cultural landscape.

Previous Kentucky Reads Selections

2018	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024

Kentucky Humanities

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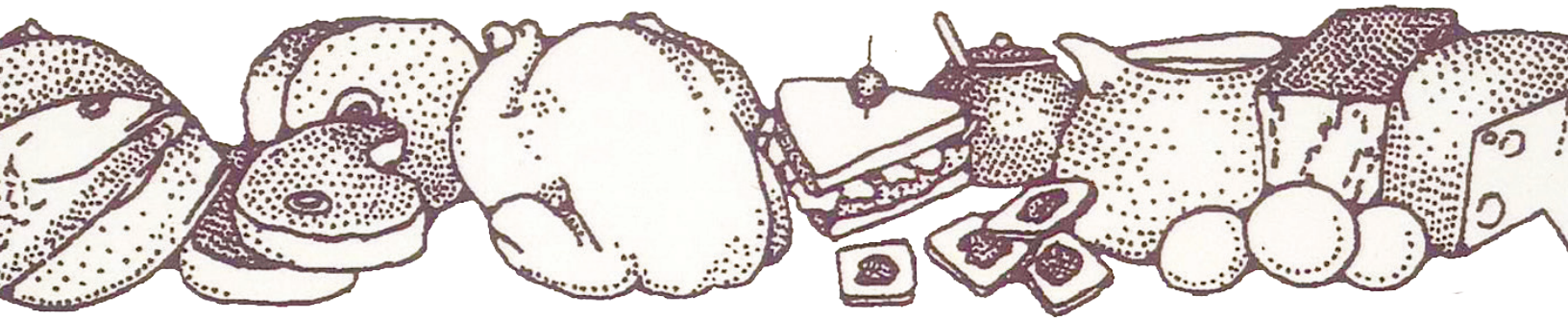
Each year, Kentucky Humanities provides funding for hundreds of public humanities programs. Sponsored by local organizations and held in familiar community settings, these programs reach across the Commonwealth.

Kentucky Humanities programs include Prime Time Family Reading®, Kentucky Chautauqua®, *Kentucky Humanities* magazine, Museum on Main Street exhibits, Grants for community projects, Speakers Bureau, Kentucky Book Festival®, *Think History*.



KENTUCKY HUMANITIES

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Meet the Editor, Linda LaPinta

By Deirdre Scaggs

Linda LaPinta is a native Kentuckian whose work weaves together the rich threads of history, culture, and personal narrative. Her books, articles, and essays explore the diverse experiences of Kentuckians, from the everyday lives of quilters to the culinary traditions that shape communities. LaPinta's love for writing and appreciation for the power of words started at an early age. Her mother recollected that she would dictate poems on the way to kindergarten. As a second grader, LaPinta's favorite activity was reading. A regular at her public library, she quickly outgrew the books that the librarian considered "age appropriate." By the fourth grade, her interests were firmly rooted. She had an aversion to math, gym, and recess, so she made a deal with her teacher that she would write for the literary magazine if she could stop participating in gym or recess.

Despite her obvious early strengths as a writer, her interests during college turned toward anthropology and archaeology. Fortunately, she and the anthropology chair didn't see her education in the same way. LaPinta decided she belonged in the English department where she found a life-long mentor who encouraged her to pursue oral history. Whether writing about the history of quilting or Kentucky cuisine, her work comes to life through vivid prose and a keen eye for detail. A deep appreciation for stories characterizes LaPinta's writing. She is a meticulous researcher, delving into archives, libraries, and personal collections to uncover the histories of Kentucky's people.

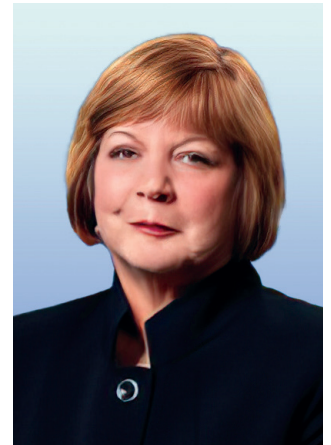
Savory Memories is a prime example of LaPinta's ability to blend Kentucky history and culture with personal narrative. The book is a culinary journey through the Commonwealth published decades before food culture became popular. It explores the diverse food traditions that have shaped the state's identity and our collective memory as told by some of Kentucky's best-known authors. But it is not the only example of LaPinta's work that focuses on Kentucky's cultural heritage. She also has written extensively about the history of quilting in the state.

In *Kentucky Quilts and Quiltmakers: Three Centuries of Creativity, Community, and Commerce*, LaPinta explores

the rich history of quilting in Kentucky, from the early pioneer days to the present. She examines the role of quilts in women's lives, as well as the ways in which quilting has been used as a form of artistic expression and social commentary. Like *Savory Memories*, *Kentucky Quilts and Quiltmakers* is a meticulously researched and beautifully written book rooted in a deep respect for individual stories. LaPinta's passion for her subject is evident on every page, as she brings to life the stories of the women who have created these works of art. This work reveals the ways in which quilting has been used to preserve and transmit cultural traditions, making it an important part of Kentucky's heritage.

Additionally, she has published two volumes of *Conversations with Kentucky Writers* as well as *Sisters in Pain: Battered Women Fight Back*. LaPinta has authored many articles and essays on diverse topics related to Kentucky history and culture. Her work has appeared in publications such as *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*, and *The Courier-Journal*. She is also a frequent speaker at conferences and community events, sharing her knowledge and passion for Kentucky's stories with audiences across the Commonwealth.

LaPinta's work is important because it sheds light on the diverse experiences of Kentuckians throughout history, from the culinary traditions that define communities to the artistic expressions that preserve cultural heritage. She gives voice to our people, whether they are quilters, cooks, or everyday citizens. Her writing is a reminder that history is rich with personal stories from individuals whose lives and traditions shape their communities. LaPinta's writing is a valuable contribution to the understanding of Kentucky's past and present, ensuring that the stories of our people will continue to be told for generations to come.





Savory Memories

By Deirdre Scaggs

Savory *Memories* is a unique blend of personal narrative, memories, and recipes celebrating the rich culinary heritage of Kentucky through the lens of Kentucky authors. Edited by Linda LaPinta (formerly L. Elisabeth Beattie), this collection features essays from 22 Kentucky authors, each sharing personal memories and recipes associated with a particular dish.

Savory Memories is a collection of stories. It is not just necessarily a cookbook; it is a collection of personal narratives. Each writer delves into their past, recalling cherished moments and the people who shaped their culinary experiences. These stories evoke a sense of nostalgia and connection, making the recipes more than just instructions—they become narratives of shared history and emotion. It is also a celebration of Kentucky's culinary diversity. The book highlights the breadth of Kentucky's foodways, through regional specialties and traditional dishes. From hearty Appalachian fare to elegant Southern cuisine, *Savory Memories* captures the diverse flavors that have shaped the state's culinary identity. The book is also a literary treasure. The contributors are all accomplished Kentucky writers, including Linda herself, lending their distinctive voices and storytelling skills to the project. Beautifully written, engaging, and often humorous, the essays make the book a pleasure to read even if you do not plan on cooking. *Savory Memories* helps to preserve Kentucky's culinary heritage. It is more than just a collection of recipes; it is a testament to the importance of food in preserving cultural identity. By sharing their culinary memories, the writers contribute to a larger conversation about the role of food in shaping communities and families.

The foreword of *Savory Memories* is written by Ronni Lundy, a highly respected author, food writer, and advocate for Appalachian and Southern food culture. She is best known for her work in preserving and sharing the rich culinary traditions of the Appalachian region, including Kentucky. Lundy has

Discussion Guide Author

Deirdre A. Scaggs



Deirdre A. Scaggs is an author, archivist, and photographer specializing in Kentucky history and culture. She serves as associate dean of research and discovery and director of the Wendell H. Ford Public Policy Research Center at the University of Kentucky Libraries. Her work focuses on preserving and promoting the rich history of Kentucky through archival research, writing, and public engagement. She is best known for her writings on women's history, foodways, and the history of the university.

Scaggs is the co-author of *Simplicity and Excellence: Elizabeth Kremer from Beaten Biscuits to Shaker Lemon Pie*, *The Historic Kentucky Kitchen: Traditional Recipes for Today's Cook*, and *Our Rightful Place: A History of Women at the University of Kentucky*. Other publications include *Women in Lexington*, a pictorial history of everyday and notable women and Scaggs' photographic work in *Row by Row: Kentucky Garden Stories*. Her work reflects a deep commitment to preserving and sharing the stories of Kentucky's past.

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had a considerable influence on the way Southern food is understood and appreciated, both regionally and nationally. Her book *Victuals: An Appalachian Journey, with Recipes* (Random House, 2016) won the 2017 James Beard Foundation's Book of the Year Award. Lundy begins her foreword with the words of histo-



rian Thomas D. Clark, “If, beyond the pearly gates, I am permitted to select my place at the table, it will be among Kentuckians.” Lundy goes on to describe how that Kentucky table might look, and it is the place where I’d like to be. It is the Kentucky table and the memories it invokes that inspired me to write my own books on Kentucky’s foodways.

LaPinta’s preface reveals how *Savory Memories* came to be while at an annual meeting of the Kentucky Arts Council. While the attendees were at lunch, they started to talk about food. LaPinta had just completed interviews with authors for her first book, *Conversations with Kentucky Writers*, when she jokingly suggested that her next book should be a Kentucky writer’s cookbook. Instead of laughing along with her joke, “a recipe emerged, and an idea for a book of vignettes that would allow representative Kentucky writers to explore how their memories of relatives and food helped nurture their responses to life.” Growing up in rural Kentucky, sharing daily meals and celebratory occasions around the table has given me plenty of these stories steeped in our cultural traditions. I imagine you all have many of your own.

I couldn’t possibly pick a favorite essay from this book as every story is incredibly rich, each giving the reader a glimpse into the personal histories of the authors. The connections among food, history, and culture make me nostalgic and feel connected to not only the contributors, but all my fellow Kentuckians. One of the special stories in *Savory Memories* include Jon Egerton’s, “A Child’s Garden of Memories.” It resonated with me for his rich description of the family garden and the bounty it provided, not only providing nutrition, but social gatherings, and incomparable memories. This story took

me back to my grandmother’s car port where we would shuck corn and snap beans.

One of my other favorite food memories includes my grandmother’s yeast rolls. With that in mind, I could understand Ed McClanahan’s story about “Grandma Jess’s Easy East Rolls.” With his humor shining through the story, McClanahan describes the Sunday dinner tradition where all he had to do was deliver the blessing before he could dig into the delicious breadbasket. Reading these stories reminds me how much we all have in common.

Betty Layman Receveur’s “Mama’s Favorite” talks about her connection to her grandmother which is the connection that prompted me to highlight these stories in this narrative. Receveur’s recipes include her grandmother’s “favorite cook in the world,” Cissy Gregg, a 20-year veteran food columnist and home consultant at *The Courier-Journal*. One of the recipes included in Receveur’s essay is from Gregg’s column, a jam cake attributed to Mrs. Creason. Jam cake has a long history in Kentucky’s food culture and is topped usually with a rich, caramel frosting (recipe also included).

Savory Memories is a delightful read for anyone interested in food, Kentucky history, or simply good storytelling. It is a book that will nourish both your body and your soul, leaving you with a deeper appreciation for the power of food to connect us to our past, our communities, and ourselves. This book demonstrates the power of collective memory and the importance of sharing our stores with others. Sharing our food memories can bring us together. It celebrates Kentucky’s connection to the land, shared experiences, and signifies the importance of continuing these amazing traditions.



Discussion Questions

1. What was your overall impression of the book? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?
2. What are the main themes that emerge from the collection of essays? (e.g., memory, family, tradition, community, identity, place)
3. Did any particular essay or recipe resonate with you more than others? Why?
4. Which essay was your favorite and why? Discuss the writing style and the story shared.
5. Were there any essays you didn't connect with as much? Why?
6. Did any of the essays make you laugh or cry? Share those moments with the group.
7. Despite their disparate backgrounds and ages, and despite their regional differences, how do the contributors transcend individual distinctions to communicate with and appeal to a broader audience?
8. Have any of the essays in *Savory Memories* inspired you to write food-related memories of your own? If so, what memories would you write about and why?
9. Does this book change your perception of Kentucky food or culture? How so?
10. What did you learn about Kentucky foodways that you didn't know before?
11. How does the book connect food with memory and identity? Share a personal experience where food is tied to a specific memory or feeling.
12. How does the book portray the relationship between food and community in Kentucky?
13. How did the different writing styles of the various authors contribute to the overall feel of the book?
14. How did the authors use sensory details to describe the food and the memories associated with it? Give specific examples.
15. How do the individual stories contribute to a larger picture of Kentucky's culinary identity?
16. Did you try any of the recipes? If so, what did you make and how did it turn out?
17. Are there any recipes you're particularly interested in trying? Why?
18. Beyond the ingredients, what do the recipes tell us about the people and culture of Kentucky?
19. Holidays and holy days inspire many of the essays in *Savory Memories*. What may be some reasons for this?
20. Just as holidays and holy days inspire a number of *Savory Memory* essays, cultural and location ties also play significant roles in many of the entries. How and why is this significant in particular essays, not only in terms of recipe selections but in terms of shaping the essays themselves?
21. Each essay in *Savory Memories* tells at least one story. How do the recipe or recipes that accompany each essay tell stories as well? What connections can be made between cooking and writing?
22. Just as a recipe's success depends on ingredients combined in particular (or approximate, as some cooks suggest) amounts, essays accomplish their goals with the inclusion of elements of other sorts, such as humor, candor, and specific points of view. In what ways is this true for your favorite essays in *Savory Memories*?
23. Do you have any similar family recipes or food traditions that you'd like to share?
24. Did any of the stories or recipes remind you of your own family food traditions?



- 25.** How do food and cooking play a role in your own life and memories?
- 26.** Do you have any cherished family recipes that have been passed down through generations?
- 27.** What are some of your favorite food-related memories?
- 28.** What is the significance of preserving culinary traditions?
- 29.** How has food culture changed over time?
- 30.** What roles do food and cooking play in our lives today?
- 31.** What are some other books or resources you would recommend for those interested in food writing?
- 32.** In what ways do the authors represented in *Savory Memories* equate sustenance of the body with sustenance of the soul? Are similarities and differences evident in their equations?
- 33.** Throughout the decades, food preferences and preparation methods vary, just as they go in and out of style. What, then, eclipses taste and technique in assessing a food-related essay with broad appeal?
- 34.** In *Remembrance of Things Past* (*Swann's Way*, to be specific) Marcel Proust indicates that a madeleine dunked in tea served as the impetus for his search for life's meaning via his writing of his seven-part novel. Hence, voluntary or involuntary memories triggered by sensory experiences are sometimes called madeleine moments. What madeleine moments can you identify in *Savory Memories*?
- 35.** How does food discussed in *Savory Memories* serve to encourage readers to negotiate, network, and collaborate?
- 36.** If you have read additional publications by *Savory Memories* contributors, can you identify any connections (theme, type of essay, etc.) between other work of theirs you have read and their essay in *Savory Memories*?
- 37.** In her foreword to *Savory Memories*, Ronni Lundy writes, "We remember those who loved us and showed it by nourishment. With every bite we come closer to telling you—to knowing ourselves—who we are, who and where it is we've come from, and sometimes, sometimes, where it is we must go." If particular *Savory Memories* essays suggest to you where you must go, where is that and why is that?
- 38.** Another contributor to *Savory Memories*, Frederick Smock declares in "One Writer's Beginning," "Science will explain the world to us. Like art, like religion, like cookery, like childbirth, teaches us how inexplicable the world is." In what ways is that true in particular essays?
- 39.** An excerpt from Betty Layman Receveur's essay, "Mama's Favorite," includes the following passage: "In the summer, we would go down Jefferson Street to the Haymarket. A neighbor had an automobile, and we would all go together, to stroll along the tables of fresh vegetables and fruits, of eggs and milk, and whatever else the farmers brought to town. Sometimes there were fresh flowers, or even litters of puppies to be given away. We would take home potatoes—sweet and Irish—green beans and onions and assorted other vegetables. Mama always watched for the first apples of the year—June apples, she called them. She said they made the best fried pies. Granddaddy said hers was the best he'd ever tasted anyway, June apples or no." In what ways does the passage above convey a time, a place, a child's emotions, and the significance of food and family without the author stating what she thinks or how she feels about any of these subjects?
- 40.** In his essay "A Child's Garden of Memories," John Egerton introduces a food-related memory by stating, "[L]et me tell you about a summer supper—a true story that recaptures an afternoon and evening of outdoor dining some fifty years ago, when I was a boy of about ten. The scene is still quite vivid in my mind. To the backyard of our home in a rural Kentucky town, my mother had invited a small multitude of relatives and friends for an informal dinner. In truth, it was a banquet. This is how I remember it." How does Egerton's tone and style frame his story for his readers?



Side Dishes

If you enjoyed *Savory Memories* and want to explore more tasty memories, many Kentuckians have written books to complement your reading.

Here are a few books to savor:

- Berry, Wes. *The Kentucky Barbeque Book*, University Press of Kentucky, 2015.
- Domine, David. *Adventures in New Kentucky Cooking with The Bluegrass Peasant*, McClanahan Publishing House, 2007.
- Engelhardt, Elizabeth S. D. and Lora E. Smith, ed. *The Food We Eat, the Stories We Tell: Contemporary Appalachian Tables*, Ohio University Press, 2019.
- Edge, John T. *The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South*, Penguin Books, 2018.
- Flexner, Marion W. *Out of Kentucky Kitchens*, Bramhall House, 1949.
- Green, Maggie. *Tasting Kentucky: Favorite Recipes from the Bluegrass State*, Farcountry Press, 2016.
- Green, Maggie. *The Kentucky Fresh Cookbook*, Cricket Press, 2011.
- Junior League of Louisville. *Bluegrass Gatherings: Entertaining through Kentucky's Seasons*, Favorite Recipes Press, 2013.
- Kentucky Monthly. *Seasoned Cooking of Kentucky: A Collection of Kentucky Monthly Recipes*, Kentucky Monthly, 2012.
- Lee, Edward. *Smoke and Pickles: Recipes and Stories from a New Southern Kitchen*, Artisan, 2013.
- Lee, Edward. *Buttermilk Graffiti*, Artisan, 2019.
- Locklear, Erica Abrams. *Appalachia on the Table: Representing Mountain Food and People*, University of Georgia Press, 2023.
- Ludwick, Cameron M. and Hess, Blair Thomas. *Famous Kentucky Flavors: Exploring the Commonwealth's Greatest Cuisines*, Indiana University Press, 2019.
- Lundy, Ronni. *Sorghum Savors*, University Press of Florida, 2015.
- Lundy, Ronni. *Victuals: An Appalachian Journey, with Recipes*, Clarkson Potter, 2016.
- Michel, Ouita, Gibbs, Sara, and Graf, Genie. *Just a Few Miles South: Timeless Recipes from Our Favorite Places*, Fireside Industries, 2021.
- Roberts, Rona. *Classic Kentucky Meals: Stories, Ingredients & Recipes from the Traditional Bluegrass Kitchen*, The History Press, 2014.
- Scaggs, Deirdre. *The Historic Kentucky Kitchen*, The University Press of Kentucky, 2013.
- Thompson, Sharon T. *Flavors of Kentucky: A Look at Kentucky's Foodways Including Recipes that Have Graced the Tables at Horse Farm Mansions, Won Awards for Creative Cooks, and are Favorite Dishes at Church Potlucks Or Family Reunions*, McClanahan Publishing House, 2006.
- van Willigen John. *Kentucky's Cookbook Heritage: Two Hundred Years of Southern Cuisine and Culture*, University Press of Kentucky, 2014.
- West, Gary P. *Eating Your Way Across Kentucky: 101 Must Places to Eat*, Acclaim Press, 2006.
- Wilkinson, Crystal. *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts: Stories and Recipes from Five Generations of Black Country Cooks*, Clarkson Potter, 2024.
- Young-Brown, Fiona. *A Culinary History of Kentucky*, Arcadia Publishing Inc., 2014.
- Zaring, Aimee. *Flavors from Home: Refugees in Kentucky Share Their Stories and Comfort Foods*, University Press of Kentucky, 2015.

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