taste of the south

AUTHENTICALLY SOUTHERN, ALWAYS DELICIOUS

76 RECIPES + TIPS

Thanksgiving ISSUE

Save Room for Dessert!
5 WAYS with CARAMEL CAKE
+ Easy SKILLET PIES
Tell us about being a self-taught chef. With my previous cooking all the time, we had constant conversation in my house, and I took that practice with me to cooking. I started buying cookbooks to go along with the ones my mother had given me, and used them not only to learn how to cook, but as a way of connecting with the experiences that being the first and only of four in my family. I would read them out loud from beginning to end to my parents, who would chip in with their experiences. It was an amazing way to get comfortable in the kitchen.

What is Poole's atmosphere like? It all comes down to comfort. I wanted to create a style of eating where people felt comfortable sharing plates and therefore sharing conversations at the table. The menu delivers a sense of dependability. They are places where people can feel familiar through food. I wanted people to feel comfortable when they walked into the space. I wanted to convey that there's simplicity and beauty in the food, but also enough to show, to mix things up of the plate.

How did you gain confidence in your cooking style? I think it's natural for young cooks, especially for those who are self-taught and have worked in smaller communities, to understand their style of cooking. You see a menu, you taste it, and you start to understand what you're working with. The more you experiment, the more confident you become.

What is the importance of the Seasoning section of the cookbook? When it comes to seasoning food, the more you learn about cooking, the more you realize it's not just about size and flavor. It's more the way the ingredients are seasoned with either spices or seasonings that make the difference. I think the goal is to be free, but also orderly in the way you put things together, allowing you to taste things that you might not have noticed otherwise.

You mention in the cookbook that you enjoy cooking and are most at ease with vegetables. Vegetables are dramatic and really stand up on their own. Often in the South, you see greens being cooked with ham hocks, and I'm not against that, but I think there's really a whole lot more to the vegetable world—like the incredible stews and soups that come out of the South. They're often slow-cooked for hours, so it's a good idea to use a good, old-fashioned pot and let the vegetables simmer. It's all about the flavors and colors, the richness and texture.

What do you hope comes from this cookbook? Cookbooks are an amazing way to learn how to cook—there are so many creative and delicious dishes out there. As a way of sharing your story, our story hopes to bring the community of the South and its approach to comfort food. It's about what's in the book, but it's also about the environment we create, the way we welcome people, and using ingredients simply and honestly.