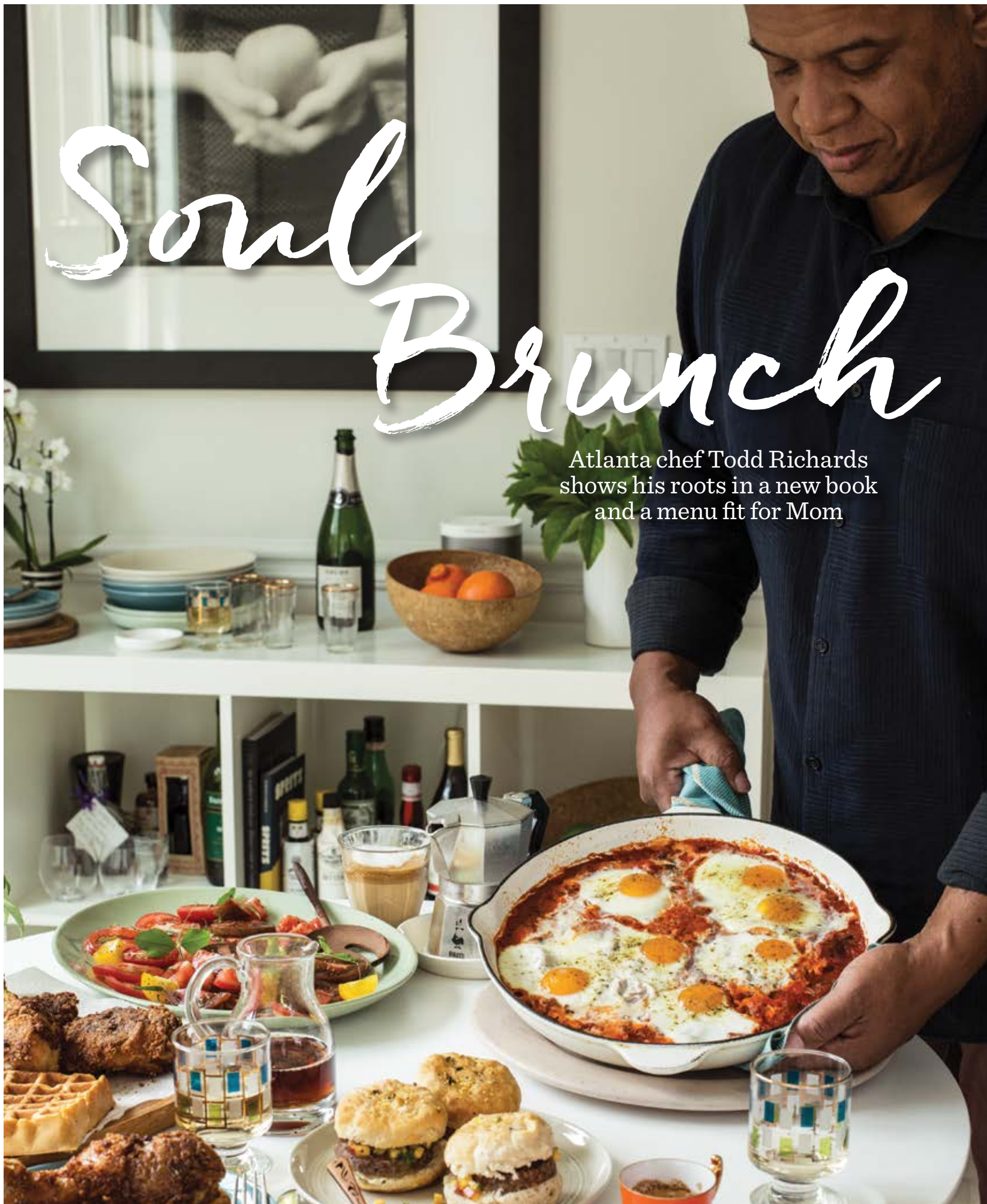


# Soul Brunch

Atlanta chef Todd Richards  
shows his roots in a new book  
and a menu fit for Mom



By Alison Miller

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANGIE MOSIER  
STYLING BY THOM DRIVER



“Cooking with the spirit of your ancestors in harmony with the ingredients you choose—that’s what soul food is about.”

**T**HE INSIDE COVERS OF CHEF TODD RICHARDS’ new cookbook are covered with a collage of childhood photos. In one, a young Richards poses with a homemade birthday cake. In another, his grandmother, Mary Wilson, tends to hot dogs charring on a grill.

“This is my mom here,” says Richards, extending a hand to the book, which sits open on the counter in his sun-dappled Grant Park kitchen. Valoria Viola “VV” Richards stands, smiling and squinting at the sun with one hand on her hip, in front of the brick exterior of Richards’ childhood home on the South Side of Chicago.

The photos are a fitting tribute from the Atlanta chef whose culinary training began with his family’s home-cooked meals, veritable feasts that fed not only his immediate family but also aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, friends, and neighbors.

“We cooked together, ate together, and celebrated together,” Richards explains. “If people didn’t feel like leaving the house, my mom would take plates over. She never wanted anyone to go without,” he says, dredging pieces of catfish in cornmeal and setting them aside for five minutes before frying—a crispiness trick he learned from his mother.

And so when the 24-year-old Richards arrived in Atlanta in 1992, he knew how to butcher a chicken, debone a fish, and smoke meat. He was a shoe-in at his first culinary job, in the meat department of a Kroger supermarket, and went on to hold executive chef positions at the Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta, the Ritz-Carlton Buckhead, and the Shed at Glenwood before co-creating the Pig and Pearl and One Flew South. In 2007, he competed on *Iron Chef America*. In 2008, as executive chef of Seelbach Hilton’s Oakroom restaurant in Louisville, Kentucky, and in 2013, while at White Oak Kitchen and Cocktails, he was a James Beard award semi-finalist for Best Chef: Southeast. His latest venture? Richards’ Southern Fried, a raved-about hot chicken food stall in Atlanta’s Krog Street Market.

“It’s been a delicious journey,” Richards says. “And it all harkens back to the celebration of food and food culture that my parents instilled in all of us growing up.”

Richards began working on *Soul: A Chef’s Culinary Evolution in 150 Recipes* in December 2016 with the goal of creating a go-between of his two favorite cookbooks, Edna Lewis’ *The Taste of Country Cooking* and *The French Laundry Cookbook* by Thomas Keller. But that wasn’t the only impetus. “I wanted to answer the age-old question of ‘where are all the black chefs?’ I know at least twenty of them right now who are absolutely fabulous and have changed the culinary industry across the board.”

Richards worked on the recipes for a year, using the seasons as his guide. Each chapter focuses on a single main ingredient or category, from berries, corn, and tomatoes, to stone fruit, rice and beans, and roots.

“Collards had to come first,” he says. And not just be-

cause they were in season. “They’re the most iconic soul food item there is.” The chapter begins with collard greens and smoked ham hocks and ends with collard waffles alongside brined trout and maple hot sauce.

Much like Richards’ own culinary arc, each of the chapters is a journey that starts with the familiar and graduates to something more complex. Dishes like buttermilk-rich cornbread provide comfort, while others, such as pork jowl with brussels sprouts slaw, break down any boundaries you might have around, say, pig cheeks or coleslaw.

Many dishes, like the ones he shares here, are right at home at the brunch table, further evidence of his family’s influence.

“A lot of our parties were brunch-focused,” he says. “Around 5 or 6 in the morning my dad and I would get the fire started. Ribs came first, then sausages, then chicken. My dad was primarily the keeper of the meats and my mom was primarily the keeper of the side dishes. Other people chipped in with cakes and pies, and would start arriving around noon.”

As journeys go, Richards’ is far from over. “My goal is to open up more opportunities to employ people and see soul food sharing a deserved space at the table with other time-honored cuisines. Cooking with the spirit of your ancestors in harmony with the ingredients you choose—that’s what soul food is about,” he says, stirring a bowl of peach and ginger relish in a vintage Pyrex mixing bowl. “It’s honoring our ancestors, telling their story, and moving the conversation forward in a progressive way.”



The catalyst for this salad? “Walking out into the garden and picking whatever’s available,” Richards says.



**Heirloom tomato salad  
with herb vinaigrette**  
Recipe page 110





Blue crab salad with apple and horseradish

## Blue Crab Salad with Apple and Horseradish

Serves 4

"My mom had a big love for crabmeat. The Carson Pirie Scott store in Evergreen Plaza had a restaurant inside, and every time we went she would order the crab salad with apples, so this is an homage to that. Since apples and crab can be quite sweet, I use horseradish to balance it out." Fresh or pasteurized crabmeat is the best for this recipe. If frozen is your only alternative, turn to poached shrimp or lobster instead.

- 1 lemon, cut into wedges
- 1 large fresh horseradish root (about 1 pound), peeled
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 2 medium red apples, peeled and diced
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons coarse-grain mustard
- 1½ teaspoons worcestershire
- ¼ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest
- 1 pound fresh blue crabmeat
- 8 fresh chives, chopped

**1.** Grate horseradish root to equal ½ teaspoon and set aside. Place remaining horseradish root in a stockpot. Add water to cover and salt; bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until the horseradish is tender and a paring knife can be inserted easily into root, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain and let stand 5 minutes. Dice into small pieces.

**2.** In a medium bowl, combine diced horseradish, apples, mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, worcestershire, pepper, lemon zest, and grated horseradish. Pick crabmeat, removing any bits of shell. Gently fold crabmeat and chives into horseradish mixture. Refrigerate the salad for 30 minutes before serving.



RICHARDS PREPS HIS CRAB SALAD



GREYHOUNDS PAIR WELL WITH ANY BRUNCH MENU





Baked eggs in tomato sauce  
Recipe page 109

Fried Chicken and Sweet Potato Waffles

Serves 4

Richards prefers to brine all birds before cooking for the best flavor and texture. Note that brining takes at least 12 hours.

For the chicken:

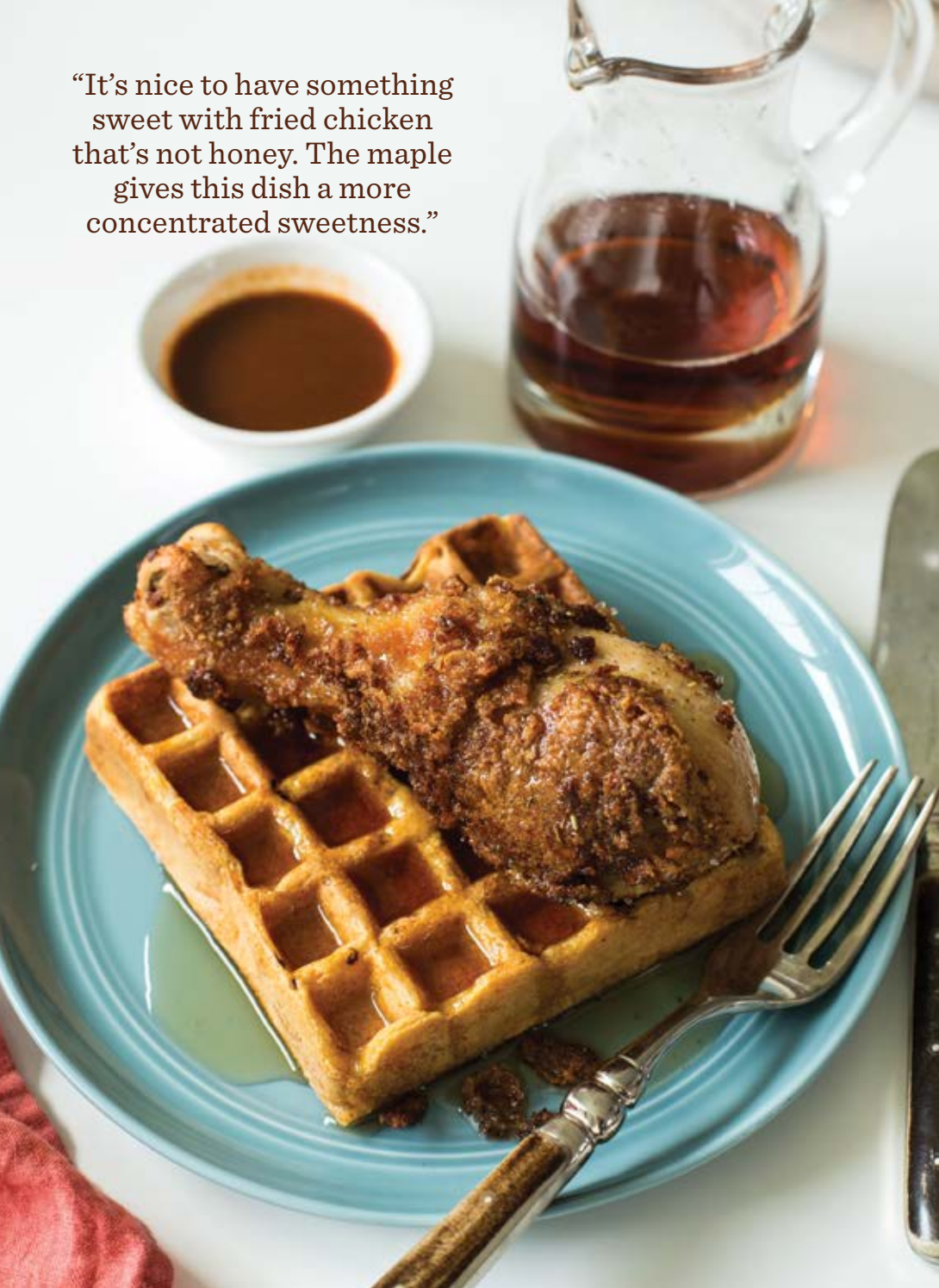
- 1 cup whole buttermilk
- 6 tablespoons kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons hot sauce
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons granulated garlic
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 1½ teaspoons red pepper flakes
- 1 (4-pound) whole chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 5 cups vegetable oil
- Seasoned flour (recipe follows)
- Maple syrup

For the waffles:

- 1 medium sweet potato
- ¼ teaspoon vegetable oil
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup whole milk
- ½ cup whole buttermilk
- ⅓ cup butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon maple extract
- 2 large eggs

Special equipment: belgian waffle iron

- 1. Brine the chicken:** In a large bowl, stir together 4 cups water, buttermilk, salt, hot sauce, sugar, and spices; add chicken pieces to brine. Refrigerate for at least 12 hours and up to 24 hours.
- 2. Make the waffles:** Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Rub sweet potato with oil and bake until tender, about 40 minutes. Remove from oven and cool for 20 minutes. Preheat a belgian waffle iron according to manufacturer’s instructions. In a medium bowl, stir together dry ingredients. In a separate bowl, combine wet ingredients. Peel and mash sweet potato and stir into milk mixture. Stir milk mixture into dry ingredients. Pour about ½ cup batter onto hot waffle iron and cook according to manufacturer’s instructions.
- 3. Make the chicken:** In a deep cast-iron skillet fitted with a deep-fry thermometer,



“It’s nice to have something sweet with fried chicken that’s not honey. The maple gives this dish a more concentrated sweetness.”

heat oil over medium heat. Remove chicken from brine and let any excess liquid drip off; discard brine. Dredge chicken in seasoned flour to coat; add to hot oil, one piece at a time. Cook, turning every few minutes until golden and a meat thermometer registers 165 degrees. Drain on paper towels. Serve chicken on waffles with maple syrup.

Seasoned Flour

Makes about 2½ cups

Store in an airtight container in the freezer,

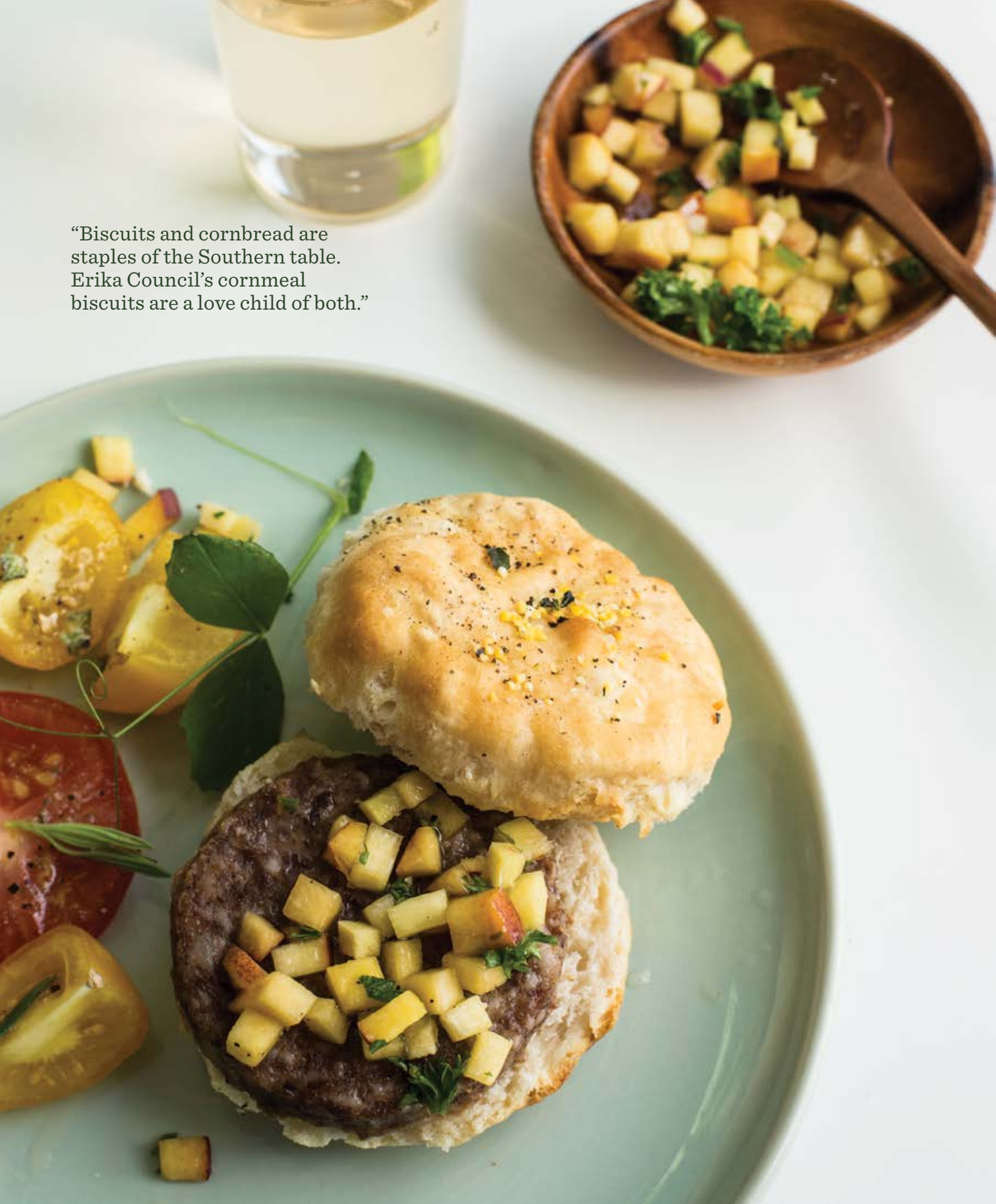
where this will keep for months.

- 2 cups flour
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1½ tablespoons granulated onion
- 1 tablespoon granulated garlic
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger

In a medium bowl, combine all ingredients.



“Biscuits and cornbread are staples of the Southern table. Erika Council’s cornmeal biscuits are a love child of both.”



**Breakfast Sausage with  
Ginger Peach Relish on  
Erika Council’s Black Pepper  
Thyme Cornmeal Biscuits**

**Serves 12**

“Biscuits and cornbread are staples of the Southern table. These are a love child of both. They have the crunchy, nutty-sweet flavor of yellow cornmeal floating in each light-and-fluffy biscuit layer.”

**For the relish:**

2 teaspoons blended olive and vegetable oil  
1 shallot, sliced into small rings  
2 tablespoons peeled and minced ginger  
3 medium peaches, finely chopped  
½ cup sugar  
½ cup apple cider vinegar  
¼ cup honey  
1 jalapeño, stemmed, seeded, and minced

**For the biscuits:**

1½ cups flour, plus more for dusting  
1 cup coarse yellow cornmeal  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
½ teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
2 tablespoons cold vegetable shortening, cut into ½-inch chunks  
½ cup cold unsalted butter, cut into ⅛ -inch slices  
1¼ cups cold buttermilk  
2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

**For the sausage:**

1 pound ground pork  
4 ounces cooked ham, finely chopped  
½ cup shredded cheddar cheese  
⅓ cup soft, fresh breadcrumbs  
2 teaspoons sorghum syrup  
1½ teaspoons minced fresh sage  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes  
¼ teaspoon ground coriander  
1 large egg, beaten

**1. Make the relish:** In a saucepan over medium-high heat, warm oil and add shallots and ginger. Reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring often, until softened, about 3 minutes. Add remaining ingredients. Cook until liquid is reduced and syrupy, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand for 20 minutes. Makes 1 cup.



**2. Make the biscuits:** In a large bowl, whisk together flour, cornmeal, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and pepper. Work shortening into flour mixture by breaking up chunks with your fingertips until only small pea-sized pieces remain. Add in a few slices of chilled butter and coat in flour. Press the pieces between well-floured fingertips into flat (nickel-size) pieces. Repeat until all chilled butter is incorporated. Place bowl in freezer until chilled, 15 minutes.

**3. Preheat oven to 450 degrees.**

Remove bowl from freezer and gently stir buttermilk into flour mixture with a fork. Add thyme. Stir until dough forms a ball and no dry bits of flour remain. (The dough will be sticky and shaggy.) Turn the dough out onto a floured surface. With floured hands, pat it to a ¼-inch-thick, 10-inch rectangle. Add more flour if needed to prevent sticking. Fold dough into thirds using a bench scraper or metal spatula. Lift the short end of the dough and fold in thirds again. Rotate dough 90 degrees, dusting the work surface underneath with flour. Roll and fold again into a 10-inch

square about ½-inch thick. Using a 2-inch round floured cutter, cut out twelve biscuits. Place 1 inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Brush biscuit tops with melted butter. Bake until the tops are golden brown, about 15 minutes.

**4. Make the sausage:** In a large bowl, stir together pork with remaining ingredients; let stand 15 minutes. Scoop about ¼-cup of the mixture onto a wax paper-lined baking sheet, and shape into a ½-inch-thick patty. Repeat until the mixture is gone. In a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat, brown patties in batches until golden brown about 4 minutes per side.

**5. To assemble:** Split the biscuits. Top bottom half with sausage patty and relish. Cover with top half.

Recipes adapted from *Soul* by Todd Richards.  
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