JUNE HARPER

A FREE KITCHEN SAMPLER

5 Forgotten Suppers

Five comforting recipes.
A little something for your kitchen.

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Welcome to My Kitchen

A personal note from June Harper

Dear Friend,

The five suppers in this little sampler are dishes that almost slipped away. They are not fancy show-off meals; they are the hearty, deeply comforting suppers our grandmothers put on the table after a long workday, when money was tight and love was measured in hot biscuits, iron-skillet gravies, and the smell of fried onions.

Older cooks rarely wrote down exact measurements. They said 'add flour until it looks right' or 'cook it till it smells like Sunday.' In these pages, I have translated those old instincts into dependable measurements and unmistakable texture cues without stripping away the heart of the dish.

Make one of these this week. Put your phone away, pull up an extra chair, and let the house fill with the scent of true Southern cooking.

With love and a practical apron,
June Harper

The 5 Suppers in This Collection:

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1. Cast-Iron Smothered Pork Chops & Onion Gravy

Prep: 15 min | Cook: 40 min | Serves: 4 | Classic Southern Comfort

"My great-aunt Mayola never used bouillon or packet mixes. Her gravy got all its rich, deep mahogany color from taking the sliced onions right to the edge of darkness in the pork drippings."

What You'll Need:

- 4 bone-in center-cut pork chops (about 3/4-inch thick)
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour, seasoned with 1 tsp salt, 1/2 tsp black pepper, 1/2 tsp garlic powder, 1/4 tsp smoked paprika
- 2 tbsp lard or vegetable oil
- 2 large yellow onions, thinly sliced into half-moons
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth (or warm water)
- 1/4 cup whole milk or heavy cream
- Fresh parsley or cracked pepper for serving

How June Makes It:

1. Dredge & Sear: Pat chops dry with paper towels. Dredge thoroughly in seasoned flour, tapping off excess (reserve 2 tbsp of leftover flour for gravy). Heat lard in a 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Brown chops 4-5 minutes per side until deep golden brown. Transfer to a warm plate (they finish cooking in the gravy).

2. Caramelize Onions: Turn heat down to medium. Add sliced onions directly into the hot drippings with a pinch of salt. Cook, stirring often, for 10-12 minutes until softened, sweet, and rich brown in color.

3. Build Gravy: Sprinkle the 2 tbsp reserved flour over the onions. Stir constantly for 2 minutes to cook out raw starch. Slowly stream in chicken broth while scraping all flavorful browned bits from the skillet bottom. Stir in milk and bring to a simmer.

4. Smother: Nest browned pork chops back into bubbling gravy. Spoon onions and gravy over the meat. Cover with a lid or foil, reduce heat to low, and simmer gently for 20 minutes until tender enough to cut with a fork.

> ***June's Texture Cue:*** *Watch the pan fond closely when you brown the chops. If the flour bits in the skillet start turning black instead of nut-brown, pull the pan off the heat for 30 seconds before you add the onions. Sweet, mahogany onions are the soul of this supper.*

2. Brown-Butter Tomato Gravy & Fluffy Cathead Biscuits

Prep: 15 min | Cook: 25 min | Serves: 4-6 | Appalachian Heritage Classic

"In the mountains of North Carolina, tomato gravy over hot split biscuits was the supper you made when the garden was overflowing and bacon grease sat proud by the stove."

What You'll Need:

For the Gravy: 3 tbsp bacon drippings (or butter) · 3 tbsp all-purpose flour · 1 can (14.5 oz) whole peeled tomatoes (crushed by hand with their juices) · 1/2 cup chicken broth · 1/2 tsp sugar · 1/2 tsp kosher salt · 1/2 tsp freshly cracked black pepper.
For the Cathead Biscuits: 2 cups Southern self-rising flour (White Lily preferred) · 1/4 cup cold lard or unsalted butter, cubed · 3/4 cup cold whole buttermilk.

How June Makes It:

1. The Catheads: Preheat oven to 450°F. Cut cold fat into self-rising flour with your fingertips until it resembles coarse peas. Stir in cold buttermilk with a fork just until a wet, shaggy dough forms. Do not knead! Scoop 6 large mounds (the size of a cat's head) onto a greased iron skillet, nestled close. Bake 14-16 minutes until golden brown on top.

2. Make the Roux: In a heavy skillet, warm bacon grease over medium heat. Whisk in flour and cook 3-4 minutes until nutty and light caramel color.

3. Simmer Tomato Gravy: Whisk in chicken broth, then pour in crushed tomatoes with juices. Stir in sugar, salt, and generous black pepper. Lower heat and simmer 10 minutes until thick, glossy, and spoonable.

4. Serve: Split steaming cathead biscuits with a fork and ladle warm tomato gravy generously over top. Serve immediately.

> ***June's Texture Cue:*** *Do not overmix biscuit dough or roll it flat. The secret to fluffy cathead biscuits is dropping rough mounds straight from bowl into the hot skillet. Those craggy edges crisp up gloriously in the oven.*

3. Quick Skillet Chicken & Fluffy Drop Dumplings

Prep: 20 min | Cook: 35 min | Serves: 4-6 | Soul-Food Weeknight Staple

"You do not have to boil an entire stewing hen on a Tuesday night to have real chicken and dumplings. This skillet method gives you rich broth and pillowy dumplings in under an hour."

What You'll Need:

• 1.5 lbs boneless skinless chicken thighs, cut into bite-sized chunks
• 2 tbsp butter · 1 medium yellow onion, diced · 2 stalks celery, sliced · 2 carrots, sliced
• 4 cups rich chicken stock · 1/2 cup heavy cream · 1 tsp poultry seasoning · Salt & black pepper
• **Dumpling Dough:** 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour · 2 tsp baking powder · 1/2 tsp salt · 2 tbsp cold butter · 3/4 cup milk

How June Makes It:

1. Sear Chicken: Melt butter in a wide Dutch oven or deep skillet over medium-high heat. Season chicken with salt, pepper, and poultry seasoning. Brown chicken chunks for 5 minutes. Remove to a plate.

2. Sauté Aromatics & Simmer: Add onion, celery, and carrots to the skillet. Cook 4 minutes until onions are translucent. Pour in chicken stock and heavy cream. Bring to a lively simmer.

3. Mix Dumplings: Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt. Cut in butter, then stir in milk with a fork until just combined into a soft, sticky dough.

4. Drop & Steam: Return chicken to simmering broth. Drop golf-ball-sized spoonfuls of dough directly onto the bubbling broth. Cover tightly with lid and reduce heat to low. Simmer undisturbed for 15 minutes. **DO NOT LIFT THE LID** while steaming!

> ***June's Texture Cue:*** *Resist the urge to peek! Dumplings cook from trapped steam. Lifting the lid lets steam escape and turns light, puffy dumplings heavy and gummy. Trust the clock for 15 full minutes.*

4. Slow-Simmered Green Pole Beans with Smoked Ham Hock

Prep: 15 min | Cook: 1 hr 15 min | Serves: 6 | Deep South Sunday Side

"In Southern cooking, green beans are not steamed crisp-tender for three minutes. They are simmered until they surrender, drinking in smoked pork and onion broth until every bite melts."

What You'll Need:

• 2 lbs fresh pole beans or Kentucky Wonder green beans, snapped into 2-inch pieces and strings removed
• 1 smoked ham hock (or 4 thick strips smoked bacon, chopped)
• 1 medium yellow onion, diced · 2 cloves garlic, minced
• 1 lb small baby new potatoes, scrubbed and left whole
• 4 cups chicken broth (or water) · 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar · 1 tsp sugar · 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes · Salt & black pepper

How June Makes It:

1. Start the Potlikker: Place ham hock, diced onion, garlic, and chicken broth into a heavy pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes to draw out smoky flavor.

2. Add Beans & Seasoning: Add snapped green beans, apple cider vinegar, sugar, and red pepper flakes. Season with 1 tsp black pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 35 minutes.

3. Nest the Potatoes: Nest whole baby potatoes down into the beans and flavorful cooking liquid. Cover and simmer another 20 minutes until potatoes are fork-tender and beans are velvety soft.

4. Finish: Shred any meat from the ham hock back into the pot. Serve hot in shallow bowls with plenty of seasoned potlikker and a wedge of skillet cornbread.

> ***June's Texture Cue:*** *Taste the potlikker right before adding potatoes. Smoked hocks vary in saltiness. If it tastes salty early on, hold back any extra table salt until the very end after the potatoes have absorbed their share.*

5. Warm Skillet Peach Cobbler with Cinnamon-Sugar Crust

Prep: 15 min | Cook: 40 min | Serves: 6-8 | Porch-Sitting Dessert

"This is the batter-underneath cobbler that rises miraculously through sweet spiced peaches as it bakes in a bubbling pool of butter. It is impossible to ruin."

What You'll Need:

• 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
• 4 cups sliced peaches (fresh peeled, frozen thawed, or two 15-oz cans drained with 2 tbsp juice reserved)
• 1/2 cup granulated sugar + 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg for peaches
• **The Batter:** 1 cup all-purpose flour · 1 cup granulated sugar · 2 tsp baking powder · 1/4 tsp salt · 3/4 cup whole milk · 1 tsp vanilla extract
• **Topping:** 1 tbsp turbinado sugar mixed with 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

How June Makes It:

1. Melt Butter: Preheat oven to 350°F. Place stick of butter inside a 10-inch or 12-inch cast-iron skillet and set in warming oven until melted and foaming. Remove carefully.

2. Warm Peaches: In a small pot, warm sliced peaches, 1/2 cup sugar, and nutmeg over medium heat for 3 minutes until sugar dissolves and juices flow.

3. Whisk Batter: Whisk flour, 1 cup sugar, baking powder, and salt. Stir in milk and vanilla until a smooth batter forms. Pour batter directly into the melted butter in skillet. **DO NOT STIR!**

4. Layer & Bake: Spoon warm peaches and syrup evenly across top of batter. Do not stir! Sprinkle cinnamon-sugar topping over all. Bake 40-45 minutes until golden brown, crisp on top, and bubbling around edges. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream.

> ***June's Texture Cue:*** *Leaving the butter, batter, and fruit in unmixed layers is the secret. As the batter bakes, it puffs up around the peaches, creating a chewy cake bottom, jammy fruit center, and sugary crisp crust.*

Keep the good suppers coming.

Six cookbooks for the Sunday table, the week before payday, the smaller table, and the days supper needs a little help.

01 Grandma's Forgotten Southern Recipes

02 Good Suppers Until Payday

03 The Diner Down the Road

04 The Suppers We Grew Up On for One or Two

05 Before the Recipe Box Is Gone

06 June's Kitchen Rescue Book

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