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Abstract

Left Out and Left Over: Redefining the Food Media Narrative of the American South

As the United States struggled to find a national cuisine in the 20th century, the South emerged as the region most ripe with narrative including poverty foods and romantic war origins. The consumption of the American South in food media has evolved over the last century from historic community and church cookbooks like Charleston Receipts to multimillion dollar, iconic media brands such as Southern Living and Garden & Gun. In each incarnation, undue authority and financial gain have come to authors and publishers as they have erased other names from their brand of the American South. Eventually, this narrative was challenged.

In the 21st century, media companies such as Southern Foodways Alliance and The Bitter Southerner have set out to redefine Southern food media to be more inclusive. New media made room for counter narratives funded by membership models less dependent on advertising dollars. Southern food media is now flooded with perspectives, and has successfully redefined itself as tethered to the past only by virtue of narrative choice. This article examines the advent of Southern food media to its current corporate statelessness and who has the power to define the region's cuisine.