

# GARDEN&GUN



PHOTO: JAMES ACOMB

Stacy Lyn Harris.

FOOD &amp; DRINK

## Stacy Lyn Harris on Why Hospitality Matters

*The Alabama tastemaker  
talks family stories, a new  
cookbook, and the power of  
Lane cake*

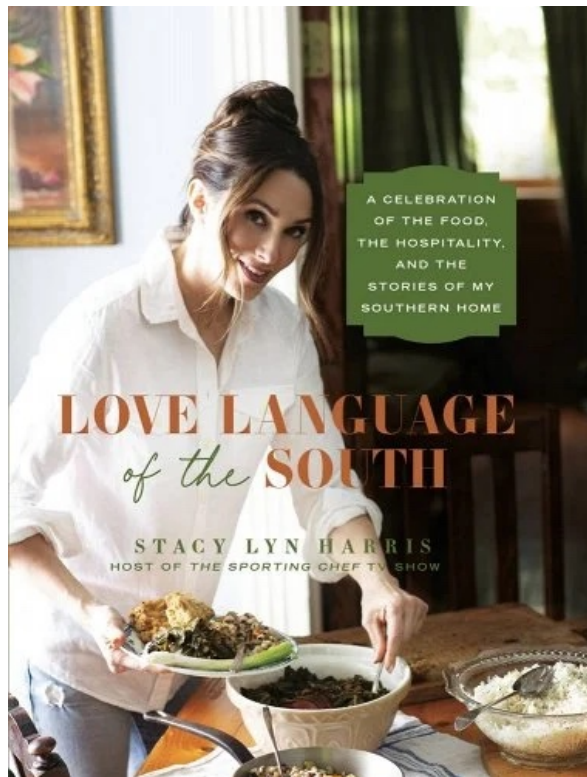
**BY JENNIFER STEWART KORNEGAY**

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As host of “The Sporting Chef” on the Outdoor Channel, Stacy Lyn Harris is known for her wild-game recipes, often augmenting the dishes with produce from her garden, edibles foraged from the land surrounding her home in Pike Road, Alabama, and fresh eggs from her brood of laying ladies.

Harris has also authored four cookbooks, including the recently released *Love Language of the South: A Celebration of the Food, Hospitality, and the Stories of My Southern Home*. “I think a lot of Southerners would say this, but cooking is how I express affection,” she says. (And frequently feeding

her husband, seven children, plus two daughters-in-law and a grandbaby has made her fluent.)



Like past collections, her new cookbook features recipes for venison, quail, and dove, but it also includes her takes on Southern classics and decadent desserts sweetened with both sugar and memories. Here, she talks a bit about *Love Language* and shares recipes for two favorite treats, including homemade peanut butter ice cream and the uniquely Alabama labor-of-love called Lane cake.

### **What motivated you to write this new cookbook?**

I wanted to create a Southerner's food handbook that makes it easy for anyone to make meals for every day but also special occasions. It's got an Alabama focus with Alabama recipes I love at the forefront: the white sauce, the Lane cake. But it has just about everything you need—recipes for

tailgating, funerals, fundraisers, holidays, a romantic dinner, and a regular Tuesday night. And I didn't organize it by salad, main dish, and dessert. It's structured by occasion and anchored by personal stories.

### **Why include the stories?**

I wanted to invite people into my life and make it feel like we're sipping tea on the porch and chatting. By tying the recipes to these moments, I'm giving people a sense of the dish before they make it. I had the stories in mind first, and recipes I loved just naturally matched the memories. Storytelling is also my way to pass along some of the Southern culture I've lived. They're funny; some are poignant. I hope they're all entertaining and underscore why hospitality matters. It always has, particularly in the South, but I think it is more important to practice it today, to find a way to preserve and expand that sense of community and welcome. I think a warm nature is part of the Southern DNA, and I want it to stay that way.

### **What were your inspirations and influences for the recipes?**

My family and I, we're big outdoors people, into fishing, hunting, gardening, putting up and preserving, and supporting other farmers, so that philosophy runs throughout the book, including some wild game dishes. That's just who we are and how we live—and how I cook. But my granny, Effie Gray, she's all over this book, too. There was nothing else like her food, and many of the recipes are hers. She cooked and ate the way so many of us are trying to return to, with the seasons, making magic from her garden.

**The Lane cake is pretty well-known around Alabama. It's the official state cake, and its bourbon-spiked filling rated a mention in *To Kill a***

## ***Mockingbird.***

I wanted to highlight Alabama with this book, and it's such an Alabama dish, named for Emma Ryland Lane who created it in Clayton, Alabama, in 1890. But to me, it's about granny. If I had to sum up her food in one word, it would be Lane cake, although, that's two! I can see it sitting on the checkered-cloth-covered table in her little kitchen. My recipe is exactly what she had written on her 3×5 index card, which is hanging in my pantry. There is one difference: I like to toast the pecans in the filling. It keeps them crunchier and boosts the nutty flavor.

## **Making Lane cake is quite a process. Any tips or tricks?**

I included a lot of simple recipes, but this isn't one of them. If somebody makes you a Lane cake, they love you. Eggs are a major part of this cake, and fresh large eggs work best. And, have all your ingredients at room temperature. You can make it ahead, too. It's really better a few days later.

Find the recipe for Lane cake [here](#) and Harris's recipe for peanut butter ice cream [here](#).

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**Jennifer Stewart Kornegay** is an award-winning freelance writer and editor based in Montgomery, Alabama. Her articles cover a variety of topics, including food and food culture, makers and travel, but the throughline is an emphasis on telling the stories of the interesting people behind them all.

A banner for 'G&G Weddings'. The left half features a photograph of wedding champagne flutes being clinked together, with a bride's hand visible. The text 'G&G Weddings' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font. The right half has a solid light beige background with the text 'Launching November 1' in a black, italicized serif font, underlined. Below this is a rectangular button with a thin black border containing the text 'RESERVE YOUR COPY' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

*Launching November 1*

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