



SLOW-COOKED COLLARDS & “POTLIKKER”

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What impact did the Great Migration have on American foodways? From 1915 to 1960, more than five million African-Americans migrated from the deep South to the northern and western United States in search of new opportunities for work and community. On February 25th we prepared a few dishes that reflect the culinary changes that emerged from that migration and help us consider how African-Americans preserved some Southern roots as “soul food” tradition while adapting and creating new dishes for their neighborhoods.

One of the staple foods of Southern culture, with roots that extend back to West Africa, is the tradition of cooking spinach, kale, or collard greens with water, seasonings, and large hunk of salt pork until they yield tender leaves with a richly flavored broth known as “potlikker.” (While many plantation cooks prepared stewed greens during the period of slavery, plantation owners would often eat the greens but not the broth, making it a nutritious and available leftover for enslaved people.) During the Great Migration, Southern culinary traditions were brought with African-Americans leaving the deep South, and foods including slow-cooked collards, roasted or baked sweet potatoes, cornbread, and fried chicken would become staples on menus of African-American eaters across the country.

SLOW-COOKED COLLARDS & “POTLIKKER” (2017)

Courtesy of Chef Jerome Grant, National Museum of African-American History and Culture
Serves 12

Ingredients

4 pounds collard greens
1 tablespoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon sugar
2 cups finely diced onion
1/4 cup finely minced garlic cloves (about 1 head)
3 ham hocks (about 1 ½ pounds)
2 teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes
2 fluid ounces apple cider vinegar
1/2 fluid ounce Tabasco Hot Sauce
Cornbread, for serving

Directions

1. Thoroughly wash and dry the collards and cut or tear the leaf from the stems. Cut the leaves to your desired size.
2. Fill a large pot with about 3 gallons of cold water. Add the salt, sugar, onions, garlic and ham hocks, then bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for 20 minutes.

3. Add the collards, red pepper flakes, vinegar, and tabasco and cook until very soft, about 2 hours. Serve the greens in a large bowl with the potlikker, with plenty of cornbread on the side for dipping.



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