



**BIANCA PHILLIPS**

# **COOKIN' CRUNK**



**EATIN' VEGAN IN THE DIRTY SOUTH**

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## Introduction

**F**or generations, meat and other animal products have characterized the cuisine of the American South. Besides serving up main courses of fried chicken, pulled pork barbecue, and crawfish, old-time Southern cooks often flavor their veggies with bacon fat and lard. Ugh.

But you won't find any ham hocks in these collard greens. There's no pork sausage in this gravy, and there's certainly not a hint of chicken in these dumplin's. *Cookin' Crunk: Eatin' Vegan in the Dirty South* offers more healthful vegan versions of traditional Southern fare.

From cheese-free Ro\*Tel dip and country-fried tempeh steak to eggplant jambalaya and stewed okra and tomatoes, *Cookin' Crunk* offers plenty in the way of comfort food with a meat-free twist. Of course, there are also plenty of sweet treats free of eggs and dairy, like dark chocolate pecan pie, blackberry cobbler, and peanut butter and banana “Elvis” cupcakes.

Most of my recipes are fairly simple, although some require advance preparation. I'm not a trained chef, just a Southern gal who grew up hovering around the knees of my mama and granny in the kitchen. As a result, my recipes are far from pretentious and gourmet—just simple, comfort food free of meat and other animal products. Any recipes that do require a little extra work, such as making homemade seitan or barbecue sauce, can be simplified by using store-bought versions of the homemade ingredients. Some recipes suggest marinating tofu or tempeh for eight to twelve hours. I've made a note in these recipes and any others where more than one hour of advance preparation is required.

There are many vegan versions of conventional ingredients, such as mayonnaise and margarine. Though any brand may be used for the recipes in this book, I've mentioned some of my favorites in the section The Southern Vegan Pantry (page 1).

One thing you'll notice is that I don't shy away from frying foods. After all, side dishes like fried squash or fried green tomatoes are a deep-rooted Southern tradition. However, I do attempt to “healthify” some greasy Southern fare with baked alternatives. You'll find a good balance of fried and baked dishes in this book.

Many of the recipes in this book are veganized versions of my family's signature dishes, such as an egg-free version of Granny's coconut pie and a version of Mama's cornbread dressin' that uses vegetable broth instead of chicken stock. Removing the meat, eggs, and dairy products from these family classics keeps traditional Southern foodways alive, while also allowing vegans, vegetarians, and anyone who cares about healthful eating to enjoy the down-home fare handed down by so many generations of talented Southern cooks.



# DON'T SPOIL YOUR SUPPER

## APPETIZERS AND SNACKS

If there's one thing to be said about Southern folks, it's that we know how to throw a great party. From family reunions and church potlucks to college keggers and bad-ass birthday throwdowns, we know the food is what makes or breaks a festive occasion. Fancy hors d'oeuvres are fine for a stuffy gathering, but the easy appetizers in this section are more fitting for a fun get-together with close friends and family who are less impressed with gourmet showmanship and more appreciative of down-home eats with great taste.

Offer up a platter of Butter Bean Bruschetta (page 39) or Deviled Tofu Bites (page 42) at your next soiree. Try the Cajun Boiled Peanuts (page 38) for a true Dirty South snack, or nosh on a Cheesy Un-chicken Quesadilla (page 44) before diggin' in to your main course. But don't pig out too much, or you'll spoil your supper.

A vintage tractor, possibly a John Deere, is shown in a field. The tractor is weathered and has a large steering wheel. The text "COME 'N' GET IT" is overlaid in a bold, white, distressed font on the lower left of the tractor image.

**COME 'N'  
GET IT**

## **SIMPLE SOUTHERN SUPPERS**

The term “dinner” causes a little confusion in some parts of the South since the word is often interchangeable with “lunch.” My dad always refers to his midday meal as “dinner.” For the sake of clearing up mealtime confusion, let’s just call the last meal of the day “supper.”

Most of the entrées in this chapter are veganized versions of traditional Southern meat-based entrées, made animal-friendly and more healthful with tofu, tempeh, seitan, and various faux meat products. Seitan Tips over Brown Rice (page 97) is a meat-free spin on the classic beef tips dish, while Country-Fried Tempeh Steak with Soy Milk Gravy (page 94) gives us vegans a chance to enjoy a “chicken-fried” supper without any birds paying the price. As an homage to my home city, Memphis, I’ve also included plenty of barbecue-influenced dishes, such as BBQ Tempeh Pizza (page 103), BBQ Tofu Spaghetti (page 82), and BBQ Dry Rub Seitan Ribs (page 96).



# ALL THE FIXIN'S

## SAVORY SIDES

From stewed okra to dirty rice, no down-home supper is complete without a few veggie- or grain-based side dishes. In this chapter you'll find my treasured Mess o' Greens with Turnips recipe (page 120), which boasts all the smoky flavor of slow-cooked greens, but without the bacon fat. Other great choices to accompany your next main course include Spicy Jalapeño Hominy (page 121), Fried Green Tomatoes (page 129), or Nutty Mushroom Quinoa (page 133). Oh, and please don't fear the Fried Cucumbers (page 131). You haven't had a cucumber until you've had one sliced, coated in batter, fried, and served with a side of Country Buttermilk Ranch Dressing (page 9).



he key to a successful New Orleans gumbo is a thick roux, which is a combination of flour and fat—in this case canola oil—cooked until browned and toasty. Be patient with the roux-makin' step. When you take that first bite of hearty, spicy gumbo, you'll understand why you did.

## Tempeh Gumbo

See photo facing page 87.

**MAKES 6 HELPIN'S**

**1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon canola oil**  
**1 onion, chopped**  
**2 cloves garlic, minced**  
**8 ounces tempeh, cubed**  
**2 stalks celery, chopped**  
**1 green bell pepper, chopped**  
**1/2 cup whole wheat pastry flour**  
**6 cups low-sodium vegetable broth**  
**1 can (28 ounces) no-salt-added  
stewed tomatoes with juice**  
**2 cups sliced fresh okra**  
**1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley,  
lightly packed**  
**2 teaspoons dried thyme**  
**1/2 teaspoon Cajun seasoning**  
**1/2 teaspoon cayenne**  
**2 bay leaves**  
**Salt**  
**Ground pepper**

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring frequently, for 1 minute. Add the tempeh and cook, stirring frequently, until browned all over, about 5 minutes. Add the celery and bell pepper and cook, stirring frequently, until tender, about 5 minutes.

Heat 1/3 cup of the oil in a large soup pot over low heat. Gradually add the flour, stirring it in 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time. After all the flour is added, continue to cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture turns dark brown, about 10 minutes. Stir in the broth. Add the tempeh mixture, the tomatoes and their juice, and the okra, parsley, thyme, Cajun seasoning, cayenne, and bay leaves and mix well. Increase the heat to high and bring to a boil. Decrease the heat to medium, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Remove the bay leaves before serving.

*Per serving: 319 calories, 11 g protein, 18 g fat (2 g sat), 26 g carbs, 185 mg sodium, 172 mg calcium, 7 g fiber*





Tempeh Gumbo, page 77

## About the Author

**BIANCA PHILLIPS** has been piddlin' around her mama's and granny's kitchens since she was knee-high to a grasshopper (that's Southern speak for "really little"). She hasn't had any fancy culinary training, but she's a firm believer that great Southern chefs learn to cook from the soul. The Arkansas native and current resident of Memphis, Tennessee, has a background in journalism and works as an associate editor at the Memphis Flyer, an alternative news-weekly. Bianca blogs about her daily vegan eats on her Vegan Crunk food blog, [vegancrunk.blogspot.com](http://vegancrunk.blogspot.com). She's also the mother of eight fur babies—six cats and two big ol' mutts.



# Classic Southern favorites with a wholesome twist

Keepin' it real and makin' it fun, vegan blogger **BIANCA PHILLIPS** adopted the Southern slang term "crunk" to convey passion and pride for her heritage and the down-home food she was raised on. As the northeast Arkansas native explains, it's about ties to the land and the hominess of passing on a rich culture of great food and good times.

By incorporating country staples (beans, corn, and fresh produce) that have been the basis of Southern cooking for generations, Bianca invites everyone to enjoy cooking simple soul food dishes that are more healthful than their traditional counterparts. These family classics, minus the meat, eggs, and dairy products, help keep Southern foodways alive while allowing vegans, vegetarians, and anyone who cares about good eatin' to enjoy this finger-lickin' down-home fare.

From cheese-free Ro\*Tel dip and country-fried tempeh steak to eggplant jambalaya and smoky stewed okra and tomatoes, *Cookin' Crunk* offers plenty in the way of classic Southern comfort food. There's also a bounty of sweet treats that includes cobblers, bread pudding, dark chocolate bourbon pecan pie, and peanut butter and banana "Elvis" cupcakes.

**Bianca Phillips** has been piddlin' around her mama's and granny's kitchens since she was knee-high to a grasshopper. She didn't have any fancy culinary training, but she is a firm believer that great Southern chefs learn to cook from the soul. She blogs about vegan eats at [vegancrunk.blogspot.com](http://vegancrunk.blogspot.com).



"Go for a road trip through the Dirty South, vegan style. *Cookin' Crunk* gets me in the mood to mess up my bib with barbecue and grits!"

**ISA CHANDA MOSKOWITZ**, author of *Vegan with a Vengeance*, *Veganomicon*, and *Appetite for Reduction*

"With all the down-home charm and wit of the South, *Cookin' Crunk* proves that veganism doesn't have to stop at the Mason-Dixon Line. In this joyous salute to her roots, Bianca Phillips offers up a mouthwatering collection of traditional Southern recipes and skillfully combines the nutrition and compassion of veganism with the comfort and decadence of good ol' Dixie."

**COLLEEN PATRICK-GOUDREAU**, author of *The Joy of Vegan Baking* and *The 30-Day Vegan Challenge*

"From BBQ Black-Eyed Pea Burgers and Cornbread Pizza to Mississippi Mud Cookies and Yella' Cake, Bianca's comforting, home-grown recipes will inspire you to cook—and maybe speak—with a Southern accent."

**DYNISE BALCAVAGE**, author of *The Urban Vegan* and *Celebrate Vegan*

"Bianca's Southern hospitality shines through in this selection of down-home favorites. Packed with her family's recipes for classic cooking and new-fangled versions of traditional dishes, it's the ultimate guide to Southern-style feasting."

**TAMASIN NOYES**, author of *American Vegan Kitchen* and *Vegan Sandwiches Save the Day!*

"The Dirty South never tasted so clean! *Cookin' Crunk* offers mouthwatering recipes full of soul and flavor, without all of the guilt."

**JONI NEWMAN**, author of *500 Vegan Recipes*, *The Complete Guide to Vegan Food Substitutions*, and *Hearty Vegan Meals for Monster Appetites*



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