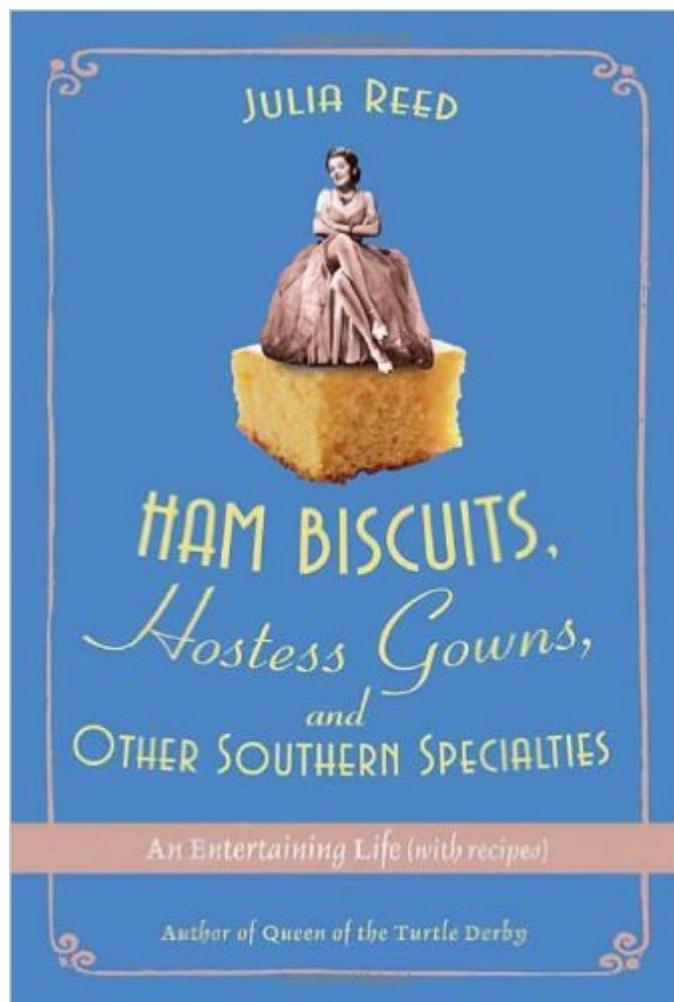


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# Ham Biscuits, Hostess Gowns, And Other Southern Specialties: An Entertaining Life (with Recipes)



## Synopsis

Julia Reed spends a lot of time thinking about ham biscuits. And cornbread and casseroles and the surprisingly modern ease of donning a hostess gown for one's own party. In *Ham Biscuits, Hostess Gowns and Other Southern Specialties* Julia Reed collects her thoughts on good cooking and the lessons of gracious entertaining that pass from one woman to another, and takes the reader on a lively and very personal tour of the culinary and social South. In essays on everything from pork chops to the perfect picnic Julia Reed revels in the simple good qualities that make the Southern table the best possible place to pull up a chair. She expounds on: the Southerner's relentless penchant for using gelatin; why most things taste better with homemade mayonnaise; the necessity of a holiday milk punch (and, possibly, a Santa hat); how best to cook for compliments • (at least one squash casserole and Lee Bailey's barbequed veal are key). She provides recipes for some of the region's best-loved dishes (cheese straws, red velvet cake, breakfast shrimp), along with her own variations on the classics, including Fried Oysters Rockefeller Salad and Creole Crab Soup. She also elaborates on worthwhile information every hostess would do well to learn: the icebreaking qualities of a Ramos gin fizz and a hot crabmeat canapé, for example; the wow factor • intrinsic in a platter of devilled eggs or a giant silver punchbowl filled with scoops of homemade ice cream. There is guidance on everything from the best possible way to eat • your luck on New Year's Day to composing a menu in honor of someone you love. Grace and hilarity under gastronomic pressure suffuse these essays, along with remembrances of her gastronomic heroes including Richard Olney, Mary Cantwell, and M.F.K. Fisher. *Ham Biscuits, Hostess Gowns and Other Southern Specialties* is another great book about the South from Julia Reed, a writer who makes her experiences in and out of the kitchen a joy to read.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Greenville, Mississippi, native and former Manhattanite Julia Reed (now of New Orleans) compiled a collection of essays on Southern food and hospitality that are as amusing as they are informative. Recipes of classic Southern dishes supplement the book. Unfortunately there is no index. And sadly there are no illustrations or photographs. But the author manages to successfully describe colorful scenes with mouth-watering results. This book would be appreciated by fine Southern cooks and a great gift for those who aspire to be.

I enjoyed the book and looked forward to trying the recipes. Liked the personal stories intermixed with the recipes. If you are a southerner you will certainly know where Julia is coming from with her comments. Liked the Kindle version enough to get a hard copy - can't get the iPad out of my husband's hands long enough to use in the kitchen! Sorry but can't use the original Kindle in the kitchen just not user friendly. Have now tried 3 of the recipes and I'm not impressed. Two have ended up in the trash and one was used out of desperation. Not planning to waste anymore time or money on the book. Sorry Julia - I really wanted to like it

Ham Biscuits, Hostess Gowns, and Other Southern Specialties: An Entertaining Life (with Recipes) What a charming, lovely, and fun book! I received it yesterday, and devoured 100 pages the first night! The author has a wonderfully descriptive, humorous voice. The book is made up of short essays that include everything from personal background, to culinary history, to cocktail party how-to's, to lively character descriptions. Each essay is then followed by a few delightful, often historical, recipes. I wish I could meet some of the eccentric characters from the author's childhood...hostess gowns, toast points, and fancy cigarette holders! This true-blue Bostonian highly recommends this charming book! Love it!!!

I understand the reviewers who object to the lack of photos or the author's hostess-with-the-mostest name-dropping, but consider the source: the book is a collection of food columns (with recipes, as the title informs us), not a cookbook. As for me, I loved this book, which fed my ex-pat Southerner's

heart with both the food and the 'tude. As one who is still mourning the loss of my copy of "Queen of the Turtle Derby" to a co-worker who moved away without returning it, I consider Julia Reed one of the best at the lighter side of Southern Studies. Not quite up there with Florence King, John Shelton Reed, and Roy C. Blount, but darn near. Light years ahead of Celia Rivenbark (who writes not-particularly-Southern Bombeckish pieces about suburban ladies-who-shop) or those Potato Queen people. Maybe it's just that the Delta is so close to my own Memphis origins, and Reed close to my own age, but despite our very different lives (I've never run around in diplomatic circles myself, nor hung out in Manhattan cocktail spots), I often find myself on the same page in my attitudes, particularly my notions of romance, glamour, and comfort. I find her style graceful and succinct, and I happily forgive the "my very good friend" name-dropping (which does get old) for her description of a garden party of her childhood or of a classically Southern blending of food, sex, and literature in the service of a doomed romance. Plus, I was inspired to make homemade pimiento cheese for the first time--it's something I never cared for as a child, but now I'm a convert.

I read most of this book while I was in the waiting room of an auto repair shop. It is a fun book, full of stories and a few recipes. The book is focused more on the humorous stories than the recipes, which is ok because it is not a cook book. But seriously, the title of the book includes "Ham Biscuits" and you can't include a recipe for ham or biscuits?

When I bought this book, I was in a hurry. A big hurry. I needed entertainment and quick. I grabbed this book because it had an enticing cover and I saw "Mississippi" somewhere on the jacket. What I assumed was a little novel ala Candace Bushnell meets Dorthea Benton Frank, (maybe a Southern Sex in the City?), turned out to be a delightful little book that taught me oh-so-much. Thanks to this book I am fearless in the kitchen. For those of you who are truly cooks- you will not understand. But this book taught me how to trust myself. I have made the most amazing dinners since reading this. Not only the book's recipes, but my own. Julia explains that sometimes (most times) simple delicious food is best (eg: ham biscuits). It is better to make what is simply delicious rather than to cook to impress. I never had pimento cheese, even though my Mother was a Mississippi girl. So I made pimento cheese ( I blended two of the recipes in the book- Mary Bell's and Keith's) for a family party and it was devoured in no time. I also made from the picnic chapter Elizabeth Frink's Roasted Chicken, which I also do a bit differently. My extremely picky eater 6 year old boy wants to eat the whole chicken! Thanks to all of her writing I never would have blended recipes or mixed things up or left ingredients out. To me this book is an homage to the writer's Mother and all the

cooks and teachers along the way that helped her learn. She credits each recipe from where/who it came and tells how each recipe came to be her stand-by. I purchased this book last summer and several times a month I will pull this out for a little guidance.

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