

Food News

Cookbook Author Speeds Up Southern Cooking

By **Hanna Raskin**, Thu., Mar. 10 2011 @ 3:45PM

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There are recipes for okra fritters, blackened catfish and benne wafers in Rebecca Lang's new cookbook, but there's not a word about fried chicken.

"I'm really sad fried chicken is not in the book," says Lang, who will be demonstrating recipes from *Quick-Fix Southern: Homemade Hospitality in 30 Minutes or Less* at **Central Market** next Monday. "I woke up in the middle of the night thinking about it, but it couldn't be done."

While Lang discovered many dishes could be executed with the aid of the right kitchen appliance - "the food processor and the slow-cooker really save me time," she says - she couldn't find a way to trim the active cooking time needed to fry up a mess of chicken.

"You can't walk away from a skillet of hot oil," Lang says. "It kills me, but I'm not a magician. I couldn't get it done."

As a chef, Lang doesn't mind investing extra time in her food. But as the mother of two young children, she rarely has more than a spare half-hour between homework sessions and bath time. She wrote the book for other harried parents.

"If we have supper, it has to be fast," she says.

Lang refused to use the convenience products some cookbook authors rely on when designing recipes for speed. Every dish is made from scratch, including the sweet potato biscuits, which are an edible testament to Lang's "turning (her) brain over to the mom side": The recipe calls for two jars of baby food.

A few of Lang's instant dishes require long hours of unmonitored slow cooking, including a preparation of boiled peanuts that simmers for 20 hours.

"A peanut's a rock, so in order to get it soft, they've got to keep going and going," Lang explains.

But no amount of slow cooking would produce an acceptable substitute for fried chicken, which may not be a bad thing. As Lang says, there are advantages to spending time in the kitchen.

"We as Southern women have always stood around and visited in the kitchen," Lang says. "That's the gathering place."

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