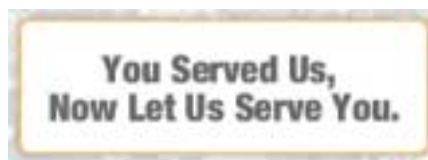


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Cooking By The Book: Southern fare on a fast track

By TOM WITOM - thomaswitom@yahoo.com

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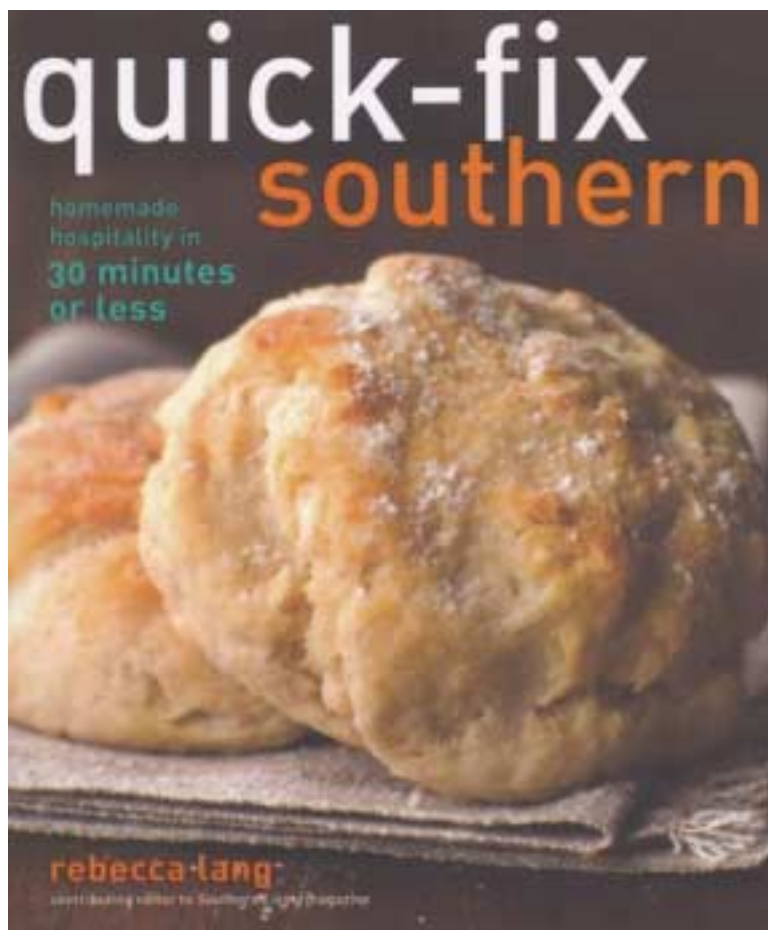
The subtitle for Rebecca Lang's new cookbook, "Quick-Fix Southern" (Andrews McMeel), says it all: Homemade hospitality in 30 minutes or less.

Lang, an accomplished cooking instructor and contributing editor for Southern Living magazine, knows about the demands that modern home cooks face. Her book offers accessible recipes pulled from her Southern heritage and presented, as she puts it, "to fit the lives of cooks who have more things to do than there is time in the day."

Readers will find some 115 straightforward recipes from Three-Cheese Grits and Fried Green Tomatoes to Soft Catfish Tacos and Real Fast Pralines.

We enjoyed her Smoked Trout Spread (recipe below) and have added it to our party-snack repertoire.

Lang also sprinkles "cooking school" tips throughout the pages of her book. Among her suggestions are to crack eggs on a flat surface rather than the side of a bowl; this reduces chances of getting bits of shell where they don't belong. She also recommends microwaving hardened brown sugar for a few seconds to soften it and using a wet paper towel under a cutting board to help prevent it from sliding.



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SMOKED TROUT SPREAD (Makes 2 cups)

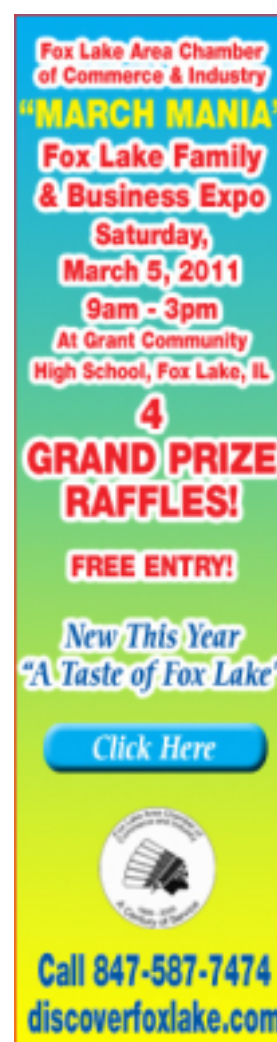
- 1/2 lb. pecan-smoked trout*
- One 8-oz. package cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1/3 cup sour cream
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 Tbl. chopped fresh dill
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1/4 tsp. hot sauce
- Fresh dill, for garnish
- Crackers, for serving

* If you can't track down pecan-smoked trout, any smoked fish will work.

Peel the skin from each trout fillet and discard it. Finely chop the trout. Combine the trout, cream cheese, sour cream, lemon zest and juice, dill, mustard and hot sauce in a medium mixing bowl.

Cover and chill for 1 hour.

Transfer to a serving bowl and garnish with the dill. Serve with crackers.



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