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Review-Fishing for Chickens: A Smokies Food Memoir

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Fishing for Chickens: A Smokies Food Memoir

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sionist painting saying that the writing style engages the reader in an aesthetic interpretation process.

Hamblin's other essays step away from the critical lens on his fiction writing and turn an eye to Faulkner's personal and professional life. Noting a lack of critical interest in Faulkner's time in Hollywood as a screenwriter, most likely due to its unsuccessful outcome, Hamblin points out similar narrative techniques that are also found in his fiction. Initially taking the job due to poor finances, Faulkner never saw much success on the screen and was often frustrated with the politics behind the scenes that left many projects on the cutting room floor. Despite many of the scripts he worked on never making it to the screen he did produce a few hits: *The Road to Glory*, *The Big Sleep*, and *To Have and Have Not*. More successful than his screenplays were the few pieces he wrote for *Sports Illustrated*. Hamblin takes the time to establish Faulkner as a sports enthusiast and makes multiple references to sports in Faulkner's writing but notes that his pieces for the magazine focus less on the play by plays of the sporting events and more on the game as a representation of the human experience. His interest in life versus art takes the center stage, as exemplified by the story of one hockey player's attempt to fight the clock and win the game - Faulkner once again displaying time as an enemy.

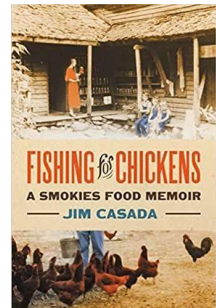
Hamblin also takes time to position Faulkner next to his contemporaries, making connections between Holden Caulfield and his own, Quentin Compson, mirroring each other through their fear of sexuality, unhealthy fascination with death, and deep concern with their respective sisters' childhood innocence. He also compares Faulkner to Steinbeck pointing out that while Faulkner spoke ill of the author on several occasions, their works overlapped in multiple ways with both writers deeply tied to their geographical roots focusing on individuality in their characters. Their works often focused on the plight of the poor and oppressed. As lost generation writers they used the retelling of myths and biblical narratives to drive their plot lines. Another writer that Hamblin juxtaposes with Faulkner is Robert Penn Warren, a contemporary southern writer - the two shaped by the history of their regions, the after-effects of the civil war, and living in the Jim Crow south. While Faulkner never mentioned Warren,

Hamblin claims Faulkner was influenced by his writing and points to Thomas Sutpen resembling a sub-plot with Cass Mastern in Penn's major work, *All the King's Men*. Other influences are Mark Twain and Shakespeare, both stylistically and in plot development. Noting that like Shakespeare, Faulkner concerned himself with themes of fate and free will and both experimental in their writing styles. Twain, also listed as an influence on Faulkner, Hamblin observes that the relationship between Huck Finn and Jim is mimicked on three different occasions in Faulkner's writing and where a white boy's cultural and ethical education is influenced by his relationship with a black man. Hamblin concludes the collection with a discussion of the universality and international reach of Faulkner's work. This book is recommended for Academic Libraries.

Sarah Grace Glover, University of North Georgia

Fishing for Chickens: A Smokies Food Memoir

Jim Casada
Athens: University of
Georgia Press, 2022
ISBN: 9780820362120
317 p. \$28.95 (Pbk)



In this delightful memoir, former history professor and avid author Jim Casada recounts the foods and foodways of his youth in the Great Smoky Mountains during the 1940s and 50s. The curious title, *Fishing for Chickens*, is an homage to his grandfather's clever method for luring "yard birds" picked for slaughter with a baited cane pole to avoid distressing the remaining flock. From crackling cornbread to yellow jacket soup to molasses pie, this memoir offers readers a delicious repast sampling dozens of signature mountain dishes while the host regales his audience with food-adjacent stories about growing up in his beloved Smokies of yesteryear.

Though Casada has co-authored multiple cookbooks, *Fishing for Chickens* is not strictly a cookbook. While the work does include a treasure trove of regional recipes, it offers much more. As the proud Smokies native explains, "this material isn't just a collection of traditional family recipes.

It's a history of how my family lived, an exercise in social commentary, and a reflection of time and place" (p. 1). Fundamentally, this memoir serves as a primary source for documenting the distinctive culture of the author's youth through the lens of food history.

Casada's work is organized thematically into four parts: domestic staples, hunted and gathered foods, preservation methods, and social gatherings. These sections are subdivided into chapters that focus on particular staples, food groups, culinary practices, and gustatory traditions (e.g., "Corn," "Wild Game and Fish," "Salting and Curing," and "New Year's Fare"). Prefaced with family or archival photographs, Casada narrates these chapters with his warm, engaging recollections and concludes most with relevant traditional mountain recipes. Lastly, *Fishing for Chickens* provides invaluable resources in the way of a Smokies lexicon glossary, an annotated bibliography for further reading, a recipe index, and a general index. Readers unfamiliar with the region's vernacular will find the glossary especially indispensable as they peruse this volume.

The greatest attribute of this book is the author's enthusiasm for the subject. Casada is a gifted storyteller who employs something as deceptively mundane as food and common meals to capture a lost way of life. The author's adoration for his beloved Smokies, reverence for his roots, and appreciation for the victuals and customs that sustained him are woven into every page. Furthermore, Casada's strategic use of mountain parlance, such as "mighty fine eating," lends the memoir a sense of regional character without devolving into hokey sentimentality. By the end of the volume, mountaineer and "flatlander" readers alike will have a newfound respect for this vanished world and pine for the author's loss.

The recipes and customs documented in *Fishing for Chickens* largely reflects the region's predominant Scotch-Irish heritage. Yet the memoir does not focus exclusively on this demographic. In addition to this rich culture, Casada also discusses the talented African American cooks he personally knew during his childhood and dedicates a chapter to traditional Cherokee foodways in honor of the Great Smoky Mountains' original inhabitants. The author is to be commended for his inclusive scope and for demonstrating that the region is more ethnically diverse than society of-

ten recognizes.

There are two criticisms of this work. While *Fishing for Chickens* is not an academic monograph, citations for noteworthy details predating the author's lifetime (namely, George Washington's predilection for "cherry bounce" beverages and pawpaw pudding) would better serve researchers interested in learning more. Far more problematic, however, is Casada's penchant for gatekeeping. Though his annotated bibliography is a helpful guide to additional southern Appalachian foodways resources, the self-proclaimed "son of the Smokies" regrettably castigates literature he deems inauthentic in representing the region. Specifically, his harsh criticism of Louise and Bill Dwyer's *Southern Appalachian Mountain Cookin': Authentic Ol' Mountain Family Recipes* (1974) is both unkind and unwarranted. Bibliographies should only include *relevant* resources. Titles that the author considers unreliable or without any redemptive qualities are best excluded altogether. After all, scholars and researchers must ultimately decide for themselves what sources are credible.

These criticisms notwithstanding, *Fishing for Chickens: A Smokies Food Memoir* is a pleasurable read and a significant primary source for the burgeoning field of food studies. Furthermore, this work demonstrates the potential that book-length autobiographies offer for documenting and expanding our understanding of regional foodways. Scholars and general readers interested in foodways, southern history, and rural Appalachian culture will find Casada's book an intriguing firsthand account with fresh insights about mid-20th century life in the Great Smoky Mountains.

A. Blake Denton, University of Southern Mississippi

Fostering Wellness in the Workplace: A Handbook for Libraries

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With the pandemic affecting nearly every aspect of our

