



Bill's Menu (eastern Carolina classic)

- Pork Ribs from Crook's Corner
- Bill's Blackstrap Barbecue Sauce
- Green Tomato Relish
- Carrot Slaw*
- Cucumbers and Onions*
- Fresh Peach Ice Cream

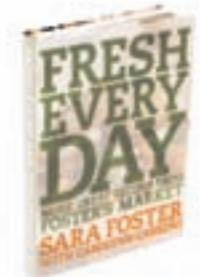
*Recipes adapted from *Seasoned in the South: Recipes from Crook's Corner and from Home* by Bill Smith (Algonquin Books, 2005).



Sara's Menu (western Carolina with a twist)

- Shay's Fall-off-the-bone Baby Back Ribs*
- Chipotle Maple Barbecue Sauce
- Mini Baked Potatoes
- Heirloom Tomato Salad with Fresh Lady Peas

*Recipe adapted from *Fresh Every Day: More Great Recipes from Foster's Market* by Sara Foster (Clarkson Potter, 2005).



COTTAGE COOKOFF: BILL SMITH VS. SARA FOSTER

North Carolina Barbecue

When two talented friends compete in a battle of ribs with all the trimmings, everybody wins

WHEN WE CHALLENGED contributing editor Sara Foster to a summer cookoff against her friend Bill Smith, a master of Southern cuisine, the choice of dish was obvious. Sara is the owner of Foster's Market in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and Bill is the head chef of the acclaimed Crook's Corner in Chapel Hill. They both take pride in their local team (the UNC Tar Heels) and good eats, specifically Carolina-style barbecue. But the commonalities, as you can see in their recipes, end there. You could pick your favorite of these two menus, but we love them together. Fire up the grill, invite some friends, and decide for yourself. Let the battle begin! >

BILL SMITH PORTRAIT: ANTONIS ACHILLEOS; BOOKS: TED TUCKER



Bill's Recipes

In the 1980s, Crook's Corner founding chef Bill Neal, along with owner Gene Hamer, put high-end Southern food on the map with such Lowcountry dishes as shrimp and grits. With national attention, the restaurant became well respected in the culinary world and has remained so under Bill Smith's direction. His cookoff menu relies on simple flavors and fresh midsummer ingredients to complement the ribs (see recipe at right), whose sweet, spicy, vinegar-based sauce is classic eastern Carolina.

BILL'S BLACKSTRAP BARBECUE SAUCE

Blackstrap molasses, produced from the final pressing of sugarcane, is much darker in color and higher in mineral content than regular molasses. Its complex taste, which is not purely sweet, makes for a more interesting sauce, but you can substitute the same amount of regular molasses in a pinch.

MAKES: 3 cups **COOK:** 1 hour

- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1 cup hot sauce (Bill calls for Texas Pete)
- 2 cups cider vinegar
- ½ cup blackstrap molasses

Combine all ingredients in a heavy nonstick saucepan, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, and simmer about an hour or until sauce is thick and shiny. Refrigerate in an airtight container up to several weeks.

PORK RIBS FROM CROOK'S CORNER

This recipe is handy for entertaining because the initial cooking can be done up to a day ahead. The ribs then can be quickly finished on the grill or in the oven, just before serving.

MAKES: 4 servings

PREP: 10 minutes **BAKE:** 3 hours

REST: 20 minutes **GRILL:** 10 minutes

2½ pounds (about 2 racks) St. Louis-style ribs
(see Glossary below)

½ cup olive oil

Sea salt, to taste

Freshly ground pepper, to taste

Bill's Blackstrap Barbecue Sauce (see recipe at left)

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350°. Drizzle both sides of ribs with oil; sprinkle with sea salt and pepper. Place on baking rack over rimmed baking sheet. Add 1½ cups water to baking sheet, and cover tightly with foil. Roast 3 hours or until ribs are tender. (Meat should separate easily from bone.)
 - 2.** Remove ribs from oven, and let rest at least 20 minutes.
 - 3.** Brush ribs on both sides with Bill's Blackstrap Barbecue Sauce, and grill over medium heat 5 to 6 minutes per side or until heated through and slightly charred.
- NOTE:** Ribs can also be finished in the oven. Preheat oven to 400°. Brush ribs on both sides with sauce, and place in shallow roasting pan. Add 1 cup sauce, and bake at 400° for 10 to 15 minutes or until sauce bubbles and thickens slightly. Serve with remaining sauce. >

ST. LOUIS-STYLE RIBS: spareribs with a fatty section removed from one side—easier to eat and somewhat leaner than regular spareribs

GREEN TOMATO RELISH

Bill's friend Leslie Jackson gave him this recipe years ago. She got it from her mother in Baton Rouge. The relish makes a nice garnish for white beans or any kind of bean soup, and Bill has lately discovered it's also a splendid sauce for fried fish fillets and grilled meats.

MAKES: 13 cups **PREP:** 30 minutes

COOK: 30 minutes

- 2 cups cider vinegar
- 1 cup sugar
- 1½ teaspoons whole allspice
- 1½ teaspoons celery seeds
- 2 to 3 bay leaves
- 2 large red bell peppers, chopped
- 2 yellow onions, chopped
- 5 pounds green tomatoes, washed, peeled, and chopped

Bring vinegar to a boil in a large nonstick pot over medium-high heat. Add sugar; stir until dissolved. Add allspice and next 4 ingredients. Return to a boil; cook 15 minutes. Add tomato, return to a boil, and cook 15 minutes more. Remove bay leaves. Refrigerate in an airtight container up to several weeks.



CUCUMBERS AND ONIONS

This is a simple and essential summer recipe, good with everything and a great addition to cold salad platters. Be sure to taste a slice of each cucumber—a bitter one can ruin the whole salad.

MAKES: about 3 cups **PREP:** 10 minutes **STAND:** 30 minutes

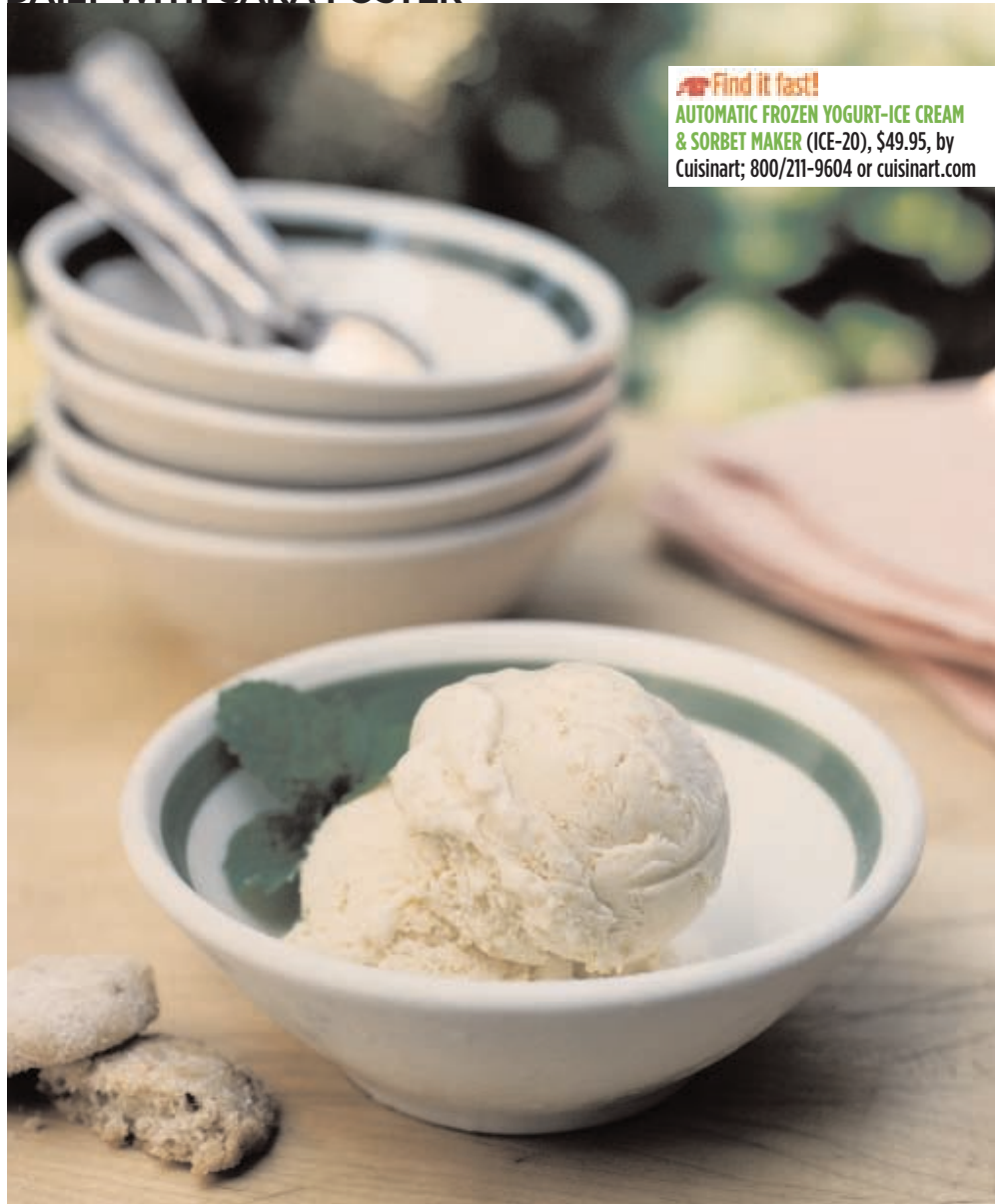
- 9 cucumbers (about 2½ pounds), scored and cut into ¼-inch rounds
- 1 red onion, halved and sliced
- 1 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
- 1 teaspoon celery seeds
- ¼ cup cider vinegar
- ¼ cup olive oil
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste

Put cucumber and onion in a large mixing bowl, and toss with 1 teaspoon salt and celery seeds. Let stand 30 minutes. Stir in vinegar and oil. Season with additional salt and pepper. Refrigerate until ready to serve, up to 3 days. >

TEST KITCHEN TIP

To score a cucumber's skin, run the tines of a fork from one end to the other, working your way around the entire cucumber.

Find it fast!
**AUTOMATIC FROZEN YOGURT-ICE CREAM
 & SORBET MAKER (ICE-20), \$49.95, by
 Cuisinart; 800/211-9604 or cuisinart.com**



CARROT SLAW

This recipe came from the French grandmother of one of Bill's friends. It tastes great with fried seafood, as well as barbecue. When Bill pairs it with soft-shell crabs, he also makes another slaw with purple cabbage. The colors on the plate are bright and beautiful.

MAKES: about 3 cups

PREP: 10 minutes

STAND: 30 minutes

- 6 carrots, peeled and shredded
- 3 large garlic cloves, minced
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon (about 3 teaspoons zest and 3 tablespoons juice)

1/4 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste

1/4 teaspoon sugar, plus more to taste

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Toss together first 5 ingredients.

Let stand 30 minutes. Stir in olive oil. Taste for seasoning, and add more salt or sugar, if desired.

Refrigerate in an airtight container up to 1 week.

FRESH PEACH ICE CREAM

We flipped for this ice cream in our Test Kitchen—the recipe got our highest rating—because it captures the taste of summer.

MAKES: about 1 quart **PREP:** 10 minutes **COOK:** 20 minutes

CHILL: 8 hours **STAND:** 30 minutes **FREEZE:** about 2 hours

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 1/4 cups sugar, divided | 6 tablespoons unsalted butter |
| 8 large egg yolks | 1 1/2 cups heavy cream |
| 1 large whole egg | 4 large peaches, peeled and sliced (about 3 cups) |
| 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise | Pinch of salt |
| 1 3/4 cups half-and-half | 1 tablespoon peach preserves |

1. Combine 3/4 cup sugar, egg yolks, and whole egg in a medium bowl. Scrape seeds from vanilla bean, and add seeds, pod, and half-and-half to saucepan. Warm over medium-high heat 8 minutes or until mixture begins to steam. Do not boil. Slowly whisk into egg mixture. Return to saucepan, and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, 10 minutes or until mixture coats back of a spoon. Whisk in butter and cream. Let cool, and chill 8 hours.

2. Toss peaches with remaining 1/2 cup sugar and salt; let stand at least 30 minutes in a glass or stainless bowl.

3. Puree peaches and peach preserves in a blender until well combined but not completely smooth. Combine peach and custard mixtures, and freeze in an ice-cream maker according to manufacturer's instructions. >



Sara's Recipes

Sara grew up learning Southern cooking firsthand from family in rural Tennessee, then studied and worked in New York and Connecticut. This added a contemporary flair to her repertoire that's reflected in her rib recipe. She flavors baby backs with a classic western Carolina tomato-and-vinegar-based sauce; maple syrup and chipotle peppers give a modern twist. Her simple salad (on page 132) and potatoes (right) round out the summery meal.

MINI BAKED POTATOES

Sara recently started serving small baked potatoes instead of standard giant russets because they're more flavorful and look nicer on the plate. Try them and they just might become your new favorite side.

MAKES: 4 servings

PREP: 5 minutes

COOK: 30 minutes

- 4 small Yukon gold, red, or California white potatoes
- 4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Sea salt, to taste
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste

TOPPINGS: sour cream or yogurt, snipped chives, freshly grated Parmesan cheese, herb butter, and salsa
Preheat oven to 400°. Pierce potatoes several times with fork, place on baking sheet, and bake 30 to 40 minutes or until tender and crisp. Cut a slit in the top of each potato, and squeeze to push flesh of potato upward. Drizzle each with 1 teaspoon olive oil, and add sea salt and pepper. Add toppings, as desired.

SHAY'S FALL-OFF-THE-BONE BABY BACK RIBS

For years Sara played around with barbecue ribs, trying to find a way to make them moist and tender but also relatively quick to cook. Then Shay, Sara's coworker, shared a recipe, and Sara had her solution.

MAKES: 4 to 6 servings

PREP: 10 minutes **BAKE:** 3 hours **GRILL:** 20 minutes

- 1 large onion, sliced
- 3½ pounds (about 2 slabs) baby back ribs
- 1 (12-ounce) bottle beer
- Sea salt, to taste
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 2 cups Chipotle Maple Barbecue Sauce (see recipe below) or your favorite bottled sauce

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Spread onion slices evenly on a rimmed baking sheet, and place ribs, bone side down, on top. Pour beer over ribs, sprinkle with sea salt and pepper, and cover tightly with foil. Bake 3 hours or until tender.
2. Brush both sides of ribs with Chipotle Maple Barbecue Sauce. Grill over medium heat, meat side down, 10 to 15 minutes or until slightly charred and crispy, basting several times with sauce. Flip ribs over, and baste cooked side liberally. Close grill lid, and cook 10 to 15 minutes more, basting often. Remove from heat; let rest 10 minutes. Cut individual ribs apart, and serve warm.

NOTE: You can bake the ribs (step 1) up to a day ahead, but you'll need to leave them on the grill a few minutes longer to make sure they're heated through.

CHIPOTLE MAPLE BARBECUE SAUCE

Prepare this sauce up to two weeks ahead. Besides the rib recipe above, it's great for chicken, roasted pork, and burgers.

MAKES: about 4½ cups **COOK:** 30 minutes

- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- ½ cup maple syrup
- ½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 3 canned chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, diced
- 1 cup white vinegar
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup apple cider or unfiltered apple juice
- Juice of 2 lemons (about 6 tablespoons)
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons dry mustard
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

Combine all ingredients in a heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat, and simmer 30 to 35 minutes or until sauce is thickened and reduced by one-fourth. Refrigerate in an airtight container up to 2 weeks. >



HEIRLOOM TOMATO SALAD WITH FRESH LADY PEAS

Lady peas are smaller, sweeter, and more tender than most peas. If you can't find them, look for fresh black-eyed, purple-hull, pink eye, or crowder peas. In a pinch, substitute cooked dried peas, and proceed with step 2.

MAKES: 6 servings **PREP:** 10 minutes **COOK:** 10 minutes

1 cup fresh lady peas or other fresh shell peas

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup cider vinegar

Juice of 1 lemon (about 3 tablespoons)

1 shallot, minced

1 teaspoon sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil

Sea salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 jalapeño pepper, cored, seeded, and minced

2 pounds assorted heirloom tomatoes, sliced into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch rounds

4 fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled soft goat cheese

- 1.** Cook peas in a large pot of boiling salted water 8 to 10 minutes or until just tender. Drain, rinse until cooled completely, and drain again.
- 2.** Combine vinegar and next 3 ingredients in a small bowl. Add olive oil in a thin, steady stream, whisking constantly. Add sea salt and pepper; stir in jalapeño. Drizzle half of vinaigrette over peas, and toss to coat.
- 3.** Arrange tomato slices on a platter or individual plates. Spoon peas over tomato, and serve with remaining vinaigrette. Sprinkle with basil, goat cheese, and additional salt and pepper, if desired. ■