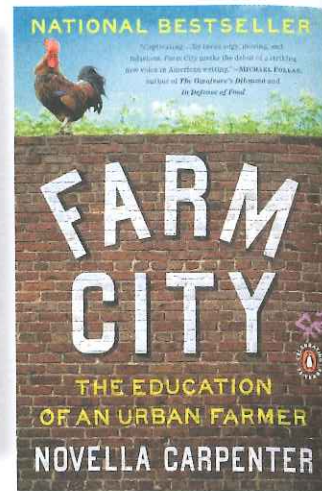
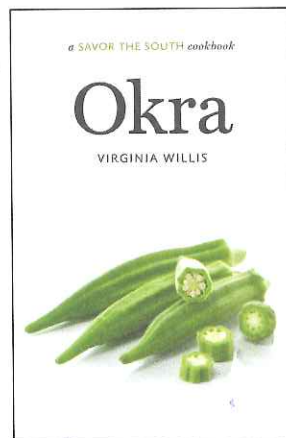


# EDIBLE INK BOOKSHELF ADDITIONS

BY CATHERINE HARRIS



## PICKLES AND PRESERVES

BY ANDREA WEIGL

(University of North Carolina Press, 2014)

This slim volume is part of the *Savor the South*<sup>®</sup> collection that includes two books we've previously reviewed, *Bourbon*, by Kathleen Purvis, and *Biscuits*, by Belinda Ellis. The release of this book is well-timed, since the season for preserving is upon us. It can be hard to think ahead and take summer's fresh bounty and stuff it into a jar, but in the fall and winter months, you'll be thankful you made the sacrifice.

For any homesteading novice who's been intimidated by the idea of preserving, Weigl's book can be a confidence-booster. Her handy tips alone—like the one for getting strawberry preserves to set without pectin—make the book worth the purchase. Home canners should find most of the recipes approachable, with many having only a handful of ingredients to tackle. Southern favorites like Chowchow and Dilly Beans share space with less-familiar but equally mouthwatering recipes, like the ones for Soft Refrigerator Honeysuckle Jelly, Pickled Figs, and Salt-Pickled Cucumbers with Shiso from James Beard Award-winning chef Andrea Reusing of Lantern restaurant in Chapel Hill, NC.

## OKRA

BY VIRGINIA WILLIS

(University of North Carolina Press, 2014)

In her brief but intriguing introduction to this peculiar pod-shaped vegetable, Chef Virginia Willis points out that people either love okra or hate it.

I never encountered okra outside of the occasional gumbo until moving to North Carolina, but I am decidedly a vote for the "love it" column. Just give me a jar of pickled okra, some fresh cheese, and a warm summer day. Willis includes plenty of Southern-style recipes, including Limpin' Susan (the wife of Hoppin' John), Corn and Okra Pudding, and Round Steak and Okra Gumbo. I thought I had a decent arsenal of recipes for these heat-loving vegetables—tossing them in maque choux, grilling them whole, frying the burgundy ones, roasting them with Cajun spices—but Willis, raised in the South and trained in France, urges us to look beyond our borders for inspiration.

Okra's native home is hard to pin down, but the two most common terms we use for it—okra and gumbo—are African in origin. Its presence in culinary traditions stretches far and wide to the Caribbean, Africa, India, and Southeast Asia. Willis gives a nod to this global footprint, with recipes like West African Chicken Stew with Okra and Peanuts and Singapore-Style Sambal Oelek Okra.

## FARM CITY: THE EDUCATION OF AN URBAN FARMER, BY NOVELLA CARPENTER

(Penguin Press, 2009)

An empty lot adjacent to her apartment building in an Oakland ghetto: This is the land that Carpenter used to build a farm that starts with vegetables and a few birds but expands over time to include rabbits, honeybees, and eventually, two pigs.

The urban setting makes for interesting reading, as does the cast of true characters, like Bobby, who takes up residence in a broken-down car, and Lana, who runs a speakeasy/variety show in a warehouse down the street.

Carpenter honestly shares the agony and ecstasy of her inner-city endeavors on Ghost Town Farm: a single heirloom watermelon that ripens on the vine is plucked from her garden overnight; a turkey she raises with great care for Thanksgiving is heartily enjoyed, with zero waste. Though she may not be considered a farmer in the traditional sense, her limited funds force her to have the same "make-do" attitude that all farmers must. This leads her to things like dumpster diving in high-rent districts for kitchen scraps to feed her very hungry pigs.

But it's not all dirty work. The dumpster diving excursions eventually lead to an opportunity to learn the art of curing meats from a local chef, and under his supervision she preserves the pork that she has raised. Quarts of golden honey from the rooftop honey bees make catching the swarm months back worth it. Her vegetable plants are so prolific that she's able to share some with neighbors and donate even more.

Carpenter's urban farming memoir continues to have influence several years later, even as she prepares to release her next book, *Gone Feral: Tracking My Dad Through the Wild*, available in mid-June. 