

**GOOD  
FOOD** →

# great life

**Virginia Willis is an Atlanta chef and cookbook author—and the creator of our “Simple Sides” recipes (on page 69 in this issue). We caught up with her to learn more about her cooking journey and her passion: a deliciously healthy life.**

BY CHERYL SLOCUM

**ABOUT ME**

I grew up in Alexandria, Louisiana, and Montezuma, Georgia. I got my Bachelor of Arts at the University of Georgia, and studied French cooking at L'Academie de Cuisine in Washington, D.C., and École de Cuisine La Varenne in France. I currently live in Atlanta. I've written eight cookbooks, including the first of my new series *Fresh Start*—it's my guide for healthy eating and weight loss.

**MY OBSESSIONS**

Food and cooking, walking or hiking in nature, and University of Georgia football.

**MY FAVORITE THING ABOUT ATLANTA**

It's a very green city with lots of access to nature.

**MY FAVORITE THINGS TO COOK**

Cooking dinner every night is a highlight of my day, but I also love dessert. It's fun to create a recipe that tastes really good but uses a judicious amount of sugar and fat.

**IN MY FRIDGE NOW**

Shrubs, syrups, and plain and flavored waters. Soy

To see what Virginia's cooking up next, follow [@viriniawillis](https://www.instagram.com/viriniawillis) on Instagram.





LAY EARS FLAT (SO THEY'RE LESS WOBBLY) TO SLICE OFF KERNELS.



TURN THE GRATER CHANNEL-SIDE UP TO COLLECT LEMON ZEST.



USE A CUPPED HAND TO STRAIN OUT LEMON SEEDS.



## GRILLED CORN "TABBOULEH"

HANDS-ON 15 MIN TOTAL 25 MIN SERVES 4  
SUBMITTED BY VIRGINIAWILLIS NEW RECIPE GO ONLINE TO RATE & REVIEW

*Grilled fresh corn kernels take the place of bulgur wheat and lend a slightly sweet edge in Virginia's version of the Lebanese grain salad known as tabbouleh (also sometimes spelled tabouleh or tabouli). Aleppo pepper is mild—if you love heat, add more!*

- 6 ears corn, shucked**
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves**
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh mint**
- 1 Tbsp. finely chopped jalapeño pepper**
- 1 clove garlic, minced or grated**
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 tsp. ground Aleppo pepper, plus more to taste**
- 1 tsp. ground coriander**
- 1 tsp. lemon zest**
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice**
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. flaky sea salt**
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. freshly ground black pepper**

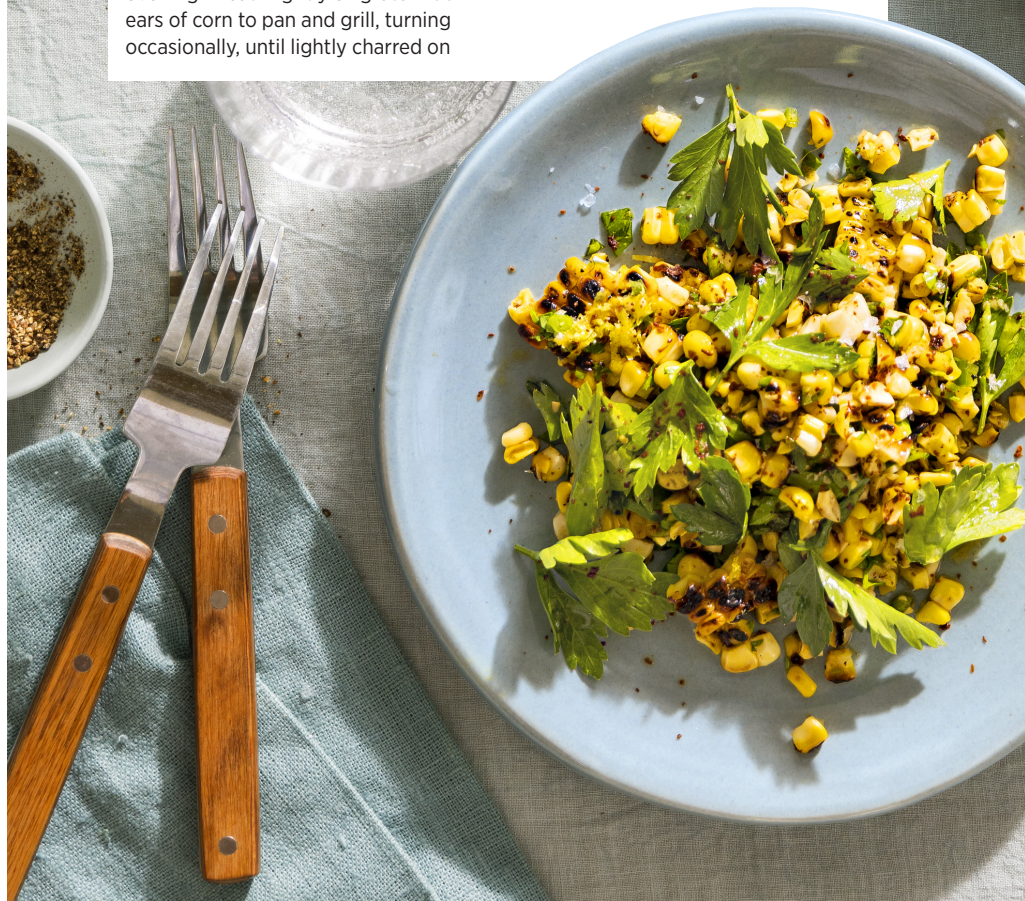
**1.** Preheat a grill pan or outdoor grill over high heat. Lightly oil grate. Add ears of corn to pan and grill, turning occasionally, until lightly charred on

all sides and tender, 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer corn to a cutting board. Let stand until cool enough to handle, about 5 minutes. Cut kernels from cobs. Discard cobs or reserve for another use. **2.** Coarsely chop  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup parsley leaves and transfer to a large bowl. Add remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup parsley leaves, the corn, mint, jalapeño, garlic, oil, Aleppo pepper, coriander, lemon zest, and lemon juice to bowl. Stir to combine. Season with salt and black pepper. Serve salad immediately or chill, covered, overnight.

[armagazine.com/grilled-corn-tabbouleh](http://armagazine.com/grilled-corn-tabbouleh)

HEALTHY GLUTEN-FREE VEGAN

PER 1 CUP: 142 CAL; 4G FAT (1G SAT); 5G PRO; 27G CARB (3G FIBER, 9G SUGARS); 448MG SODIUM







*A selfie  
with my  
mama.*

*Continued from page 35*

milk, butter, cheese, and skyr (an Icelandic product similar to yogurt). There's also miso and tofu. I fill a produce bin and an entire shelf with fruits and vegetables.

#### **MY CLOSEST THING TO A SUPERPOWER**

Making biscuits.

#### **THE FOOD DISCOVERY THAT CHANGED MY LIFE**

I love to fish, and seafood is an important part of a healthy diet. After reading *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World* by Mark Kurlansky, I quit eating overfished species and became a sustainable seafood advocate and activist. I'm a member of Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch Blue Ribbon Task Force, and I've lobbied Congress on the topic.

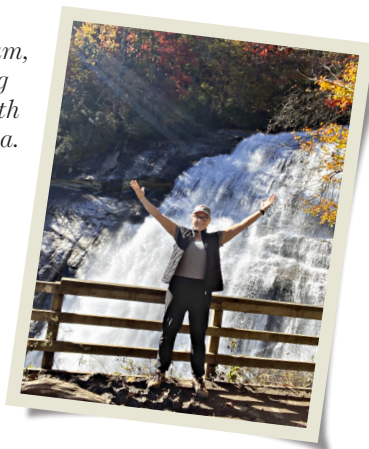
#### **THE KITCHEN TOOL I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT**

A chef's knife—and my ice cream scoop collection. I use a variety of sizes to measure for portion control.

#### **ON MY BUCKET LIST**

I have a dream to hike the Appalachian Trail. I hope to go to Japan sooner rather than later. Or Scandinavia. Or South America. The list is endless!

*Here I am,  
hiking  
in North  
Georgia.*



#### **RARE TALENTS I POSSESS THAT NO ONE WILL PAY ME FOR**

I can do a turkey call.

#### **DISHES I MAKE THAT OTHERS LIKE MOST**

Biscuits (they're the first thing I remember cooking), cornbread, collards with Parmesan, and butternut squash gratin

#### **FOR MY LAST MEAL ON EARTH, I WANT...**

My grandmother's fried chicken, butter beans, collard greens, rice, and gravy. And since I may as well, both a biscuit and a wedge of cornbread! I think it might need to be flourless chocolate cake for dessert.

#### **MY FAVORITE SAYING**

*"Progress is progress, no matter how small."* For me, it is my forward movement toward being healthy and strong. In the initial stages of my weight loss, any number down was a plus!

*before (2018)*



*after (2021)*

*"I started losing weight in 2019 with help from WW and lots of outdoor exercise. I'm 55 years old, I make a living cooking and eating, and I've lost 70 pounds. If I can do it, so can you!"*

#### **WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT ALLRECIPES**

I love the straightforwardness and absolute "can-do-ness" of the recipes. Online, the community is incredible!

#### **FAVORITE CUISINES**

French and Southern are a given, and I love the bold flavors of Middle Eastern food. My general philosophy—regardless of cuisine—is to do as little as possible to really good ingredients so as not to mess them up.

#### **THE MOST GRATIFYING PART OF COOKING**

I love the science of flavors. It's a multisensory experience that begins at the market, moves into kitchen playtime, and ends with satiated friends and family at the table. I am in heaven.