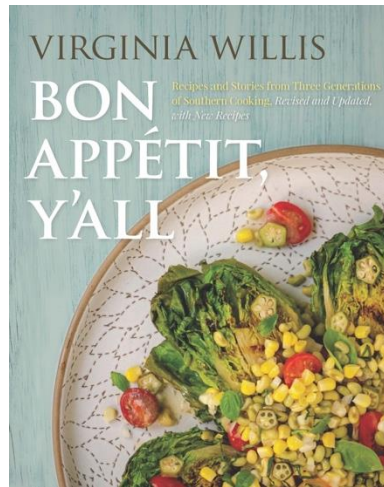


# The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Atlanta author gives her first cookbook — and herself — a makeover



*“Bon Appetit, Y’all: Recipes and Stories From Three Generations of Southern Cooking, Revised and Updated, with New Recipes” by Virginia Willis (UGA Press, \$24.95)*

By Susan Puckett – For the AJC

It’s been more than 16 years since Atlanta Journal-Constitution food columnist Virginia Willis’s debut cookbook hit bookshelves and became a bestseller. Its title, “Bon Appetit, Y’all,” succinctly conveyed her unique perspective as both a proud daughter of the South and French-trained chef who’d cooked for luminaries including Julia Child herself.

Five more well-received cookbooks followed — including the James Beard Award winner “Lighten Up, Y’all” — plus numerous high-profile media appearances.

But the excess eating, drinking and overscheduling that came with that success took its toll. Stressed, depressed and overweight, Willis resolved to remake her lifestyle. She dropped 65 pounds and continues to chronicle her wellness journey on social media.

She shares this latest chapter of her life in the introduction to *Bon Appetit, Y’all: Recipes and Stories From Three Generations of Southern Cooking, Revised and Updated, with New Recipes*” (\$24.95), a spruced-up softcover of the original that the University of Georgia Press will release Oct. 15.

Her health-focused regimen, she emphasizes, doesn’t prohibit the occasional indulgence. “However, the years have taught me moderation and balance.”

Those life changes prompted her to re-evaluate every recipe in her well-worn copy of the book closest to her heart, and reflect which — if given the opportunity to do over — she would modify, replace, or leave as is. In the new edition, her beloved grandmother’s recipe for buttermilk biscuits remains in its original dairy-rich glory, along with a vegan version inspired by a yoga buddy. Pecans punctuate her mama’s classic pie as well as a vegetarian lentil-based pate and a mocha torte scaled down to a 6-inch round to satisfy a sweet tooth without leftovers. The recipe for Cauliflower and Broccoli Parmesan — a new favorite in my household — cleverly swaps oven-roasted vegetable steaks for the breaded and fried chicken cutlets or eggplant slices of classic recipes.

For all the additions and refinements, the Southern accent in the latest generation of “Bon Appetit, Y’all” comes through as clear as ever.