



Collards: A Southern Tradition from Seed to Table

Dr. Edward H. Davis Ph.D., Dr. John T. Morgan Ph.D.

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Food is essential to southern culture, and collard greens play a central role in the South's culinary traditions. A feast to the famished, a reward to the strong, and a comfort to the weary, collards have long been held dear in the food-loving southern heart. In *Collards: A Southern Tradition from Seed to Table*, Edward H. Davis and John T. Morgan provide this emblematic and beloved vegetable the full-length survey its fascinating and complex history merits.

The book begins with collards' obscure origins. Like a good detective story, the search for collards' home country leads the authors both to Europe and West Africa, where they unravel a tale as surprising and complex as that of southern people themselves. Crossing back over the Atlantic, the authors traverse miles of American back roads, from Arkansas to Florida and from Virginia to Louisiana. They vividly recount visits to homes, gardens, grocers, farms, and restaurants where the many varieties of collards are honored, from the familiar green collards to the yellow cabbage collard and rare purple cultivars.

In uncovering the secrets of growing collards, the authors locate prize-winning patches of the plant, interview "seed savers," and provide useful tips for kitchen gardeners. They also describe how collards made the leap from kitchen garden staple to highly valued commercial crop.

Collards captures the tastes, smells, and prize-winning recipes from the South's premier collards festivals. They find collards at the homes of farmers, jazz musicians, governors, and steel workers. Kin to cabbage and broccoli but superior to both in nutritional value, collard greens transcend human divisions of black and white, rich and poor, sophisticated and rustic, and urban and rural.

Food trends may come and go, but collards are a tradition that southerners return to again and again. Richly illustrated in color, *Collards* demonstrates the abiding centrality of this green leafy vegetable to the foodways of the American South. In it, readers will rediscover an old friend.

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