

There are few dishes Eula Mae Stitcher cannot cook. The very thought of Eula's fruit cobbler or Red Velvet, fresh apple, Amish Friendship, Coca-Cola, and punchbowl cakes can leave anyone's mouth watering. The biggest fan of Eula's baking is her husband of forty-two years, local musician Alton Stitcher. Mr. Stitcher has seen the modern evolution of baking and his wife's recipes over the years, and he still has vivid memories of the ingredients and methods his mother used in preparing food for his family as a child. Growing up the son of a widow on his grandfather's farm in Carroll County, Georgia educated Stitcher on how various ingredients could be produced by a small family farm, as well as how individuals survived during times of scarcity. At sixteen years of age, Alton began working at Carrollton's Lawler Hosiery Mill, a job where he learned the exact value a cheap, filling, and portable breakfast and lunch had to a tired and overworked mill worker. Often in the Stitcher household the leftover biscuit from breakfast was saved and used as lunch with a slice of ham or other filler. Mr. Stitcher can still recall with great clarity his mother's bread bowl, iron boiler, bread pan, stove, and the family flour barrel, and how she effortlessly made delicious cakes, pies and other dishes for holidays or the church's dinner on the grounds.

Interview of Alton Stitcher
19 March 2002
Interviewed by Rebecca J. Glasgow
Southern Baking Traditions
Center for Public History

AS: And a, my, my daddy was sharecroppin' down at the river at that time.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: They would leave the mill, and go, they would farm awhile you know, and whatever he—they thought they could make [rooster crows] m-- more money at, you know, they would do it, during that time. So he sharecropped part of the time, and worked in the ho- a, cotton mill; my mother worked [rooster crows] in the hosiery mill.

RG: Okay, okay

AS: An' um, I was, I was about six years old when we moved there. An' wasn't too long after then, my daddy, he a, had ta, have an operation, an' a, he took pneumonia, [rooster crows] and died.

RG: [tisks] Oh I'm sorry

AS: He was twenty-nine

RG: Oh!

AS: My mother was twenty-nine at the time too. An' she had us five kids, to raise. [Rooster crows] An' um, my granddaddy lived here in Carroll County. Out on a Horsley Mill Road if you know where that's at. He had a farm out there an' he had two houses

out there. Two had a small farm, he was a, rentin'. [Rooster crows] He was rentin' to buy is what it—he was paying the tax on it you know, an' a, an' tryin' to buy it too you know, both of the little farm, well—one farm was fifty, about fifty-five acres. And the other one was a, [rooster crows] twenty-six

RG: Okay

AS: And he had them two houses out there and my granddaddy most of the time had some kind of an old car, that would run you know coz, T Model, or somethin' like that. And after my daddy died, course he come up there to get us. Bring us out to his place, out in the country. Where we'd have a place to stay. An' a, he had, he drove that old car up there, to pick up, my mother, and a, I just had a, my youngest sister was born at, at that time she was... five months old, I be—seven months old, at that time.

RG: [quietly] tisks. Oh, my gosh.

AS: And he come up there an' a, to carry a, my mother, my older sis-- older sister, and my youngest sister. And I had a brother just four years younger than me, and a, carry them, back in the car. My uncle come in a, two-horse wagon to move us. From Carroll County back down there. And um, next morning, got up an' put everything on the a, old wagon. An' a, my granddaddy and my mother, sister, older sister, younger sister, and my younger brother, they got in the car with [clock plays musical number] my granddaddy, and they, drove back. Me and my older brother, which was two years older than me—he was eight, I was six at that time, and, we went back on the wagon. Course we had a cow, we had to tie the cow on the back of the, to the back of the wagon, and a, cow, just walked along, tied to the back of the wagon.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And um, it's a pretty long trip from there you know back to a...Carrollton. Let's see it's about twenty, it's twenty-two miles from Carrollton to Newnan, and we was about six or eight miles, out of Newnan.

RG: Right

AS: Out there. About thirty miles. That's a long ways to a, carry a, a cow behind a wagon, and move you know. But we, we got to the river, now we, we crossed the river where there was a bridge, at that time, big steel sides and everything, but a wood, floor you know?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: An' a, I don't know, how many times we had to stop before we got there, but, a, we was getting' hungry, an' my momma had, cooked some biscuits, fried some strickiline—[chuckles] you know what that is?

RG: No sir.

AS: It's [laughs heartily] it's about the cheapest meat you can buy I guess! [AS and RG laugh] But you know what fat, fatback is--

RG: I sure do.

AS: Well all right you've seen this, the meat there with the fatback's got streaks in it?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: That's what it is; we called that strickiline.

RG; Gotcha

AS: An' a, we had som-- and some scrambled eggs, an' a some biscuits in a sack. An' we was gettin' pretty hungry, an' all we had to drink was water. An' a, my uncle said somethin' about milkin' that cow. And, he, wha—[laughs] he got off of the wagon, went back there an' a, we didn't have nothing to milk the milk in [laughs] so he got down there, down there close and milked that milk into his mou-- in his mouth from the cow you know [laughs]

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And we had to have some of it too. It was warm [laughs] but it was wet [AS and RG laugh] and so I don-- I, I think it was way at—I know it was, it was way in the night when we got home. Because, you can't travel about—with a team of horses--

RG: Mmhmm

AS: 'bout two or three miles an hour

RG: Right

AS: Yeah. You can count that to about three, three miles an hour, then stop an' then rest, you get to rest some while

*

AS: Yeah. And, and we called it the red house. And a, we started farmin' there. And course, we would help my granddaddy and them with his crop, they would help us. But a, my granddaddy gave my mother everything that we raised on that farm. To her you know, for us.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: But times was pretty hard. An' a, talkin' about somethin' to eat...we didn't have good stuff you know like a *lot* of people did, to eat. I remember a lot of times we'd give

out a flour. When havin' a biscuit. But my granddaddy owned a little mill he-- of his own down there where he ground corn

RG: Oohh!

AS: Mmhmm. An' a, we had plenty of mill all times. But a, we'd give out a flour. And momma would make what she would call *flitters*. Those *flutter cakes* you know that you'd call 'em. Mix up a, the meal you know an', an' fry 'em in little thin, 'bout like this, [forms a circle with his hands] 'bout that big—that's what we'd take for dinner at school. Might have, I'd take two of 'em together and put some eggs in between 'em. And I tell you something else we'd ha-- a, had to go, a carry to school a lot of times to survive too. A biscuit, with gravy—you know what gravy is?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: They'd put that gravy in that biscuit, sprinkle a little sugar in there, make it a little better you know.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And that's, we'd eat that a lot of times. And sometimes, she'd put a little, little hole in there you know like they would these doughnuts or honey-filled doughnuts? Pour syr-- sar-- sarghum syrup in there

RG: Mmhmm

AS: But we thought it was good

RG: Mmhmm

AS: We had to eat it anyway.

RG: [laughs] Well um, you mentioned biscuits

AS: Right

RG: Um, what um, what other types of breads besides the couple others that—cornbread for example? Is that something you would have? A lot?

AS: Right. We had, mhmm, we ate a lot of cornbread.

RG: You did?

AS: Yes

RG: Okay

AS: An' a, course we had our garden there you know, a pretty close to the house, but a, you know back then we raised cotton—more cotton than anything else. We raised some corn, but, a, cotton was the main thang. If you didn't have a place to raise cotton out in the country, you couldn't make it.

*

RG: All right, we were talking about um, the cornbread, the biscuits—so when typically did you eat these breads? Did you eat them at certain times of day? Certain times of the day?

AS: Well lunchtime the people called, we called it dinner, dinnertime. And a lot of people says dinner, at our suppertime

RG: Mmhmm

AS: See I was raised up out in the country, get there you know and they had these dinner bells you know that you'd ring. They'd ring them bells you know. You could hear 'em for miles you know. There was a dinner bell. Great big bell, hung up you know, and they'd ring it and about eleven o'clock. That was to let people know, it was time to start slowing down, gettin' ready to, come home for dinner.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And so that's where, where we got dinner, I mean a, yeah dinner. At twelve o'clock, in the daytime [laughs] not at night. And that was my, nighttime, that was our supper. But these, the dinner, you could a, you could a tell which bell, whose bell it was because they had different sizes of bells

RG: Mmhmm, oh!

AS: They had different sounds. And you'd learn them different sounds you know, whose bell it was. You knew it right in the country.

RG: Yeah. [long pause] Okay

AS: The cornbread, yeah we would eat that, we would eat it at dinner, and at supper. See what we would do back then, a, you didn't cook three meals a day

RG: Okay

AS: You cooked a big dinner, coz I'll tell you most everybody was in the fields workin' and a, a they would have to leave the field say about ten o'clock go home and prepare dinner, see? That's what momma would have to do. And a, [long pause] They'd ring them bells. Them people would a, start toward they'd finish one end you know, they 'd get to the other end of the row you know and then they'd start unhitchin' them mules,

from the plow stocks, or whatever they was doin' you know the and a get on them backs and ride 'em, on. That's what we done [laughs]

RG: Okay, um, let's see...

AS: the corn, the cornbread you was talking about—see we eat that at o—at our dinner and supper too. Like I was saying they couldn't, we didn't cook three meals a day. We had leftovers; warm it up, supertime, that's what most people done. They had to. We didn't even get to go to town, you know, when we wanted to. They had a, what they call a peddler that come by, I think one time a week. And he had a lot of stuff on there you know that you could buy like that goin' to town, see?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And a, a great big a, truck thing you know, built over near where you could walk in it you know and look see what you wanted

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And a, if you didn't have money to buy for what you wanted, they'd take eggs

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And they had these coops you know, Chicken coops, they'd a, they'd take a chicken you know, they'd take that chicken to town set it to one of the stores up there you know, and a, then a, ***END SIDE A, CASSETTE ONE***

RG: So it was like bartering?

AS: The what?

RG: Bartering? Is that what--

AS: the, the chickens? see, a, you'd trade them a chickens to this peddler you know for whatever you wanted to buy on, that you didn't--

RG: Mmhmm

AS: have at the house.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: see? They'd bring a, coffee--

RG: Oh!

AS: Ah, the lard—what they called it back then, what, what most people in the country had their own you know.

*

AS: Smoke, stuff. [Draws deep breath] But I'd come in from school an' a, before they wa—they was workin' twelve hours a day at that time, from six 'til six. I'd come, I would come in and I would fire that old stove up, an' a, back then, what you had to eat is what you wou-- could afford to buy, an' most of the time that was some kind of dried beans an' stuff like that.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: Well I'd take them beans you know and pick 'em out an' wash 'em, an' a, I, I knew how to do that, an' a, salt 'em you know an' put 'em on 'em cook 'em.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And, I could cook cornbread, an' that's what we had for supper.

RG: Okay now that's what I want to hear about!

AS: Yeah

RG: Um, how did you prepare the cornbread--

AS: Well, I--

RG: And where did you get the ingredients--

AS: Back, back then a, if you had milk you used milk. If you didn't, you used water. You take that a, meal, an' a, I can't tell you exactly what, how much of the stuff right now that I, would put in it but you would put, so much meal, you'd put so much bakin' powders, and if you wanted a soda—which you wouldn't, you can't use too much s-s-soda, in bread, coz if you do, they don't taste good—but you can use a *little* bit. An' a an' a bakin' powders an' stuff like an' a, mix it up with water, grease the skillet—we had these big iron skillets we cooked in—an' a, put it in the oven. It wasn't bad. [Both laugh] As a matter of fact I, sometimes I think about fixin' up some like that now! [Both laugh] Just see [laughs] see if I was missin' anything! [Laughs]

RG: So the meal then—was that still the meal you would get from your--

AS: That was--

RG: Grandfather's?

AS: When he was a—well during that time now my granddaddy had left, the country. He- they- he had lost out out there, an' a, they moved to town too, an' a—see he was a

good mealer, one of the best ones. An' he um, somebody had a mill on Presbyterian Avenue up here in a, Carrollton. Well he was, runnin' it for them.

RG: Okay

AS: An' a, they a paid, paid him so much you know to run it an' we'd go there an' get it, but it's still meal that my granddaddy was grindin' no-- though, yeah. As long as ground corn, we, we got that meal. [*Short pause*] And he was still grindin'.

*

AS: Well a—now back when we was, a, growin' up—especially out when we were goin' to school out there in country. A, they, they baked, now they ba—a they would bake cakes, different kinds of cakes you know, all, all along you know.

RG: Okay

AS: When they can, could afford a, have the ingredients you know to do it

RG: Right

AS: But most of the time they'd, they'd go from scratch you know use their own a, flour and everything--

RG: uh-huh

AS: That's what they would do. [*Draws deep breath*] They made a, a lot of what they called gingerbread

RG: Oh really?

AS: Yeah. And when we were coming home from school...we could smell that stuff. We kn—we knew that we had some gingerbread, or some a, what they call tea cakes, you know. You know what a tea cake is?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: It's a sweet, little sweet bread that the teas cakes--

RG: Now would that gingerbread, Mr. Stitcher, be, a mo—a special occasion type or was that something you had often?

AS: No, they didn't have, they didn't have that a, not, not a whole lot, but a good bit too you know, because it didn't take too much to make that.

RG: Okay

AS: The little tea cakes an'—course they's, they'd cook enough where we'd take, could take some to school, you know for a day or two you know, have somethin' sweet.

*

AS: [Clears throat] An' too, my granddaddy had a, had beehives, where he had bees, you know?

RG: [Let's out soft exclamation] Oh! Wonderful!

AS: An' a, certain times of the year, we would go out—I say we—I'd, I'd go out there with 'em, an' sort a, hol—at night you ha-- helt a lantern... where they could see what they was doin', all the bees was inside, you know? An' a, you took the top off of that beehive, an' you got your honey out.

RG: Uh-huh

AS: And they had a thing, built... well rolled up, it was a, m-- made out of blue jeans an' a, all kind of stuff, like that you know that would make a lot of smoke?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And they, they'd set that thing afire

RG: Oh

AS: And hold it over that beehive, an' blow that smoke down into there where that honey was they'd run all them bees down to the bottom.

RG: Ahh

AS: Then they'd cut that honey out—and we had, we had honey, we had the sorghum syrup—

RG: You mentioned that earlier with the, with the round cakes with holes in them you were talkin' about, right? The s-- that your mother would make and then you'd pour sorghum syrup in the middle?

AS: Oh that was the biscuit.

AS: [Tisks] Oh that was in the biscuit? Okay I'm sorry.

AS: Mmhmm. Yeah that was that was just a plain biscuit, an' a punch hole in, pour syrup in the middle.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: That's, an' a, it was mostly our own syrup because we raised our sugar cane too, you know?

RG: You did? Oh wow!

AS: Carry it to the a, what we called the syrup mill, had a, grind that stuff—have you ever seen a syrup mill?

RG: I sure haven't!

AS: Mmm. It's a big thang, an' a, what they'd have a mule, you know, ho-- hooked to it well, an' it'd go around and around, that's what turned it. An' a, that would turn that thing you know where you figured that a, [clears throat] was a, the a, sugar crane, cane into. And that would squeeze the juice out, an' it'd run down into a, place, then when, then they had a, a place there where they would cook it, and make the syrup. Sorghum syrup.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: I used ta, love to watch them do that when we'd carry that sugar cane, to a, syrup mill, an' a, when it was runnin' out, pure juice from the syrup, from that sugar crane—cane, I can't even talk! [laughs] They'd let us, they'd catch some of it and let us drink it you know?

RG: Mmmhmmm

AS: That was real good.

RG: Ooh yeah!

AS: Yeah, [laughs] and that's what they made that s-- a, sorghum syrup.

RG: [whispers] Wow

AS: Out of. And that was good too.

RG: I bet.

AS: An' that's that's what we ate for lunch sometime at school—an' a biscuit.

RG: So did, now, did you sweeten your cornbread?

AS: No, we, we didn't sweeten the cornbread.

RG: I didn't think so.

AS: Now, a lot of people do. [Pointing towards his wife] She has, a time or two but a, I don't care too much about the cornbread bein' sweet—now you can buy the cornmeal you know, that's sweet.

*

RG: Okay, let me just quickly ask you these two, but you did touch upon this, a little bit earlier: What types of leavening did you use, for the biscuits, an' ...

AS: The biscuits.

RG: And other breads, anything else that you...

AS: Oh. Well I te-- um, I don't know—now, part of the time, they may have that self-rising flour out there, I don't know.

RG: Oh!

AS: But if they didn't...I know they didn't part of the time, but they would use a, they'd have to use their own bakin' powders you know an' stuff in there, like that. An' a, you mean when they would make the biscuit up? They put the flour in this...biscuit thing. [laughs] That what you called it!

RG: You mean the pan, or—

AS: Yeah it was made out of—these was made out of wood you know this the—[trailed off because he believed I knew and he did not want to elaborate unnecessarily].

RG: Oh no, please describe it!

AS: Yeah. A, [pointing to his wife] she can describe it better 'an I can but it was a, um, it was a tray I guess is what you'd call it.

RG: Okay

AS: A biscuit tray, or a bread tray.

RG: And this is what you baked it in?

AS: It was a bread tray what it was. And you can mix your, you mix your meal up, cornbread up in there too, an' your flour, your biscuits too, up in there. That, they would use a, hog lard.

RG: Okay

AS: In that, you know? An' whatever a, baking powders or whatever it was--

RG: Now would the baking powder be something they got off the, the--

AS: You had to buy it.

RG: the peddler that came?

AS: Yeah you had to buy that at, that's at a, stores in town, you know?

RG: Okay

AS: Or either, if the a, peddler come by, he had all that kind of stuff too.

RG: He did.

AS: An' paper back then, you-- they use a lot of, they use snuff just about everybody did you know, (tobaccer) smoke, chew to dip or sometime all of it. And a, they had it on that.

RG: Were these things fairly expensive? Er—

AS: What's the—

RG: The baking powder, the tobacco

AS: Nooo, uh-uh it wasn't expensive.

RG: Okay

AS: If it was we'd a have to done without [AS and RG laugh]

RG: Well um, how did you measure the ingredients, when you baked? Your cornbread an' your biscuits an' your other breads.

AS: I tell ya most of the time they just do it like they wanted to.

RG: Okay

AS: They just put a little dab of this a little dab of that an' a, if it wasn't just like they wanted it they'd, change it next time you know?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: That's why—they didn't have a recipes to go by.

RG: Okay

AS: An' exc-- not even in the cakes I didn't see no recipes. They'd make the cakes out there you know an' a, um...just put a little bit—they used um, flour—regular flour. They didn't get baking stuff, you know in a box.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: They used flour from a, the flour bin.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: We had a flour barrel is what we had. We had a big barrel about this, that thing was that high, [demonstrates: approximately three feet high] three f-- three, a, four foot high, maybe. Maybe four foot, three and a half. And bout this big around [demonstrates: approximately seventeen inches in diameter]. An' a, that's where you dipped your, dumped your flour in when you'd buy it in these big hundred pound bags? You'd dump it in that a, flour barrel, then had a lid that went back over it you know?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: You could get regen-- I guess that once in awhile they'd look at that flour barrel see how it's was goin' down you know? [AS and RG laugh]

RG: Yeah how of-- how long do you guess it took you to go-- to empty it?

AS: Empty?

RG: Ta, to use all the flour in the barrel?

AS: I don't know, the way we eat it it didn't take [laughs] well it did, that, a, a hundred pound flour, a, sack of flour would do a, a good while.

RG: Okay

AS: I don't know exactly how long but it would do a long time. Because we—for breakfast is about the only time we used that. The rest of the meals—dinner and supper—we eat cornbread.

RG: [almost simultaneously] Cornbread. Okay.

*

RG: Okay, um, we, we talked a little bit about this as far as with the biscuits, but can you describe some other pans or dishes that you used when you baked different types of breads?

AS: You mean what they baked them in?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: Well, just plain ol' pans I guess, about like they do now I reckon a, but you know when we a, cooked back then, boiled stuff it was in a big, iron boiler you know, thing. That set on top of the stove.

RG: Mmhmm. And tell me about the stove, that you used.

AS: Well it was a wood stove. An' um, up here [gestures to the surface of an imaginary stove] you had a, what you called a warmer. You had, two doors you know up there an' you could put stuff in there after you cooked it, put it up there an' you'd, it'd keep it warm for a long time an', an' keep the flies an' stuff off of it too.

RG: Hmmmmm

AS: An' a, on a, I remember on the left side it had a reservoir there, that was next to the, burner, next to your furnace, your fire, where you put your fire at.

RG: Okay

AS: An' a, it had a...a lid that, you'd opened up on the top when—you'd have hot water there all, just all day long.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: Open that up an' dip down in there you know, an' get you some hot water out.

RG: Hmmm

AS: An' um...now a lot of them stoves back then didn't have any a, what you call a, thermostat or, didn't tell you how hot anything was--

RG: Oh right

AS: You just had to kinda guess at it. But, when you baked anything in them old wood stoves, it was good. It cooked real fast.

RG: Mmhmm

AS: Cooked a lot of biscuits you know an' stuff like that. They'd cook in ten or twelve minutes you know. You had ta really watch 'em when you put 'em in there an' take 'em out, an' it just a little bit. But they were really good.

RG: Mmmm

AS: Now, these stoves had eyes on the top. You know where you-- where you could, you'd lift them off, an' them pots was made ta fit right down in there see? You boiled it where, that you boiled a, your beans or whatever

RG: Mmhmm

AS: They a, the bottom was made just to fit right down in that hold on the stove

RG: Why would they ever change that? That sounds really convenient.

AS: It was good. It was! But stuff tastes, a, different back then a, you know cooked on them stoves than they do now. I don't know why.

RG: Mmmm. It was wood-burning, right? Wonder if that's—

AS: Wood, wood-burning, mmhmm.

RG: You—it was better, the food tasted better, do you mean? Or just different?

AS: I believe it was better. I know it was better cooked in them iron pots.

RG: Oh yeah!

AS: Mmhmm

RG: [tisks] Gosh! Okay, well um, were there special events that you baked more for?

AS: On Sundays, a sometime they, we'd, we'd have company you know on, on Sundays sometime an' a, they'd get in there an' a, they'd get out an', kill a, two or three chickens an' a, that's, that was a special you know, somethin' special you know—if ya had chicken. Back then, because a, most of them chickens they used 'em for the eggs you know?

*

RG: [Giggles] No! [AS chuckles too] Um, okay, um...so far what types of occasions, besides Sundays, might you bake something special—like di-- you talked about cakes?

AS: Well sometimes you know, at the churches, they'd have what they would call a, all-day singin'?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: And dinner on the ground—you've heard of that. An' of course they wouldn't be eatin' on the ground—well some people would you know—some places didn't, didn't have these big, tables you know. They'd have to spread out somethin' you know and set down on the ground and really, it'd be dinner on the ground. An' a, they cook a bunch of

stuff, like cakes an' chicken an' a...an' a, that's what they'd take for their dinner. Biscuits, cornbread, salads—stuff like that—potato salad...

RG: Did you have like pies an' cobblers an'...

AS: They would, they would take sweet 'potater' pies, and durin' the season when you'd get them pumpkins...have them pumpkin pies.

RG: Okay

AS: Hmm. An' I remember, they made a lot of, of what they called a cheesecake. But, I - I don't think there was any cheese in it. [RG laughs] They'd take a—to make it look like it had cheese in it—they'd take a lemon, and grate that, outside off--

RG: Okay

AS: into a...a like-- like a powder like stuff you know.

RG: Uh-huh

AS: And they would use that on to-- all over the top of that icing on the cake.

RG: Hmmm.

AS: Course, back then they cooked a lot of chocolate cakes...chocolate, lemon-cheese, an'—I think that was about the favorites back, back then.

RG: Was cocoa something that was expensive, or--

AS: It wasn't high back—cocoa?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: Not back then it wasn't.

RG: Okay

AS: They used that I think to make the icing with. Some of it.

RG: mm, okay

AS: But my favorites of the a, pies, I, I would say would be a, a, sweet potater, or the pumpkin. That was my favorite, an'—but cobblers—peach and apple.

RG: Mmm

AS: They made a, a lot of them—see we had fruit trees too out there.

RG: Okay

AS: [Draws deep breath] An' a, jellies—they made their own jellies, jams and stuff like that. [Pointing to his wife] She does; she still does. We have a, we have a, a scupadine...vine out here. We have a carrot tree out here; make carrot jelly. And we have plums out here; she makes plum jelly. We have three plum trees out here [RG gasps quietly] get-- has them big plums about like that [demonstrates: approximately three-and-a-half, four inches in length].

RG: [whispers] wow!

AS: And she makes that, um, well jelly from all that—an', an' I did have some grape vines out there, but they played out, an' a, I-- I cut 'em down.

RG: Okay

AS: But that currant jelly is real good. It's—have you ever seen a currant?

RG: [Just realized AS said 'currant', not carrot] Currant?

AS: Mmhmm

RG: Yeah! Yeah! Okay.

AS: Little bitty things you know. Well that's, that's what we have out there an' we get them off you know an' she a, makes jelly. You can buy the currant jelly, at the stores.

RG: And she makes it? Wow!

AS: Uh-huh. She ha-- she's probably got some now in there, she can show you some of it. She makes some *good* stuff. I tell you, she's a *good* cake baker.

*

AS: I hope you do. An', a, I tell ya, a, maybe next time when you come out, you might have some of them a, a, some of that lo-- a bread, Amish Bread. I think she's fixin' ta put up some you know.

RG: For the, Saturday

AS: And she has a cake, she has a cake in there that takes—I think it's thirty or thirty-one days you know...for it to get ready to make a cak--

RG: [Amazed] Thirty days?

AS: Mmhmm. Yep, it, she puts it in a, in a, jar, gallon jug, jug's what it is, with a big mouth on it? And every so often—she has ta stir it everyday, and every so often you, you

add something to it, an' a, thirty-one days it's ready. I think it's thirty. And then she cooks it.

RG: [whispers] Wow. We'll have to ask her about that--because the Amish Cake I know is ten days--

AS: Mmhmm

RG: Thirty days! I can't imagine!

AS: She cooks apple cakes...she'll take anything make a cake out of it. [chuckles. RG joins in] One of these days she go probably make me a mud pie! [AS laughs hardily, shooting a glance at his wife in the other room (because she had been listening in)] Put a little chocolate on it!

RG: [overlapping AS] I don't think she heard that. She didn't hear that. She stopped listening.

AS: Put a little chocolate on it! [Both chuckle. Clock chimes with melody] That's just like her.

*

AS: Some of them outrageous names...[chuckles] She told you that, a her granddaughter wanted a-- well her grandson wanted that a, what kind of Pinto Bean Cake?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: Was-- Yeah. That's what he wants for his birthday. And it's gonna be this weekend.

RG: Yeah that's what you guys were sayin'.

AS: Mmhmm. You say somethin' about a Pinto Bean Cake people say [telephone rings] they don't know what a Pinto Bean Cake is. [Can hear Eula Stitcher on the telephone]

RG: That is...

AS: That's sauerkraut. [pause] But it works.

RG: Yeah she has a recipe for Chocolate Sauerkraut Cake, a Sausage Cake, [AS clears throat] the Pinto bean cake...I saw something else out there. I can't remember now, but—oh, the Coca-Cola Cake. Um...all right, so here's something that might be a really good topic for you, um...how have, have you changed, or has she changed or adapted old family recipes? You said you couldn't differentiate between her butterbeans and your moms butterbeans...does she follow some actual, you know, recipes that maybe your mother did write down later, or...

AS: Not as I know of

RG: It's just coincidental that--

AS: She just does her own, she just does her own, way of cookin'

*

RG: U-kay. Um...alright. When do you eat your breads today? When--when do you eat, breads in your home now?

AS: All day long [Both laugh] [inaudible] the biscuits...[chuckles] a, for breakfast...cornbread, for dinner an'...supper.

RG: Is this mostly every day?

AS: Mmhmm. When—a, sometimes we'll eat a sandwich, you know, for supper. We—and drink milk or (sumpin') like that. But I tell ya she cooks a, just, she cooks about every day. Well she does. She cooks somethin' every day. Probably don't like to, [chuckles] but she does.

RG: Um...okay, so do you prefer...corn, or wheat flour based breads today?

AS: Corn. You talkin' about a, the bread?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: Well if I had to have my, the favorite of, of all bread—it would be cornbread. Because I tell ya what, um, I learned ta eat, cornbread for breakfast, when we were out on the farm. Because we'd give out um, a, flour, you know sometimes. And the way my-- that my mother cooked them a, little flitters that I was tellin' you about--

RG: Mmhmm

AS: them things were good! And you can eat them anytime. But you can take some flour an' mix in with that a, corn a, meal too you know an' makes it a little bit different.

RG: Hmm,mmm.

AS: Mmm

RG: Uh...okay. Now she [referring to Eula Sticher] might cringe if I ask this, but um, I-- this, I'm very curious about this because a lot of people I've talked to, don't bake at all anymore. An' it's so fascinating an' wonderful that she's-- still uses the old-fashioned methods, so, does she use boxed, um, boxed mixes e-- ever? You know like Pilsbury, Duncan-Hines, anything like that?

AS: You mean to make cakes?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: Sometimes, yeah, mmhmm. But sometimes she'd-- a, she'll use a, plain, you know the flour in there ta make a, but I think she's found out that it's a little easier to use it out of the box. But she can cook right from the a, flour in there.

RG: Yeah

AS: Yeah

RG: Oooo-kay. Um.... Do you know what types of flours—she uses today? [pause] Or you use?

AS: Mmm. Well we use Martha White for a long time, I think she's usin' another brand right now.

RG: [Leans toward kitchen, speaking to Eula Stitcher] What type of flour do you use today?

ES: White Lily

RG: White Lily, u-kay.

AS: That's it. That's right. That's-- that's what she's usin' now.

RG: And um, [speaking louder, and to both Stitchers] what type of fat do you currently use for baking?

AS: Crisco

ES: Crisco oil

RG: U-kay. How 'bout the type of sweetener you use?

ES: Use sugar

RG: Okay. An', what type of milk do you use in baking?

ES: Mostly can milk

RG: U-kay. Alright. I hope that's picking her up. What types of leavening agent do you use?

ES: Now that, I-- I go by the recipes [inaudible]

RG: Okay. So, s—some different examples might be...for your cakes?

ES: Now I cook ‘em on three-fifty.

RG: Okay

ES: But most, most of mine is a, I go for the recipe, an’ if it’s a, cake mix, I use it; if it’s not I use a, flour.

RG: U-kay

ES: It’ll call for cake flour an’ I use self-rising. [chuckles, then turns back to conversation with Mick (in the kitchen); she can be heard talking as she walks back to the table]

RG: Alright!

AS: I don’t think she even had a, recipe book when we married.

RG: Really?

AS: She just cooked, you know, go-- the way she wanted to. That’s the way I see it.

RG: That’s wonderful!

AS: Then she started buying cookbooks, an’—an’ I don’t think she actually goes by all that, in the cookbook, she don’t. [Looking at his wife] She’s shakin’ her head no. She doesn’t--

ES: Not unless I’m cookin’ a cake!

AS: A you go by the, right by the recipe when you’re cookin’ a cake now?

ES: Yeah

AS: You used ta didn’t!

ES: I know I used ta didn’t, but I do now. That way I can get ‘em the same, all the time.

RG: What—what types of—does she use any special...um, pans today with-- or just ordinary baking pans, or, does she have any--

AS: Um...yeah ordinary-- a, just ordinary, a, bakin’ pan—you mean ta, for the layers?

RG: Yeah for anything that she bakes. You know cornbread you use this heavy skillet in the oven--

AS: Oh she has—ta cook cornbread? (Arn) skillet—she got a big ar-- we got some r-- a round, two or three round skillets an' a big square (arn) skillet. That's what she cooks the, cornbread in.

RG: That makes a big difference, I think.

AS: Yeah it does.

RG: An' what types of really special foods—I, it seems to me all the food she makes is special. The recipes that she has, they're all special. What do you feel, are the special foods that she makes, or does she make, for e--xample you have this birthday coming up, your grandson's birthday. Um, you know does she get really--

AS: Um, well I really don't know. Um, what she cooks specially?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: That I like?

RG: Mmhmm

AS: Tell you the truth I like anything she cooks!

RG: Mmhmm. You're a lucky man!

AS: Yeah, I do. She don't cook anything that's not good to me.

RG: Well, we've talked about her cakes, an', your cornbread, what about—does she make breads, or does she make pies or cobblers with these fruits an' things you have?

AS: A...the cobblers that we make, that she makes, is either blueberry, apple, peach...an' a, sweet (potater). An' I love that sweet (potater) cobbler.

RG: gasps

AS: Mm--me, that's good! That's our favorite cobblers right there I, I would say. Um, that's a, the fruits an' stuff, she uses that ya know for jams an' jellies.

RG: Mmhmm. So were those—like the blueberries—that's something she's getting from the store? You guys don't have the blueberries from a--

AS: I-- I've got two little vines out there, bushes out there, an' a, they really don't, I hadn't had 'em out there too long, and they really don't a, give enough maybe for about one, or two little old, a, cobblers you know. An' we usually just, buy some of 'em you know, an a, most of 'em.

RG: The peaches an' the apples too?

AS: Mmhmm. We don't have any fruit trees.

RG: U-kay.

AS: Except the plum you know?

RG: Yeah. What about, banana pudding?

AS: [Obvious delight] Oh yeah she does that too—makes some good banana pudding.

RG: Do you know where her recipe came from for that?

AS: [calling to Eula, still in the kitchen] Hey. Where did your recipe come from for your banana puddin', outta your head?

ES: Off of the banana puddin' box.

AS/RG [in unison] Oh! Okay!

ES: Off the vanilla wafer box. [AS laughs heartily]

RG: Ummm...is that somethin' that was, that your mother made a lo-- you know, is that somethin' you've made, been making for years?

ES: I've been makin' it, cookin' it since I was about eight years old.

*

RG: Okay. So there are actually bananas in it?

ES: Yes ma'am.

RG: Okay. That might sound like a ridiculous question, but we've had this, big, um...

AS: At school? Stuff at school?

RG: Yeah, we've had a resurgence--

MB: A big controversy about it at school.

RG: Yeah. Our um—my supervisor has been unsure about--

AS: Whether it's bananas or not?

RG: Yeah! Because, she didn't-- she couldn't, really...

AS: Couldn't find no bananas in it?

RG: No, she couldn't figure how there wer-- such a prevalence of bananas in the area. She thought they'd probably be kind of exotic an' expensive, an' way back when, when you guys were growing up, she wasn't sure how easily they would be found. So, did your mother make banana pudding?

AS: [overlapping RG's last sentence] Bananas. Well, you couldn't find them, you couldn't find them any time during the year, I don't believe, back when I was growin' up. Um...

RG: [unsure at the time, because also speaking] You could or you couldn't?

AS: I don't...I don't remember seein' bananas all, all during the year back then.

RG: Okay

AS: Sure didn't. But they would get (bananers) an' make banana pudding every so often.

RG: U-kay. Like in the summer time, er—or the winter time. One of the two I guess, depending on where they came from.

AS: Right

RG: If they were coming from the southern regions, it would have been--

AS: Yeah. Well it's easier now to get things, you know, than it was back then.

*

RG: Um...okay...[scours questionnaire to see what has/not been covered] let's see...alright then, um, do you or your wife make, um, special or favorite dishes, for, say, church gatherings today?

AS: Well I tell you what, her favorite thing, everybody always wants--

RG: Or funeral

AS: well, when a, we're goin' to somethin' like that: they want one of them Red Velvet cakes that she makes. An' it's, that's, almost a must right there.

RG: Wow!

AS: They got to have that red--

RG: [simultaneously] Note for the record I'm going to sample the Red Velvet Cake in a little while. [both chuckle]

AS: Yeah, they had-- they had to have that Red Velvet Cake, an' what else? Oh yeah, a, the, some kind of a, a, Mexican cornbread.

RG: Oh!

AS: Yeah. She makes some *good* Mexican cornbread.

RG: Now what is in that, that sets it apart from--

AS: It's pepper for one thing.

RG: What kind of pepper?

AS: Well you can use a—if you don't want it hot, just use plain a, sweet pepper. You can mix it an' have it a little hot, or you can mix it just put plain hot pepper an' then have it hot. An' it's good. You put the corn in it I do—I, I believe you do. You put a, [addressing Eula] is it whole cornel corn?

ES: I'd rather have cream.

AS: Cream style corn. Get her to make some of that one of these days, [RG giggles] an'—you ain't never eat none of it?

RG: No! No sir I haven't. Especially not with cream corn, I know I've never had that. That sounds different. An' then um, what type of holiday baking, goes on in this house? I can imagine—I can only imagine. [Addressing Eula] You want to tell me about your holiday baking?

ES: All kind of cakes, put 'em in the freezer an' then just [laughing] take 'em out of the freezer!

AS: [laughs] Sh-- she'll bake 'em before time you know.

RG: What kinds of cakes?

ES: I make a fresh coconut, an' I grate the coconut myself an' fix it. An' I make the Red Velvet, an' a, the Hanky-Panky...

RG: [reaches forward with the microphone, and Eula looks a little frightened] I'm just holding it out so it catches you more.

ES: And...I don't remember wha-- what else, but I cooked a, Chocolate a, an' Sauerkraut a good bit too.

RG: Tell us about your chocolate an' sauerkraut cake if you would. An' where the recipe came from.

ES: Let me get the recipe.

RG: Alright.

AS: What she, she usually, bakes several different kinds of cakes—sometime two or three of one, one kind you know, if it's—you know a special kind that we like more. An' she'll, put 'em in there an' freeze 'em. If anybody comes around you know, she'll take out one of them cakes an' make coffee you know an' we'll set around like we—sort of like we did today you know. She don't have anything in there now much. Usually, she's got several cakes in there, froze.

RG: Wow

ES: [returning with her recipe book] An' I make the sausage cake.

RG: The sausage cake. Yes, tell us about that too.

ES: Well I got the recipe from a friend of mine, an' I make the sausage cake, and put—it calls for a pound of a, sausage, an' then I make the s-- chocolate and sauerkraut cake.

RG: And that recipe came from...the same friend?

ES: Yes ma'am.

RG: Wow. And does she live in Carrollton, or he?

ES: Villa Rica.

RG: Villa Rica

ES: An' I make the fresh apple cake.

RG: Mmm. What kind of apples do you use for that?

ES: Fresh apples, just chip 'em up.

AS: [speaks simultaneous with Eula] Use, just any kind

RG: Any kind of apple?

AS: Mmhmm

ES: Takes a, three cups of a, tart apples in it.

RG: Okay

ES: An' Pinto Bean cake

RG: All unique

AS: But that Red Velvet Cake I guess she gets more...

ES: Everybody likes it better than they do any of it. An' then there's a, a Seven-Up, but I don't care too much for the Seven-Up. But the Hanky-Panky is a, pistachio puddin' mix in it

RG: [reviewing at the recipe] Oh my goodness! Pistachio pudding. Mmm that sounds so good! [AS chuckles] Thank-you!

*