

NATHALIE DUPREE
Charleston, SC

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[Begin Nathalie Dupree Interview]**00:00:09**

April Grayson: This is April Grayson on October 7, 2004 and I'm interviewing Nathalie Dupree in Oxford, Mississippi. I'm wondering if you could start by telling me your date and place of birth.

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Nathalie Dupree: I was born during the very tip of the War in 1939 when my father was stationed in New Jersey. And I think he was stationed in Trenton and I was born in Teaneck. But I remember nothing about New Jersey because we were just there in passing and I think just long enough for me to be born, so but **[Laughs]** that's about it.

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AG: And where did you grow up?

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ND: I grew up in Virginia. I grew up in what was really suburban and country Virginia because at the time that I grew up there were maybe ten houses between Mount Vernon and Highway One and now there are probably 50,000 **[Laughs]**; I have no idea—there's a lot. And I grew up in Fairlington just shortly—I mean Shirley Highway and Lee Highway if you know that area, a lot—they hadn't really been extended very far and it—my father once rode home down Shirley Highway on a bicycle—in a—on a bicycle that he had purchased for me. So it's not the Shirley Highway of today. It was not a well-traveled route, and I would go across the highway to go to school. I would run across the highway **[Laughs]**, so it's quite a different world right now.

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AG: And now you live in Charleston, South Carolina?

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ND: Now I live in Charleston, South Carolina.

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AG: I was wondering if you could explain the origin of your involvement with SFA. I've heard that you and John Egerton had some conversations early on about creating that organization and I wonder if you could share that.

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ND: Well I think of myself as a catalyst and just a little—I think maybe John Egerton is, too, just a little ahead of the baby-boomers. So I kind of see things maybe a little plainer than they do and it's good—it's been good and it's been bad in my life. So sometimes I start things—try to start things sooner and they don't—there's not a mass of people to follow me. And then a few years later there's a herd that is on the same wavelength and that's happened all of my life.

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And I have tried to start—I was one of the founders of IACP, I was a founder of Les Dames d'Escoffier in Atlanta, and I tried to start an Atlanta Women's Culinary Guild twenty-five years ago, and I've tried several times to start Southern Foodways. But frankly, the mass of people involved earlier on was not great enough until the last ten years really. There weren't enough of us for us to feel that we could segment ourselves into different areas of specialties. At

the time that I first tried doing this which was over twenty years ago, there just—everybody—there seemed to be just one person in every state and maybe in every three states and there was a lot of territorial stuff, kind of like cats on a big farm, and of course then you get a lot of cats on the block they each just know that their house is their area and the area shrinks and—and that's better because then you really get to know that area.

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And so—so I think SFA came along at that time, finally, where we had enough people, enough cats on the block that we could all get our own little space and not feel that we had to cover the whole range of Southern food but we could specialize in barbeque and we could specialize in Low Country and so forth.

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When I first wrote *New Southern Cooking* we had to treat this—this area that's bigger than Europe in one book. You had to cover everything from New Orleans and part of Texas to Maryland and of course now you don't have to. So does that help you?

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John Egerton called me and I'm sure he called John Taylor and some other people because John Taylor—or John Egerton is a prince of a fellow who is a great uniter and because he was the one person in the food industry that everybody respected because we all did have our different takes on this. And we needed a uniter and so he was the one. And I think he's the one that really promoted John Edge—John T. Edge to be here at—to get a position at the University of Mississippi and bring that forward.

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I have—my husband was teaching here at Ole Miss and I had approached someone about doing something like this but it was the wrong person. I had gone to the Home Economics

Department rather than through the Southern Foodways and Marcia Garrison and I had talked about doing some things about Southern women but we—we didn't have the right methodology you know. I still think men are better at that than women.

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AG: Were you at the organizational meeting in Birmingham?

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ND: Well you see there were a couple of groups before this. Now there was a group that met before this group in Birmingham. I don't know if that was—I don't have my years straight, but yes; I was at an organizational meeting in Birmingham, yes.

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AG: Do you recall anything from that meeting?

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ND: Well I recall that I was stunned that IACP didn't have their bylaws in their book because I was wanting the bylaws in place as soon as possible, when I start an organization or work on the framing of an organization, because I think it's very important to have the rules. And there were a lot of us. Martha Johnston was on my right. So there were a number of us there, and it must have been thirty—around thirty, double check. So I do remember that there was a lot of discussion. I think we all, when we looked around at all those faces and realized we didn't know anybody—know everybody that we felt that the field was indeed big enough now to—to do this

and before it had not been, so that was a big relief. And then we all went out to get more—we wanted the body I think of fifty people to actually frame it.

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Prior to that there had been an organization that had floundered and I had been on its Advisory Board and had quit it. So it was you know—well there have been two of them. You know it—it took—this is—was not an easy thing. The—the real benefit of this that we started with a paid staff member, and that’s the benefit of it. Having a paid staff member from the get-go makes a big difference.

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AG: Were the two organizations you were referring to The Society for the Preservation and Revitalization of Southern Food and American Southern Food Institute?

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ND: Yes. And then there was one that I had tried starting before that. God knows what that name was, but yeah.

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AG: Why do you think SFA has had more success than those two?

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ND: Well one is just plain time, the right time; the funding; someone willing to take the telephone calls and—and postage; someone who saw a benefit towards getting publicity like the University of Mississippi did; the mantle of John Egerton being placed on John T.; the blessing

of the Dean at that time of John T.—all of that made a big, big, big difference because without that it would have been a lot more fractious I think. We would have had to start raising money immediately and everybody would have had to take on a larger load than what we were—we were prepared to do in addition to our other duties.

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But John Egerton is the real—was the real leader on this. He seems to have had a—because of the body of his work, both in civil rights and food, he had contacts that like myself—but bridged both paths. And so he knew a number of very talented and knowledgeable African Americans that not all of us knew. And so he was able to bring a diverse group together. I was really pleased about that. I mean there were just exciting people there that I didn't know from before. It wasn't the same old contentions and factions and so forth.

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I think also that the—the [*Sighs*]
—one of the previous groups that had been started had seemed to be just a—a group that was going to raise funds to sort of support one person. And as much we all loved that person we were mixing apples and oranges and we were uncomfortable with the mixing of apples and oranges. We felt that we needed to—if we needed to take care of one of our own then we needed to do that and if we needed to start a foodways group we needed to do that.

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Also the [*Sighs*]
—the bylaws and structure of those organizations was never in place properly in my way of thinking. I didn't feel that it was in place properly. I'm kind of unnerved about that.

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AG: So what was the original mission for SFA?

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ND: Well I think pretty much what we have. I had hoped though that we would not have to meet in Oxford every year; that we would—so I think that the idea of having interim meetings is a good one. But I think what I wanted, what I always want—is to get all the little people in the field involved. That’s always what I want. Wanted—that’s what I wanted with IACP and it’s what I wanted with Les Dames d’Escoffier and a women’s group. I want to have everyone have access to the people that are interested in the field. And so I think we’ve really got that now where everyone does have access to—so that’s the important thing. Networking is always the—the real thing that holds a group like this together and everything else, so you get—you get the most benefit out of it if you participate in the work because that allows you to do the networking.

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I also wanted us to get into some of the tough areas that we’ve gotten into like this particular Conference, which is on human race. And I wanted us to get into clearing up some of the misunderstandings. I got very tired about hearing about African Americans traveling three months in a small ship with rice in their ears, you know or okra pots or whatever it is. I mean I really want us to get to the point where we—one, where we really had some points that we agreed upon that were—were factual even if the same myths keep circulating whether it’s where iced tea was invented in Philadelphia or—or whether it goes back 200 years before that. I wanted us to be able to at least throw that information out and have everybody be aware that there’s more than myth that they first heard. And I think we’ve done that.

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AG: How has your—how has your vision evolved since the founding of SFA?

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ND: I think the—the exciting thing for me, and I don't know that this is the vision; the exciting thing for me has been to work with some of these young women. As I said, I'm very sexist and I really enjoyed getting to know some of these young women who were working on slave cookbooks and things like that because I had been able to meet some young women that I didn't know before and loved bridging the ages and I'm kind of a matriarch. So it works very well for me to be in this multi-tiered age group; I like that.

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I think that's a large part of it. The thing that I didn't envision, although I should have, was the—the professional cooks being so interested in this. I—I thought that we would get more of the food writers and the food historians and all of that, which we certainly have, but I didn't envision the other. And I'm also interested in the like the people coming from—from Mississippi College for Women who want to cook and all of that because that's very exciting to me. I helped found—that was my vision; my vision was to start that. And so to see it—that vision connect with this vision is very exciting for me because those girls that I had wanted to have a culinary school for all of the sudden were now understanding that there was a whole body of work to be done in Southern foodways. So that was—that's part of the vision—is just seeing all the pieces come together.

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AG: Did you attend the first Symposium?

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ND: You know I missed some things because some things were not on my schedule in time, and there was one thing that I think was at pre-Symposium time that I loaned my house for—for a party, but I wasn't there. But we cooked some things for it—my house here in Oxford. And then I think I missed the first—was that here or was that like in—no, that was a Board Meeting in Atlanta. I'm sorry. I think I was here for the first Symposium, yeah. **[Laughs]** But you know don't hold my feet to the fire about this. I go to about five conferences a year and they blend together I'm afraid to say.

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AG: You talked a little bit about this anyway but do you have any other specifics about your role in developing the mission of SFA and the program?

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ND: Well I wasn't allowed to touch the program. I was the—**[Laughs]** I haven't even been allowed to give a talk here, so I've been on one panel where I was allowed to talk about promoting my television show. So—so I haven't been allowed to do any programs or touch the programming, and in fact, I've had some violent disagreements with the Programming Committee. I guess the time I became the most infuriated and when I stormed and screamed was at the Barbeque Conference when there was no woman speaker—not one and only one woman, who was a manufacturer's rep on one panel. And that had me over the wall frankly because I had not been a member of the organization a long time. I mean even if we had discussed women's cakes at barbeques, because you never have a barbeque without some cakes; we should have had

some women on that program. So you know yes; I have—I was not ever allowed to participate in the program because I'm so strong. **[Laughs]**

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AG: **[Laughs]** Well shifting gears a little bit; the SFA focuses on food and culture. I was wondering what that means to you intellectually and personally.

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ND: Well I'm a little more primitive than that. I have said for years and written a number of speeches around the fact that food is a control issue. Food is the most powerful control issue there is—period. It's the first thing you do when you're born; it's the last thing you do—get to make a choice about before you die. Unless somebody insists on putting you on foods like Jeb Bush but—

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The—the power of food is as strong in the Southern culture as it is in say, Italy, France, some other cultures. There are cultures where—there are societies where food is not such a large aspect of the culture historically. But Southern food has been a large aspect of our culture and I think to a large degree because of the War Between the States or the Civil War and the Great Depression, and then World War II when until after World War II really the South didn't have a stable, stable economy. And so we—we ate a lot off of the land. And I think that gave us the power to feed ourselves, which was pretty important even if—you know this is during the Depression because the boll weevil may have gotten the cotton but it didn't eat the tomatoes, you know. And so I think food has always represented something to the South—having your own cow, having your own pig, having—you know and we're moving away from that I think with

some trepidation. And I think a lot of Southerners really are sorry that we have gotten to that point where we don't all have victory parties and whatever. When I was growing up we did.

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So food as culture is broader than just thinking of—of culture as being high-society. Culture is the entire embrace of a people within a society and it's the fascinating part about society because everything is reflected through food—who sits with who, you know the English had below the salt and above the salt at the table. And—and ours is the same way. If we look at the sitting—sit-ins and say huh; they chose the sit-ins because that was—the sit-in at restaurants, because that was where they could make a stand that would be meaningful to people and change such perceptions you know and make people understand that if you were black that if you ate off of a plate it didn't have to be washed anymore than if you were white [*Laughs*] you know—amazing.

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So yeah, food is—food is a large part of culture. It is the strongest most powerful part of culture and to understand a culture, you just have to understand its food.

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AG: You were talking about some of the traditions that seem to be—seem to be leaving. A lot of talk about Southern food is about tradition in a community. Do you think that's an accurate thing or is it more a romantic way of looking at it?

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ND: Well you know most of the people that I know—that I know personally—did not have servants in their homes for the last I mean within—my favorite former husband's stepmother

who is in her eighties and one of my dear friends, a country woman who is still cooking in her daughter's restaurant, those women had families that didn't have help in the home except the—maybe like one of them would—Kate was saying today—they didn't have any help in the home. Her mother had fourteen children and at one point someone black came to live with them. Kate didn't much remember why; she wasn't in school then so she must have been young. But the woman didn't collect any money. She just worked for room and board and bus fare to go home over the weekends.

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So and Kate said her mother did most of the cooking, so this woman must have been there to help with the children and must have needed a place to stay or she wouldn't have been—who'd need her; she wouldn't have been there.

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So it's romantic to think that there was always an abundance of food and that there was always a—and that there was always an abundance of people to prepare it. But when you had large families you could work the farm and you could feed everybody. Whether or not you had someone living with you six months of one year of your—of your family's life, because that's the only time Kate ever remembers anyone black being really employed by her family, because they were poor. They were millworkers and farmers. Kate was a millworker. Her father tried to farm and her husband tried to farm. They tried to because you know they didn't have large blocks of land.

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So I think it's—in one sense it's romantic. The real thing that was important about food was that everybody sat down to eat together. And that is the big thing that's missing in our society right now is that the time you really get intimate is your car and driving your child

someplace or when you're riding someplace with someone more than sitting down with your child over dinner. So—so that's part of it. I suspect there are some people who think about food and think about their great-grandmother's food and it was all prepared by somebody other than their great-grandmother. In my case, there wasn't anyone like that. My favorite former husband's stepmother is the one that cooked until very recently and my friend Kate still does in a restaurant, so—and they're both white. So they didn't lean on people of other cultures to do that for them.

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So that—those traditions going are too bad because I really like those meals. At the same time, I wouldn't want to give up my foie gras, you know so I—I want Southern food to stay the same way, but I want to be able to get what I want when I want it of the other food. Did that—?

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AG: Yeah. Shifting back to SFA specifically—this is the last questions about the SFA, incidentally—what are your ideas for the future of the organization in the context of what you'd like to see happen and context of—?

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ND: Well and I really—I was really the nagger on the Board I guess. I mean I nagged for oral histories. And I nagged for tape-recording all of these sessions and we're finally doing that and we—we're finally doing oral histories. But I would like to do more—more and more and more oral histories. I mean I would—if I had my way we would—we would get more grant money and get more students working on oral histories at the Low Country and you know we would do a real project like they did during the Depression. And—and I think we're really almost at that point in our economy where—where some people could get some [*Laughs*] you know—could

earn some money getting these oral histories and it would be of a real benefit to our society to get these down, so that we knew some of the things like what I was talking about with Kate and—and really understand the role of different races within the last 100 years and so forth and how people ate whether it was the same or whether it was different, understanding that oral histories are still distorted. The minute you say something it's not really true.

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But visions, I don't really have any—any visions except I'd like to hear from a broader number of—of people. I'm really kind of tired of hearing from the same people. And I'd like to have things that are more—well we're moving that way—more academics. There have been some speakers that I've just felt didn't really know their stuff. I don't want them too academic; I don't want them to read at me, but I do want people who are more knowledgeable sometimes than others. But I think we're getting there. I don't have any vision for it now because I'm not on the Board. I don't have to be on the Board. I'm not involved to the same degree. And I have my own projects that I'm working on in Charleston, two other—two other Boards that I'm working on [*Laughs*], so—so I've pulled back from this more. But this can go on without me very happily and I'm working on getting a—*a Rice Group* started in Charleston and we had a Convention there last year of—of food from the Caribbean to the South. And I'm working on getting a Charleston big event there. So I'm not—I'm—I'm letting SFA—SFA to its own resources [*Laughs*] and probably won't—will let new people take on the vision and see what they do.

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AG: Let's shift a little bit to more personal. I was wondering if you could tell us about the food of your childhood and who prepared it and—? Was there a specific ceremony around the house—?

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ND: Well my mother was a good cook when I was young but then my parents got—became divorced. And she had to work. My brother went into the hospital when he was three, and I was nine and that was a very traumatic period. And during that time my father left for Germany and the whole family was disrupted. And then my mother went back to work as soon as my brother got out of the hospital. So then I had to do the cooking a lot of the time, a lot of the shopping, my sister and I. I remember more about what I did than I do about what anybody else did [*Laughs*]. I mean I remember going to the grocery store with Bunny and buying all snacks and getting to the checkout counter and not having any meat or vegetables and having to—the humiliation of putting it all back and having to go back and get the meat and realized that we didn't have any money for snacks, you know. So I remember all that.

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We had neighborhood people who were wonderful cooks. A woman, named Lemoyne that was just down the street from us, gosh; she introduced me to greens and cornbread and biscuits and hers were really good. And—and I would eat there as much as I could; I would go over there. My stepmother, my father's wife, second wife was not a very good cook either but she was from Atlanta and then—then they lived you know in different places including in Texas. And she was much more of a Southern cook. She was more of a pot roast and—and vegetable person, but her foods didn't necessarily have a lot of flavor. [*Laughs*] She was just not interested in it I think. I think both she and my mother were at the point in—in life that they wanted to do

other things. And so I was—whenever I would taste something that was wonderful like Lemoyne’s I would remember it, and want to duplicate it and then get them to show me how—much more than that.

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We didn’t—we did eat together as a family up ‘til my teenage years but then—but then not so much. My sister and I would cook, but not so much—not so much. But I didn’t have the basic, small-town, starry-eyed home life that you hear about. That was—that was not me with the grandparents down the street and biscuits on the table. That I would have liked to have had.

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AG: So your—your starting cooking came—came obviously—. And at what point did you develop a real interest and a love for food?

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ND: Well I always loved it. And then when I was a sophomore in college, after my sophomore year in college, I went up to Cambridge that summer and lived in—in an international student house. And we all had to have different jobs and the cook got sick, and so I took over for the cook. And we all paid eighty-five cents a meal for meals and I loved it. I mean my first two nights were big mistakes. I mean I cooked things I knew, I—I thought I knew, but when multiplied by three, which is always a mistake. And so I wound up with—well the first year—night was tuna fish a-la—tuna fish casserole and a lot of these things were planned by the—by the cook before she got sick. And we didn’t have the ingredients and so I tried to do tuna fish casserole, but I multiplied everything by three and I guess I didn’t do it very well. And so there was a layer of grease and a layer of milk and a layer of flour and then the tuna fish all in the

bottom. And I stirred it altogether and made some toast and called it tuna fish a-la-king and added some frozen peas—whole peas.

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And then probably Le Sueur's because I don't think we had any freezer big enough. And then—I'm sure we didn't—the next night we made—I was trying to make meatballs and spaghetti and meatballs and an Israeli boy helped me. And I multiplied the ingredients by four but I didn't get into the body of the recipe and multiplied the body of the recipe by four. So it said make 16 meatballs, put them in the oven, so he made 16 meatballs. But they were of course four times as large as they were supposed to be. He was supposed to make 64 meatballs. And so he put them into the oven and after the designated period of time I looked and realized that I had to get them in a pan in a hurry and chop them all up and that became spaghetti with meat sauce.

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So then I continued cooking and I really did learn a lot about cooking—roast chicken and everything, the rest of that period of time, and I really loved it. I really enjoyed it. I'd come home every day—and I told my mother then that I wanted to be a cook. And my mother just was stunned and she said, "Ladies don't cook; please don't do this. Ladies don't cook. You'll have to work at night with men lifting heavy pans. Nice girls don't do this. You'll never marry a rich man," or whatever it was that she had intended for me. I never did actually. And so I just—I gave it up because she didn't ask me not to do very many things, and so I gave it up until you know ten years later when I moved to London and went to the London Cordon Bleu.

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But then I—I became a great cook at home, a great home-cook. But it wasn't—not everything was from scratch. I mean whenever I tried to make piecrust, once I made it on a running dishwasher in a small apartment and I couldn't understand why it stuck. I mean I didn't

understand anything. You know I just loved it; I didn't understand it. And I didn't understand why once my onion soup—I mean why it would be so wonderful when I caramelized my onions and another time it wouldn't you know, the difference in pans would make, and the difference in [colors] and everything. So I was really grateful when—when it happened that we moved to London and my favorite former husband and I, we went to—and I went to the London Cordon Bleu. Because that's when I really learned how to cook.

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AG: How did you transition into food writing and your television show? Tell us about that.

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ND: Well up to that time I really had never been good at anything. You know the reason I wanted to cook was because it was the only thing I had ever been good at. And prior to that time, I had hop scotched around jobs; I had been a copywriter, an advertising copywriter and I had worked for public relations firms and I had done this and I had done that. And I just translated all of those things into what I was doing later.

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But when I left the Cordon Bleu I had no—I did—I did it for myself and not for anybody else. And then we went—from the Cordon Bleu we went to Spain because my husband had left his job and we went to Majorca because he—we had a friend there and we—we needed to go for tax reasons. We needed to stay out of the country another three months or something to make the x-number of months starting with the first of the year or something. And so went to Majorca and we—we—after about five days I was in a swimming pool. And I was over at somebody's house cooking. I had made oh I think cold lemon soufflé and pork of some sort and a soup of some—a

cold soup of some sort. And then I was in the swimming pool waiting for everything to set and get finished. And someone swam over to me and said, “You know there’s a job at the best restaurant in the middle of the island.” And he said, “The food is so good; why don’t you look for a job there? The chef has left. He’s French and he couldn’t find any women to date, and so—.” The next thing I knew these two junior leaguers from New York called me and asked me—asked to interview me. And by happenstance I had gone to a restaurant the night before, a couple days before, and asked if I could stand in the kitchen and watch the chef cook. I had never done that. I mean I didn’t know how to make vegetables—time and reheat them or how he kept food going. I mean I never worked in a restaurant. And I don’t know why I said okay; but I did—I did.

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So I became the chef of this restaurant in the middle of Majorca and I did everything from scratch. I made every crepe from scratch. I made every—I mean I can’t begin to tell you how ambitious I was. And—and the restaurant really had a good reputation and—and did very well.

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AG: What was the name?

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ND: C’an Poleta—C-apostrophe-a-n and then a new word—P-o-l-e-t-a. And it was between Pollensa and Alcudia in Majorca. But of course my agreement was that we would always have reservations and that I just didn’t—be on call because the only help I had were two of the

Majorcan women who came in the morning to help me chop and help and do the dishes and maybe some—I don't remember just what right now. But I don't know.

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But anyway maybe one of the men came in later and washed them, but—but anyway I would—I was essentially in the kitchen by myself at night, so I wanted to know what was going to happen. And of course they always broke that rule and 9 o'clock would come and I would be shutting down the kitchen and some Spaniards would show up wanting you know a 10-course meal. So it was—it was a real trial. I learned a lot about organization and planning and fixing ahead and I mean I didn't know how to reheat a vegetable, because at school we made our vegetables and we ate them fresh and they were perfect. So—so I learned a lot; it was a good—I mean I didn't even know you could make crepes ahead. I had to figure that out for myself. But it was a good experience, and—and I lasted out the full season. And then we came back to the States.

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AG: And then the television show and your cookbook?

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ND: Well I had a restaurant and my husband, my favorite former husband wanted to start a restaurant, a—an antique shop out in Social Circle, Georgia, the hub between Social Circle and Covington and I agreed if I could have a restaurant. So I had a restaurant there for two years. And then someone came to me and asked me to start a cooking school at Rich's, which was a large department store. And I started a cooking school at Rich's, which had eighteen stoves—nineteen stoves really. And so I had this—it was a huge full participation school and a fabulous

experience. And I had all these people that learned how to cook from me. I just had oh, thousands of them, and I had you know maybe 100 students now that have—that—catering or running restaurants. I have a number who have written cookbooks and so forth, so it's—it's nice. It's nice to see what they're all doing—television producers and television shows and writers, etcetera, so it's nice.

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And so I did that for almost ten years. And during that time I wrote my first little pamphlet cookbook, which was called *Let's Entertain*, and I never really count that, but I should mention it. And then—so then while I was at Rich's, I did another book for a woman named Irena Chalmers to do the series of cookbooks right after they started the International Association of Culinary Professionals and that was a Southern cookbook called *Cooking of the South*—yeah, *Cooking of the South* and that was a very small paperback book. And when Jimmy Carter was elected I did a book on grits where—where I had a grits contest, but I had—I developed a recipe for—to use in grits with yogurt and making a flat soufflé and rolling it and cooking grits with other things like cream and butter and doing the *Fabulous Grits and Greens*. And it really was a changing point in the history of grits.

00:46:47

And then Shirley Corriher, who is now a very famous cookbook writer, won third prize, so she was just one of the many people that came for this little thing that I started and came for classes and then she came—she won classes and then she stayed and worked for me and—and did research for me and everything.

00:47:11

And then when Rich's closed the cooking school I had already decided to write *New Southern Cooking*. And but I did it as a desperation method—to keep myself alive and to keep

my friend, Kate, who worked for me to make enough to feed my friend, Kate. I also had a full-time radio—I mean an hour a day radio program with WCNN that bridged that period for me. I had two foster children at that time, so I had to have enough income for us all to make it. And then as it turned out, just at that time I was President of IACP so I had a lot of stuff going on. But I did do *New Southern Cooking*, which was a pivotal book because it was the first book that—that said that—that there was some change. It directly said that there was some changes going on in this broad expanse that's as big as Europe. And it wasn't intended to be a research book but I believe it was the first Southern book to have a bibliography.

00:48:28

John Egerton had one that came out soon after that; John and I both had the same publisher, and so I'm not sure of these dates at all. But we didn't know each other at the time. But both of us had realized the need to start codifying Southern food and to start gathering bibliographies of the books that we used. And that's always interested me that around the same time, we both realized it needed to be done. And I did it with what was happening new, what was integrated into—or what I was seeing that my students and my friends were doing in Southern food that was new. And he was—and he was taking care of the old.

00:49:13

So it was actually very good timing in that sense. And as I was working on *New Southern Cooking*, White Lily came to me and asked me if I would do a—a cooking show on Southern food. Though I didn't know anything about it; I really didn't want to do it because I didn't [*Sighs*] you know, know how to compete with Julia Child and my mother didn't bring me up to be a TV star either. You know I always thought you had to be pretty to be on television, a different kind of a person, and I don't see very well and so—and I'm kind of a mess. But they—they got me to do it, and so I wound up doing, all and all, 300 shows for *PBS* and *The Learning*

Channel and *The Food Network*. But *The New Southern Cooking* was the first one and it—there was a vacuum right then of cooking schools—cooking shows. Julia wasn't on and Jeff Smith was a man, you know but there were no women on. And so *New Southern Cooking* rather just stay in the seven States that were White Lily's market states—took off all over the country. And so there are chefs that are twenty-five and thirty years-old now that are coming to me and saying they watched it as children, you know and that that's what gave them the basis for their Southern cooking right now.

00:50:50

It's interesting, yeah. Yeah.

00:50:56

AG: The last question: I was wondering if you could describe a meal that you have prepared that is Southern?

00:51:07

ND: Oh my. Today's Southern or old Southern, new Southern?

00:51:12

AG: You get to pick.

00:51:14

ND: Well, I'd certainly have grits. And I think maybe I would have a cheese grits soufflé and I would have biscuits. It wouldn't be very—it wouldn't be probably technologically correct, a little starchy, but if I could have everything I wanted on the table I would have creamed corn

which is corn that's cut in slices down three ways and then cooked in butter in a pan, but it's—the cob is milked so that you have the milk of the cob and that's the *cream*. Sometimes it's called fried corn; sometimes creamed corn. And then I had—I would have greens of some sort or okra, but you know in—in the Southern—the true Southern homes that I know, meat doesn't always have a big place.

00:52:37

Mama, my favorite former husband's grandmother that lived in the—a little town near America's Georgia, used to just mostly have vegetables on the table and if there was a chicken it was one chicken for eight of us. You know it wasn't a big deal. And maybe a country ham, maybe, but so I'm not sure if I wanted a quintessentially Southern meal how much meat I would have. I might have some but then again if it was in the middle of the summer, I might not; I might just slice some tomatoes, real ripe tomatoes, and I might take some onions and chip them up over some sliced cucumbers and pour some vinegar on them, white vinegar on them, cider vinegar or white vinegar, and I might have peach cobbler, probably of some sort. And I might or might not have a chicken of some sort or—or a roast pork of some sort.

00:53:48

I'm sure I'll think of—okra of course if I could, fried okra. I'm not a big okra tomato fan. I know some people are. So that's probably what I would—if somebody was coming to see me that wanted a Southern meal that's probably what I would do—lots and lots of really good vegetables and breads and I wouldn't—I wouldn't worry about carbohydrates one bit—not one bit. I would just load on the vegetables and—and if they wanted to pass up on my biscuits and my cornbread, that would be their problem.

00:54:36

AG: That sounds wonderful. The last thing—SFA is putting together a radio show, and they’re trying to get little riffs from each person I interview like, “I’m April Grayson, I love butterbeans and you’re listening to *Cornbread Nation*. I was wondering if you could do—you could just talk off the top of your head, give your name, a food, a Southern food you love and say you’re listening—you’re listening to *Cornbread Nation*.”

00:55:11

ND: I’m Nathalie Dupree and I love biscuits, and I’m listening to *Cornbread Nation*.

00:55:20

AG: One more time and say you’re listening—.

00:55:26

AG: I’m Nathalie Dupree and I love Southern biscuits; you’re listening—.

00:55:30

[End Nathalie Dupree Interview]