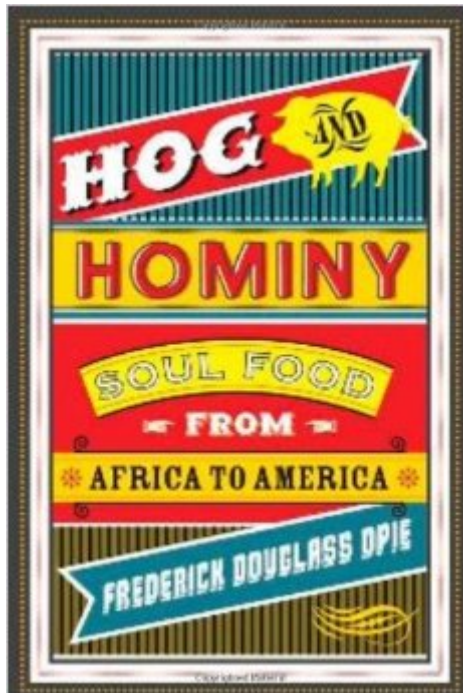


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# Hog And Hominy: Soul Food From Africa To America (Arts And Traditions Of The Table: Perspectives On Culinary History)



## Synopsis

Frederick Douglass Opie deconstructs and compares the foodways of people of African descent throughout the Americas, interprets the health legacies of black culinary traditions, and explains the concept of soul itself, revealing soul food to be an amalgamation of West and Central African social and cultural influences as well as the adaptations blacks made to the conditions of slavery and freedom in the Americas. Sampling from travel accounts, periodicals, government reports on food and diet, and interviews with more than thirty people born before 1945, Opie reconstructs an interrelated history of Moorish influence on the Iberian Peninsula, the African slave trade, slavery in the Americas, the emergence of Jim Crow, the Great Migration, the Great Depression, and the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. His grassroots approach reveals the global origins of soul food, the forces that shaped its development, and the distinctive cultural collaborations that occurred among Africans, Asians, Europeans, and Americans throughout history. Opie shows how food can be an indicator of social position, a site of community building and cultural identity, and a juncture at which different cultural traditions can develop and impact the collective health of a community.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Food scholar Frederick Douglass Opie asserts in *Hog and Hominy* that soul food is without a doubt an American expression that stems from an amalgamation of the different African foodways and was transported from across Africa to the Americas. Opie meticulously traces the development of

the soul food history from its roots, to its re-invention in the 1960s and 1970s, and finally to today's health consciousness that implicates traditional soul food cuisine an unhealthy practice. In so doing, Opie's calls into question the traditional folklore surrounding American soul food and helps the reader understand this apparently "simple concept" of soul food justifiably more as a complex and intriguing "academic field" in food studies. *Hog and Hominy* begins with the Atlantic world foodways exchange--yams, rice, stews, fried chicken, cornbread, and the use of fat--between the West African and Iberian cultures that soon finds its way aboard the Portuguese trade ships. Here the book also notes how food is identified with religious observances and special occasions that become later evidenced in American culture. The book then traces the transatlantic foodways to a confluence of Caribbean, British, Native American (especially in Virginia and Carolinas) cultures that influenced the cooking done by enslaved Africans and later freed African American slaves. With the Great Migration, where millions of African Americans left the antebellum plantation world, the book then moves from the South to the North. Here, briefly discussed is the memory of southern roots placed within the parameters of an "endurance foodways" effected from the days of the depression and the Jim Crow culture. The book then diverges into 1960s and 1970s movements where the term "soul food" received its name. It is here where Opie claims that much of today's version of soul food is blended with the cuisine found in most northern cities' Caribbean neighborhood restaurants. The book ends by looking at the critiques of soul food made by mostly radical African American health and religious movements. In *Hog and Hominy*, Opie combines historical contexts and interdisciplinary methods with oral history interviews, secondary sources, Library of Congress photographs and transcripts, and contemporary media sources with great success. However his format is uneven and inundated with the occasional recipe, excerpts, and photographs popping up here and there. Instead of augmenting the narrative, these "pop ups" rather distract from the story. Nonetheless, Opie produces a richly detailed account of the events leading up to what is known today as "soul food." *Hog and Hominy* weaves together a powerful story about how this foodway interacted with other cultures and thereby, obtaining different meanings for all.

I enjoyed this book immensely! I found that it gave excellent detail on the origins of soul food and tied it nicely from colonial America to modern day America. This book filled in the historical holes that I have found in the Food Network, Discovery Channel etc... programs about soul food and Southern cooking. The book is both a scholarly work as well as an entertaining read. I have no doubt that Dr. Opie will add "Best Selling Author" to his resume of accomplishments.

I read this for my Food and Identity in U. S. History class. It's a brief but informative look on the history of soul food and how it arrived in the colonies from Africa, influencing and being influenced by several ethnic foodways.

Arrived on a Saturday ( very surprised) almost like special delivery- like the book only problem font is very small

I had a lot of interest in the topic but found the book hard going. In the first half, Opie establishes that Africans were already familiar with American foods like corn and black-eyed peas before the slave trade really got under way. He goes on to cite (I can't say "incorporate") various sources which produce factoids about the slaves' cuisine. The first half of the book reads like a dissertation that has been adapted into a book, common enough in academia. The book does get interesting in Chapter 7, "The Chitlin Circuit." Here Opie clarifies the origin of the term "soul food" as something that grew out of the civil rights struggle, particularly in the 1960s. Opie acknowledges that the hog jowls, grits, chitlins, greens and so on represent the same food eaten by white southerners, especially poor white southerners. He quotes Amari Baraka, Pearl Bowser and many others to show their effort to claim this cuisine as a central part of African-American culture. There's a lot of info in this book (although it is too focused on New York City), but the great, sweeping STORY of black people's eating is still waiting for a writer.

Wonderful book! Full of great history!

It's an excellent read. It's particularly interesting. I originally was given the book to read or a class, but I genuinely found myself enjoying it.

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