

# sizzle

SUMMER  
2016

THE AMERICAN CULINARY FEDERATION QUARTERLY FOR STUDENTS OF COOKING



## SOUTHERN CUISINE

Chefs add their own local interpretations for an eclectic cross-section of the popular regional fare.

By Amelia Levin



Southern of Magnolias

Kelly Franz, executive chef at the acclaimed Magnolias, Charleston, South Carolina, set about to redefine Lowcountry cuisine with contemporary imprints and a focus on local, seasonal, heirloom and artisan foods.

While Lowcountry cuisine is primarily considered coastal fare from South Carolina and Georgia hallmarked by seafood stews or boils, "Charleston is known specifically for its chutneys, benne seeds, shrimp and grits, pimento cheese, crabcakes with tarragon and fried green tomatoes. They're on every menu," Franz says.

She explains that Southern cuisine is historically defined as "cooking with love," aka, butter or bacon fat. "But it has gone beyond that, with more of an emphasis on tradition, care and ingredients."

For example, Franz starts off with the typical shrimp and grits found just about anywhere in Charleston, but she elevates

the dish with a housemade lobster stock turned into a velouté with wine, sweet vermouth and butter to finish.

She always sources the freshest local collard greens she can find and the most sustainably raised local chicken for her buttermilk-marinated fried chicken with Texas hot sauce and sausage gravy.

In spring, Franz waits anxiously for the first South Carolina strawberries, pairing them with fresh radishes and other with crabcakes or a bourbon/buttermilk-marinated catfish with a Creole-inspired rémoulade sauce spiked with green Tabasco, pickled okra and celery.

Franz isn't afraid to fuse Southern dishes with Latin influences, such as in her chili-rubbed tuna with habanero hummus, pepper jack spring rolls and roasted mango salsa, all placed atop more of that Creole rémoulade. "Even if I get way out there with new ideas, I try to reel it back in with those classic Southern tastes," she says.

**opposite:** Grits, shrimp and sausage served at Magnolias, Charleston, South Carolina.



ISABELLI  
MEDIA RELATIONS