

ELLA BRENNAN

Restaurateur Extraordinaire



Ella Brennan is the matriarch of a New Orleans family that operates multiple restaurants, including Commander's Palace in New Orleans, the one that most clearly bears her imprimatur. Over her career as a restaurateur, she has made her mark with a series of fresh and innovative concepts, and still studies the restaurant business avidly, staying on the lookout for new dishes, new wines, new ways of making a better restaurant. She is still the superb teacher she has always been. Although mostly retired, she still shows up at Commander's Palace as her home is right next door.

Leah Chase has always been an inspiration to me. Now don't get me wrong – she's a lot of fun, too! I think we're both enjoying being at that age where you can say what you really think and get away with it. Not that either of us ever really bit our tongues!

If ever there was a role model, Leah is it. Whether she is teaching the neighborhood children about respecting a business establishment that is trying to make a living and supporting lots of people, or feeding and advising the leaders of the civil rights movement, or organizing citizens

to support the arts – this lady is a leader. She is the embodiment of walking the walk. She lives what she preaches and she preaches about her belief in the "common good." And that is something I wish people talked about more. This "me me me" take on life is the pits. Leah never bought in to that. She gives and gives and gives, even when she is in the midst of tough times.

I remember Leah showing up everywhere to support everyone after Katrina when she had lost everything. EVERYTHING. She just put her head down and started working on coming back. She used to joke, "I can't die

now; I owe everybody money." She is the epitome of a class act. Leah as much as anyone in this city – ever - helped bring everybody together. She did it with love, with compassion, with an occasional stern "talking to", and of course with food.

And on that subject, I so admire her as well. I love the recipe in her book that uses pickled pork with greens. Maybe it's a generational thing, but I love pickled pork. It's good with red beans too.

Just one thing, Leah, you are still everywhere and I have slowed down and I am younger than you. You're making me look bad, so – cut it out! I love ya.

– Ella Brennan

Mustard Greens with Pickled Pork and Potatoes

by Leah Chase of Dooky Chase's Restaurant

Coming up in the Depression days, Daddy always planted everything. He planted greens, okra and onions. I never bought an onion until I came to New Orleans. My Daddy supplied everyone with vegetables.

We always had food because Daddy planted it. Sometimes the vegetables were prepared without all of the seasoning meat. My mother cooked a lot with onions and she did a pretty good job with those things. She didn't have all of the fancy spices.

If you have ever grown vegetables yourself, you don't care if you grow another one in your life. Farming has got to be the hardest thing in the world. Having grown vegetables does make you more conscious of the quality of the things you are buying, though. There is nothing like fresh vegetables.

Needless to say, I know of many ways to cook vegetables. This recipe could help round out a meal or become the main attraction itself!

INGREDIENTS

2 lb. pickled pork, cubed
2 qt. water
4 bunches mustard greens
Water to cover greens
½ cup chopped onions
1 whole red pepper
1 bay leaf
2 medium white potatoes,
quartered

DIRECTIONS

Place pickled pork in a pot and cover with water. Let boil until meat is tender. While meat is boiling, remove all large stems from greens. Wash thoroughly, changing water two or three times.

Place greens in large pot, just covering with water. Bring to a boil; let boil for 10 minutes. Drain greens,

saving 2 cups of the liquid. Cut greens three or four times. Return greens to pot; add onions, whole red pepper, bay leaf, the potatoes and the 2 cups of liquid. Remove meat from water and add meat to the greens with one cup of liquid from the pot. Cook for 30 minutes until potatoes are tender and all seasonings have blended.

Note: No salt is added because pickled pork is quite salty. By adding the cup of liquid from the meat, an ample amount of salt is provided as well as enough "pot liquor" (the name used for the liquid in which the greens are cooked). Yield: 6 servings.

