

# NORMA'S APPALACHIAN COOKBOOK

A century of flavor, from the hollow to the heart of the home. Celebrating 100 years of the hands that fed us.

Salt of the earth and sweets from the ridge. A collection of mountain heritage in honor of Norma's 100th year.

*In honor of*

Norma Thompson

(1926 - 2017)



Will Hollingsworth



In the heart of Philippi, West Virginia, history isn't found in books—it's found in the weathered timbers of the covered bridge stretching across the Tygart Valley River. A silent witness to the first land battle of the Civil War, that bridge stood as a sturdy anchor for the town long before Norma was born there in 1926. For Norma and her husband, it was more than a landmark; it was the gateway to home. It was the place where, on humid West Virginia summer afternoons, they would lead their grandchildren across the wooden planks, the shadows of the rafters dancing over stories of a century gone by.

This collection is a tribute to that same enduring spirit. Just as the bridge has weathered the currents of time, Norma's recipes served as the steady foundation of our family. Within these pages, the "pinches" and "handfuls" of mountain tradition are finally caught on paper to honor what would have been her 100th year. From the crisp edges of a buttermilk biscuit to the slow-simmered comfort of soup beans, these dishes carry the scent of those Philippi summers and the warmth of a woman whose love was as permanent as the timber and stone of her home. May these recipes guide you back to her table, no matter how far you've traveled.



A close-up photograph of a white ceramic bowl filled with a hearty soup. The soup contains numerous light-colored beans, chunks of reddish-brown meat, and translucent onions. A thick, golden-brown slice of cornbread is placed on top of the soup. The bowl is set on a woven placemat. The text "SOUP BEANS" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font.

# SOUP BEANS

*In Appalachia, "soup beans" are always pinto beans. They aren't a side dish; they are the main event.*

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## Ingredients:

- **1 lb** Dried Pinto Beans (sorted and rinsed)
- **1** Ham hock (or a generous "chunk" of salt pork)
- **1 tbsp** Bacon grease (the secret to the shine)
- **Water** to cover (plus 2 inches)
- **Salt and pepper** to taste (careful with the salt if the ham is salty)



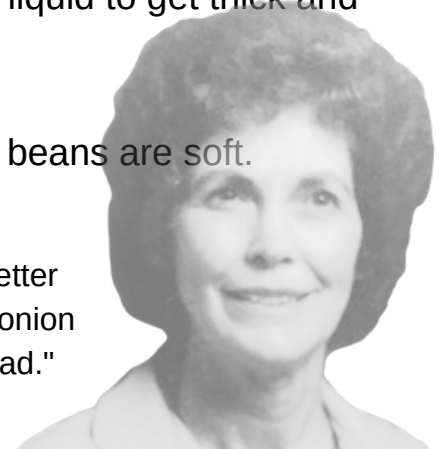
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## Instructions:

1. The Soak: Cover the beans with water and soak overnight. Or, if you're in a hurry (the "quick soak"), boil them for 2 minutes, then let them sit covered for an hour.
2. The Simmer: Drain the soak water. Add the ham hock and bacon grease. Cover with fresh water.
3. The Wait: Bring to a boil, then drop to a low simmer. Let them cook for 3 to 4 hours. You want the skins to start to "pop" and the liquid to get thick and creamy.

The Finish: Only add your salt at the very end, once the beans are soft.

**Norma's Touch:** "A bowl of soup beans is better on the second day, served with a slice of raw onion on the side and a crumbled piece of cornbread."





# CORN BREAD

*In West Virginia, putting sugar in cornbread is a "fighting offense." This recipe uses a hot cast-iron skillet to get that famous, crunchy "lace" crust on the bottom.*

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## Ingredients:

- **2 cups** White or Yellow Cornmeal (stone-ground if you can find it)
- **1/2 cup** All-purpose flour (just to hold it together)
- **1 tsp** Baking soda
- **1 tsp** Salt
- **1 1/2 cups** Real Buttermilk (the "clabbered" kind)
- **1** Large egg
- **2 tbsp** Bacon grease (for the skillet)



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## Instructions:

1. **The Pre-Heat:** Put the bacon grease in a 10-inch cast-iron skillet and place it in the oven. Pre-heat the oven (and the skillet!) to 425°F. You want that grease screaming hot.
2. **The Batter:** Whisk the dry ingredients. Stir in the buttermilk and egg until just combined. Don't overwork it.
3. **The Sizzle:** Carefully pull the hot skillet out. Pour the batter into the hot grease. It should sizzle—that's the crust forming!

**The Bake:** Bake for 20–25 minutes until the top is golden and the edges are pulling away from the iron.