

By
Deb
Lucks

BACK ON THE FARM, THERE WAS AN APPLE TREE JUST OUT OF REACH OF THE HOG PEN. I USED TO THROW THE APPLES TO THE HOGS.



MIZ HATTIE'S SOUTHERN-STYLE CHARACTER

HATTIE HESS IS THE FOUNDER, ENTREPRENEUR AND BIG PERSONALITY BEHIND MIZ HATTIE'S SOUTHERN BBQ STALL IN THE HUDSON VALLEY FOOD HALL IN BEACON. SHE AND HER HUSBAND ERICH SERVE UP A MENU BASED ON THE FLAVORS SHE GREW UP WITH BACK HOME IN NORTH CAROLINA. HER FAMILY SHARECROPPED AND SHE IS ONE OF NINE CHILDREN.

I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A COOK. I DIDN'T COME THIS FAR AND WORK THIS HARD NOT TO MAKE IT. IT'S MY DREAM.

ERICH QUIT HIS DAY JOB TOO.



I'M MR. HATTIE NOW. I DO THE MEAT SMOKING.

NOT EVERY BBQ JOINT CAN BOAST AN EXECUTIVE CHEF ON THE CREW. OF COURSE THERE'S MORE TO THE FOOD BUSINESS THAN FOOD.

HATTIE'S THE BEST GREETER. WE MOVED HER UP TO THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE.



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I WAS THE ONE IN THE KITCHEN WITH MAMA-- WATCHING WITH BIG EYES.

EVERY HARVEST, HER DAD AND THE OTHER FARMERS WOULD HOLD A "PIG PICKING" THAT'S HOW SHE LEARNED TO SET UP COALS.

Hey, lady!

BUT THE FOOD'S IMPORTANT ALSO!

YOU DON'T PUT THE FISH IN THE BASKET. YOU PUT THE BASKET IN THE OIL AND SLIDE THE FISH IN. SOUTHERN PEOPLE ARE FUNNY ABOUT THEIR FISH. THEY WANT IT TO BE CRISP.

I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICANS TO INTEGRATE AG COX JR. HIGH SCHOOL. I CAN TELL YOU THE RACISM I ENCOUNTERED THERE WAS NOTHING LIKE WHAT I ENCOUNTERED AT THE CULINARY INSTITUTE.

I SAW THAT I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO DO IT ON MY OWN.

ON HER OWN HAS MEANT WORKING TWO JOBS: TEACHING SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS AT JOHN JAY HIGH SCHOOL AND CATERING-- DOING FESTIVALS AND COOK-OFFS FROM TEXAS TO NYC. THIS YEAR, SHE RETIRED FROM TEACHING.

I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO ENJOY IT. (FULL DISCLOSURE: I DID).

