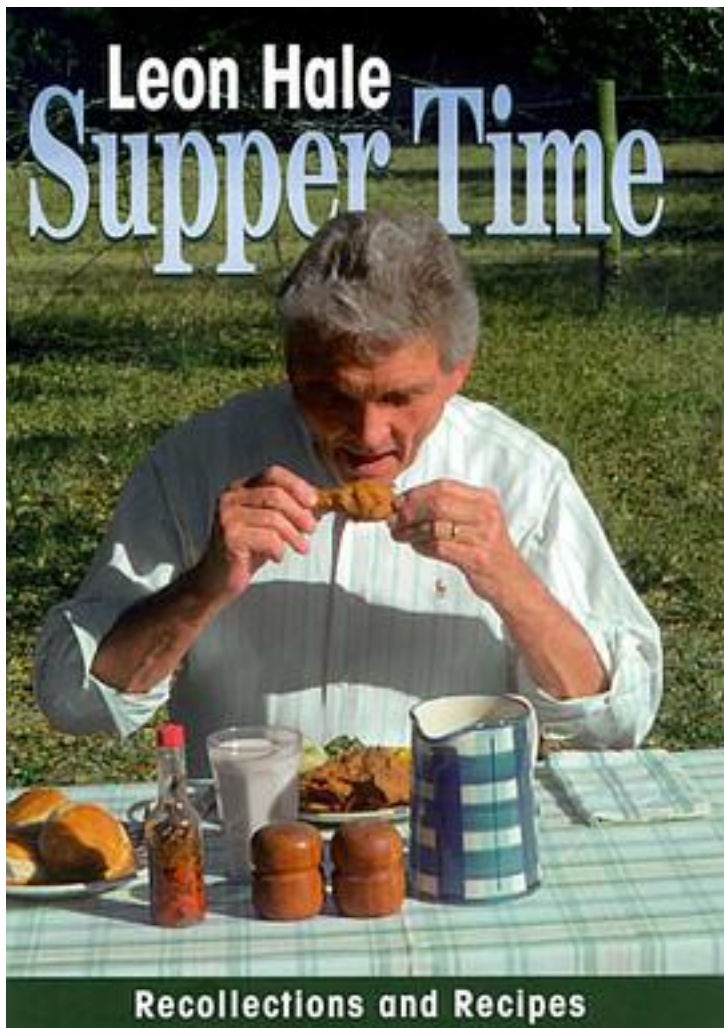


Supper Time



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From the beloved Houston Chronicle columnist comes this delightful and

heart-warming stroll through the kitchens of his life. In relating his love affair with the food that has sustained him for more than three-quarters of a century, Leon Hale recreates for us the tables of Texas and the South enjoyed by our parents and grandparents -- and if we are lucky, ourselves. They were filled with solid, nurturing fare like chicken and dumplings, cornbread with Jersey butter, chicken-fried steak, green beans glistening with bacon drippings, and homemade fried pies -- tables glowing with the memory of good times and good friends. America's way of eating has evolved, of course, and Hale's passion for food has evolved with it. Today his pleasures run to more healthful fare: jalapeno turkey burgers on whole grain buns, blue corn dinner pancakes with black beans, the world's best sweet pepper omelette. From the day in Bryan when he invented blackened chicken to his bachelor apartment adventures making pot roast and "the Soupwich" -- a lunch-time staple -- Hale has been a producer of unusual dishes. But he is only an occasional cook. For the most part he has been on the consuming end, as he recalls some of the beloved figures whose signature dishes he still longs for: his mother-in-law, "Mimi" Vick, and her Christmas ambrosia; Mary Elizabeth Adams and her world-class fried chicken; Made Moore's guacamole salad accompanied by fried Matagorda oysters -- a holiday tradition. Or Mary Helen Hale's Texas cheese dip, which became the Hale family's all-purpose comfort food. With memories of cooks who learned their craft in the late 1800s, Supper Time serves as a kind of food history of twentieth-century Texas. Forgotten staples of the 1920s like chow-chow give way to Forties' Spare sandwiches, Sixties' backyard barbecues -- where neighbors would piggy-back a pork chop or two on the grill if Hale was cooking -- and eventually to today's low fat but satisfying dishes like turkey breast meat loaf with skinny mashed potatoes. This is an intimate, unforgettable portrait of a man, his friends, family, and his time, full of personal preferences, brimming with memory and affection, enriched by family recipes, old and new. And Hale tells his story with the self-deprecating humor, wit, and grace for which he is celebrated.

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