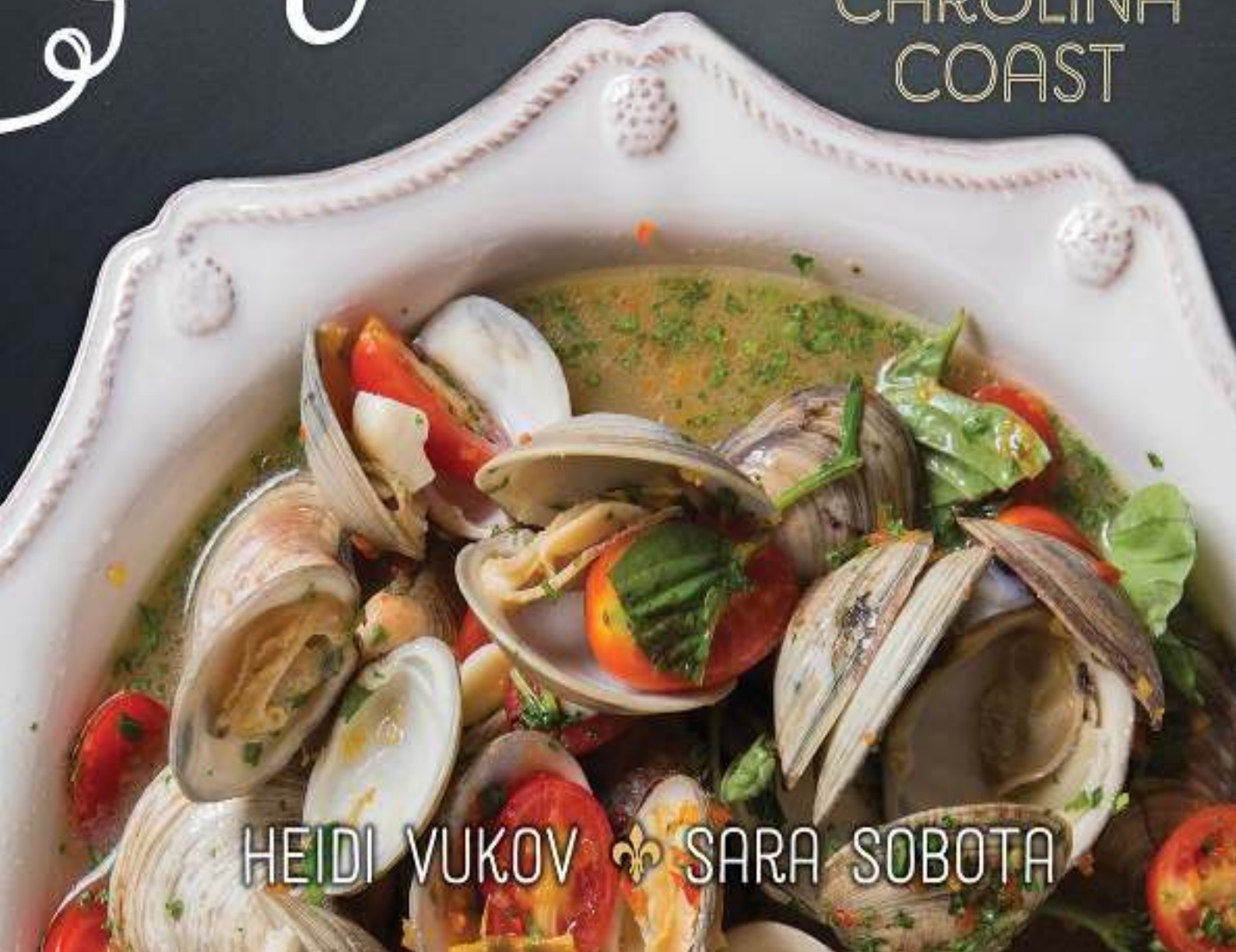


Bonjour,
My' all!

Heidi's
**FUSION
COOKING**
on the
SOUTH
CAROLINA
COAST



HEIDI VUKOV ❁ SARA SOBOTA

BONJOUR, Y'ALL

HEIDI'S FUSION COOKING ON THE SOUTH
CAROLINA COAST

HEIDI VUKOV & SARA SOBOTA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SCOTT SMALLIN EXCEPT AS NOTED OTHERWISE.



BONJOUR, Y'ALL

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Digital Edition 1.0

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This book is dedicated to my husband, Gary, and our children, Matt, Bryan, Alex, and Ben, for their understanding that we did not have traditional weekends and holidays like most families, knowing that those times were about serving others first. Although the days before Thanksgiving and Christmas were always the busiest days in the restaurant, we, as a family, were still able to pull off an enjoyable meal to share together and make wonderful memories.—HV

To my husband, Chris, for enduring the hours I spent huddled over the computer mumbling about cranberry rye bread, and pastries; for his love of food; and for his support of my writing. Also to our boys, Bryce, Alex, and Aidan, who became quite fond of the frequent trips to “Heidi’s,” where they always enjoyed a special treat.—SS

Bonjour, Y'all

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HISTORY OF CROISSANTS BISTRO & BAKERY



“Bonjour, y’all!” This popular slogan for Croissants Bistro & Bakery in Myrtle Beach, South

Carolina, encapsulates an unlikely pairing of two distinct culinary traditions. European cuisine and Southern home cooking seem at first to be strange bedfellows—are they serving coq au vin or biscuits and gravy?—yet diners quickly discover how this restaurant blends the best of both cultures to a savory union. Delights such as crab beignets, gazpacho with shrimp, and fruit-filled crepes reflect Croissants’ success in combining the elegance and finesse of the French palate with the hospitality and warmth of the Southern kitchen. Throw in an award-winning European bakery, where gorgeous wedding cakes dot the shelves and delicate pastries fill the cases, and you’ve got Croissants.

So how did this fusion fare evolve? The answer lies in the creative vision of Heidi Vukov, owner and operator of Croissants. The Pennsylvania native traveled south in 1992 with the intention of making Myrtle Beach her home, and she never looked back. Her twenty-year-old restaurant is a study in experimentation, inspiration, and passion for food, and its journey has in many ways paralleled the evolution of the Myrtle Beach area itself. Heidi’s knowledge of and enthusiasm for ingredients and their innovative preparation is matched only by her love for the lowcountry lifestyle and the people of the South Carolina coast. Croissants has progressed through multiple manifestations over the years—a ladies’ lunch spot, a European bakery, a fusion bistro—and in each stage of the restaurant’s history, Heidi has offered a dining experience that’s just a little bit different . . . surprising, elegant, delicious.

In the typical combination of business acumen and serendipity that has marked the progress of her restaurant, Heidi embarked on a new mission in 2009 to sharpen Croissants’ focus on lowcountry and European fusion fare. Over the subsequent five years, the restaurant has won honors including the 2011 South Carolina Restaurateur of the Year award, the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence, and the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce awards for Small Business of the Year and Business Innovation. In a perfect pairing of homage to traditional European and Southern cuisine with an eye toward eclectic, homegrown twists and tastes, Croissants’ menu and ambiance reflects Heidi’s intention to take the Myrtle Beach bistro into the next culinary dimension.

This book, then, is a celebration of diversity in cooking. The recipes demonstrate how a time-honored ingredient can be shaken up a bit, paired with a new taste, and enhanced with a different cooking style. The dishes reflect a sincere respect for the land and sea of the lowcountry with a nod to European tradition, and they offer a peek into Heidi’s mind, heart, and palate.

It’s time now to throw open the French doors, walk out on the verandah, and find out exactly what she’s got cooking.



A TASTE OF THE OLD COUNTRY

Heidi's talent and passion for baking originated in the roots of her family's history. Her father emigrated from Germany as a young man, leaving his family behind, to come to America, where he would marry and start his own family. As a young girl, Heidi traveled to Germany often, where she would accompany her grandmother on morning trips to bakeries and pastry shops. In the afternoon, Oma would make fancy desserts for afternoon tea such as fruit tarts, Black Forest Torte, or chocolate rolls. Heidi also traveled with relatives through France and Austria, sampling the beautiful desserts and experiencing baking and preparation methods firsthand. It was through her European childhood experiences that Heidi fell in love with the art of pastry.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the pond, baking was just as rewarding and exciting in the kitchens of her American relatives. Heidi's grandmother in rural Pennsylvania, who had endured the Great Depression, taught Heidi economy and resourcefulness in baking as she churned out fruit pies and chocolate cakes with fluffy icing using local, homegrown ingredients. "We never wasted anything in our baking process," Heidi says. "We used what we had—seasonal fruits, fresh butter—and treated those ingredients with respect, because there was no going to the store to get more."

The diversity in baking styles became the foundation for Heidi's talent and creativity in the kitchen.



Photo courtesy of Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce

A RISKY MOVE

Heidi left her home in Pennsylvania and headed to Myrtle Beach in 1992, spurred by a love of the ocean and the lowcountry lifestyle. It was a romantic move in some ways—she pictured daily beach walks and serene sunrises—yet Heidi also brought with her a clear vision for her future and an ambitious business plan. In the early 1990s, Myrtle Beach was a popular regional tourist destination, but it hadn't achieved the national spotlight; no chain restaurants had arrived, and most dining spots were family run, offering traditional Southern fare. Recognizing the area's growing popularity, Heidi speculated that Myrtle Beach was ripe with potential for culinary growth. In this land of buttermilk biscuits and pancake houses, she envisioned a European café and bakery where people would surrender their grits in favor of a savory cheese Danish.

But doubts materialized during Heidi's first months in town. Though she was a highly talented baker and an aspiring entrepreneur, she was also a single mom with two kids in a small Southern area. Who, she wondered, would want to invest in a newly relocated female (from the North!) with so little established success?

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