



GUMBO

From the kitchen of Minty Jeffrey, ColorsNW co-founder

(An adaptation of the gumbo recipe by gospel legend Mahalia Jackson, as published in the Los Angeles Times' California Cookbook)

INGREDIENTS (Makes 10-12 servings)

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| Oil | 4 cloves garlic, crushed |
| 4 large blue crabs | 2 lbs chicken |
| 4 lbs shrimp | (wings and backs work well) |
| 1 lb cooked ham,
cut in 1" cubes | 2 (10 oz) packages frozen okra,
thawed OR 1½ lbs fresh okra |
| 1 lb link sausage, sliced | (optional) |
| 1 lb salt pork, cut in ½" cubes | ¼ cup sugar |
| 2 (1 lb, 12oz) cans whole tomatoes | ¼ cup parsley flakes |
| 4 bay leaves, crumbled | Salt to taste |
| 2 large onions, diced | Pepper to taste |
| 2 large green bell peppers, diced | Hot cooked long-grain rice |

DIRECTIONS

CLEAN CRABS, discarding spongy substance in main shell, reserving meaty portions. Clean shrimp, reserving shells. Place shrimp shells in deep saucepan with water to cover generously and simmer 30 minutes or longer to make a broth.

POUR OIL INTO HEAVY SKILLET to a depth of 1/8". Heat and add ham, sausage, and salt pork. Saute until lightly browned, stirring occasionally. Pour meat mixture into large kettle and add 1 can of tomatoes and enough broth, drained from shrimp shells, to cover generously. Add crumbled bay leaves, cover and simmer for approximately 30 minutes.

HEAT 2 TABLESPOONS MORE OIL in same skillet and add onions, green bell peppers and garlic. Saute until lightly browned, stirring occasionally. Add vegetable mixture and chicken parts to kettle (gumbo pot) and simmer 30 minutes longer.

IF DESIRED, HEAT 2 TABLESPOONS OIL in another heavy skillet, add okra and cook, stirring often, until it is lightly browned and loses its stickiness, about 30 minutes. Add shrimp to okra and saute 3-4 minutes longer, or until shrimp turns pink. Stir in 2 tablespoons sugar and parsley. Combine seafood and okra in gumbo pot, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve over hot rice in deep soup bowls.

A FEW NOTES ABOUT GUMBO:

- ▶ People from different regions of the Gulf Coast make gumbo differently; there is absolutely no "right" way to make gumbo, although any good pot of gumbo will beg the taster to differ.
- ▶ Some cooks use a roux (a thickening agent of flour and butter) for the gumbo base and some don't. Typically, Creole gumbo involves the use of roux and traditional Cajun gumbo does not.
- ▶ All gumbo and jambalaya aficionados will say the key is the rice. It must be of very high quality and must be long grain (and lawd, please no instant!)

THE READING ROOM

'Bur Bur and Friends'

Reading inspires get-up-and-go in kids of color

Welcome to the world of Bur Bur. In this award-winning new children's book series "Bur Bur & Friends," young readers wander through a potpourri of adventurous outdoor activities with either Bur Bur and his family or Bur Bur's multihued friends and their families. The books offer an earnest look at biracial families from a child's point of view: In "Bur Bur's Fishing Adventure," young Bur Bur sets out on a fishing excursion with his daddy, who is Caucasian. Near the end of the tale, father and son deliver their hard-earned prize to Bur Bur's African-American mom, and the sweet family delights in the day's catch.

In early 2007, Farmer's Hat Productions – a Minnesota-based publishing company – released the multicultural young-reader series with three books, all featuring Bur Bur: "Bur Bur's Fishing Adventure," "Bur Bur's Boating ABC's" and "Bur Bur Throws out the First Pitch." Last November, another "friend," Anna, and another book, "Anna Goes Hiking," were added to the collection.

Farmer's Hat Productions was born out of a need experienced by two mothers of young biracial boys. Former stockbroker-turned-stay-at-home mom

JoAnne Pastel and friend Kakie Fitzsimmons were "unable to find books that encouraged children of all ethnicities to participate in an active lifestyle."

Curly-haired Bur Bur is the result, and the books exude warmth and real personality. Modeled after Pastel's son who is nicknamed "Bur Bur," the series' characters are reminiscent of the type of kids you'd find on the playground of many inner-city schools. In terms of race and ethnicity, Bur Bur's friends represent the changing face of "diversity" in our communities. However, the traditional construction of Bur Bur's parents (and Anna's, too), models the "nuclear family" ideal, with one mommy and one daddy; thus, they are less representative of the many diverse forms of families children know today. Perhaps that topic will be explored in a future book, and with a future friend.

Pastel and Fitzsimmons are in the process of expanding their line to include other products such as toys, music and software, all featuring Bur Bur's diverse friends who cheerfully promote self-esteem and healthy eating habits through recreation and outdoor exploration.

The hardcover, fully illustrated books retail for \$14.95 each and can be purchased through the company website: www.burburandfriends.com.

■ Carolyn J. WRIGHT

