

In The Works

News from The Kitchen Sisters

October 2005:

Things are a little different around here at the moment Kitchen Central. Along with working on a new cycle of Hidden Kitchen stories for NPR's Morning Edition, we are about to embark on our first nationwide book tour for our first ever book, "Hidden Kitchens: Stories, Recipes and More from NPR The Kitchen Sisters".

There we were, in November 2004, minding our own kitchen business, trying to hit our weekly deadlines for our Hidden Kitchen Friday morning stories, when writer, Sam Freedman did a story about the series for the NY Times.

The world of publishing took an interest and the next thing we knew, less than 8 months later, we had written a book. And produced a 3 cd audiobook, all inspired by the off-beat, historic, unusual, heartbreaking, beautiful and eccentric kitchen stories we've been collecting for the last two years.

Along with gathering interviews, oral histories, music and archival audio, like we do for the radio documentaries, we, the royal we, (The Kitchen Sisters are more than two women and a microphone), we're really a collaborative--use acknowledgment line here) got to dig up some of the most intriguing photographs and graphics, there are over 100 images in the book, and share the recipes that go with the stories we've been telling. There are some 30 of them to impress your family and neighborhood with. Maybe you want to attempt the ham balls, clam balls and speed balls that grace NASCAR kitchens, or you would rather make the Wild Rice Hot Dish, the casserole at the crossroads where Minnesota meets Ojibwe, or perhaps it's the sweet tea recipe made in the secret civil right kitchen of Georgia Gilmore, or forager Angelo Garro's recipe for Sicilian Poached Eggs.

Memphis, Tennessee:

We chose to start our book tour in Memphis, Tennessee, because it is sonic ground zero for The Kitchen Sisters and the source of much of the inspiration of our earlier national collaboration, Lost & Found Sound. Three of our most cherished pieces are about some of the sonic pioneers that come from there, Sam Phillips and the Memphis Recording Service: We Record Everything, Anywhere, Anytime, R.A.Coleman's Electronic Memories, and WHER – 1000 Beautiful Watts.

After we had made our travel arrangements it turns out that we had picked the 50th anniversary of launch of WHER. So, our book event at [Davis Kidd Book Store](#) will also be a celebration of the women of the first all-girl radio station in the nation in October 1955.

A book tour.

Sweet Jesus. What should we wear? You don't have to think about that kind of thing when you're in radio. That's a very behind the scenes medium. Not a lot of visuals. Most of the people we encountered were leaning over a blazing pit roasting Boston Butt at midnight in Kentucky, or poling a canoe through a ricing lake at dawn on the reservation. I don't think they

noticed our clothes. Just the microphones that followed their every move for hours on end as they cooked harvested and spoke. They thought we were insane, especially when we tried to record the sound of rice, but they humored us, and we have these radio stories, and now a book and cd set to bring back to them that hopefully captures some of the amazing stories they were gracious enough to share and entrust us with.

Nikki will probably wear a scarf. We met some 20 years ago, and I can count the times on two hands I've seen her without one. If you come see us at a bookstore, if you're looking to talk to Nikki, look for the one in the scarf. Me, I like boots. And lipstick.

And sound. And food. And the people who create both. And we're going to celebrating all that as we head across America reading from the book, playing Frances McDormand's glorious rendering and the stories from NPR that inspired this whole Hidden Kitchen project.

We hope you'll hook up with us somewhere along the way. About a thousand people nationwide had a hand in shaping this project with us, sharing a story, family photograph. a recipe, a hot tip or lead. How to thank you all. We met a lot of you in the course of collecting, but a lot of you called the Hidden Kitchen hotline at NPR or emailed with your hidden kitchen messages and we were never face to face and we would like to thank you in person. The rest of you, it's time you pony up. We're starting a new season of stories on Morning Edition, so it's never to let to tell us about a tiny kitchen culture only you know about. We'll be traveling with our microphone, so come tell us.

AUDIOBOOK

Did we mention that the wonderful, fiercely intelligent, fiercely funny Academy Award Winning Actress, Frances McDormand, who loves public radio as much as we do, narrates our Hidden Kitchen AudioBook. It's an audio book with a twist. A hybrid project. Audio Book meets Radio meets a journey searching for the soul of America through its food. We loved listening to her, learned so much from watching her work, and one day we'll have to put an outtake or two on the site so you can hear some of our favorite off her off the grid readings.

Davia Nelson & Nikki Silva
The Kitchen Sisters