



"It's difficult to think anything but pleasant thoughts while eating a homegrown tomato." - Lewis Grizzard

Down here in the South, we not only sound different from the rest of the wide world, but we use words and phrases that do not make a whole heck of a lot of sense. And that's one of the things I like about it the most.

We don't just sit, we "plop." If it's crooked, well, it's actually "catawampus." If someone has a hard time letting go of a grudge, they're "hanging in there like a hair on a biscuit." We pull out the "good china" for guests and the "everyday china" is just as nice. We love "occasional chairs" for extra guests that always show up at the last minute. Hot is a universal word, "screaming hot" belongs just to us. We "sit and stay a spell" and if you're "madder than a hornet's nest," we don't just ask what's on your mind, we say go ahead, "spit it out" already. If someone can't rub two nickels together, well, he's "poor to tow it." And no matter what, when some things will never change, oh well, it's "any way you slice it."

But my personal, all time, favorite Southern word, without, a doubt, is pickin'.

See for the rest of the world, picking is simply just a verb that has a lot of various meanings. For moms, it's something we do every day; constantly picking up after all those who live with us so we can see the floor in order to sweep it. For siblings, picking means knowing which buttons to push and how long we can keep on pushing them before getting a major butt kicking. Guitar players can pick a lick and young children have never met a dandelion they

couldn't help but pick.

Only for us, it's not just a verb, but an experience, a way of life. Something generations can, and still do, together, as a family. And it also incorporates my second all time favorite thing about the South; Southern home grown vegetables (like Lewis, tomatoes are my absolute favorite.)

Growing up, every summer, we would go pickin' in my grandfather, Papa's, garden outside of Athens, GA. At the time, his garden seemed as big as Sanford Stadium, but now, if I were to go back, it would be what it is, and was at the time –just a small slice of space no bigger than the carport behind it that my family all used to sit and rock on and watch the cars go by. But just as loved.

I haven't been back to Colbert in 20 years, since Papa passed away. I guess I'm a little scared to go back and check. No one wants to go back and find weeds and dead grass where tiny treasures and childhood memories once grew. But if I did go back with my girls, I would hope to still find all of those lusciously dripping, vibrant-colored tomatoes, red onions, green peppers, yellow squash, peaches, plums, okra and zucchini growing out from the same tilled up dirt . . . just like the ones all those years ago that I'd wrestle off the vine and bring into the kitchen with pride and dirty fingers.

It saddens me when I think about how they never had the opportunity to see Papa's garden and all of that love, but they have been blessed spending their summers here traveling and picking their way up and down HWY 21 along the barrier islands, their buckets full and their hearts happy. They are teenagers now, but we still go picking at Dempsey's and Barefoot Farms (and now the Pasture Shed Farm), tasting as we go the love in the simple things that can grow from a single vine and into a lasting memory.

Now it's your turn; y'all to get on out there and see what you can find. It's not only a smorgasbord for your taste buds but a bright and beautiful mosaic to your eyes, as well. As with Monet and his gardens in Giverny, we Southerners are equally inspired by the summer fruits and vegetables that spring forth from every field, farm stand, and family gathering across our region for miles and miles, or wherever our roots call us back to.

Tis' the Season

Written by Laura Packard
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Because, quite simply, we are to our roots like the loveliest homegrown tomato is to the heartiest of vine. Connected, nourished and strengthened through the generations before us. Any way you slice it, it doesn't get any better than that.

Happy Pickin'!