Blood in the Barbecue?

Food and Faith in the American South

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Anyone growing up in the American South, or even a visitor just traveling through the region, knows that barbecue and Dixie go together like honey and flies. No other food is so distinctively southern, as obvious in the signs seemingly everywhere for barbecue, or simply BBQ, posted on billboards, the sides of buildings, and menus of restaurants, cafes, and honkytonks scattered from Mississippi to Virginia. By barbecue, I mean mainly pork (but it can include beef and chicken) cooked slowly and basted often with carefully prepared sauces; hence the word as southerners use it refers both to the food and its style of preparation. Anything less is not barbecue; indeed, southerners bristle when outsiders casually talk of barbecuing but really mean just grilling burgers or throwing some chicken legs on a burner. To defame the word barbecue in this latter way is not just a sign of ignorance, but a violation of a sacred regional norm.

In this chapter, I look at barbecue as a deeply embedded symbol in southern culture. Food symbols are important in any culture; more than just an object of curiosity or taste, they are bound up with a people's way of life, their deepest values and identities. That being the case, food symbols inevitably are implicated in religious and political matters. In fact, I shall argue that barbecue—and especially barbecue pork—is of crucial symbolic significance for the South, for both its unity of experience and cultural distinctiveness as a region.

BARBECUE AS SYMBOL

Why single out pork barbecue? It could be argued that barbecue is a national food today, particularly at truck stops across the country. Yet it is also true that regional preferences remain deeply embedded when it comes to the choice of meat: pork is preferred east of the Mississippi, beef in the cattle country and in the West (Fabricant 1996). And nowhere is there as much variety in eating pork as found in the South. Southerners like pork fixed in endless ways, be it chicken-fried pork chops, cracklins or pork rinds, pickled pigs' feet and snouts, sausage, ham, or bacon, but mainly it's pork barbecued—whether chopped or pulled or sliced or made into hash—that they like the most. Indeed, hash in many southern towns has lost its generic meaning as a type of food; the term refers simply to a pork dish served on rice, alongside a bountiful supply of slaw and pickles. And then there are ribs. Mouth-watering ribs basted with a home-made sauce and dry rubbed to seal in the juices, cooked with dry, cool smoke—for this there is no substitute this side of heaven.

Like any food that becomes so much a part of the culture, pork in the South is more than just the meat of choice. It's a fundamental symbol whose meanings penetrate deep into the region's way of life. Evidence for this is apparent even in the sheer number and types of signs for pigs, in one form or another, found all over the South. Well-known observer of southern culture, sociologist John Shelton Reed of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, writes:

> For years I've kept a mental log of barbecue joint signs. I've seen pigs reclining, running, and dancing; pigs with bibs, with knives and forks, with crowns and scepters. I've seen pigs as beauty contest winners, pigs in Confederate uniforms, and pigs in cowboy hats (one with a banjo). I've seen Mr. and Mrs. Pig dressed for a night on the town, and Mr. and Mrs. Pig as American Gothic. But I've never seen pigs like I saw in Memphis. Pigs in chess hats and volunteer firemen's helmets. A pig in a Superman suit rising from the flames. A pig reclining in a skillet; another on a grill, drinking beer. Two pigs basting a little gnomish person on a spit, and (on the T shirts of a team called the Rowdy Southern Swine) a whole trainload of partying pigs. It's a hard call, but my favorite was probably some pigs with wings and haloes, from a team called Hog Heaven. (Reed 1995, 148)

Pigs are extraordinarily versatile: they can be dressed in popular garb to fit any audience, working class, middle class, or upper class, no matter how formal or informal the occasion. The animal takes on almost totemic proportions as anyone knows who has ever heard University of Arkansas Razorback football fans chant, calling the hogs—Wooooo000000000000! Pig! Suuuuuuuuueeeeeeeeeeeee! And like any symbol as pervasive as this one, it serves to bring southerners together around celebrations and common activities. Few other places in the South enjoy as much joviality, sociality, and sharing as do those places where pig symbols are displayed. Like in any liminal moment or setting, old boundaries tend to lose force and a new basis of social solidarity emerges. To quote John Shelton Reed (1995, 47) again, "A good barbecue joint may be the one

place you'll find Southerners of all descriptions—yuppies, hippies, and cowboys, Christians and sinners, black and white together."

Of course, Reed is speaking about barbecue in the New South where increasing numbers of southerners (both old-timers and new comers) find a pig sign more acceptable than a Dixie flag. Southerners of late have been hunting for a new regional emblem and the pig ranks high on that list. The fact that pigs and barbecue have all gone mainstream in recent times helps—Memphis has its World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest; Hillsboro, North Carolina, its annual Hillsboro Hog Day; Climax, Georgia, its Climax Swine Time; and not to be overlooked, there's the Chitlin Strut in Salley, South Carolina. These aren't just commercial ventures to attract tourists, efforts at trading on southern tradition to hungry outsiders (though southerners aren't adverse to making a little money on it); they are symbolic markers of sorts, reminding a changing, expanding world of the continuing importance of barbecue. The fact that southern barbecue is now exported to other regions of the country reinforces the need for dramatizing its symbolic presence and significance within the homeland. If nothing more, it reminds people who live in the South and those who grew up there of a reality that borders on the timeless. Upscale magazines like Southern Living do their part as well to package barbecuing as a southern fine art. These magazines regularly carry recipes for suave, middle-class southerners interested in advancing the skills of making good sauces and concocting new culinary delights like "Cheesy Barbecue Popcorn." Hence barbecue—replacing grits—emerges as the symbol of a new, more prosperous and respectable South.

But these celebrations and upscale recipes notwithstanding, the real meaning of barbecue in the South lies in its more traditional setting—in the joints and shacks where

most of it is still served, close to the pits where it is cooked. Largely a male enterprise, barbecuing in this context has long signaled an ordered world of social patterns and activities. Anthropologist Mary Douglas (1972, 61) writes, "If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries. Food categories therefore encode social events." One could not find a better example in the South of what Douglas has in mind than with the preparation and serving of that most favorite of foods—pit-barbecued pork and the "fixins."

In a basic sort of way, eating barbecue defines a southerner. This is true not just in the sense of "you are what you eat," which of course is to some extent true, but also in the sense that groups are known by their food habits. Especially in a region with so distinct a consciousness of itself as being over against others—in-group versus out-group—foodways function as a symbol of group identity. The practices surrounding even the homeliest and most mundane of food easily emerge as significant. Barbecue pork is just such a homely and mundane food, long serving as a visible boundary distinguishing southerners from other Americans. That boundary has not disappeared; if anything, it may have become even more visible as southern-style barbecue has spread across the country creating a space for southern culture in the most alien places—like Yankee territory. The boundary is increasingly tied less to physical space, and more to the presence of southerners wherever they live. Both within the region and outside of it, southerners continue to relish being different even to the extreme of boasting about it, as we know from bumper stickers proclaiming that "Southerners do it slower" or, as in Hank

Williams's classic lyric, "If heaven ain't a lot like Dixie, I don't want anything to do with it." Moreover, the fact that such bumper stickers show up in great numbers on cars, pickups, and vans outside barbecue joints where Hank Williams's music still plays on jukeboxes underscores something of Mary Douglass's point about food categories encoding social realities.

Certainly for the major social institutions of southern life, barbecue is very much at the center of action. For example, it continues to be the favorite food at political rallies. Democrats and Republicans, and nowadays mostly Republicans, routinely hold political events featuring barbecue—often chopped pork with hash, rice, slaw, and hush puppies. That tradition reaches far back into the past. Even as far back as the election of 1832, the Louisville Journal reported that "swallowing a pig" was an effective technique in winning the voter's favor (Remini 1971). Then as now, eating dramatizes and enacts fundamental cultural values—it combines taste with rhetoric and conveys not just what is good to eat but what people feel about how things are going on the farm, in the town, for themselves, and for the larger world. Even more important, for southerners a political rally with barbecue bonds the group and symbolizes a world governed by law and order. It communicates something of the sacred and the profane, the two at some point juxtaposed against one another. The most profane of things, as Emile Durkheim reminds us, has the capacity to evoke the presence of the sacred; and conversely, that which is regarded as sacred mingles freely in and around the profane. In many rural areas and small towns radios still carry, often at noontime, daily reports on local stock prices interspersed with Gospel music—"hogs and hymns," as we called it in South Carolina when I was growing up. The latest prices on hogs and cattle come together with inspirational and country

music, and often a political commentary, in what amounts to a mediated ritual of southern identity and celebration.

God approves of barbecue, or so it would seem considering the thousands of church cookbooks published across the region. Just about every First Presbyterian church has a cookbook and, for sure, the biggest Southern Baptist and United Methodist churches in every city have one, and all have recipes for barbecue sauces. Often the recipes are personalized, such as "Miss Maggie Clark's BBQ Sauce" with instructions about how to prepare it. It is common for such information—the "esoteric knowledge" of barbecuing—to come from someone who is widely known and respected within a church, and often it has been handed down from a master cook from a previous generation. The church supper is of course the occasion par excellence for eating barbecue, symbolizing a shared religious and social world and communal belonging. Both the frequency of church suppers and the attention given to food in religious gatherings for southerners point to the symbolic significance of food. The meal mediates between the individual and the community and serves as a ritual affirmation of the gathered community itself. Because both the political and religious institutions are closely identified with the same food—with barbecue pork and fried chicken, the latter being the second best-known food of the region—the two institutions themselves are closely linked symbolically. It might even be said that for many southern churchgoers food is a key ingredient in ordering and sustaining a phenomenological world bringing the religious and political together.

BARBECUE AND SACRIFICE

Links between food and religion run deep in any culture—provoking powerful religious emotions associated with food. Pigs especially seem to evoke strong religious emotions. So strong, anthropologist Marvin Harris suggests, that the world can be divided into two types of people, pig lovers and pig haters. Pig hating among Jews and Muslims is well known, but pig loving is common as well, particularly in Celtic cultures. Pig hating and pig loving differ in how they symbolize relations between people and food. Pig hate leads to carefully prescribed dietary regulations and food prohibitions. Here the pig symbolizes those boundaries with a taboo-like quality: don't eat, don't touch. Pig love arouses a more mystical, unifying experience, a bringing together of the people world and the animal world. Its power to solidify is astounding, shown by Harris to work its magic in many cultures. "Pig love," he writes (1974, 46) "is a state of total community between man and pig. While the presence of pigs threatens the human status of Moslems and Jews, in the ambience of pig love one cannot truly be human except in the company of pigs." Hence, not surprisingly, in those places around the world where you find pig love you also observe close contact of people and pigs: people often have pigs in pens adjacent to where they live, sometimes even in barns attached to human dwellings. It is not uncommon for people to talk to their pigs, to call them by names; people will feed them from the family table—"slopping" as people below the Mason and Dixon are fond of saying, meaning that they care so much for their choice swine they share with them their own leftover human food. Obviously, southerners are pig lovers.

Given this close association with pigs, we can speak, not inappropriately, of the "cult of the pig" in the South. And unlike in India in the case of cows, the veneration of

the pig results in obligatory sacrifices and celebratory occasions for eating pigs. To quote Marvin Harris again:

> Because of ritual slaughter and sacred feasting, pig love provides a broader prospect for communion between man and beast than is true of the Hindu farmer and his cow. The climax of pig love is the incorporation of the pig as flesh into the flesh of the human host and of the pig as spirit into the spirit of the ancestors. (1974, 46)

Communion with pigs! Obviously there's something deeply mystical about such communion binding pig lovers and their pigs. And it doesn't take a great deal of imagination to leap from this depiction of incorporating the pig as flesh to the high and holy act of eating the body and blood of Christ as practiced by Christians. In a region where there is both so much pig love <u>and</u> Christ love, and frequent eating of the flesh of both kinds, might there be an affinity between these two sacred feasts? Might there be blood in the barbecue, so to speak?

THE SOUTH'S "TWO CULTURES"

The question is not as far-fetched as it might first seem. Among white Southerners, blood has long assumed a special status. It is <u>the</u> life force: a potent symbol of family and kin bonding, of unity among people, especially in the face of an external threat. Some might go so far as to say—indeed, people have said—that blood is an obsession among white

Anglo-Saxon Protestant southerners. Certainly concern about racial purity is a defining feature of southern history. Racial purity came to be a concern particularly in the years after the Civil War when southerners, suffering from defeat, sought to defend and romanticize their way of life by means of Jim Crow segregation laws and a system of rituals and etiquette respecting their pride and identity. Defensiveness and pride resulted in a powerful psychology that unified much of the southern white world around folk symbols—including the mystique surrounding blood and ancestry. This regional psychology would perhaps reach its apex in the veneration of the southern "soldier saint" who fought valiantly and spilled his blood on behalf of a way of life. It is a psychology, too, that would produce cultural distortions in its unyielding and obsessive devotion to a cause. To quote John Shelton Reed (1982, 131), who paraphrases Irving Babbitt's comment about the Spanish, "There seems to be something southern about southerners that causes them to behave in a southern manner."

Religion is a crucial element in southern identity and culture, but it is a complex reality since, as Samuel S. Hill points out, there are "two cultures" juxtaposed in southern experience. What emerged after the Civil War and Reconstruction in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, Hill argues, were two overlapping ritual systems: one, celebrating regional and folk values, and the other, affirming historic Christian beliefs and practices. Much of southern tradition ever since is a playing out of the tensions between these two ritual systems. The fact that the love ethic of Christianity was muffled in popular religious life, forced to accommodate a prideful and racially sensitive regional culture, is a big part of what makes southern religion so distinctive; in effect, social justice took back seat to a more personal, Christ-centered piety. Added is a peculiar guilt-oriented

theology paralleling regional experiences of slavery and war which brought to prominence themes of sacrifice and atonement through the blood of Christ. This theological construction would dominate much of popular religious life after the fall of the Confederacy and the era of Reconstruction—which is to say, the great majority of believers, upward of 80 percent or more in some counties of Baptists, Methodists, and other low-church, sectarian Protestants. Regional values created an operative southern theology of the "problem-solution" sort, with an emphasis upon the all-important work of salvation by Christ, whose death on the cross satisfied God's violated holiness and thereby made redemption possible for any individual if only he or she would accept what had been done for him or her. As Flannery O'Connor so rightly claimed, the South became "Christ-haunted," and to understand what that means one must grasp how themes of sacrifice and atonement play out not just in church but throughout the culture.

A "Christ-haunted" culture finds expression in the region's sacred and quasi-sacred music. Nothing quite occupies the place within southern life as those old hymns like "The Old Rugged Cross," "Nothing but the Blood," and "Blessed Assurance," all pitched to deep mystical meanings surrounding the cross, blood, and salvation. Journalist Marshall Frady (1980, XVff) sums up this underlying message lying at the heart of southern piety in the following way:

> Religion in the South was principally a romance about the cross—a dire melodrama of thorns and betrayal and midnight anguish, with nothing in the life of Jesus mattering quite so much as his suffering and his death. The Southern Jesus was an almost pre-Raphaelite figure of pale languishing melancholy, with a

> tender, grave, bearded face much like those thin faces of young Confederate officers that stare, doomed, out of ghostly tintypes. And nowhere was this Southern Christ so passionately defined as in those old heavy-hauling hymns that most Southerners had sung, at least once in their youth, at some summer night's revival in a bug-swarmed tent on the ragged outskirts of town: What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus… Oh! precious is the flow that makes me white as snow… in agony and blood, He fixed his languid eyes on me… O Jesus, Lord! how can it be that Thou shouldst give Thy life for me, to bear the cross and agony in that dread hour on Calvary… Oh, how I love Jesus! Oh, how I love Jeees-SUSSS!

But how do we get from revivals and such heavy hymns back to barbecue? The answer it would seem has to do, in one way or another, with blood, sacrifice, and mystical communion. The "two cultures" of the South, though distinct, are drawn together through symbols and rituals—those of both the official religious system and the folk culture. The greater the cultural integration, in fact, the greater the chances that what happens in one ritual system will bear upon the other. And because southern culture continues to be rather tightly bound, combining distinctive regional and religious themes, it follows that folk rituals will reinforce the dominant religious and cultural themes and, to some extent, develop analogues of myth, practice, and boundary-defining mechanisms in lived experience similar to those of the official religious establishment. It is in this latter sense that food as symbolism and barbecuing as a specific practice take on deep ritual meaning and significance for southerners, even if only vaguely perceived.

FOOD, PLACE, KIN, AND CHURCH

To start with, we might look for what Durkheim would call the "elementary forms of ritual sacrifice" in the popular culture. And barbecuing as a cultural practice certainly offers opportunity to do so. Much mystery surrounds barbecuing as a "food event": pork is traditionally barbecued in pits requiring careful attention to the fire, the cooking, and the sauces. The pit itself is not unimportant. The pit qualifies as sacred space of sorts, and hence is usually covered when not in use. When in use it is a place of awe and mystery, the primordial depths from which good things come. Amid the smoldering logs and smoke streaming from the bottoms of the pit, magical forces turn the raw meat into something mouth watering and delectable. A vigil-like atmosphere prevails as the meat cooks slowly, and especially when it is cooked overnight as is frequently the case. It is a time of watching and stoking the fires, of telling and sharing stories. Even today, when backyard grills have taken over much of the barbecuing and turned it into a private and family-based activity, good old boys still come together to watch the pits overnight as they prepare meals for the Lions Club, a church, or a political rally.

The fact that those watching the fires and telling the stories—the high priests—are almost always men is itself important symbolically. Cooking in the region is commonly women's work, but not so with pit barbecuing. It is viewed as a special act, set apart from regular cooking, requiring special knowledge, and hence a man's job. This ritual reversal of cooking responsibilities signals an enduring male authority and locates the artistry and craft of turning pork into barbecue clearly within a quasi-sacred province for which only

men may take charge. Barbecuing is part work, part sport, and part performance, and much lore surrounds those cooks who possess what amount to esoteric skills, knowledge of recipes, and techniques of food preparation (often handed down from older males). It is not uncommon to hear stories praising the best barbecue cooks in a community and conferring upon them great respect and status, defining them as functional equivalents to a high priest officiating a sacred feast.

But there's more involved than preparing barbecue—eating it takes on particular significance as well. No blasphemy is intended when I say that loving Jesus and loving pigs have much in common: both types of love are expressed in feasts, and even more importantly, in both the act of eating is symbolically related to the crucial flow of vital life forces. The first—shared feasts—is obvious enough, but what about this latter? Is pig love an occasion for the flow of vital life forces?

To grasp how this might possibly be, it is important to remember that in the South historically there have been strong, overlapping attachments to place, kin, and church. Southern religion is closely bound up with locality and kinship. Jean Heriot's ethnography of a Southern Baptist congregation in South Carolina nicely underscores the fusion of these three types of identity: "Being Baptist (is) more than a statement of doctrinal belief," she writes, "it (is) also a statement about family, kinship ties, place, and history" (1994, 57). Polls and surveys show that attachments to local communities remain stronger in this region than anywhere else in the United States, which, in turn, reinforces kinship and religious ties. Local attachments undergird a local worldview with its own sacred canopy and drama of sin and salvation, played out in a context bounded to a considerable degree by community and kinship ties. Close links between church and

family abound. In Appalachia, for example, the proliferation of churches is known to result often from kin groups breaking off and organizing their own churches (Bryant 1981). And nowhere on earth are there more family reunions, cemetery associations, and church-organized homecomings—social gatherings where family and religious identities easily fuse. Moreover, such gatherings almost invariably include dinner on the grounds, frequently at a church, and often with the same people who are at church on Sunday morning meeting to eat with extended family and kin later in the afternoon. Put differently, in the context of the South's two cultures, ties of kinship and place are organizing social principles bound up with religious identity, ties so strong they often overshadow the deeper historic, universal themes of the official religious community.

Place, family, and church are all bound by ancestry, but practically speaking, it is the food practices more than anything else that keep memory alive and visibly symbolize this underlying historical unity. Eating, and certainly eating barbecue, is the one thing—sometimes it seems like the only thing—that kin groups do when they come together. By sharing a meal together, they reaffirm the ties that bind—of one to another and of all to place. But why is barbecue so important in this respect? Part of the answer lies in the fact that traditionally, stoking the barbecue pit has been a man's job. Despite clear norms about cooking as a female activity, public and outdoors cooking with a male head is important because it reaffirms the traditional social order, the unity of all things past and present. It seems reasonable to expect, in fact, that the stronger the overlapping identities of place, family, and church, the more likely outdoor food practices will take on great symbolic significance. Even in the New South of interstate highways, shopping malls, and family Web pages in cyberspace, the "food event" remains of great importance

to families. Gwen Neville (1987) argues that reunions, homecomings, and other such occasions involving big spreads of food provide for southerners who have left their home communities a chance to return and to renew their ties with their primal community. Such occasions are really like pilgrimages to places of origin, opportunities to re-create meaningful ties to a sacred community encompassing kin and fellow believers. Gathered around the table, often not far removed from the barbecue pit, generations of people bound by family, kin, and religious ties all come together, if only briefly, in what amounts to a ritual celebration of communitas, of the ties that really bind and give expression to the vital life forces.

Gathering around the table and pit takes on semi-sacred significance, even replacing the church for some as the dominant arena for the celebration of communitas for still another reason. And this has to do with the particular style of popular southern religion. While southerners are known for their high levels of religiosity, Holy Communion, or the celebration of the Eucharist, is not a particularly prominent part of the region's tradition. Low-church, evangelical Protestantism set the style historically with its emphasis upon emotions and individuals accepting Christ in their hearts rather than upon liturgical worship and celebration, or the sacramental observance of a gathered community. In practical effect, religious food was robbed of some of its mystical power. Thus, communion services in southern churches historically were infrequent, often "quarterly" (meaning every three months) among Baptists, Methodists, and other low-church denominations. Even when Holy Communion is served, grape juice replaces wine in the popular faith traditions. It was a Methodist dentist, Dr. Thomas Welch, who saw to it many years ago that unfermented grape juice was substituted in the Lord's Supper, a

practice that caught on among low-church groups in the South where drinking, or activities related to drinking, was viewed as a serious moral problem. Once again, the "two cultures" thesis sheds light upon the situation. Southerners forged a popular-based unity in an official ascetic-religious call for total abstinence from alcohol—including wine—in the interest of personal piety, but in so doing created a pale imitation of the historic Christian mass that was originally modeled after the account in First Corinthians where Jesus took a cup of wine and pronounced, "This is the new covenant in my blood. Do this in remembrance of me." Grassroots southern religion—that is, the dominant religion—is left with strong moral power over individuals but weak in its sacramental rituals and mystical celebrations.

As a consequence, much of southern religion suffers from a moral asceticism and blandness, or an inability to "enjoy Jesus" in ways that Christian traditions in other cultural settings often do. Southerners tend to celebrate Jesus emotionally within the more narrow confines of their individual lives, but far less so in a lively and shared partaking of Jesus' body and blood. Yet as one commentator, Donald Horton, has pointed out, a vital aspect of lived religion is its "social jollification," or the actual enjoyment people experience with food and drink as they celebrate the mystical bonds of faith. Food has a sensuous and rejuvenating quality in a religious context, if given ritual expression. But if this doesn't happen in the communion services within popular church life, then where else might it happen?

Casual observation suggests that communion with the pig is an occasion for social jollification. In this protoritual moment vital life forces flow, helped in no small part because barbecue is often eaten with beer, and on occasion even bourbon—and not

infrequently under a Dixie flag or guns or some other symbol of regional significance. Nor is it a coincidence that the usual place for eating barbecue is called a "joint," for it is in shacks and honkytonks that eating and drinking come together in what amounts to a hearty display of enjoyment. Even the more upscale places that try to disassociate barbecue from the seamier aspects of southern life like to bill themselves as places where you can enjoy yourself casually as you eat and drink. No matter where the place, or the socioeconomic status of the clientele, eating barbecue seems to make people happy and gregarious: they seem to get excited just making simple menu selections; even coming together around this special food seems rejuvenating in a Durkheimian sense. In a very simple, yet profound sort of way, regional bonds are affirmed and the simple act of eating becomes "time out of time," a moment of celebration and mystical unity. Food and memory are always bound together, but especially so in a context where emotions are less restrained and the natural unities of people easily surface. In effect, the barbecue joint and the social occasions on which barbecue is served accomplish what the church often fails to do: create an opportunity for affirming the mundane world of family, kin, and friends in an open, jovial atmosphere.

Just because the symbolic blood in the barbecue overshadows the pale substitute of the church-based communion does not mean that what happens at church is unimportant. My point is not to downplay the role of religious institutions; indeed, the many church suppers, overt friendliness, and stress upon fellowship—often a code word for getting together to eat—help to sustain the importance of food symbolism and its meaning in southern life. Rather, the two—barbecue and church—can be, and often are, mutually enforcing and are not easily separated in the ritual performance of southern

identity in a context in which place, kin, and religion are all symbolically linked. What we learn in all of this is a basic Durkheimian principle: that even in the most profane, everyday activities such as eating, the underlying vital forces of social life and of primordial human bonding find sacred expression. So the next time you hear the familiar southern chant—Wooooo000000000000! Pig! Suuuuuuuueeeeeeeeeeee!—remember, it is about more than just pigs.

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