

## Somewhere in Between

Willow Nero's blog about journalism, food, Ole Miss and life.

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### The South's best potato salad

#### **Blind Pig Pub has it**

Published in the June 25, 2009, Oxford Town. The weekly arts and entertainment publication does not have its own site at present, so you can find my articles here.

If black eyed peas bring prosperity, tuna casserole is meant to solace grief, and oysters signal lust, what emotion is mixed into a bowl of potato salad?

Most people approach the stuff with caution. They're not quite fans, but they don't hate potato salad. Plus, you can never be too sure on how long the mayo-doused concoction has been sitting in the heat. But you'll be damned if you don't suffer through a few bites of your aunt's tried and true recipe.

As Will Campbell, Mississippian Civil Rights leader and one-time director of religious life at the University of Mississippi, sees it in his book "Brother to a Dragonfly," potato salad almost means more than saying "I love you."

"(Food) is something (neighbors) do not have to explain or discuss or feel self-conscious about ... It means, 'I love you. And I am sorry for what you are going through and I will share as much of your burden as I can.' And maybe potato salad is a better way of saying it."

Perhaps that's why it makes such good bar food. What better to drown your sorrows than a cold beer, a local ear and heaps of love (or, potato salad)?

Surely, that's not what brings people to lunch at David Moore's Blind Pig Pub. But his potato salad does have somewhat of its own fan base.

"We have people who come in just for potato salad and people who come in with their families who've eaten here and say, 'Oh, no. You've got to have potato salad.'"

Unfortunately, Moore can only vouch for his panini sandwiches boasting deli cuts and fine cheeses. The potato salad comes from a tub labeled St. Clair.

The owner of the Memphis-based food production company gets full credit, according to Angela Griffith, regional account executive. "Oscar Edmonds III was dabbling in research and development and thought, we already have all the stuff that would be like a baked potato so why not try it as a salad?"

Voila, baked potato salad; potatoes, mayo, sour cream, bacon, seasoning.

Both Moore and Griffith agree that the delight is in the surprise that this potato salad isn't goopy, mustard-based or vinegar-drenched.

"It is the only potato salad I have ever enjoyed, and my grandmother was an avid potato salad cooker," Moore says. "It's darn good. Too bad it's got bacon in it for vegetarians."

At St. Clair Foods, this medley served at Blind Pig and Taylor Grocery, among other restaurants, is the top seller of more than 100 chilled salads, frozen entrees and salad dressings. In fact, St. Clair makes around 20 million pounds of its dozen types of potato salad each year.

"It's like a craze. It's like wow. When I say that's our top-selling item across the board, that tells a lot," said Griffith. "It's just so different from a mustard potato salad. You go somewhere and you expect that and you get this. It's just so different."

Surprisingly, St. Clair's Baked Potato Salad is not only available to restaurateurs. You can pick it up at some Sam's Clubs and other restaurant supply stores. Or you can try your hand at re-creating this newly beloved Blind Pig Pub mainstay.

Moore suggests rolling balls of this potato salad in cornmeal and deep-frying them. Bon-appetit!