

Michael W. Twitty

Michael W. Twitty is a recognized culinary historian and independent scholar focusing on historic African American food and folk culture and culinary traditions of historic Africa and her Diaspora. He is a living history interpreter and historic chef, one of the few recognized international experts of his craft—the re-construction of early Southern cuisine as prepared by enslaved African American cooks for tables high and low—from heirloom seeds and heritage breed animals to fish, game, and foraged plant foods to historic cooking methods to the table. He is webmaster of www.Afroculinaria.com, the first website/blog devoted to the preservation of historic African American foods and foodways. He has conducted over 200 classes and workshops, written curricula and educational programs, giving lectures and performed cooking demonstrations for over 100 groups including the Smithsonian Institution, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Carnegie-Mellon, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, Library of Congress, the Association for the Study of Food and Society and Oxford University's Symposium on Food and Cookery. He has been profiled in the Washington Post and Washington Post Magazine, the New York Times, Grist, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Cuisine Noir, Baltimore Sun, Chicago Tribune, Jet Magazine, Ebony.com and other periodicals. He has also been interviewed multiple times on NPR including the acclaimed food program The Splendid Table and Poppy Tooker's Louisiana Eats and has been interviewed by the BBC. In 2013, he made several major appearances on television connected to his work including Bizarre Foods America with Andrew Zimmern, PBS' Time Team America, and Many Rivers to Cross with Dr. Henry Louis Gates.

As a part of his work as a culinary preservationist, he curated the first collection of African American heritage seeds through D. Landreth Seed Company for their bicentennial which proved to be wildly popular. Because of his work in the field, he was labeled “One of Five Food Writers to Watch in 2012,” by the Chicago Tribune. In 2013, First We Feast honored him in their list of the “20 Greatest (American) Food Bloggers of All Time.” His work includes substantial activism in the fields of social justice, food and culinary justice, environmental awareness, intergroup peace work and racial reconciliation.

In the field of culinary history, Mr. Twitty's work has been included in a number of volumes. Most recently he contributed an sidebar essay in vegan chef Bryant Terry's upcoming cookbook, a recipe to Louisiana Eats by Poppy Tooker, and five articles to the recently published Oxford Encyclopedia of American Food and Drink. He also contributed eighteen articles to Greenwood Press' seminal encyclopedia, World of a Slave: Encyclopedia of the Material Life of Slaves in the United States, an article for the Greenwood Encyclopedia of Entertaining, and a lengthy biographical essay in their one

volume reference work *Icons of American Cooking*. He was invited to participate in the 2010 Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery and the paper presented there was included in the published work based on the symposium. He authored the anchor essay on the African roots of rice and bean dishes in *Rice and Beans: A Unique Dish in a Hundred Places* as well as several recipes and essays in *America I AM: Pass it Down Cookbook*. His work in tracing heirloom vegetables from Africa to America has been profiled in several works including *Chasing Chilies: Hot Spots Along the Pepper Trail* among other works. As a freelance writer, his work has been published in *Edible Chesapeake*, *The Tiller*, *The Jewish Forward*, *Eatocracy* on CNN.com, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *The Journal of Negro History and Repast*, the scholarly journal of the culinary historians of Ann Arbor, among others.

In addition to work published by others, he is also the author of a considerable volume of self-published work, beginning with *Fighting Old Nep: The Foodways of Enslaved Afro-Marylanders 1634-1864*, tracing the foodways of enslaved Marylanders from historic West and Central Africa through to the end of the Civil War. The work has been successfully sold independently and through retailers including Colonial Williamsburg, D. Landreth Seed Company, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and other outlets. His blog, *Afroculinaria.com* sustained over two and a half years with 250 posts, has attracted over half a million visitors and garnered a following of over 1500 subscribers, over 3,500 Twitter followers and a Facebook fan base of over 7300 to date. He actively maintains a social media presence and press lists to attract and sustain a ready audience for his presentations, published works and understands well the viral and popular marketing key to increasing sales and engagement. Most recently, his nationally recognized project, *The Cooking Gene*, successfully garnered the support of over 100 backers on crowdfunding site *Indiegogo*, raising over \$8,000 to fully fund his effort to document the link between his family's origins in West and Central Africa through their arrival in the colonial and antebellum South using culinary history and DNA research. He has been awarded two grants from the Montgomery County Arts and Humanities Council, including a FY 2014 grant to continue *The Cooking Gene* project.

Mr. Twitty has obtained significant experience in promoting and expounding on his work. The *Cooking Gene* Project, book signings, and inclusion in the Maryland Humanities Council's Speaker's Bureau for over 6 years speak to his tested ability to market and publicly represent his brand.