

The Zest S8E21 Bonus Episode

Dalia Colon: [00:00:00] Hey, it's Dalia popping into your feed with a little something, something to make your holidays extra merry and bright a bonus episode of The Zest. The holidays are a great time to gather family recipes. So I couldn't pass up the opportunity to tell you about the City of Tampa's Soulwalk Community Cookbook.

Dalia Colon: Tampa's Soulwalk is a trail linking historic sites that tell the story of the city's communities of color. Now the city is creating a companion cookbook for the trail and they need your input. You have until the end of the year to submit recipes online at tampa.gov/soulwalk.

Dalia Colon: Submission forms are also available at local libraries and City of Tampa community centers. Now, you don't need to live within Tampa City limits to participate, and you don't need to be a person of color, as long as your recipe reflects Black or African American cuisine. Ida Walker and Tina Wright are part of the team behind the Soulwalk Community Cookbook, and they're here to [00:01:00] tell us more about the project.

Dalia Colon: Well, it's so nice to meet both of you. Can you start by introducing yourself? Tell me your name and how you got involved in this project. and we'll start with Ida.

Ida Walker: Okay, very good. Thank you. So my name is Ida Walker and I am the senior executive assistant for the chief of police for the Tampa Police Department.

Ida Walker: And how I came about the, um, the Soulwalk is I was a project manager for the Fearless Four, a historical monument for the police department where we, um, we captured the history of the first black officers and also the first accomplishments of black officers with the Tampa Police Department. And from that point, Tina and, uh, And Robin Nigh, who's the, uh, city's [00:02:00] arts and cultural, uh, manager for the city.

Ida Walker: You know, she came up with the idea of Soulwalk and, you know, where we can capture the history across the city of Tampa, um, of African American, uh, the African American experience. So that's how, um, I became involved with.

Dalia Colon: So Tina, what is your involvement and what is soul walk for people who don't know?

Tina Wright: Oh, um, my involvement is, um, being a part of the committee. Um, just to offer my suggestions, my experience, um, knowledge of just the area and the locations that, uh, we have on the Soulwalk trail. Soulwalk is a trail that, um, we have identified. throughout the [00:03:00] city on different locations where, uh, African Americans have, um, lived, um, had businesses and just contributed to the history of Tampa.

Tina Wright: And we want everyone to know the, know of the contributions and, um, the, the knowledge, the experience, the hard work, the dedication that African Americans, um, contributed to make Tampa, um, what it is today. And, you know, it's, it starts from restaurants. It goes to businesses, schools, um, um, residents, um, communities, you name it.

Tina Wright: And all of these play an important role in identifying the locations that, uh, we've chosen to be, um, historical monuments for the Soulwalk Trail.

Dalia Colon: Oh, there's so much to talk about [00:04:00] already. I'm going to go back to Ida. I know that both of you have decades of experience in Tampa. So just focusing on the Black owned restaurants, what do you remember about some of those that maybe are no longer here?

Ida Walker: Oh, my goodness. I remember Central Avenue because I was a young child when we lived in Central Park, which is part of Central Avenue near Central Avenue and just, you know, walking, you know, Central Avenue with my parents. Yeah. My aunts or my mom, you know, going down for some fried chicken and Tina, what was the name of the restaurant down there on Central Avenue with the fried chicken?

Ida Walker: I remember the ice cream.

Tina Wright: I remember the Greek, the Greek saying, yes, saying that was just one of the ones that I can remember us, you know, getting food from there. So, [00:05:00] yeah, but, um, it was just many, there were so many. Um, Black, um, restaurants that, you know, I've, I've just forgotten the, the names of them, but I'm remembering the, the areas where, um, like the Bexley Barbecue and the, um, Cozy Corner, gosh, there's cold economy and Charlie Gizzards.

Tina Wright: And then, of course, that's. Betty's Restaurant, Betty's Cafe on 34th and Martin Luther King. Those were places, I mean, that you can go and get some great soul food. And when, and I say great, I mean great soul food. So, you know, it was nothing to be able to, um, say, well, you know, I want a good barbecue sandwich.

Tina Wright: And there you are at, you know, one of the, the Caldonia's, um, barbecues saying, or I want a good fried chicken sandwich. And then you got Cozy Corner, or I just want a home cooked soul food meal. And [00:06:00] you got Betty's Cafe. So we just, we had plenty, plenty of restaurants, but just, you know, just to name, name them all.

Tina Wright: Oh my gosh, it was just be so mind boggling. But you know, the one that I do remember and that's still around is Big John Alabama Barbecue. They are still around and they're, I mean, still strutting their stuff when it comes to barbecue.

Ida Walker: And they were, Dalia, yes, Dalia, they were one of our chefs at the launch.

Ida Walker: So they were one of our celebrity chefs at the launch of the Call for Recipes.

Dalia Colon: When we talk about soul food, there are so many definitions. So Tina, I'll start with you. What do you mean when you say soul food?

Tina Wright: Soul food. Soul food to me is love. I say soul food is laughter. Soul food is bringing [00:07:00] families together.

Tina Wright: You know, we, we center around our, our foods, the, the, the foods that we adopt as part of our heritage. And from there, we'll make memories and we create legacies. That's what soul food is.

Dalia Colon: Ida, what are some examples of this type of food? When you think of a plate of soul food, what is on that plate?

Ida Walker: Oh my goodness.

Ida Walker: We just had Thanksgiving, so, uh, I'm talking collard greens. Collard greens with your smoked meats in it, whether it's, um, back in the day they had hog jaws and, uh, hog mauls and Uh, you know, you had your smoked

neck bones, uh, inside to give it that flavor. Uh, today we use a lot of turkey because we got a little healthier side of it.

Ida Walker: So we use a lot of turkey now. Um, I'm, you know, the, the mac and cheese. Oh, I [00:08:00] love the mac and cheese. I love the different cheeses. And Everybody makes it differently. So I love, uh, the, the, uh, the corn bread, corn bread dressing that goes alongside of your turkey and, uh, your cranberry. What is the cranberry sauce that's with it?

Ida Walker: I love the peas, you know, those fresh snap peas that we would sit. You know, uh, at the table and snap those peas, you know, and what they call them, shelling, shelling the peas and just the freshness of, uh, of the vegetables that we use, you know, uh, we, uh, we went out to Tina and, um, and her husband's farm to pick collard greens, fresh collard greens for Thanksgiving.

Ida Walker: And so those are the things that I think of, uh, when I [00:09:00] talk about, when you talk about soul food, our black cuisine, you know, and, um, yeah, so, and those family gatherings where, you know, after Sunday, what they call a Sunday meal, you know, you start cooking on Saturday for Sunday, you know, after church or those Friday night Fish fries.

Ida Walker: That's what I think of. Uh, soul food, you know, jambalaya, you know, uh, crab enchilada. That's what I think about. Uh, when we have those gatherings for soul food, crab enchilada. Yes.

Dalia Colon: Tina, do you remember the Friday fish fries?

Tina Wright: Oh girl. Yes. Fish and grits, fish and grits. And, uh, I can remember going to the, um, fish market.

Tina Wright: And there, you know, um, get me a, a, a mullet, they, they, um, scale it, and, and, [00:10:00] um, they gut it, and get it all flayed out, and you get it home, and, and you season, and you fry it with that corn meal, and have a side of grits, and sometimes you may have coleslaw, and sometimes you may have hush puppies, but yes, Friday was a fish and grit kind of day.

Tina Wright: There was no determining what are we going to have for dinner tonight. Everybody pretty much knew it was fish and grits on Friday.

Dalia Colon: I heard that there were some famous visitors who would come to town And frequent perhaps a boarding house or some of these black owned

restaurants. Who are some of the names we may know who participated in these fish fries and Sunday dinners and things when they were in town?

Ida Walker: Oh, gosh, I can't remember hearing the stories as well. and Ray Charles names comes to mind. Um, it's actually noted, um, as part of the historical, [00:11:00] um, Soul Walk trail that he actually, um, did a recording here of one of his songs. So, I know Ray Charles was one of them.

Dalia Colon: Oh, wow. Because he's from Florida. Is that true?

Dalia Colon: Like the St. Augustine area, I want to say?

Ida Walker: I believe that's where he went to school. I believe that's where he went to school. The blind. Yeah, the blind. Yes.

Dalia Colon: You know what? People are... People are going to be screaming at their radio, so I'm going to Google it in just a minute here. Um, Ida, were there any other notable names?

Ida Walker: So I understand that was a Chubby Checker that was here who did The Twist, who created The Twist.

Dalia Colon: Yeah. He, he was a visitor as well?

Ida Walker: Yes. He was a visitor as well, from what I understand.

Dalia Colon: Okay. Ray Charles was born in Albany, Georgia, but I do believe he went to school here in Florida. There was a school for the blind.

Dalia Colon: Okay. Tina, why is it so important to preserve this [00:12:00] food? It sounds like there are so many stories that are conjured up when you even talk about the fish fry or the hush puppies. So why is it so important for the city of Tampa to put together this?

Tina Wright: How can you tell the history of a heritage? And not include what makes that heritage important.

Tina Wright: And it's food it's surrounded by our food. We create our memories, our memories of our, um, grandparents, our parents, and we're passing these memories and legacies on. We don't want this to be forgotten. And so it is important that we continue to do this. It is important that we put this

together so that The generation beyond us can go back and say, Oh, this is what our ancestors left behind for us to enjoy, [00:13:00] for us to partake in, for us to have our own set of memories and leave legacies.

Tina Wright: We have, we can't, we cannot lose the memories and legacies of our heritage. And, and, and most, like I says, those memories and heritages. are created around food.

Dalia Colon: I mean, I think you said it. Ida, is there anything you would add to that?

Ida Walker: Oh, yes. Um, you know, uh, learning the history, even of our families, like 50 years from now, when, uh, our grandkids, when they, you know, want to just Google something about grandmother, you know, uh, Maybe grandmama Ida, you know, they want to Google something and they come across a recipe that grandmother Ida, you know, contributed to the city of Tampa or, um, a recipe that, you know, maybe an aunt or someone you know, contributed to the city of [00:14:00] Tampa. We just want, uh, the history as a whole, including food, to be part of a history so that for generations to come, others can, um, can look back and just see what, uh, what it is, what was happening today in the city of Tampa.

Dalia Colon: So Tina, where will these recipes live? I understand that there will be a cookbook and then will the book be for sale? Where will these memories be captured?

Tina Wright: It will be a cookbook. Um, at this point they're working out the logistics of, um, if it would be for, um, sale or, but we know that, [00:15:00] um, they will be a part of the, um, African, um, museum, African American museum, Ida.

Tina Wright: That was one of the, um, sources. We wanted to put it there, um, a part of the, um, visitors, um, Tampa Bay, um, association. Um, we wanted to, that to be a source of, um, where they can locate it. But, um, at this point we haven't. Robin, they really haven't worked out, um, all of the justice of where we really want these, um, books to be.

Tina Wright: But I'm hoping in libraries, I'm hoping in, um, bookstores, you know, I'm thinking big, you know, so, you know, I'm hoping all over that, you know, you'll go in a bookstore, Barnes and Nobles and go, Oh, the City of Tampa Soulwalk Cookbook. So I'm hoping we can find it there. But. You know, that's just my dream is to see it big, you know, [00:16:00] libraries, bookstores,

just all over where people can actually, um, you know, get a part of history, our history that we contributed.

Dalia Colon: Ida, what kind of recipes are you looking for? Because you said everybody's got a mac and cheese recipe. Do you want 10 different mac and cheese recipes? Do you want the fish fry recipe? Do you want a recipe that is not, that you haven't captured yet? What are you looking for, for people listening?

Ida Walker: So we look, we are looking for whatever favorite recipe that your family or your grandmother or whatever that favorite recipe is, you know, that, uh, that will tell a story about your family's history surrounding food.

Ida Walker: So whether that be mac and cheese, whether it be collard greens, whether it be the favorite potato salad, whatever that [00:17:00] favorite meal recipe. Are that favorite dish that relates to your family? That's what we are looking for. Of course, we can't put a hundred recipes of mac and cheese in the book, but we will have a selection team that will choose the, uh, recipes that go in the book.

Ida Walker: Uh, but we will have. All of the recipes captured and archived in the city archives as well. So it will still be there and be available, but every recipe won't make the book. But we're wanting all types of recipes. We want to have a, um, a wide variety of recipes that go into the book. And also I just want to add that the, the book will also be available as Tina mentioned, uh, Visit Tampa Bay whenever we have conventions here in Tampa, whenever, [00:18:00] uh, we have people visiting Tampa, They will have the opportunity to receive those, uh, those books.

Ida Walker: And we have hundreds of visitors that comes, uh, that visit Tampa every year. Oh yeah.

Dalia Colon: Probably hundreds of thousands of visitors. That's amazing. Before I let you go, we've talked about the past. And then we've talked about, you know, which restaurants are still there in the present, but we didn't really talk about that in between period of desegregation in Florida and what that looked like from a culinary perspective.

Dalia Colon: So I don't know if either of you can speak to this, but how did what and where you ate change during desegregation?

Ida Walker: But I believe like once our restaurants, once, um, Central Avenue went away, once, you know, um, our, um, some [00:19:00] of the restaurants started closing down, of course, we still have some that's out there.

Ida Walker: But a lot of our, our, our, uh, black cooks and, um, black waiters, they were working at, you know, uh, like Morrison's restaurant, you know, or I think then it became Pickle Dilly's. And, uh, so we had it, but we had it on a different level. You know, it, uh, it left, you know, from being more of a mom to pop, uh, restaurant or family restaurant to the commercial restaurants like Morrison.

Ida Walker: And, you know, we had, you know, black cooks and black waiters in those restaurants. And I don't want to leave out, uh, during segregation. Our, uh, cooks that were in the, uh, uh, the schools, the, uh, cafeteria at the schools that, [00:20:00] that the fresh food that they cooked for us, I mean, it was not fast food in the schools back then, and I just want to, you know, uh, at some point we want to highlight, you know, the people that, um, That kept us fed, you know, uh, as if we were getting a meal, a home cooked meal when we were in the schools.

Dalia Colon: Oh, that's so good. Yeah, we can't forget about them. Do either of you have a recipe in the cookbook?

Tina Wright: I submitted my um, spicy collard greens recipe.

Dalia Colon: What's your secret ingredient or can you say, I guess you, you have to say, cause you're putting it in the cookbook.

Tina Wright: De stemming them, washing them, um, cutting them up kind of, um, medium, small, um, and then just, um, taking ham hocks and, and smoked neck bones and, and, and, um, putting and washing them [00:21:00] and putting them in the pot and bringing them to boil and letting them simmer while I'm preparing the greens and cutting them up.

Tina Wright: And I use that pot, um, liquor, uh, stock is what, what most people, and, and I put my greens in there and, um, I do onions. I do green bell pepper. Um, but the key is crushed red pepper to make it spicy. And then at just when my greens are almost done, I take maybe eight to 10 strips of, um, baked breakfast bacon.

Tina Wright: I, um, microwave it, get it crispy, I crunch up the bacon and I put the bacon and the drippings all on top of the greens. And that, that, it's, it's not a truly healthy, but it's very tasty.

Dalia Colon: Amazing. And then Ida, what about you? Do you have a recipe that you've submitted for the book?

Ida Walker: I have not submitted one [00:22:00] yet, but I'm in between my mac and cheese and an apple cake. I think I'm going to go with the apple cake. It's a very simple cake and it takes fresh apples and it's so easy to make. I think that's the one I'm going to get. And it's so, so good.

Dalia Colon: That would go great with a side of collard greens. Last question for you ladies. Many people listening to this are outside of the Tampa Bay area and they're thinking what a great idea I want to do something like this for my community. So do you have any advice for other cities to do their own cookbook?

Tina Wright: Oh, gosh. I say enthusiasm. Um, get the folk with the knowledge, you know, just, you know, just wanting to do it to be, you know, just the desire to do this. That's, I think that's what drives us.

Tina Wright: And, and we put [00:23:00] forth every effort to make it. Um, as perfect as possible. So that I would say, if that's your desire, gather a group and just make it work. You know, we, we talked for, oh gosh, almost a year on Soulwalk and, and the trail and gosh, how long did we talk about the Soulwalk cookbook and we did this and we did that and then.

Tina Wright: We just found ourselves coming together, uh, from the experience that knowledge, the research, the submission of, um, the different recipes, and this is where we are today. We're at fruition of getting this cookbook out there.

Dalia Colon: That's awesome. Ida, do you have any words of advice to add to that?

Ida Walker: Yes, I just want to, uh, tell everyone is the importance of sharing your family stories, you know, sharing [00:24:00] those great times around, uh, surrounding, you know, food and other history that you would like to share.

Ida Walker: And, you know, as Tina said, if you can get together a group of people who are motivated and inspired to just make it happen and just, you know, and just do it as they say, just do it.

Dalia Colon: I love that. Well, you two just did it. And with the help of the community, we can all do it together and create something really special.

Dalia Colon: So I appreciate both of your time, Tina Wright and Ida Walker. Thank you so much. And we actually have a conversation coming up next season with Adrian Miller, who's known as the "Soul Food Scholar". People may recognize him from the Netflix series, High on the Hog so we got more soul food coming up.

Tina Wright: Oh, wonderful.

Ida Walker: That's great.

Dalia Colon: Ida Walker and Tina Wright are part of the team behind Tampa's Soulwalk Community Cookbook. You have until the end of this year to submit a recipe and you can find a link to the submission page on our [00:25:00] website, the zest podcast. com. We hope you enjoyed this bonus episode. We'll be back with fresh new shows in the new year.

Dalia Colon: I'm Dalia Colon. I produce The Zest with Andrew Lucas. Our social media and web guru is Alexandria Ebron. The Zest is a production of WUSF Public Media. Copyright 2023. Part of the NPR Network.