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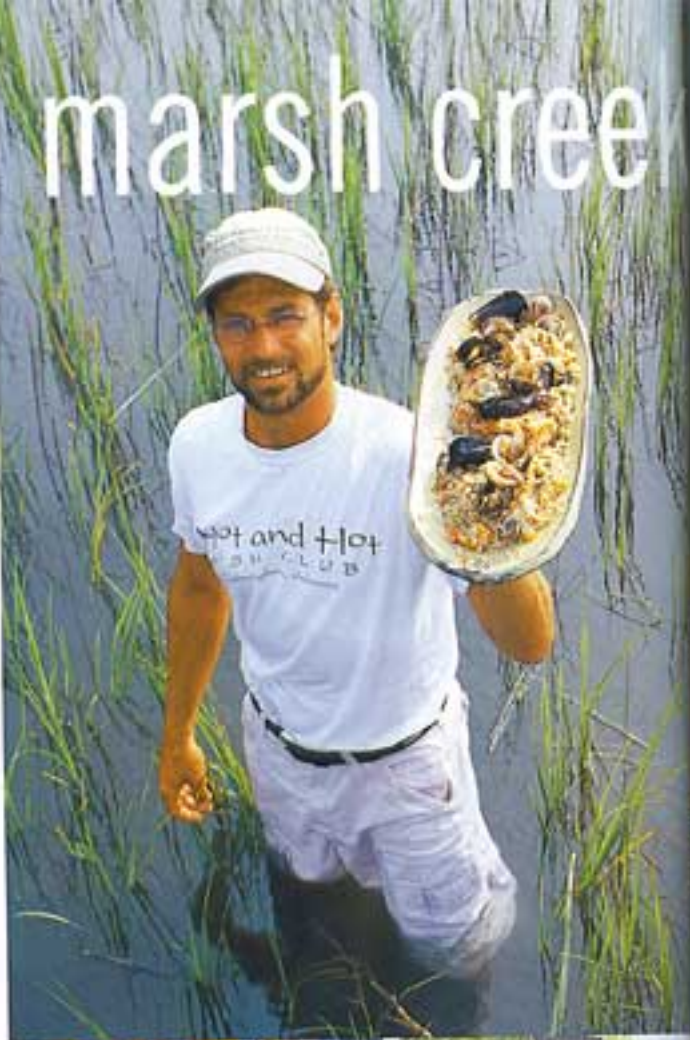
Chef Chris Hastings remembers childhood summers on Pawleys Island, South Carolina, hauling in baskets of the day's fresh-caught bounty. A generation later, Chris passes this Lowcountry legacy on to his sons.

Amid a flurry of gulls begging for their share, restaurateur Chris Hastings and his wife, Idit, set up lunch while son Zeb and Vincent run along the beach. As the family gathers around the table, Chris begins to tell his story: "Creek Boy. That's what they called me."

On the map it's Salt Marsh Creek, an inlet from the Atlantic running parallel to Pawleys Island. To locals, it's just "the creek." Chris often visited here as a child to harvest clams, crabs, and fish. "It came naturally and it was fun," he says. This lifestyle inspired Chris' philosophy on food—local and fresh.

BY JULIA DOWLING RUTLAND

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOWARD L. PUCKETT
STYLING BY VIRGINIA CRAVENS HOUSTON



Hot and Hot Fish Club
Tomato Salad



memoirs



Tradition is important to Chris and Idie, and today's menu reflects their Southern roots. Paying homage to meals of decades ago, the couple prepares a vibrant platter of Hot and Hot Fish Club Tomato Salad. The first Hot and Hot Fish Club (namesake to Chris' renowned restaurant in Birmingham, Alabama) was a men's club founded more than 150 years ago. Membership included Chris' great-great-grandfather. Its name evoked the tradition of serving many steaming seafood courses, one after the other.

Though not hot, and not seafood, the tomato salad Chris derived from succulent wits Southern favorites—lima beans, bacon, corn, okra. He prefers heirloom tomatoes: not hybridized or altered from their original form. "They are imperfect and often blemished," he says. "But it gets back to the flavors. Flavor is first, last, and always."

Lunch unfolds pleasantly but not too leisurely. High tide fast approaches, and the family's spot on the wide beach will soon be 2 feet under. High tide also means good crabbing, so it's time to bait lines.

Tom is page 120.

When I look at Zeb," says Idie, "I see his father. Not as much as how he looks but the way he acts. The chain is unbroken—it's the next-generation over top." Zeb (father, frogpond) and Vincent (heart to him) walk the line for a possible catch.



Hot and He
FISH CLUB
Birmingham, AL





