

# Alex Hitz Cooks Up a New Book



Deborah Whitlaw-Llewellyn

By Alex Hitz

*My Beverly Hills Kitchen* shares the cook and consummate host's Southern recipes and memories.

He's the consummate entertainer, host and sometime restaurateur. **Alex Hitz** poured heart and soul and, yes, even recipes into his new book, *My Beverly Hills Kitchen*, to be published in October by Knopf. The native Atlantan introduces us to his favorite memories and recipes. In it, he instructs us in the lazy summer foods of Southern tradition, like Sally Lunn bread and Hummingbird cake, and in the methods he's perfected since earning his toque at Paris's Le Cordon Bleu.

It is his role as a host, however, that Hitz inhabits most completely. After cutting his teeth at The Patio in Atlanta and living briefly in New York, he built his dream house in the Hollywood Hills overlooking the Pacific, complete with a state-of-the-art kitchen, where he regularly cooks for anywhere from 2 to 100. "Nobody puts on a fête like Alex," says one globe-trotting friend. "If only for the sweet-milk biscuits with cheddar, I'll fly to Beverly Hills." At parties, as in print, we're delighted to find fried chicken, corn pudding and lemon squares, brightly reinvented from their dusty forms in old Southern cookbooks for the palates of today. His advice: "Enjoy these recipes, but just don't make all of them at one time!"

## Hitz's Notes on Ingredients

- Never skimp on ingredients: Always buy the best you can afford. I did not say the most expensive—I said

the best. Learn to tell the difference.

- Always use salted butter, not margarine. Sneering purists will have you believe that if you use unsalted butter, you might better control the salt in a dish. The result inevitably ends up tasteless and needing salt. That's why I like Land O'Lakes, the salted butter I grew up on.
- My favorite Dijon mustard is Maille. Do yourself a favor and find it!
- Don't use products as ingredients—start from scratch. The only exceptions I make are tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce and, for my Hummingbird cake, canned pineapple.
- Homemade stocks are always best, but if you don't have time to make them, organic bases are perfectly acceptable. Try Better Than Bouillon brand, which you can find at [superiortouch.com](http://superiortouch.com).

## Hitz's Notes on Equipment

- Buy the best cookware you can afford. I like All-Clad and Le Creuset, which is enameled. [all-clad.com](http://all-clad.com); [lecreuset.com](http://lecreuset.com).
- Throw away things such as cheap baking sheets—they burn food. Buy heavy stainless-steel ones from [chefsresource.com](http://chefsresource.com) or your local restaurant supply store.
- Buy excellent chef knives, like Wüsthof or Henckels.
- Buy a large KitchenAid mixer, a food processor and a scale.
- There's a huge difference between wet and dry measure. Buy measuring cups for both.
- **And finally...** Taste everything as you are cooking.

## Hitz on Millionaire's Potatoes

No one was better at entertaining than **Nan Kempner**. A San Francisco native, Kempner came to New York as a young bride in the mid-1950s and spent the next 50 years perfecting her role as a society figure and hostess. She gave lunches and dinners every week in her glamorous Park Avenue duplex, which had been built for a silent film star, Carmel Myers, and was rumored to have had a Champagne faucet in the bathtub.

I absolutely loved it when, at Christmastime for lunch, Kempner would serve baked potatoes with caviar. It was the way they were served that was such fun. First you would get a plain baked potato with sour cream. Next, huge tins of Russian or, in those days, Iranian caviar would be passed as many as five or six times, so gluttons like me could take as much as we liked. Kempner had an intuitive understanding of quality and luxury, and wore it lightly—and always with a sense of humor. I suggest using caviar from New York's Russ and Daughters ([russanddaughters.com](http://russanddaughters.com)).

## **Hitz on Bill Blass's Caramelized Bacon**

*Yield: 24 to 32 bite-sized hors d'oeuvres*

Everyone loves bacon, whether or not they admit it. This recipe was made famous by Bill Blass, who was well-known not only as a celebrated fashion designer but also as an excellent host who served superb, simple food. I only serve this treat occasionally, but guests are genuinely happy when I do.

1/2 pound thick-cut bacon

1 cup (packed) dark-brown sugar

Preheat oven to 250°F. Dredge individual bacon slices in brown sugar, patting sugar down on both sides to make it stick. Place the bacon slices on a heavy baking sheet. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes, until the bacon is caramelized and crisp. Remove from the oven and let cool. Break them into bite-sized pieces to serve.

## **Hitz on Bourbon Whipped Cream**

This recipe is elegant, flavorful and memorable—the very best way to end a lunch or dinner. I especially like it on chocolate cake, or as a decadently rich complement to plain fresh berries. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a whisk, combine one cup of heavy cream, one-fourth cup of sugar and two tablespoons of bourbon—I like Maker's Mark or Wild Turkey. Whip on medium until the desired texture is achieved—soft peaks, for this recipe. Serve over everything!