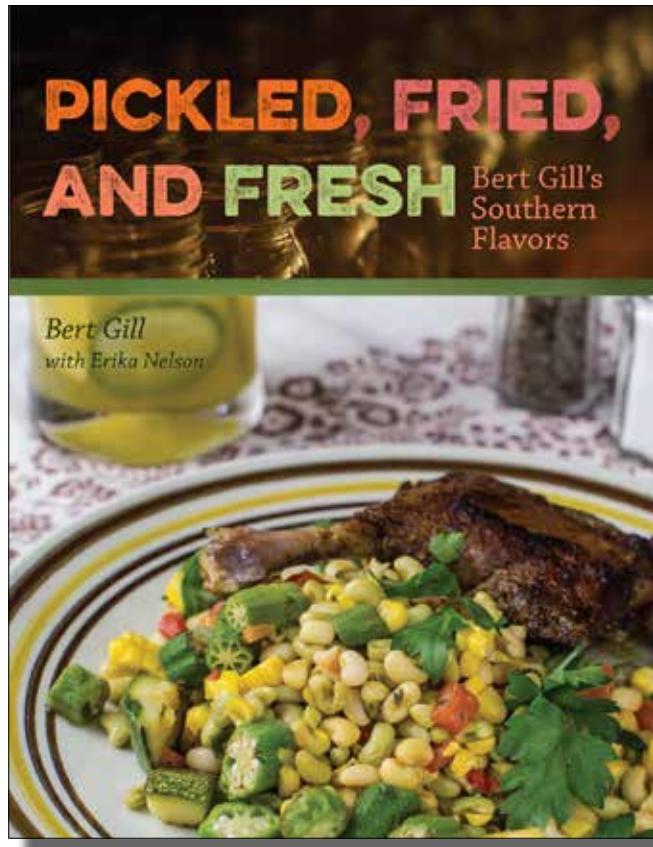


# WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



“Genuine and generous, Gill brings a big city perspective with passion and understanding of the importance of North Florida foodways.”

—**MATT JAMIE**, founder, Bourbon Barrel Foods

“Gill’s commitment to local food and culture is shown in his book’s superior knowledge of locally available ingredients, North Central Florida geography, and the role food plays in our lives beyond sustenance.”—**JACK PAYNE**, senior vice president of agriculture and natural resources and head of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida

“Chef Gill’s creations are a study in contrasts—they have rural southern roots and yet are urbane. These easy to follow and delicious recipes bring Bert Gill’s fresh Florida epicurean delights home.”—**PEGEEN HANRAHAN**, former mayor of Gainesville

“Gill’s book is as fresh and engaging as his restaurants. Whether you’re a culinary novice or a seasoned cook, you’ll find something here that strikes your fancy.”  
—**NANCY WHITE**, food writer, Florida Times-Union

“Gill has served our region’s best to his restaurants’ patrons for years. Now both the experienced chef and the beginner cook can savor some of his classics.”  
—**STEFANIE SAMARA HAMBLEN**, founder, Hogtown HomeGrown.



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**PICKLED, FRIED, AND FRESH**  
*Bert Gill's Southern Flavors*  
BERT GILL WITH ERIKA NELSON

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Photo by Wes Lindberg



**CHEF BERT GILL** has been working in restaurants since 1985. In 1994 he graduated from New England Culinary Institute, and he has been the executive chef of Mildred's Big City Food since June 1999. Gill spent seven years as a weekly staple on Gainesville's TV20, where he demonstrated cooking techniques and highlighted unique produce from local farmers.

Bert Gill and his wife, Tara Gill, are now the owners of Mildred's Big City Food, the New Deal Café, and Blue Gill Quality Foods. Blue Gill opened in June 2011 and is gaining popularity for its fun atmosphere, fresh food, and great cocktails. *Florida Trend* named Blue Gill as Gainesville's Best New Restaurant 2012 in their "Best of Florida" issue.

Through their restaurants, the Gills are dedicated to supporting locally grown food and sustainable agriculture. They have long been a major supporter of local farmers in the north-central Florida community, and in 2003 Bert Gill co-founded a farm-to-table food organization, the North Florida Food Partnership.

Gill also volunteers within the north-central Florida community. He is committed to teaching not only his patrons but also the community's youth about sustainable agriculture. At Eastside High School he is involved with mentoring future chefs and teaching them the importance of organic and local agriculture. As part of the organization Let's Move, for three years he also volunteered in the Alachua County School District cafeterias, where he helped set up healthy menus. His dedication to supporting the community was recognized in 2008 when he received the Adult Volunteer of the Year Award from the school district. In addition Gill was acknowledged by the Florida Restaurant Association when they presented him with the 2008 ProStart Pineapple Award for his lecturing and teaching within the restaurant industry, and in 2009 they named Gill the Professional Mentor of the Year.

A Gainesville resident for nearly forty years, **ERIKA NELSON** thinks there is no greater pleasure than eating a delicious, well-prepared meal with friends. The Nelsons and the Gills are long-time family friends, and together they enjoy many of Bert's amazing creations. Erika works at Jordan Glen School, and has a B.A. from the University of Florida and a MLIS from the University of South Florida.

**BERT GILL**  
**is available for interviews and appearances.**



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Photo by Wes Lindberg

# Q & A with

## BERT GILL

author of

### Pickled, Fried, and Fresh

Excerpted from <http://gainesvilleobserved.com/2014/11/10/meet-the-chef-gill-breathes-life-into-eating-local/comment-page-1/>

Courtesy of Gainesville Observed

#### Tell us about your early years.

I was born in Winter Haven, in Polk County, and I lived on a farm in Missouri for a while with my family. I've also lived in Alabama, the Carolinas and New England. I got my first restaurant job at 15 as a dishwasher in a nice little restaurant called Harriston's (now Harry's Old Place) in Winter Haven. The Boston Red Sox had spring training there in those days. Ted Williams and everyone ate there.

#### You ended up in Gainesville?

I came here to go to college and met Tara here. In 1994 we got married and I went to New England Culinary Institute in Vermont. At that point, NECI was considered one of the best cooking schools in the country, if not the world. We had about a 35-percent graduation rate. It was very hard. Their curriculum was very European. It was a two-year program. I went straight through and finished in a year.

#### How did you eventually find a job?

I went around to all these different restaurants. The way I did it was by asking, "Hey, can I work in your kitchen today so you might think about hiring me?" I ended up at the Pillar House in Newton Lower Falls. It was an old restaurant but elegant. You ate with silver and you drank from crystal there. They had a new executive chef named Charles Grandon. He was one of these rising stars from San Francisco. He had this pedigree and he was going to go big. I liked it there. With-

in 14 months, he left and I became executive chef. That was a big deal. I was the youngest executive chef they ever had.

#### To what do you credit that fast rise?

It was a combination of dedication and discipline. There was a level of absolute discipline that goes into it and having passion for it. It's a very emotional business. At least it is for me. I'm a very emotional person, and so it gives me something that I need in my life. It fulfills something mental and physical. There's the adrenaline part to it. There's the intensity. There's defeat. There's a lot of losing. It doesn't feel good to lose. But when things are great, it's rewarding.

#### Who has had the most influence on you and your career?

My wife. I've been married 20 years. I really love my wife. We have three kids, 14, 11 and 10. There's not a better motivator than family. Being a chef and having a family can be difficult, but my focus is strictly work and family. There's a certain amount of pride I take in being a family person. It's a big responsibility. I take it seriously.

#### What part of your job gives you the most satisfaction?

While I love cooking and I love cuisine, I also love the interactions I have with my co-workers, developing a team—the concept of culture. It's very important for us to create culture within our workplaces, where people are responsible to each other for the success of our company.

#### Explain your farm-to-table commitment.

When I moved to Gainesville, I started going to the farmer's markets here and making connections. The farmers would come, we'd make the menu, we'd make the food. I started with the University of Florida meat-processing unit. I built relationships with my vendors, found common interests and got their products. I went right to the farms. You trust what they're going to deliver to you and then you serve it. We became proponents of local food.

#### But you don't advertise that you're green?

When you go into one of our restaurants, you're not going to see it advertised all over the place. From the beginning we have purchased as much of our food locally

as possible. It's not just produce either, it's also meat, it's chicken, it's fish, it's eggs. We are always trying to get the best product within our community that we can. This is not some fad for us.

### **Does the same hold true for your seafood?**

When I serve grouper or mangrove snapper or kingfish or whatever, it's local. It's from our waters. Our fish comes whole. We fabricate it all because that's how fish stays best. But do I have to write, "This is Tommy Johnson's grouper caught nine miles offshore in a rickety old boat"? No. I find that the people who spew that out the most are doing the least. So we don't write everything on our menus because, frankly, it's a little bit irrelevant to me. Maybe I'm a pompous ass for that part, where it's like "Of course!" But that's how it is. Of course it's supposed to be the freshest and the best. When good food is on a plate, you know it.

### **Would you describe Blue Gill as "Southern" cooking?**

People like to peg us as Southern, but really we're Florida interested. We're interested in our community. All our companies are, but here it's about fish. A lot of fish. But then we do things like fried-green tomatoes and other Southern staples. I have a real love-hate relationship with Southern food. It's amazing how everybody's got to have some opinion about what "Southern" is. Some believe that if the cornbread isn't like a rock and grisly, then it ain't real Southern cornbread. Or they'll say, "It's not like my grandma used to make." Well, we're doing our own style of Southern cuisine that's not your grandma's—and maybe that's a good thing.

### **But you don't mind admitting when you're wrong?**

We serve over 100,000 meals a year. I'm humble because they're not all right. We're talking about a lot of plates of food. And you know what? They're not all going to be perfect. I accept that. I don't accept that we ever do it on purpose. I don't accept that there's a false intention to sell something that isn't right. But we're going to make mistakes sometimes. And I accept that. There are times when I'll have to tell people, "We were wrong today. We didn't do it right. And it's not our standard." Having standards is a big deal.

### **What is your mission?**

I'm 45 years old. I'm not going to be one of the country's greatest chefs, I'm not. But that doesn't mean I can't have a commitment to what I'm doing and be suc-



cessful at it. Be grateful for what success you have and then try and enable the people around you to have success. If we had a cultural mission, that is what it is today.

# TODAY'S SPECIALS

WINE • Barrica

• PICPOUL de PINET

## SNACKS

- BEER BATTERED CATFISH FINGERS
- CRISPY GROPER CHEEKS
- COD CROQUETTES
- FOIE GRAS TORCHON

SPIRITS

MOONSHINE LEMONADE

SODA LAVENDER LIME

SOUR POTATO & FENNEL

SALAD CHARRED ROMAINE  
GOAT CHEESE, BUTTERNUT  
SQUASH, PEANUTS, PICKLED  
ONION, HERB VINAIGRETTE

## SALMON

LEMON PARSNIP PUREE  
APPLES, BUTTERNUT SQUASH, SWEET POTATOES 23

## GROPER

SWEET POTATO RISOTTO,  
SEASONAL VEGETABLES 26

## FLounder

FRIED POTATOES w/ BACON & HORSERADISH  
SEASONAL VEGETABLES 23

## FILET MIGNON

STEWED LENTILS  
CHESTNUT SAUCE 26

## SEARED DUCK BREAST

SMASHED POTATOES,  
BRUSSELS SPROUTS 19

## SHORT RIBS

SWEET POTATO HOME FRIES,  
CARROT PARSLEY SLAW 18

## DESSERT

### • FRIED PIES

--> peach

--> chocolate

pecan tartlet

w/ vanilla ice cream

• Pumpkin bread french  
toast w/ choc. mousse

### • PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE

• COCONUT CAKE

• Vanilla angel

food cake

w/ chocolate  
mousse

## ICE CREAM

• VANILLA

• CHOCOLATE

• PEANUT BUTTER

CHOCOLATE CHIP

# CONTENTS

Foreword ix

Introduction 1

Snacks 5

Seafood 25

Meat 49

Sides 83

Sauces & Dressings 113

Sweets 123

Cocktails 141

Index 153

## BLUE CRAB AND SCALLOP CAKES

Bay scallops are in season in north-central Florida starting on June 1. You can go anywhere along the Gulf of Mexico between Crystal River and St. Joseph's Peninsula to search for scallops. They live in shallow water, making them easy to dive for—a fun summer adventure for the whole family.

1 small onion	zest of 2 lemons
1 small carrot	juice of 2 lemons
2 stalks celery	salt and pepper
3 garlic cloves	1 cup coarse bread crumbs
1 generous tablespoon of butter	
1 pound fresh blue crab meat	
1 pound fresh bay scallops, chopped	
2 eggs	
½ bunch Italian parsley, finely chopped	
1 tablespoon Seafood Seasoning (page 47)	



### Makes 4–6 servings (depending on the size of the cakes)

To make a mirepoix, finely chop the onion, carrot, celery, and garlic. Place a tablespoon of butter in a large sauté pan and sweat the chopped onion, carrot, celery, and garlic on medium-high heat until the onions are translucent, approximately 2 minutes.

Mix all the remaining ingredients into the mirepoix and season with salt and pepper. Let stand in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to allow the bread crumbs to soak up all the juices.

Using an ice cream scoop or small ramekin, make the crab patties to your desired size, and pan fry each on medium-high heat in a small amount of vegetable oil for approximately 2 minutes on each side or until they are a nice golden brown on the outside.

Place the crab cakes on a lightly greased cookie sheet and bake for 20 minutes at 350°F.



See the Tartar Sauce recipe on page 121 for a great dipping sauce to go with these crab cakes.

Mirepoix (pronounced “meer-pwah”) is an aromatic vegetable mixture chosen by the cook to be the subtle background flavor, not the forward most dominating flavor in a dish. Often a combination of chopped celery, carrots, and onions, mirepoix proportions are usually 50% onion, 25% carrot, and 25% celery. Leeks are a great substitute for onions, and you can replace the carrots with parsnips for variety.



## BLUE GILL BURGER

Tom and Bryan at the University of Florida make our ground beef, which is dry aged, meaning it has less moisture or water content. The burger has a delicious rich smell and flavor.

I originally came up with this recipe for my kids, who are horrible about eating leftovers. This burger is a combination of beef and pork, covered in (yes!) pimento cheese and bacon.

We all like a little BBQ, but it's hard to finish a whole slab or shoulder, so here's a great use of those leftovers. This burger is our number one selling item at Blue Gill Quality Food. After the first bite, you won't want to put it down. It's absolutely decadent and just a little disgusting.

24 ounces ground beef

8 ounces cooked pork, shredded (BBQ  
ribs are the best, but pork shoulder or  
shank will work)

10–12 strips cooked bacon

Pimento Cheese (page 21)  
4 kaiser rolls, lightly toasted

**Makes four 8-ounce burgers**

Gently fold the pork into the beef and hand shape the burgers. Grill for 6 minutes on each side. Top with bacon and Pimento Cheese.



Sometimes you create a burger that needs nothing else, and this is one of them. Leave the ketchup in the refrigerator.