



SWEET POTATO COBBLER

“Momma?” Edna said.

“Yes, child?” she said.

“What we gonna eat?”

“Well,” she said, “how about some cobbler?”

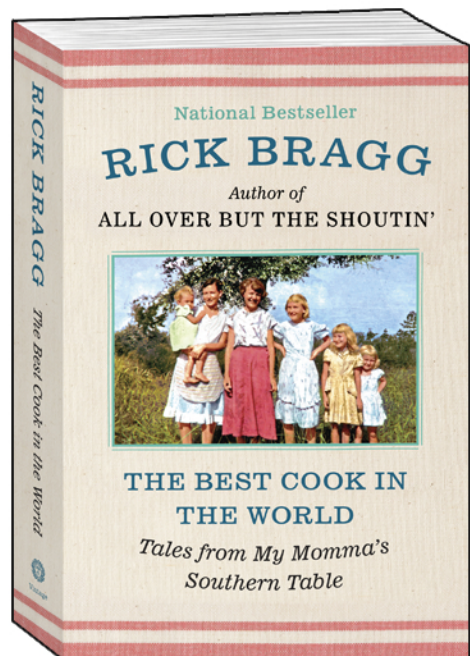
“Just cobbler?”

“Just cobbler.”

And the rejoicing commenced again.

(p.179)

In 1934 Rick Bragg’s grandmother, Ava, was faced with a harsh reality—her children were starving and hope was running out. She found herself with nothing in the pantry but a little flour, sugar, butter, milk, molasses, a few seasonings, and, blessedly, a mound of sweet potatoes. Ava took what little she had and delighted the children by making dessert for dinner, not just one, but two nights—first a sweet potato pie and then something new, a sweet potato cobbler. “There we was, in terrible shape, and the kids were dancing around with pie on their face,” she recalls. (p. 182) Her resourcefulness not only put food on the table for another day, but brought happiness in the darkest of times. We hope this recipe, and the others in *The Best Cook in the World*, inspire you to find beauty and pleasure in food and not just a means of survival.





SWEET POTATO COBBLER

INGREDIENTS:

3 pounds sweet potatoes
1 stick butter
1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
2 cups whole milk

METHOD:

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.

Bake your sweet potatoes, skin on, for about ½ hour. Cool, peel, and cut into big chunks. If they're medium-sized potatoes, you can split them lengthwise, and then cut across about three or four times. You do not want bite-sized pieces, but something bigger.

The size of your baking dish will determine your texture. If you want a crispier crust, use a bigger, shallower pan. If you want a fluffier, softer crust, use a smaller, deeper one.

My mother uses a pan that she would use for a large pound cake.

"You don't need no liquid in this. The sweet taters will make a little."

Pour in the sweet potatoes. Cut one stick butter into about six sections, and spread it out among the sweet potatoes. Sprinkle a little cinnamon, no more than a teaspoon, over the potatoes.

"The sweet is in the batter," she said.

Combine the flour and sugar, and stir in the milk, until you get a batter about the consistency of pancake batter or a little thicker. Pour about half of it over the sweet potatoes. Set the bowl down, pick up the baking dish, give it a gentle shake or two, then bang down, smartly but not hard enough to send batter flying or crack your baking dish, on the counter.

"Gets it shook down in there real good," she said.

Then pour the rest of the batter in, and sprinkle with your remaining cinnamon.

Bake for about 30 minutes or so, until the crust is golden brown.

This cobbler can be served as dessert, of course, but it can also be served as a side dish, particularly delicious with roast pork, even if you have to imagine the pork.