

## 9/11 EVENTS

Is your church, visual or performing arts organization, or civic group planning a special remembrance to mark the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11? Please email details about your event, including date, time and location, to Teri Greene at terigreene@gannett.com and also submit the information online at [montgomeryadvertiser.com/calendar](http://montgomeryadvertiser.com/calendar).

Events should be open to the public.

## HELOISE

### Wrinkle releaser

Dear Heloise: I read your column daily and enjoy it very much. I have a hint for you:

Often, I will take clothes out of my closet and find that they have creases or wrinkles in them. Rather than going through the hassle of taking out the iron, I set my blow-dryer on high and blow the wrinkles. Wrinkles usually will be gone in about 30 seconds. It really saves time in the morning when I'm getting ready for work, and it's great when traveling, too.

— A reader, via email

More Heloise, **PAGE 5E**

## SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY



### Club marks 60th anniversary

The Stars Social Club recently hosted a music-filled evening at the RSA Activity Center in honor of the group's 60th anniversary. Deborah Hayes Moore shares highlights from the "night of stars" on **PAGE 4E**.

## AUDITIONS

### Event open to area youth

The Montgomery Youth Orchestra will hold auditions beginning at 11 a.m. Sept. 10 in the choir room at Eastmont Baptist Church, 4505 Atlanta Highway.

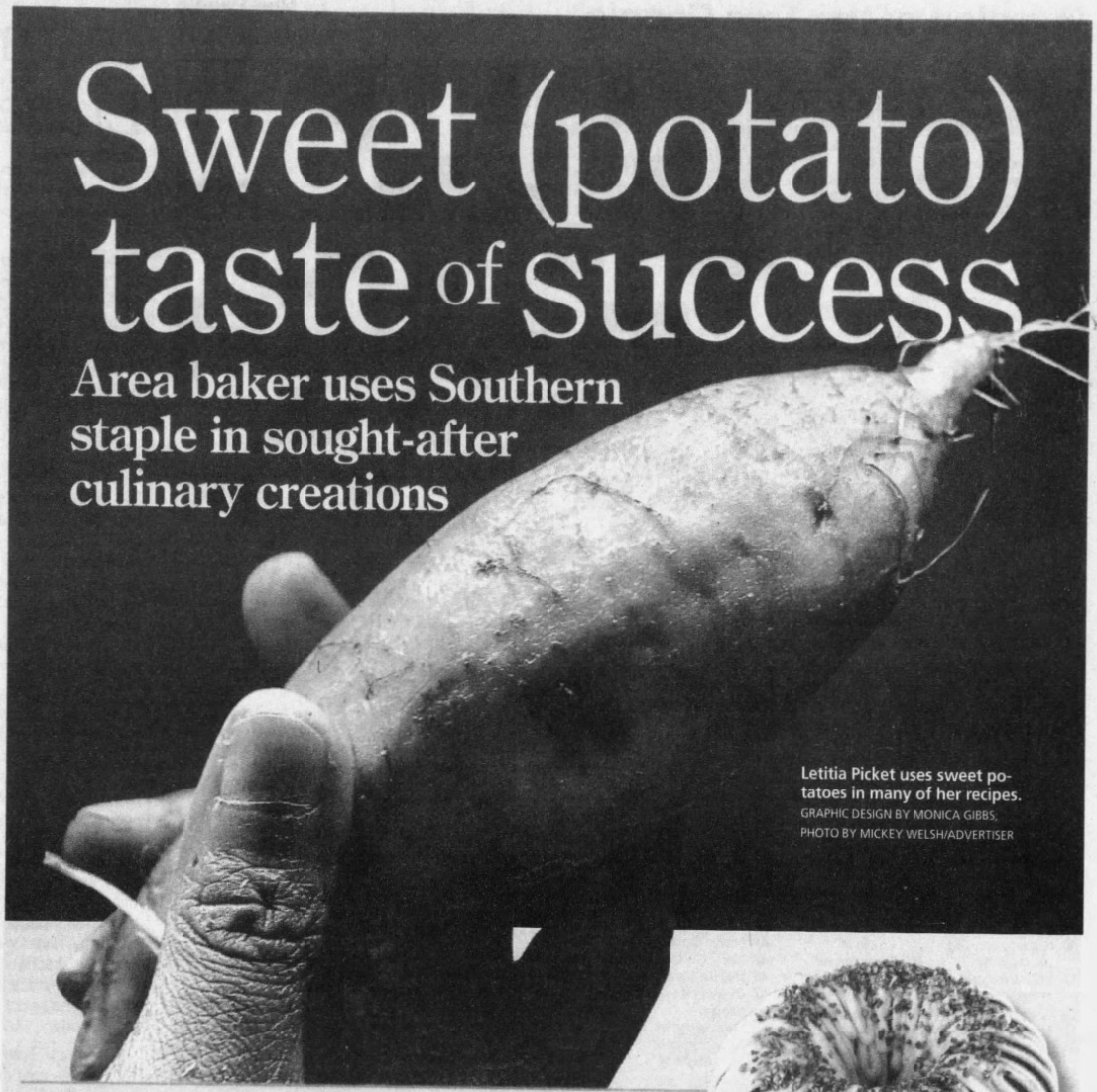
Auditions are open to high school students and musically advanced junior high school students ages 13 and up. The orchestral ensemble is seeking students who play the following instruments: violin, viola, cello, bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, French horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, percussion and harp.

Also that day, there will be a rehearsal from 9:45 to 11 a.m. for all returning, as well as prospective members. Those auditioning must participate in the rehearsal and are also required to play scales, sight-read and perform a solo piece.

To learn more, call 262-6154 or 377-8697.

# Sweet (potato) taste of success

## Area baker uses Southern staple in sought-after culinary creations



Letitia Pickett uses sweet potatoes in many of her recipes.

GRAPHIC DESIGN BY MONICA GIBBS.  
PHOTO BY MICKEY WELSH/ADVERTISER

By Nick Thomas  
Special to the Advertiser

In Southern restaurants, the sweet potato is most frequently served baked, smothered in butter and brown sugar. But to 35-year-old Montgomery native Letitia Pickett, the starchy root vegetable is more than a colorful side dish.

A year ago, Pickett formed her local home-based business, Des-Z's Potato Cones, which is named after her children, Destiny and Zechariah, and her first kitchen creation.

"The business began with a prayer request for something different to take to a work luncheon," Pickett said outside a classroom on the Auburn Montgomery campus, where she takes evening classes. "God gave me the recipe for mashed potato cones and all of the others came after that."

While the warm potato cones — made from mashed white potatoes and seven secret ingredients served in an ice cream cone — remain a popular seller, according to Pickett, most of her other creations feature sweet potatoes as the main ingredient. She sells dozens of homemade products at farmers markets in Montgomery and Tuskegee.

"My interest in sweet potatoes really began back in 2001, when I was pregnant with my son and I became anemic," Pickett said. "I was looking

for foods that were high in iron, and the sweet potato was perfect."

As she considered interesting ways to prepare sweet potatoes, Pickett then headed to her kitchen and began experimenting. Working with a recipe from her great-aunt, she came up with a killer sweet potato pie formula.

"Most people put eggs in their sweet potato pies, but I don't. So what makes the pie firm? I can't tell the secret!" she said, with a laugh. "But the pies are what I quickly became known for and I would make a couple of dozen each year for Thanksgiving and Christmas."

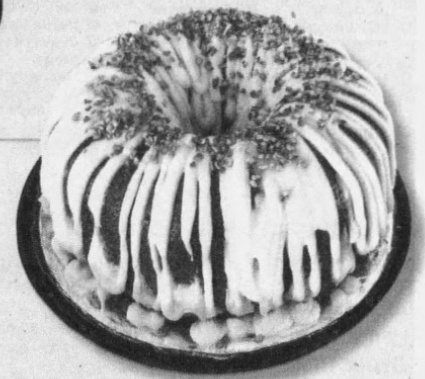
Other creations soon followed, and were promptly offered for "taste-testing" to her eager family, friends and coworkers.

"People would come over to my cubicle at work and ask what I had brought in for them to sample," she said. "One of their favorites was my sweet potato pound cake."

Pickett said she found a pound cake recipe about a year ago, and tweaked it until she was satisfied with the flavor and texture.

"You can eat it by itself, or with my special frosting. People seem to love it," she said.

Candra Thomas, who works for the Alabama Department of Educa-



Below, Letitia Pickett with her sweet potato products at the Garrett Coliseum Farmers Market; above Sweet Potato Pound Cake.

NICK THOMAS/SPECIAL TO THE ADVERTISER



See TASTE, Page 3E

# Savor the flavor of sweet potatoes

Though Letitia Pickett won't divulge the secret ingredients in her sought after potato cones and other culinary confections that incorporate sweet potatoes — which you can purchase at area farmers markets — here, writer Nick Thomas shares one of his family recipes:

## Sweet Potato Slice

- 4 ounces soft butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 cup cooked, mashed sweet potatoes
- ½ cup chopped pecans

## Frosting

- 2 ounces brown sugar
  - 1 ounce butter
  - 1 tablespoon milk
  - ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
  - ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
  - Pinch of ground cloves
  - 1 cup powdered sugar
  - ½ cup chopped pecans
- Beat butter, sugar and va-

nilla until light and creamy. Gradually add eggs, beating well after each addition. Fold in flour, baking soda, spices, sweet potatoes and nuts.

Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit, in a 8-by-12-inch greased pan for 30 minutes, or until firm. Cool in pan for 10 minutes, then turn onto a wire rack.

To make the frosting: Place brown sugar, butter, milk and spices in saucepan and stir over low heat until melted/dissolved. Remove from heat and beat in powered sugar until smooth. Spread over warm slice, and sprinkle with nuts.

— Recipe courtesy of Nick Thomas

# Can't afford lobster? Try a seafood salad roll

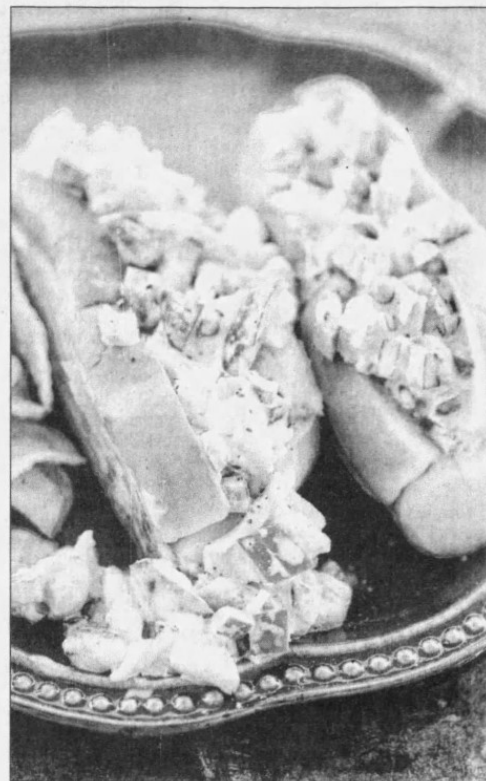
By J.M. Hirsch  
The Associated Press

Lobster rolls seem to just scream summer. And they scream it with lots of dollar signs.

So in an effort to have our summer and eat it too, I came up with this less costly alternative — a seafood salad with a rich mayonnaise sauce spiked with tangy capers and crunchy celery and red pepper.

Some people may roll their eyes at the inclusion of imitation lobster. But while it won't fool anyone into thinking it's the real thing when served on its own, it is totally respectable in a salad (not to mention cheaper and easier). Using real shrimp balances the salad out texturally, while smoked salmon lends a deliciously salty-savory flavor.

Not in the mood for a bun? This seafood salad also is great over greens.



This seafood salad boasts a rich mayonnaise sauce spiked with tangy capers, crunchy celery and red pepper.

MATTHEW MEAD/AP

## Tangy Seafood Salad Rolls

- 9 ounces cooked shrimp, shells and tails removed
- 8 ounces imitation lobster meat
- 8 ounces smoked salmon, finely chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, cored and diced
- 1 shallot, minced
- 3 stalks celery, finely diced
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 2 tablespoons drained capers

**Salt and ground black pepper**  
6 hot dog buns, toasted

Roughly chop the shrimp and lobster meat into bite-size chunks. In a large bowl, combine both with the smoked salmon. Mix in the red bell pepper, shallot and

celery, then set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk together mayonnaise, Dijon, hot sauce, lemon juice and capers. Add to the seafood and mix well to coat. Season with salt and pepper. Spoon into the hot dog buns.

# Taste

Continued from Page 1E

tion, is not a big sweet potato fan but said, "the sweet potato pound cake is very moist and delicious. I have taken baskets to my office and the staff just was shocked with the flavor. All of her products I have sampled were very pleasing to my taste buds."

In addition to the pound cake, Pickett's line of products includes muffins, cupcakes, pies, cake pops, waffles, cookies, rolls, chips, dessert pizza, parfaits and spreads — all based on the humble, yet apparently versatile sweet potato.

In addition, she produces specialty cakes such as Red Velvet, Carrot, Pineapple Upside Down, Peanut Butter/Chocolate, and Hummingbird — a spice cake with banana, pineapple and walnut/cream cheese frosting.

Pickett sells her products at the Garrett Coliseum Farmers Market on the first and third Saturdays of each month, and at the Tuskegee Market on the second and fourth Saturdays. But each week, the preparation begins a few days earlier with the purchase of a box of jumbo sweet potatoes.

"I like the Georgia-grown ones when they are available because their flesh is more orange, they have more beta

## WANT TO GO?

Letitia Pickett sells her products at the Garrett Coliseum Farmers Market from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on the first and third Saturday of each month, and from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Tuskegee Farmers Market on the second and fourth Saturday. To learn more about Pickett and Des-Z's Potato Cones, visit [deszpotatocones.com](http://deszpotatocones.com).

carotene and they are better tasting," she said.

Pickett said she then starts preparing Wednesday and Thursday evenings after her classes wrap up.

"Typically I'm up until 2 am Friday morning," she said. "I come home from work at 6 p.m. and cook all Friday night. Usually, I get to bed around 5 a.m. Saturday — if I'm lucky — for a couple of hours sleep. Then it's off to the market all day."

Her sweet potato pound cakes sell for \$25 (\$12 for half a cake). Pies are \$10 during the holiday seasons. A full price list can be found on her website, [deszpotatocones.com](http://deszpotatocones.com).

Although she works full-time in an office as an administrative support assistant and has just started an education degree at AUM, Pickett hopes to expand her cooking business and is already scouting locations for a store.

"It's going to be costly," she acknowledges. "I'll need another baker, a cashier, store hostess and lots of equipment. There are also licenses and health department regulations to follow.

"But I definitely want my own building in downtown Montgomery," she said.

In addition to crediting a little divine inspiration with her business's inception, Pickett finds strength from the same source in her busy life.

"It's tough getting my work, study, and cooking schedules all together each week," Pickett admits. "I just have to pray, pray, pray!"

Nick Thomas is a freelance journalist who lives in Millbrook.

HOME ACCENT

Categories Shown

50% Off

**Decorative Lamps**  
INCLUDES LAMP LIGHTS, NITE LIGHTS, LAMP SHADES, FINIALS, SHADE CHARMS & CORD COVERS.

**Wall Decor**  
INCLUDES MIRRORS, ART, CLOCKS, SHELVES & SEASONAL.

**Decorative Knobs, Drawer Pulls, Hooks & Brackets**

**Ceramics, Pottery & Polyresin**  
INCLUDES TABLE TOP, BLUE & WHITE, ORIENTAL, SOUTHWEST & SEASONAL AS WELL AS ITEMS FROM OUR CRAFT AND FLORAL DEPARTMENTS.

**Woven Baskets, Storage Baskets & Hampers**  
INCLUDES SEASONAL.

**Glassware**  
INCLUDES GLASS WITH DECORATIVE ACCENTS & GLASS FROM OUR CRAFT, FLORAL & SEASONAL DEPARTMENTS. ITEMS \$1.99 & HIGHER. EXCLUDES STAINED GLASS.

**Table Runners, Decorative Pillows, Throws, Tassels & Rugs**  
INCLUDES SEASONAL.

**Candles, Flameless LED Candles, Candle Holders & Reed Diffusers**  
INCLUDES SEASONAL. EXCLUDES TEALIGHTS, VOTIVES & VALUE PACKS.

**"Make It Christmas" Craft Parts & Materials**

**Unfinished Paper Maché Decor & Ornaments**  
INCLUDES EVERYDAY.

**Unfinished Figurines & Ornaments**  
INCLUDES

**Christmas Ornaments**  
INCLUDES CHRISTMAS BASICS & ROBERT STANLEY BLOWN GLASS.

**Decorative Treetops**  
INCLUDES METAL, PLASTIC & FABRIC ANGELS & SANTAS.

HOME ACCENT • BASKETS • SEWING NOTIONS • SEASONAL • CERAMICS • ART SUPPLIES • CARDS & PARTY SHOP • JEWELRY