



# SIMMONS CATFISH

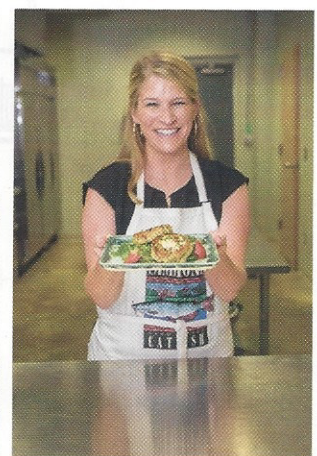
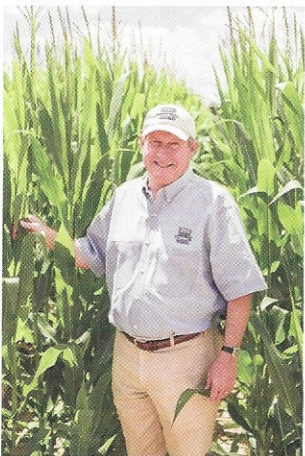
## A DEVOTED FAMILY

WRITTEN BY MITCHELL WALTERS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM + ALLI PHOTOGRAPHY

As Mark Twain once wisely declared, “The catfish is a plenty good enough fish for anyone.” Thanks to the fertile land blanketing the Delta, Mississippi has become the top producer of one of the most wholesome foods in the country: the catfish. For over thirty years, a family-owned and operated company in Yazoo City has dominated the catfish farming industry by raising, harvesting, processing and distributing flavorful, clean catfish.

Growing up on a handsome Delta farm, a young Harry Simmons dreamed of one day becoming a farmer. “This was a farming community and everyone worked in some type of agriculture,” recalls Harry. After graduating from college with a degree in Agricultural Economics, Harry eagerly returned to his roots. “I used a small piece of land that my dad gave me, purchased an additional 500 acres, and began farming.” Today, Harry works and lives on much of the same land that sparked his passion as a boy.

In 1974, Harry grew his first crop, cotton and soybeans, which produced an impressive, healthy harvest. However, the next year’s crop was a disappointment, and Harry sought economic stability. He laughs, “So, I began thinking about catfish.” Farming catfish was a new phenomenon in the Delta, and Harry was intrigued. “With the type of land that I was farming, catfish seemed to be the best thing to produce. My land has an abundance of water, and its clay-type soil holds water well.” Simmons Catfish was born.



Harry began stocking his first catfish ponds in 1978, and by 1982, his business was flourishing! “That’s when we created the Simmons Farmed Raised Catfish Processing Plant and began processing and selling our brand. We started selling locally at first, then branched out across the country,” says Harry. Simmons Catfish quickly became known for its exceptional quality and taste. “When we started, we hoped to process about 20-25,000 live pounds per week. Now, we process around 75-100,000 live pounds daily,” says Harry.

Often called the “super fish,” catfish is a low-cholesterol, high-protein source of heart-healthy Omega 3 fatty acids, offering 100% of the daily requirement for energy boosting vitamin B12. Willard Scott of the Today Show even famously proclaimed, “If I go down for anything in history, I would like to be known as the person who convinced the American People that catfish is one of the finest eating fishes in the world.”

The Simmons Catfish farm is located in the heart of the Delta, and their exquisitely clear ponds are supplied from spring fed aquifers found 100 feet below the soil, promising a product that is safe for the environment and a sustainable food source. Simmons Catfish feeds their farm-raised fish a mixture of grain, protein and vitamins, giving their catfish its signature taste – delicious, clean and fresh.

The Simmons love of catfish does not end with Harry. His daughter, Katy Simmons Prosser, is a remarkably talented chef. Trained at The French Culinary Institute (now known as The International Culinary Center), in New York City, Katy spent seven years working in the competitive food industry. In October 2012, Katy joined her father at Simmons Catfish, and immediately created a brand new Marketing division. She has developed an attractive website, featuring everything from recipes to Simmons Swag, and Katy successfully reaches clients and potential customers through social media. She also wows coworkers with her culinary skills. Katy laughs, “Since our office is in the middle of nowhere, we are usually cooking something all of the time!” Harry says with awe, “Katy has been able to strengthen our brand and reach more people than I certainly would. I am so pleased to have her here!”

Katy is devotedly carrying the family business into the future. She says, “We are very excited about what’s in store for Simmons Catfish. The consumer seems really interested in learning more about local farm-to-table companies and knowing where their food comes from these days. We hope to build on this excitement and make sure catfish continues to be the staple food of the south for many generations to come.”

There is no doubt Harry is delighted with Katy’s work and her innate enthusiasm for Simmons Catfish. “I am just encouraged that some of our younger generation is willing to get into the farming and agricultural community,” Harry admits. “As a family enterprise, I am so happy to have Katy involved. I also have a nephew who manages the farm at the plant. I am hoping they can continue this business if they want to. We will continue to grow our brand, a brand known for good quality and honest, dependable packing, service and delivery,” says Harry. “I look forward to them taking charge and continuing to pursue growth in the company as we have for the past 30 or more years.”

This dedicated family and their loyal team are committed to producing “Flavor fresh from the pond to your plate.” Katy says warmly, “Most Mississippians have very fond memories of growing up around a catfish fry with family, and I hope they feel a sense of pride that this southern dish comes from their home state.”

