**DEDICATION**

This recipe book contains all the loose recipes that I have collected during the past 50 years of our marriage. They have come from family, friends, co-workers, magazines and newspaper clippings and, labels from foods. I received my first recipes from my grandmother – Mama Franklin. It is to her in her memory I dedicate this book of recipes. She not only taught me most of what I know about cooking, but through her example, she instilled in me a love of cooking.

Mary Kate Blue Franklin was born on March 4, 1906. Her mother died during her childbirth and left her father to raise her. She shared with me many of her memories from those years growing up without a mother and trying to help her daddy with the work. He made a living as a farmer, but they were blessed to live near her mother’s sisters and aunts. Those ladies helped to mold her into the wonderful Southern lady who she was. One of her earliest memories of cooking was when she was five-years-old and her daddy made her a wooden block to stand on to reach the eyes of the wood stove. She cooked their breakfast before he left to go to the fields to farm. She had lunch ready for him when he came home from the fields and supper when he came in at the end of the day. When she started to school, she was blessed to live across the road from school. Her teachers knew how she did the cooking for her and her daddy and allowed her to leave school each day early enough to go home and prepare their lunch. Then after they ate, she walked back to school to finish her school work.

Although she only attended school through the eighth grade, she was one of the smartest ladies I have ever known – maybe not so much in book knowledge, but she learned volumes of life knowledge. At the end of her eighth grade, her daddy remarried and moved them to another part of the county. She continued to spend the majority of her time with her aunts, helping them take care of their children and grandchildren and learning more about cooking. By the time she was fifteen years old, she had met my granddaddy and they were soon married. They had two children, my mother Mary Frances and my uncle Joe (Pete).

Through her life she was always the one who seemed to take charge and make the decisions. It never seemed to bother my grandfather. Mama always used her cooking skills to help them make a living. In the mid-fifties, the town of Luverne had a gas line put in. At that time there were no real restaurants in town. My grandmother opened up her home for any or all the workers to come to her house at lunch and supper and eat. Everyday her dining table was filled with bowls and platters of homemade and home-cooked food. When the workers finished their pipe-line job, they moved on to their next work. But this experience left Mama Franklin with an “itch” to cook for people and watch them enjoy her cooking.

She rented a café on the main street in town; (ironically it belonged to Sam’s mother, given to her by her daddy). The main menu consisted of hamburgers , hotdogs and sandwiches. She loved not only the cooking, but seeing and talking and laughing with those who came into the café. When a restaurant opened at the edge of town, she rented that so she could prepare the kinds of food she had always cooked, i.e. fried chicken, all kinds of fresh vegetables and wonderful homemade desserts. I helped her after school, on holidays and week-ends from the time I was 13 until I was 21. I remember that you could get a meat, three vegetables, bread and coffee or tea for 65¢ and a piece of homemade pie for another 15¢. Mama wasn’t a very good business woman, but she sure could cook.

She was happiest when she had her family sit down and eat one of her meals. I guess that is another trait I inherited from her. One of the biggest differences between us was that I have hundreds and hundreds of recipes that I have collected over the years in addition to dozens of published cookbooks. Mama never had a cookbook when I was growing up. The only recipes she had were those on the sides of ingredients she might buy. Somehow she always knew exactly what to add to make a delicious dish. I hope that you enjoy trying some of the recipes in this book and think of the joy I have when I, too, prepare a dish for my family!

I love you,

Lou