

**EDNA VANCE
ADAMS
MUELLER
1893-1972**



**COOKING
SHOW
PIONEER**

Oklahoma City's 'Aunt Susan' beat Julia Child by about thirty years. She was cooking and giving out helpful hints from 1928 to 1943. This culinary pioneer was Edna Vance Adams.

Beginning in 1921, Susan Abercrombie penned a home economics column at The Daily Oklahoman as Aunt Susan, including recipes, quick tips, suggestions and entertaining musts. When she retired in 1928, her assistant Edna replaced her.

Edna Vance was born in March 1893 in Missouri. Around 1900, the family moved to Oklahoma City. She studied home economics at Oklahoma A&M College (now OSU), until the financial strain on her family halted that journey. In 1920, she married Martin Adams. He died around 1933.

'Aunt Susan' became a star of newspaper, radio and kitchen. She produced a cooking column, hosted one of the first five-days-a-week radio cooking shows, and conducted annual cooking shows that attracted thousands. Of the 5,000 recipes she published, her Aunt Bill's Brown Candy – published on December 10, 1928 – became a holiday tradition. Because letters requesting the recipe arrived every year, she reprinted the recipe for the next fifteen years. The tradition continues today.

In December 2008, renowned food blogger and Oklahoma-native Molly Wizenberg published the recipe in Bon Appetit magazine. Search the internet to find this recipe and an easier microwave version by Melba Brown.

In addition to her column, Edna began a weekday radio show when the Oklahoma Publishing Company acquired WKY in 1928, where she cooked while delivering a running commentary. The station built the first studio test kitchen in the nation. Over the years, 48,000 women visited her elaborately equipped laboratory-studio-kitchen which was always open to visitors.

But it was Edna's cooking schools that eclipsed the other facets of her popularity. From 1931 to 1942, she staged an annual week-long cooking affair that attracted over 25,000 at the Coliseum (now Farmers Market), and later at the Municipal Auditorium (now Civic Center Music Hall). Participants received a souvenir booklet of recipes.

In 1935, Adams went on a luxury trip to tour European restaurants – at the newspaper's expense – an extravagance during the Dust Bowl and Great Depression. The adventure included a transatlantic voyage on the French steamer Normandie and visits to the kitchen of the French president and Buckingham Palace, where she filed columns about European eateries.

In 1943, after being fired for an affair with a married newsroom employee, Edna married Oklahoman reporter Harold Mueller and moved to New York City, to become food editor for McCall's Magazine. In 1947, she moved to General Mills and its "Betty Crocker Magazine of the Air". It was the first-ever daily culinary television – making her a national television star. Eventually she moved to Evergreen, Colorado where she died in September 1972.

People may not remember Aunt Susan but her Aunt Bill's Brown Candy recipe, a cross between praline and fudge, is still a holiday season tradition. If you can't spend the 3½ hours to prepare this masterpiece, The Woody Candy Company in Oklahoma City has you covered.