Michael W. Twitty: The Cooking Gene

Tuesday, February 12, 2019 - 5:00pm
CHC Events Hall

Commonwealth Honors College Annual Black History Month Celebration

The Cooking Gene: Tracing My African American Story through Food

For African American culinary historian Michael W. Twitty there was a giant hole in the story of American cooking as big as the one in the story of most African American families. Putting the microscope on himself, Michael decided to fully trace out his family history through the story of Southern and American food. Using genetic research, historic interpretation, nature study, heirloom gardening and interviews with contemporary voices in food, his journey led him back to his family’s origins in West and Central Africa and a front ring seat in the debate over race and food in American life.

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Talk followed by Reception

featuring Michael Twitty's recipes prepared by nationally renowned UMass Dining Services

Event co-sponsors: UMass Amherst College of Humanities and Fine Arts, UMass Amherst Academic Departments of History, Hospitality & Tourism Management, Judaic & Near Eastern Studies, Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies and the W.E.B. DuBois Department of Afro-American Studies. UMass Amherst Student Success/Residential Academic Programs, Center for Multicultural Advancement and Student Success,
Michael W. Twitty is a recognized culinary historian and independent scholar focusing on historic African American food and folk culture and culinary traditions of historic Africa and her Diaspora. He is a living history interpreter and historic chef, one of the few recognized international experts of his craft—the re-construction of early Southern cuisine as prepared by enslaved African American cooks for tables high and low—from heirloom seeds and heritage breed animals to fish, game, and foraged plant foods to historic cooking methods to the table. Twitty is also the webmaster of www.Afroculinaria.com, the first website/blog devoted to the preservation of historic African American foods and foodways. Michael Twitty’s book, The Cooking Gene, won two James Beard Awards in 2018 for Food Writing and Best Book.