

# Quality is the Key for Simmons Catfish

BY GENNIE TAYLOR

Placing emphasis on quality, Simmons Farm Raised Catfish has been a successful leader in the catfish industry for almost 40 years produces millions of pounds of fish each year on the company's farm in Yazoo City.

Simmons Catfish sets quality as their priority, said Katy Simmons Prosser, Marketing and Brand Development Director and daughter to founder Harry Simmons, Jr.

"Quality is a key difference for us at Simmons," Prosser said. "It is something we are known for in the catfish industry. About half of our products are hand cut, which also makes our product stand out for its clean presentation. We also chill our fish immediately upon arrival to the plant which keeps our fish as fresh as possible."

"Also, with more and more people understanding and caring where their food comes from, we hope people will start to choose U.S. grown catfish when given the choice," Prosser said.

Farm-raised catfish is the largest aquaculture industry in the United States and Simmons is one of the largest catfish farms in the state of Mississippi.

In 2005, the U.S. catfish industry produced 600 million pounds of catfish from 165,000 pond water acres. Mississippi produced 350 million pounds, or 55 percent, of all U. S. catfish production in 2005, and Mississippians produced this amount in only 100,000 pond water acres.

Today, Simmons Catfish produces between 18-20 million pounds of catfish per year on more than 2,000 acres.

The Simmons family has perfected the art of producing some of the highest quality catfish in the country on the Simmons Catfish farm. Simmons Catfish's production plant

employs around 250 people. Many of these employees include friends and family members such as Prosser.

A trained chef, Prosser, was brought into the family business to help create and promote more flavorful ways to enjoy Simmons Catfish.

"Simmons Catfish is a family-owned operation that was started by my father, Harry Simmons, in 1982 and we have bright plans for the future with many new faces coming aboard in recent years including myself and my husband, Andy Prosser," Katy Simmons Prosser said. "Plus, our cousin, Dan Bradshaw, is our farm manager, so there are lots of family

members involved with Simmons Catfish."

In the 1970s, Harry Simmons returned to the Mississippi Delta, after spending time in the Army and at college, with plans to farm. He began farming cotton and soybeans, but by the late 70s, he began to think about a different crop – catfish. Simmons describes this crop as "a clean, sustainable food that can

provide delicious year-round nutrition for American families even as it protects and nurtures the environment."

Using his resources, including the rich alluvial soil of the Mississippi Delta, Simmons began to replace his fields with ponds supplied by 100-feet below ground aquifers.

Simmons began stocking ponds and growing acreage. By 1982, Harry Simmons opened his catfish processing plant, giving him the opportunity to market his catfish and develop a brand that would come to be known for its quality.

In addition, Simmons Catfish oversees all environmental control and production aspects of the farming internally,



safeguarding the utmost highest quality products to include whole catfish, fillet cuts, nuggets, catfish steaks, breaded products, marinated fillets, hushpuppies, breeding, and gift packs.

"Fillets are our best-selling item," Prosser said. "We have many sizes ranging from small 2-4 ounce fillets to large 9-12 ounce fillets. Of all the sizes, 3-5 fillets are probably the most popular since this is what most people like to fry."

In addition to the traditional favorites, Simmons Catfish continues to bring new products to their customers.

"Our Delacata is one of our newest products," Prosser said. "It is a center cut of a fillet that is hand trimmed removing any fat or skin layer making it the finest cut of catfish available."

Prosser said the company sells directly to restaurants, grocers, and distributors.

"Some of our biggest customers are Cock of the Walk, Cracker Barrel, and Jerry's Catfish House," she said. "Local grocers like McDade's, Piggly Wiggly, and Save-a-lot are good spots to find our fish too."

"Our trucks travel all over the Southeast, but one of our biggest customers is a fish market in Los Angeles."

In addition, Simmons Catfish has an online store that ships all over the US. And many patrons shop for Simmons Catfish the "old-fashioned" way. They "come out to our farm to buy directly from us," Prosser said.

Harry Simmons has set a standard in the catfish industry for high-quality catfish. That quality assurance is expected to be maintained by all employees of Simmons Catfish where they have the company motto of "Quality is everyone's business."

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From left, Harry Simmons, Jr., President of Simmons Catfish; Katy Simmons Prosser, Marketing and Brand Development Director; and Dan Bradshaw, Farm Manager.



## PAN-FRIED DELACATA WITH LEMON, BUTTER AND CAPER SAUCE

1 stick butter  
1 (5 to 6-ounce) Delacata fillet  
Salt  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour  
1 tablespoon capers  
2 large lemons, juiced

Melt butter in large skillet over medium high heat. Season fillet with salt and pepper; then lightly dust with flour. When butter is hot, add fillet presentation-side down. Cook 3 to 4 minutes or until golden brown. Carefully turn fillet; cook 3 to 4 more minutes or until done. Remove from skillet and set aside.

Add capers to skillet. Cook 30 seconds. Remove skillet from heat and carefully add lemon juice. Stir to combine; season with salt and pepper.

Plate Delacata fillet and drizzle with caper sauce.

## MR. BILL'S PAN SAUTÉED CATFISH

2 tablespoons butter, melted  
1 teaspoon Tony Chachere's Creole Seasoning  
4 teaspoons Cavender's Greek Seasoning  
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided  
6 Simmons Delacata Style Catfish or 5-7 ounce fillets

Combine butter, Tony's, Cavender's, and 4 tablespoons olive oil in bowl.

Wipe the catfish dry and marinate in butter mixture for 30 minutes or up to 2 hours.

Heat a sauté or grill pan to medium heat with 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Put catfish in pan, presentation side down. Cook for 15 minutes then turn and cook for 5 minutes more.

Serve with sauce of your choice or as a catfish sandwich.  
Servings: 6

*Bill Meeks has been an important part of the Simmons team for almost 30 years. You can often find him in the kitchen preparing catfish in many different ways. This has become his favorite preparation especially for the Delacata Style Catfish.*



## KATY'S CATFISH CAKES

3-4 (3-5 ounce) Simmons Catfish Fillets  
Olive oil  
Tony Cachere's Creole Seasoning  
Pepper  
1/3 cup mayonnaise  
1/4 cup minced red onion  
1/4 cup minced red bell pepper  
2 tablespoons minced celery  
1-1/2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 egg white, lightly beaten  
1-1/4 cups panko breadcrumbs, divided  
Salt and pepper  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter



Season catfish fillets with olive oil, Tony's seasoning, and pepper. Bake in oven for 20 minutes at 375 degrees. Let catfish cool and then crumble.

Combine mayonnaise and next 5 ingredients with catfish and 3/4 cup panko breadcrumbs in a large bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Form into patties, then dredge patties in remaining panko. Place in freezer for 15 minutes before cooking.

Heat 2 tablespoons butter in a nonstick skillet over medium high heat. Add cakes to pan; cook 10 minutes or until lightly browned and cooked through; turning once.

Serve with Comeback sauce or red pepper aioli.  
Serves 6 cakes or 12 mini cakes