



## A Wonder-ful Caterer

WHEN STEVIE WONDER came to town late last summer on his first tour in 10 years, concert organizers were looking for a caterer. Patricia Griffith's name came up. Before she knew it, Griffith, whose company is called Southern Oven, was feeding the legendary artist and his crew at the Sleep Train Pavilion in Concord.

"I rank the experience up there with giving birth to my daughter," says Griffith, a bubbly woman prone to bursts of dancing in the kitchen. "It was a very spiritual, religious moment for me. It was magical. Stevie Wonder was like the walking messiah that night."

Griffith's backstage menu was a Southern extravaganza that included everything from a lightly spicy gumbo, to golden fried chicken, to tender sliced tri-tip of beef with an herbaceous pot liquor gravy, to rich macaroni and cheese. And Texas chocolate cake and lemon chess pie for dessert.

Southern Oven's food was a hit with Wonder, who specifically requested that Live Nation, the show's promoter, work with a local minority caterer. Griffith had worked with Live Nation before at the Brian McKnight concert at Oakland's Paramount Theatre. "I would have to say that I think Stevie liked the food," says Griffith, who served similar fare at her Walnut Creek restaurant, which she closed in 2005 to start her catering business. Wonder normally requests grilled chicken breast and Diet Coke, but after sampling Griffith's food before the show—at the insistence of crew members who had enjoyed their preshow meal—Wonder put in a special request for a fried chicken dinner after the show. Griffith obliged, arranging a fresh batch of fried chicken to send Wonder on his way.

This holiday season, Griffith is available for catering, and local grocery stores will be selling her line of baked goods, which retail under the Southern Oven label. The offerings include monkey bread, yeasted pull-apart rolls that are perfect with holiday meals, and desserts such as a rum-raisin bread pudding made from the monkey bread, caramel pecan pie, red velvet cake, and sweet potato pie.

*Southern Oven, (925) 706-7037, [www.southernoven.com](http://www.southernoven.com). You can find Southern Oven products at Whole Foods, Susan Foord Catering and Diablo Foods in Lafayette, and Andronico's. —Kathryn Jessup*