



In **Paula Deen's** kitchen, no one is a stranger and she likes to keep it that way. A native of Albany, Georgia, Paula Deen never dreamed she would become an American icon. Paula was living the American dream—married to her high school sweetheart and mother of two adorable boys when tragedy struck. Her parents died, her marriage failed and she began a prolonged battle with agoraphobia. With her boys in their teens and her family near homelessness, Paula took her last \$200, reached deep inside and started “The Bag Lady,” a home-based meal delivery service that marked the start of Paula’s professional cooking. With sons Jamie and Bobby delivering “lunch-and-love-in-a-bag,” beginning in June 1989, Paula turned around her life by using what she knew best, traditional Southern cooking.

Paula has become an American phenomenon, overcoming poverty, doubt and agoraphobia to achieve success and acclaim she could never have imagined. Yet the most remarkable part of Paula Deen’s journey from her kitchen to fame and fortune is that Paula has remained every bit as genuine, real and full of love as the first meals to leave her kitchen.

The Bag Lady brought out Paula’s strengths and stabilized her family. She began cooking outside her home and started preparing meals at a Best Western motel in Savannah and finally opening her first restaurant, The Lady and Sons, with Bobby and Jamie five years later. The restaurant was a hit and the popularity of Paula and her cooking led to her first cookbook, 1998’s *The Lady and Sons Savannah Country Cookbook*. The book gave her fans the opportunity to try Paula’s recipes at home, and led to her first television appearance on QVC. Paula’s genuine warmth and folksy personality made her a natural for television. ...

## Paula Deen

### Speech Topics

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