

# SMITHEY IRONWARE

A MODERN CLASSIC

BY GINNY HEARD

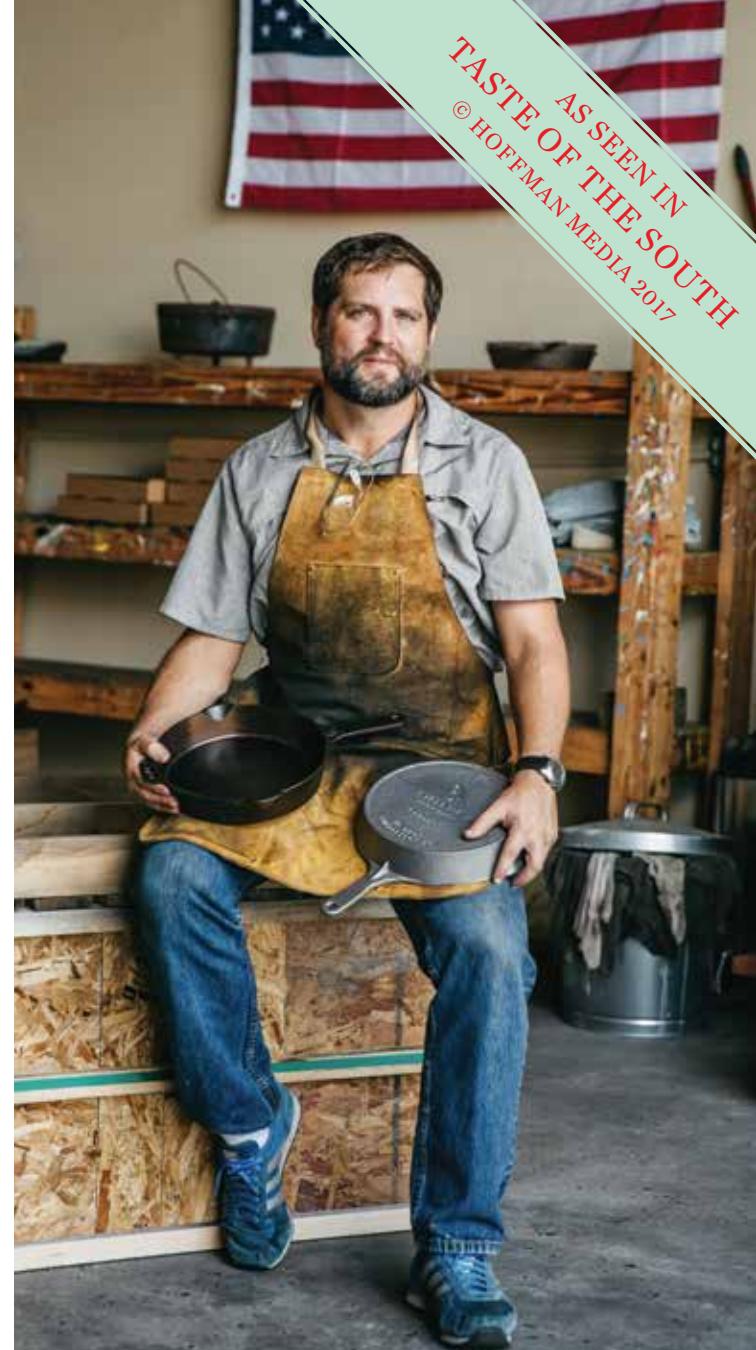
A sturdy stalwart of the Southern kitchen, the cast-iron skillet has long been relied on as a faithful vessel for bringing our best recipes to life. But as devotion to cast iron grows and those who were once mere admirers become avid collectors, one begins to wonder—is there enough to go around?

Enter our reverence for the cast-iron creators of today. One such cast-iron maker with a fast-growing following is Isaac Morton, creator and owner of Smithey Ironware, based in Charleston, South Carolina. His beautiful, highly crafted skillets have become a beacon to those searching for modern, quality cookware with traditional craftsmanship. The design of his pieces is so classic and their surfaces so smooth that one would think Isaac had apprenticed in the hallowed halls of long-gone foundries, or at the very least, had a family tradition handed down to him. But Isaac's curiosity in the cast-iron world was first sparked when his sister-in-law gave him a vintage Griswold skillet. "Before that, I had always enjoyed cooking with cast iron, but I'd never really cooked on the smooth surface of a vintage skillet," Isaac says. "I'd always struggled to get comfortable with the grainy surfaces of the more modern pieces."

The Griswold skillet opened his eyes to the craftsmanship that went into each piece of vintage cast iron. He began reading collectors' books and amassed cast-iron pieces to restore. "They made great gifts to people who appreciated cooking and artistry," Isaac explains. But the more he learned about the history of cast iron, the more he felt there was something missing. "I realized there was a gap—the cast-iron foundries that produced these premium pieces were lost 50 or 60 years ago," he says. "So I started trying to figure out how to create a modern piece that represents the quality of those older pieces."

He began by learning about the foundry industry and cast-iron cookware design. He reached out to foundries about producing new pieces and received rejections. Finally, in late 2014, he identified a foundry that was a fit. "I think it takes a heavy dose of curiosity and the ability to be comfortable with failing a few times," Isaac says. "I don't have a metal-smithing background, but I do have a good feel for how products are designed." He started working with a designer in Charleston to create a model for the foundries to work from, and as samples came in and problems arose, Isaac faced each hurdle head-on. "It takes a lot of time and effort, but I enjoy the design and product challenge," he says. "It's so rewarding once you know you've created something great."

He knew that he wanted his pieces to be premium cast iron, and he took time to consider what this meant to him. "Surface smoothness is the most important aspect to me," Isaac says. His pieces are hand-ground and seasoned in his workshop in Charleston, and the end result is a perfect glassy surface. "The design and weight also need to be beautiful and



functional—something you can get comfortable with so you can sear with authority," he says.

Because of the high quality and usability of the Smithey Ironware skillets, they are bound to be passed down as family heirlooms. "You have to work pretty hard to destroy a cast-iron skillet," Isaac laughs. "And even then you can usually bring it back to life. They last nearly forever—they'll outlast you!" Yes, cast iron's shelf life is lengthy, but the last thing Isaac wants you to do is keep it on a shelf. "I want it out on your stove, ready for its next use," he says. With their beauty and functionality, these skillets don't belong anywhere else. 🍳

Visit the Smithey Ironware website, [smitheyironware.com](http://smitheyironware.com), to learn more and to purchase your own heirloom skillet.