

Southern-Fried Speech

It's not unusual for Lola and me to be at the Countryside Café on Mahan Gap Road, about 10 miles west of Cleveland. It's one of our favorite places, and it features good Southern cooking.

On a Saturday a few weeks ago, we had been seated and had just ordered our food when Lola called my attention to a framed poster on the wall behind me. It was entitled *The South*, and I feel I should share what it said to enlighten folks – especially Northerners and Westerners – about our Southern speech. Here is what was listed on the poster:



That last expression likely needs some amplification. Any good Southerner will often use the phrase *Bless his (or her) heart*. Translated, it means *poor thing*, and is usually added before or after a gentle insult or when expressing genuine concern.

What you have read here is just a taste of Southern expressions.

Many Southerners, compared with residents in other parts of the United States, tend to speak slightly slower. So don't be impatient, *for heaven's sake* (another phrase you will hear quite a bit).

Know that some words gain additional syllables, while others may lose a syllable or two.

Southern speech is different; some folks find it charming, while others – not so much.

(more)

In any conversation, Southerners mostly agree with the admonition in the Bible:

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person (Colossians 4:6 ESV).

And that's good advice, no matter where in the country you may live.

– Beecher Hunter