



# Office of the City Clerk

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## Legislation Text

File #: R2022-297, Version: 1

### **SALUTE TO MOTHER WADE & JOSEPHINE'S SOUTHERN COOKING**

WHEREAS on March 8, 2022, Josephine Wade, affectionately known as Mother Wade, joins this city's growing ranks of octogenarians; and

WHEREAS, Mother Wade operates Josephine's Southern Cooking, a landmark of the Chatham neighborhood. It is now the oldest African American woman-owned soul food restaurant in Chicago, outliving the city's other iconic soul food restaurants such as Army & Lou's, Izola's, Edna's, Soul Queen, and Gladys' Luncheonette. She has fed countless celebrities such as 50 Cent, MC Hammer, Busta Rhymes, LL Cool J, Vickie Winans, and all the best-known gospel singers; and

WHEREAS, Mother Wade's journey began in Forrest City, Arkansas, known as the "Jewel of the Delta" where she learned to cook breakfast, lunch, and dinner to help feed the family. She cooked because her mother was pregnant and had to work in the field every day. After attending culinary school in Phoenix, she moved to Chicago in 1960 where she worked at The Courthouse restaurant in Hyde Park's Harper Court and then as a dietitian for the University of Chicago; and

WHEREAS Mother Wade started catering when she was pregnant with her son, making food for bar mitzvahs, Passover, and other events. Since 1963, she has remained in business through three restaurants. Wade opened Captain Smith Seafood restaurant at 353 E. 79th St. with Rupert "Captain" Smith, who would become her second husband. In 1967 and in the '80s, she operated a catering truck to serve people working at the Cook County courthouse at 26<sup>th</sup> and California. In 1987, she opened Captain's Hard Time Dining, a seafood restaurant that closed after two decades in business; and

WHEREAS today Mother Wade runs Josephine's Southern Cooking at 436 E. 79th St. where many of the famous have enjoyed a meal. The reigning queen of Chicago soul food served the Queen of Soul whenever Aretha Franklin was in town. "I specialized in Aretha's gumbo," Wade said. "She liked gumbo and chitlins. And then when she got so she couldn't eat that food, then mostly she would just eat turkey and a little dressing" They were planning to write a cookbook together just before Franklin passed in 2018; and

WHEREAS Josephine Wade runs more than a restaurant. She takes care of the homeless. Pastors send their congregants. People ask for all manner of advice and even help with their legal issues. "I don't know why they think I can solve everything, and I can't," she said. "But I do get it done." In 2017, the city designated the corner of 79th Street and Vernon Avenue, steps from the restaurant, as "Honorary Mother Josephine Wade Way". In 2019, the Food Network's makeover show, "Restaurant: Impossible", remodeled the main dining room of the restaurant in two days. During the pandemic, Mother Wade delivered thousands of community-funded meals to homebound seniors and health-care workers; and

WHEREAS Wade's recipes for shrimp etouffee and hush puppies have been published in a new trade cookbook, "Savor Our World," by the food service company at McCormick Place. Josephine's has a location at the convention center open only during shows. "I've waited a lifetime to be in a book," Wade said. Her son, Victor Love, who co-owns the business with his mother, plans to duplicate their relationship with McCormick Place at O'Hare Airport, as well as expanding to other cities. He is also working on two new concepts inspired by his mother; Josie's, a total Southern and Creole breakfast experience to be coming in 2022 and, in 2023, "J's", a soul food campus restaurant with small plates and real upscale food. Josie's, is planned for the Logan Square neighborhood near Division Street and Clybourn Avenue, and J's is planned for opening on the South Side; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Roderick Sawyer, Alderman of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ward, has informed this august body of Mother Josephine Wade's milestone occasion; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that we, the mayor, and members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered together this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of March 2022 AD, do hereby offer our heartiest congratulations to Mother Josephine Wade on the occasion of her 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday extend our best wishes for success in all her future endeavors.

RODERICK T. SAWYER Alderman - 6<sup>th</sup> Ward

BE IT FURTHERRESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to Mother Josephine Wade.