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Article Summary: Today the name Duncan Hines is associated only with packaged foods, but in the middle of the twentieth century, Duncan Hines was a food critic whose recommendations strongly influenced American's restaurant choices.

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Photographs / Images: Sign: Recommended by Duncan Hines, Author "Adventures in Good Eating", "Along the Highways of America", Approved 1949

Recommended by  
Duncan Hines

## *Isn't that a Cake Mix?*

*Today the name Duncan Hines is associated only with packaged foods, but in the middle of the twentieth century, when the Lone Oak boasted a Duncan Hines endorsement, he was a food critic whose recommendations strongly influenced Americans' restaurant choices.*



From the 1930s through most of the 1950s his regularly published restaurant guides, *Adventures in Good Eating*, steered American diners to the best eating establishments nationwide.

Hines set high standards not only for the quality of the food, but also for cleanliness, and diners knew that a restaurant with a Duncan Hines recommendation was almost always one in which Hines himself had eaten and personally endorsed.

His inspections were always conducted anonymously, and he always paid for his meals. After eating, he would request a tour of the kitchen. If he found the food superior, and the establishment

spotless, he would leave, never revealing his identity. A few weeks later the establishment would receive a letter informing them that they would be included in his next guide.

Hines also owned the "Recommended by Duncan Hines" signs and rented them to approved restaurants. If a restaurant's quality fell below his standards, he would simply remove the sign.

The Duncan Hines recommendation for the Lone Oak marked it as an exceptional eatery and, no doubt, contributed to making it both popular and profitable. ☐

(See Louis Hatchett, *Duncan Hines: The Man Behind the Cake Mix*, (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), 88, 129.