

## On the Scene at Paula Deen's First Public Appearance

Saturday, September 14, 2013, by [Eater Staff](#)

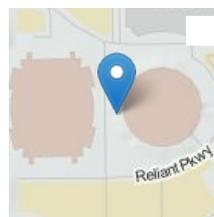
Here now, a report from [Amber Ambrose](http://amberambrose.com) <<http://amberambrose.com>> at Houston's Metro Cooking and Entertaining Show, where **Paula Deen** made her first public appearance since [PaulaDeenGate](http://eater.com/tags/paula-deen-gate) <<http://eater.com/tags/paula-deen-gate>> .



[Photo: [Eric Sauseda](http://groovehouse.carbonmade.com) <<http://groovehouse.carbonmade.com>> ]

"Paula! Paula! Paula!" chanted the crowd at the Metro Cooking and Entertaining Show in Houston, Texas as they awaited the first public appearance of **Paula Deen** in three months.

Deen's hiatus was brought about by a [public relations nightmare](http://eater.com/archives/2013/06/26/watch-paula-deen-defend-herself-on-the-today-show.php) <<http://eater.com/archives/2013/06/26/watch-paula-deen-defend-herself-on-the-today-show.php>> surrounding her deposition <<http://eater.com/archives/2013/06/20/heres-the-racist-paula-deen-deposition-transcript.php>> in a now-dismissed lawsuit <<http://eater.com/archives/2013/08/23/paula-deen-lawsuit-dismissed-after-settlement.php>> , in which she admitted to using racial slurs. The surrounding fallout eventually led to the non-renewal of her Food Network show <<http://eater.com/archives/2013/06/22/paula-deen-comments-on-end-of-food-network-contract.php>> as well as millions of dollars in [lost endorsements](#)



**RELIANT CENTER**  
8400 Kirby Dr, Houston,  
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<http://eater.com/archives/2013/06/26/paula-deen-endorsements.php> .

But no one in the crowd seemed to have anything but love for the Southern chef, many traveling hours to see Deen's first appearance since the scandal. A few even donned pageant-style sashes with words of support for the Deen family, shirts that read "**Team Paula Deen**," and a homemade sign that read, "Deen brothers: we support your mama."



[Photo: Amber Ambrose]

"I came for Paula Deen," said Dr. Rita Poimbeauf, who traveled two and a half hours from Port Lavaca, Texas for the occasion.

"She's a wonderful TV personality," said Poimbeauf. "There was no reason for that frenzy to cause her such hardships. We support her."

Show attendee Beverly Brock added, "I love Paula. I love her food. I love all the butter. I love her."

Twenty minutes after the scheduled appearance, Deen's sons Bobby and Jamie finally walked on stage. Revving up the already anxious crowd, Bobby introduced "the most caring and loving woman on this earth," right before Paula took to the stage.

Clutching a tissue and dabbing her misty, waterproof mascara-clad eyes, Paula was too overcome with emotion to utter a word as the crowd roared for a full two minutes.



[Photo: [Eric Sauseda <http://groovehouse.carbonmade.com>](http://groovehouse.carbonmade.com) ]

"These are tears of joy, y'all," said Paula, finally speaking. "This is my first time out in three months. The one place I would take my one step back out is Texas, because Texas is full of loving, forgiving folks and y'all's hearts are as big as y'all's state."

Gathering more composure Paula continued, "As y'all know — unless you've been under a rock — I had a little rough patch this Summer, but you know it was an opportunity to learn. I learned a lot about myself. I certainly learned a lot about my business, and I just want to thank y'all from the bottom of my heart. Hi. I'm back."

After bringing her husband Michael Groover up to the stage, as well as a few additional family members, and kissing Bobby, Jamie, and Michael repeatedly, Paula finally settled into the cooking demonstration, but not before making a playful comment about her new daughter-in-law's (Bobby's new wife) peacock-patterned pants.



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[Photos: Eric Sauseda <<http://groovehouse.carbonmade.com>> ]

"We live in such a serious world," said Paula. "Everything is taken so seriously, so it's always been my wish for y'all to come back in and enjoy being with my family and forget about everything that hurts you. I love y'all."

Chicken pot pies, a cucumber-tomato salad, and a peanut butter pie were on the menu, though it took Paula a little time to focus on the task at hand. At times she wandered

around the stage, forgetting what task she had just started, chalking it up to how "excited" she was to see everyone in the audience. However, it was so noticeable at one point someone in the audience whispered audibly, "She's a bit loopy, isn't she?"

Right about that time — 15 minutes after Paula took the stage — show organizers ushered media members out of the theater (though the show was definitely not a sell-out), including several from Houston-based websites and newspapers in addition to all of Houston's major television stations. Though it's not standard procedure to ban media from an event a mere 15 minutes after it's begun, no one else seemed fazed by the abrupt, forced exit.

Luckily, tickets were still on sale for \$63, though some had paid as much as **\$400 for VIP seats** to the event.

After missing what a PR representative for the show described as Paula "overwhipping the cream for the peanut butter pie — there's your scandal," Eater came back in as Deen was passing around bowls of food for the guests in the front of the audience to taste, but "no double dippin' y'all!"

"I needed to be here with y'all so bad," said Paula, before directing them to a representative selling tickets to the annual Paula Deen cruise this January.



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[Photos: Eric Sauseda <<http://groovehouse.carbonmade.com>> /Amber Ambrose]

Filing out alongside attendees of the gun show happening in an adjacent convention hall, Deen fans seemed satisfied with the show. That included Austin resident, Angela Ranney, a loyal follower since 2007.

"I think she looks fantastic. She's lost so much weight," said Ranney after the show. "I'm so proud of her. She reminds me so much of my mom. She's just a hoot and a holler."

Ranney's friend Gary, observed that it "started out a little somber and emotional, but once she got into the swing of it, it was really good."

Only time will tell if a national audience will be as forgiving as the one in Houston.

— Amber Ambrose

**Update 9/15:** Here's [video of the event](#)

<<http://www.myfoxboston.com/story/23433108/does-paula-deen-have-the-recipe-for-redemption>> from Fox 26 in Houston:

· [All Paula Deen Coverage on Eater](http://eater.com/tags/paula-deen) <<http://eater.com/tags/paula-deen>> [-E-]

· [All Eater Features](http://eater.com/tags/eater-features) <<http://eater.com/tags/eater-features>> [-E-]

1 someone put this hick out of her misery or at least out of ours and never allow her on tv again #1. 09/14/13 07:19 PM



user-1000050

2 anonymous comments

590 It figures that Texas would welcome the old racist hag. #4. 09/14/13 09:46 PM

Pecan Sandies

1 anonymous comment

16 Thank you Amber for putting together a non-biased article. The hate for her regarding the debacle has astounded me. #7. 09/15/13 02:05 AM



Jim Rassinier

What she did was wrong, but she owned it. America has always been forgiving in that manner. (or do have a new "internet bully" generation that don't?)

2 anonymous comments

2 O f course she went to Texas. They hate immigrants, African Americans, and anyone who doesn't agree with the Tea Party. She probably felt right at home there. That said who really cares where Paula Deen goes to sob #10. 09/15/13 11:18 AM



Keith Berry

on the air once again. She is a public figure that also had said many inflammatory things to people that worked for her, she should have been a little more sensitive to things like race, and less to Paula Deen Inc. When you get so self absorbed in your success, you have a tendency to discount the people who helped make you a success. Like your hourly employees, and those people in the restaurant business tend to be of low income and different ethnicities .

113 @Keith Berry: Isn't grouping all Texans as racist, immigrant-hating, right-wing conservatives as bad as being a racist, immigrant-hating, right-wing conservative? P.S. Houston is one of the most diverse cities in the country. So, just saying that the stereotypes aren't always the truth. Imagine that. #11. 09/15/13 11:42 AM

AmberAmbrosi

113 @Keith Berry: Though I completely agree with your assessment of Paula discounting the "little people" that helped her create a successful brand. Totally. #12. 09/15/13 11:47 AM

AmberAmbrosi

3 um. texas is not the place you described at all keith. that's the thing about texas: real big state, full of different people. maybe stop with the generalizations you seem to dislike so much. #hypocrite #stfu #13. 09/15/13 12:08 PM

petite bouchée

1 I think she was the victim of a media lynching. The media is the worst set of bullies ever. #14. 09/15/13 12:59 PM



Linda Economi

13 anonymous comments

2

 Craig Kirschne #28. 09/16/13 12:30 PM  
Ok first off yes using any racial term is not exceptable. How ever if she truely is suffering from a mental illness it's not something that should be used against a person. One can forgive and not forget. If it's a illness than she can and should get help not just medical but also friends and family.

2 #29. 09/16/13 12:31 PM  
If people can turn a blind eye to how many celebrities act than clearly can for give this poor old lady.

 Craig Kirschne #30. 09/16/13 03:19 PM  
1  
@Linda Economides:amen

 Deborah Lynn I #32. 09/16/13 06:59 PM  
1 anonymous comment

2  
@user-100005029353075: @user-100005029353075: hey loser why th e anonymous reply, you must be an asshole

 Mark Parham #33. 09/16/13 07:00 PM  
2  
@Pecan Sandies: another asshole speaks

 Mark Parham  
1 anonymous comment