

## The Reliable Source

By Amy Argetsinger and Roxanne Roberts  
Wednesday, April 18, 2007; C03p

### Pork & Deen: A Problem Pairing?

Will *Paula Deen* be the next *Kathie Lee Gifford*? When the Food Network's Southern belle comes to the Smithsonian tonight, union organizers at the world's largest pork plant will be there to protest.

In September, Deen signed an endorsement deal with Smithfield Foods, which makes her a high-profile target for workers at the company's Tar Heel, N.C., facility. Former senator *John Edwards* and actor *Danny Glover* have already called for increased safety measures at the plant, but Deen hasn't given her support to the decade-long effort. So two workers, *Fran Rogers* and *Lenore Bailey*, have tickets for tonight's sold-out book reading at the Museum of National History and will ask her to meet with plant workers.

*Gene Bruskin*, director of the campaign to unionize the plant, said he believes Deen isn't aware of safety concerns and he hopes she'll become an advocate like Gifford, who waged a public campaign against sweatshops after it became known that children made her clothing line. "This is a chance for her to do the right thing," said Bruskin, adding that protesters -- out of respect for Deen -- will hold a "quiet vigil" at the museum.

In a statement yesterday, Deen said she partnered with Smithfield because it "shared my family values and traditions." Publicist *Nancy Assuncao* said organizers are trying to drag Deen into the middle of a company-employee dispute: "This is a corporate issue and something that should be resolved between the two parties."