



What's Cookin'?

2025 PROFILE

TIMES
WEST VIRGINIAN



EMERGING INTO 2025

**WE'RE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE 2025 PALATINE
FREE SUMMER CONCERT LINEUP.**

THURSDAY, MAY 22-24
Three Rivers Festival

FRIDAY, MAY 23
Three Rivers Festival
Get Poison'd - Tribute to Poison
(headliner) and opener **The**
Available's 7PM

SATURDAY, MAY 24
Three Rivers Festival
The Ultimate Doors - Tribute
to The Doors (headliner) with
opener Awaken 7PM

SATURDAY, JUNE 7
Weary Space Wanderer (opener)
Bennie And The Jets -Elton John

Tribute (headliner) 7PM

SATURDAY, JUNE 14
Eyes of the Nile -Iron Maiden
Tribute (opener) and The Four
Horsemen - A Celebration of
Metallica (headliner) 7PM

SATURDAY, JUNE 28
Yam Yam (opener) Moon Hooch
(headliner) 7PM

SATURDAY, JULY 5
Independence Day Celebration
with host Byron "Six Six" Cooper
(host and opener) **Motorcycle**

Drive-By (middle band) and Liquid
A (headliner) 6PM
SATURDAY, JULY 12
Johnnie Johnson Festival with
Flight Six- Six (opener), The Up
And Up (middle band) and The
Deep Fried Five (headliner) 6PM

SATURDAY, JULY 26
Bluffett - Tribute to Jimmy Buffett
(only band) 7PM

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9
Invincible The Premier Pat
Benatar Tribute (opener) and
Adrenalize The Ultimate Def
Leppard Experience (headliner)
7PM

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23



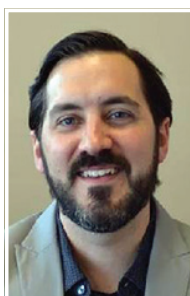
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Welcome to PROFILE 2025

Ask almost anyone who watched Super Bowl LIX and they will tell you the excitement they felt when the cameras panned back inside Caesars Superdome and the fans of the Philadelphia Eagles and the Kansas City Chiefs were singing John Denver's time-honored song, "Take Me Home, Country Roads" along with a Rocket mortgage commercial that included the song.

Music brings people together to a point that your heart warms, your eyes glisten and you may even feel tingling. All of these are feelings of joy.

Another one of life's necessities that brings people

together and, for some, may very well create the same feelings, is food.

That's why we decided to focus on food this year and tell people's stories of how they entered the food business. We talked with folks who cook for personal enjoyment, stress relief and, yes, the sheer joy of wanting to make others happy.

It is our pleasure to present Profile 2025, "What's Cookin'?"

Eric Cravey
Editor

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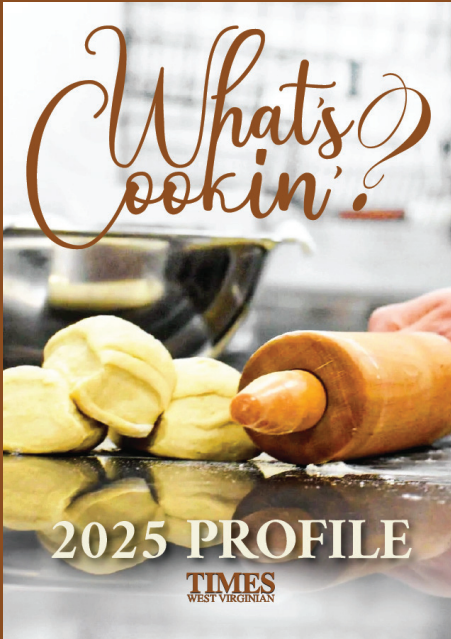
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PHOTO BY ERIC CRAVEY

A cheesecake sits on a table in Brad Eddy's office inside the Fairmont-Marion Transit Authority. He said some people think his brother's cheesecake is better than his, while others think his is better than his brother's.

Mechanic by day, Brad Eddy comes from a family of cooks

By Eric Cravey

Brad Eddy has been cooking so long, he has developed a knack for deciphering the kinds of seasonings in different foods.

"So I am lucky. I can taste something that somebody else has made, and I can pretty much copy it just from taste or, if there's something about it I don't like, I change it sometimes," said Eddy, who has earned a reputation as the in-house chef at the Fairmont-Marion Transit Authority.

However, Eddy's Transit Authority

job description has nothing to do with cooking. He is a mechanic who keeps the buses in top working condition for the public of Marion County.

But, give Eddy an excuse to cook and he will do it. He said he likes to cook because food brings people together.

"One day, during the last big snow we had, we were dead — nothing happening," Eddy said. "So I went down and got a bunch of stuff, and I made a big pot of chili for everybody."

Eddy describes his skills as "old

school" having acquired them on his family's farm in McCurdysville where his parents raised livestock and chickens and grew a hardy vegetable garden each year. They also canned their own vegetables for the winter. His mom taught him and his four older brothers how to cook.

"We started cooking at a young age — seven- or eight years old," Eddy said, who is 44. "We were able to cook eggs and do all our own stuff, because, mom had us going. We were raised old school,

so we made our own sausage — we still do things the old way."

After high school, Eddy's years of experience cooking helped him land a sous chef position at an upscale retirement community in the area. He worked under the head chef who kept tabs on the kinds of desserts the residents wanted.

One day, the head chef had a crew meeting where he assigned different types of dishes to different cooks. Eddy was tasked with coming up with a new

and tasty dessert for the residents.

"They were chewing (out) the head chef because they were getting tired of the same old, same old, so they wanted something different," Eddy said.

He began his mission by perusing the storeroom that housed different flavorings, so he could begin his alchemy.

"Over on the wall, we had different flavorings, vanilla, banana flavoring, just different flavorings on the wall, different food colorings for icings and stuff," Eddy said. "So I went in there, and I took a regular cake mix and I threw in red Jello and mixed it all up. So, and then on top of that, I put in blueberry icing. Mixed up the icing, got some blueberry extract, mixed up this blueberry icing."

However, he didn't stop there. He took some bananas and threw them into the cake mix with the goal of making what used to be known as a "banana flip."

"So, I kind of did that and then, later that evening, the chef come back, and he said, 'They loved it,'" Eddy said.

Eddy likes to merge his creativity with his homespun knowhow to create dishes that also challenge his cooking skills.

"We did a Mardi Gras here one time that was pretty much on a wing," he said.

Eddy had never cooked alligator before, but one of his co-workers brought in alligator meat for the Transit Authority celebration. Before he set out to cook the gator, Eddy did some research.

"I got online, did some research, and we blackened it on the grill," Eddy said. "To me, it tastes like pork chops. I mean, it was the first time I've ever had alligator, and the first time I ever did it. But I did blackened alligator on the grill."

And then there was the time his cousin went hunting and shared some moose meat with Eddy for a Transit Authority event. Again, here comes the grill and the creativity.

"It kind of tastes like beef, kind of like beef, a little bit different. Not so bad," Eddy said. "I'm not afraid to try anything at least once if I like it. I'm not so crazy about oysters, though."

Eddy is not the kind of cook to lean on recipes when he is preparing a meal. He's almost like a rolling database of how to prep meat before cooking it and can offer tips about seasonings on the fly. For example, he can recite his recipe for making a good brine for a holiday ham.

"Actually I use maple syrup, salt nitrate, which is a pink salt, and which is a curing salt, and then I use peppercorns, bay leaves, little bit of honey and water, and I mix that all up, and the bay leaves, and I pull that,



PHOTO BY ERIC CRAVEY

Brad Eddy, a mechanic with the Fairmont-Marion Transit Authority, cuts a piece of cheesecake he recently made from scratch, something he has been doing for years.

make a concentrate of that," Eddy said. "That's one gallon of water there, and then I add one gallon of cold water and let it get cold, and then put the meat down and let that set and then I'll penetrate into the meat."

Eddy said his brine is a process that works best when allowed to soak for seven days.

"It'll soak in about two inches," he said.

And while Eddy said he can't recall a cooking experience that he would describe as a mess, a time when something went really awry. However, he can tell you how he cooked chicken

for family dinner the night before. It all starts with a mixture of salt, pepper and garlic.

"I fry bacon first, and then I fry the chicken on the bacon grease, and I take the bacon up," Eddy said. "And then afterwards, I take cream cheese, and I put Ranch seasoning over the cream cheese, stir that up, and then lay it on the chicken, put the bacon on top of that, and then cheddar cheese on cross top of that, and then bacon. Yeah, they love it."

Eddy's boss, Transit Authority General Manager Jeff Mullenax, said Eddy comes from a long line of cooks.

And admits Eddy is the "go-to" person when he plans an event involving food at the Authority.

"Brad has been the designated cook for all of our company functions and when he cooks, it's more than a meal," Mullenax said. "It's like an event of a celebration."

Eddy admits he could work in the food service industry again, but prefers working on vehicles instead.

He said he won't stop cooking for the sheer enjoyment of it.

"It makes me feel good to make other people happy. I mean, there's not enough happiness in the world," Eddy said.

Tina Shaw

Baker extraordinaire and leader of love

By Payton Caldwell



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Like a scene from a film, Tina Shaw's wedding cookies she baked for her niece sit atop a table in Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

We all have different forms of therapy.

Whether it's waking up early every morning for a long walk outdoors, snuggling up in bed after a long day to read a thrilling page-turner, or simply just taking five minutes out of each day to breathe and reflect on the day's events, each of us has some sort of activity that we turn to for an outlet.

For Tina Shaw, that outlet is baking.

If you were to step inside Shaw's kitchen, you might become overwhelmed with the smell of freshly

baked cookies perched on the stove top. You might see a messy countertop with ingredients and kitchen tools scattered about.

What you are guaranteed to feel, though, is the warmth and love that Shaw pours into every single baked good that goes into her oven and comes out waiting to be devoured by family, friends and even strangers.

For Shaw, baking isn't just a hobby or a way to pass time. It's her therapy. More importantly, as she puts it, "It's a labor of love."

Despite spending so much time in

the kitchen, Shaw despises cooking. While her husband, for who she has the fondest appreciation, enjoys prepping a good meal for dinner, she would much rather avoid the difficulties associated with planning a menu for the week and instead sets her sights on the preparation of decadent goods.

That enjoyment, however, wasn't something that began early on.

"My mom was a baker and a cook, and I have an older sister who really became a fabulous baker," Shaw said. "I could never hold a candle to her,

but she got sick as we got older and didn't bake for a few Christmases. I felt that somebody had to take over, so I started baking at Christmas. That's really how I got started."

Shaw, who hails from Italian origins, recalls growing up in the Fairmont community surrounded by neighbors of all ethnicities and backgrounds. While she does not enjoy fixing a traditional meal, she fondly remembers learning Italian delicacies and recipes from her grandparents and her mother.

"For me, my grandparents

immigrated from Italy, so I grew up in a very Italian-like culture,” Shaw said. “We lived in Watson, and there were a lot of Italians there. We always had big family gatherings, weddings, funerals, and no matter what it was we were always together.”

“I don’t like to cook and I don’t want to make a meatloaf and potatoes and all that for dinner. My husband and I, though, will can our own peppers, and we make our own Italian sausage, sauce, and meatballs. Typically we make a lot of that and freeze it, and I do enjoy things like that because those are things I learned from my family.”

While her Italian heritage certainly has had an impact on various aspects of her life, when it comes to baking, Shaw believes there are two baked goods that are a reflection of her background — Easter Bread and Galette Cookies. Both are desserts she credits to her late mother, perhaps the most influential figure in her baking journey.

“A Galette is a small, thick putzel, and for some reason I have a knack for them,” Shaw said. “They stay soft and I don’t know what I do, but everyone wants my Galettes. My mom had a Galette iron, and at Christmas she would come up to visit and we’d spend the whole evening making Galettes for the cookie trays. After she passed, I got my own iron out and started to make the Galettes, but I just couldn’t without thinking of my mom.”

“My husband eventually went into the garage, got the iron, and he baked with me. They [Gallettes] are something I make for Christmas, but I’ve also had people request that I make them a dozen or so.”

“With Easter coming up, I also do an Easter Bread. My mom taught me that, and that is a tradition in my family. I tweaked the recipe a bit, though, and mine is more of a sweet bread with glaze and jellybeans so that kids will love it too.”

In such a close-knit family, Shaw heavily prioritizes her relationship with her sons, along with her grandchildren. Her love language and sign of affection toward them almost always begins in the kitchen and ends with some sort of baked good ready to eat when they come visit.

“Every year I make a bunny cake for my sons, and I’ve been doing that since my kids were babies,” Shaw said. “Now they’re in their 20s and 30s, but when they come home they still ask me where the bunny cake is. They look forward to coming in to visit and if there aren’t extra cookies to take home, then we’re baking together even on Christmas Day.”

“With the Easter Bread, I’ll make several little loaves for the boys to take home, and I bake it to where they can toast it and some without the glaze. My grandson and granddaughter love to play in the kitchen too when they visit, and at Christmas they will make Santa cookies with me. They’ll jump up on their little stool and help me do anything.”

Along with her immediate family, Shaw also enjoys baking for other family members, especially on special occasions. She is recently most proud of cookies that she baked for her niece’s wedding held in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. While she thoroughly enjoys the process, however, it’s also one that requires multiple steps to ensure the cookies are more than a success.

“I tried all kinds of different cookies, and I can’t tell you they were perfect,” Shaw said. “There were some of them that weren’t pretty, but they did taste good. I incorporated different cookies in there, and usually I have a list for whatever occasion so I know what I’m going to make. I did the colors of the wedding, so I ordered M&M’s from the website to match.”

“It’s really an all-hands on deck process, though, to get them to their destination. We had to get a refrigerated truck and arrange how to get the cookies there and also load them, so that was stressful. You also can’t really do anything the morning of the wedding, so you show up at the venue and put together the cookie table. It really takes a village.”

With the continuous development of social media, Shaw says she is learning more recipes than ever and finding things she is eager to try. In essence, the creative process and experimenting with different recipes and techniques is something she truly enjoys while baking. She even implemented a new recipe for her



SUBMITTED PHOTO

One of Tina Shaw’s specialties is an Easter Bunny cake shown here.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Andy Shaw helps his mom, Tina Shaw, bake Christmas cookies.

niece's wedding.

"Before I try anything new I always do a test run," Shaw said. "I made cookies called Pillow-Soft for the wedding. They are made out of a dough that you have to cut in strips, and then you put a Hershey bar in it. You line them up and then do another layer, and you use a little wheel to make it look like a pillow. The first time I made them, they were ugly, but I figured it out."

"There is also a site that I like to look at online to find new recipes, and for Easter I'm going to do a butterfly cake for my grandkids. You cut it to make the wings and you decorate it with different colors of icing, so that will be a new thing for me. When I first started baking I just used old recipes, but with social media now the world has opened up to bakers."

While her family and Italian heritage are part of what make her work so special, one factor Shaw considers to be important to her baking abilities is the aspect of tradition and the chance to carry on the family legacy.

"I am a very traditional person, so to carry on tradition is vital for me," Shaw said. "I keep doing it because I know my mom is watching over me, and I know my sister enjoys that I bake. I'll always bake for holidays, vacations, whatever the occasion, and I have my own process which I enjoy. The baking process isn't just a tradition, it's therapeutic for me. The more I got into it the more I realized 'OK, I can do this.'"

For aspiring bakers who may have hopes to reach Shaw's level of excellence in the kitchen, she insists

that it's all about accepting failure and just repeating the process until eventually you get it right.

"Take your time and don't be too hard on yourself," Shaw said. "It doesn't matter how ugly your cookies are, they're probably very good. And people won't notice that once they eat them. You just have to keep trying, and failure is part of it."

Although she has many customers who value her abilities, Shaw says that Fairmont resident MaryJo Thomas is her "Galette girl." Thomas is a loyal customer who reaches out to Shaw every year for her famous cookies.

"In terms of people who can maybe vouch for me, MaryJo is someone who orders from me a lot," Shaw said. "I make her a big cookie tray every Christmas, and other times throughout the year, but the Galettes

I have to make separate. I put them in a separate batch, and I make them for her granddaughter too."

As she continues to perfect new recipes and maintain her current skills, Shaw is optimistic about the possibility of trying new recipes and providing her family and friends with more baked goods. What matters most, though, is that with each fresh batch, she's able to show those important to her just how much they are loved.

"I do it because it's a labor of love for my friends and family members," Shaw said. "When I turn on my music, get my ingredients out, and start baking, my mind is focused on that and not whatever has me stressed at the moment. I do it because I enjoy it and I know my family and friends do too."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

One of the favorite spots at any wedding is the cookie table and baker Tina Shaw loves baking for others.

Rinse and Repeat

Anna Waugh's guidebook to cooking 101

By Payton Caldwell

For 92-year-old Anna Waugh, there's nothing more satisfying than a clean kitchen.

As soon as a meal has concluded, no matter if it's day or night, the first thing on her mind is clearing the table, washing the dishes, and storing everything away just to do it all over again the next day.

It's the repetition that matters. The sort of repetition that has stuck with her throughout her many years in the kitchen. The kind that all started during her many years spent in Roswell, New Mexico, at the beginning of her marriage.

"My husband was in the service out there for several years, and that's when I really started to learn to cook for the first time," Waugh said. "I never learned how to cook from my mother growing up, because she was a terrible cook. In Roswell, I first learned how to cook potatoes, and I just got in a habit of doing that."

"During that time I really wasn't interested in cooking, but we didn't have much of a choice if we wanted a home cooked meal. So I started to just pick up habits and I taught myself what I needed to know."

While cooking may not have been her first choice in terms of a hobby or pastime, for Waugh, learning how to read recipes and experimenting with different dishes was more than just something to do. Essentially, it was vital for survival, and a necessary part of her day-to-day life as the wife of a U.S. service member.

"The potatoes were really just the start and they were something simple, but I ended up trying to learn how to make other things," Waugh said. "I learned to make a little gravy, which was not very good. It was pretty lumpy at first and it did not taste good. So, I went back to making the potatoes the next night after that because it was the only thing I knew how to do. Little by little I learned how to do one thing at a time."

"If I hadn't figured out how to cook and follow a recipe, it would have been really difficult to find a good meal at that time, particularly while we were stationed in New Mexico. I had nobody out there that could tell me any different. But, I did what I had to do to survive. I was so young and really just learning about life, so learning to cook at the

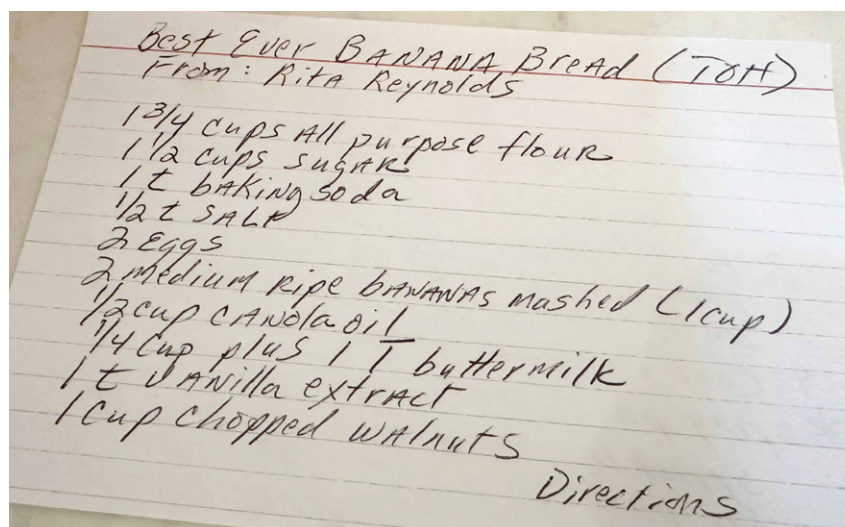


PHOTO BY PAYTON CALDWELL

Anna Waugh said she often shares recipes with her friends and family. Shown here is a photo of her sought-after banana bread recipe.

same time was a lot."

Throughout her cooking journey, one of her fondest memories that makes her chuckle to this day is the first time she ever learned how to cook meat. It's safe to say that for Waugh, the famous saying "if at first you don't succeed, try, try again" was one that became her motto as she continued to master her craft in the kitchen.

"After we moved back to West Virginia, I started to pick up more things, and one thing my husband wanted me to learn was how to cook meat. He was adamant that I should learn how to fry a porkchop. So, like the other things I had previously learned, I went to fry it, and unfortunately I didn't realize it was done.

"At first, I thought it was OK to eat because both sides were brown, but needless to say I found out after that first time that it wasn't done. That didn't go over so well. Like everything else, though, I just continued to practice and eventually I got it right, and figured out I needed to put a lid on my pan to let it simmer at the same time."

When reflecting on the countless hours spent in the kitchen during the course of her life, Waugh says that one of the most important parts of cooking has been building relationships with family and friends who she has either taught or learned from. Specifically, she cites her late mother-in-law as an influential figure.

"In the beginning and for a long time I never used recipes, but when I would

be in her kitchen, she would teach me things and give me recipes to follow," Waugh said. "She was really the person I learned a lot from and some of her recipes are things I took with me and continued to use up until just a few years ago. Even if I didn't know what things meant, being able to learn from her was important."

"At my bridal shower all those years ago, she actually gave me a cookbook that I've kept ever since. It's something that has been of sentimental value to me and I've learned a lot from it. I cherished that time I got to spend with her."

Waugh, who has been actively involved in her church community for many years, believes that some of her best dishes have been served at functions held by her congregation. To her, there is almost nothing as significant as being able to put a smile on the face of one of her dear friends every Sunday.

"For many years we did a big Thanksgiving dinner at the church, and I always made the dressing for that," Waugh said. "So many people have asked me at church to make them potato salad, ham salad, spaghetti, just different things I've made for people over the years. I like doing that. It's always enjoyable for me to be able to take in something I've made on Sunday morning and see how happy it makes my friends."

"We don't do gatherings like that as often as we used to, but when we do still have small things, even now that I am much older, I still try to find a way to

whip up a dish or make brownies, just so I can make them smile."

While she still is a youthful 92, in recent years, Waugh has dealt with the symptoms of Parkinson's disease, which has limited her abilities in the kitchen. One thing she can absolutely still make without any complications is her famous banana bread.

"People ask me all the time to make them banana bread, and I actually was just told by someone the other day that they think it's great," Waugh said. "In the family, everyone always wants me to make it too. It's like a rite of passage, that when you come visit there has to be a slice of banana bread waiting for you."

"I never make it with nuts because so many of my family and friends don't like it that way, but I do try my best to make it not dry. Nobody wants dry banana bread, I can tell you that. On days my hands are working fine, I try to make a loaf just to have ready for anyone that might stop by."

With so many years of experience under her belt, Waugh says she is more than happy to pass along her knowledge and recipes to anyone who asks. What she doesn't think can be passed on, though, is the amount of love and pride she pours into every dish.

"I've had people ask me, 'how do you put gravy on baked steak,' or 'how do you do your cranberry salad for Thanksgiving?' I'm always willing to tell them. Some people don't want to share their recipes, but I do. I've shared them with anyone in my family who wants them, and I've passed them along to people who are wanting to make something the way I do.

"Every dish I make, though, is made with love. I'm proud of the things I have made over the years and I truly do believe that that is something that cannot be replicated. To make a dish with love, it has to be something you practice over and over. You have to mean it."

Waugh's kitchen is one that exudes both simplicity and efficiency. She's never had a dishwasher, because why have a machine when you can do it yourself?

Her appliances may be old, and her table may be on its last leg, but one thing is certain when you look around. The kitchen isn't just a room in her home. It's the place she feels the most at ease, even after all this time.

The desire to be his own boss led Mike Thompson to create Grill 250

By Colin C. Rhodes

Clarksburg native, Mike Thompson brings 40 years of restaurant experience to the Fairmont area with his most recent establishment, Grill 250.

Located at 711 Husky Highway on Route 250, across from the entrance of Barrackville Road, Thompson opened Grill 250 in May of 2023 where a now-closed restaurant used to be. He had looked everywhere from Clarksburg to Morgantown for locations and came to Fairmont because of the price and the equipment left behind.

“[The equipment] was in good shape,” Thompson said. “It had a nice, clean dining room. And that’s pretty much what brought me here to Fairmont.”

Thompson grew up in Clarksburg in a family that loved to cook. That’s how he gained his love and passion for food and cooking. He got his first cooking job at 15 working concessions at West Virginia University football games in Morgantown.

Since then, the now 55-year-old has worked at various restaurants in Clarksburg, Glenville, and even down south in the state of Florida. Thompson spent around 10 years as the director of operations for a restaurant in Florida called Frank ‘N Stein, a chain of franchises that ultimately closed for good after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thompson came back to West Virginia after his time in Florida and created Grill 250. His menu features a variety of items, including salads, wings and hot dogs. His most popular items, however, are his steak hoagies and smash burgers.

Most of what Thompson makes at Grill 250 is made in house, including the sauces and roasted peppers. For the sandwiches and burgers, Thompson uses the best quality ingredients he can find.

“For our smash burgers, it’s all fresh beef,” Thompson said. “Black Canyon Angus beef. Never been frozen, always fresh.”

It’s all part of his commitment to making the best food possible for his patrons. The consensus of the reviews on Google Maps is that he’s doing what he aims to do. Grill 250 has 42 reviews averaging 4.7 stars, and some of the reviews even use the word “best” to describe Thompson’s cooking.

Thompson owns and operates Grill 250 by himself. One may find

that incredibly challenging, but Thompson’s been in the business long enough to enjoy what comes with owning and operating a restaurant on his own.

“I mean, there’s a lot of work involved in it, but like I say, I enjoy doing it,” Thompson said. “And I want to cook the best products I possibly can, so I try to make as many things from scratch as I possibly can as well.”

This doesn’t mean Thompson doesn’t have help. He hires employees to assist in the cooking, cleaning, and serving at Grill 250.

There have been times in Thompson’s life where he made a living doing other things than cooking at restaurants. He said he’s sold cars and insurance, but there’s never been a time in his life where cooking was never an option.

Since opening Grill 250, Thompson’s restaurant has received its fair share of customers. It’s a decent mix of people eating in and ordering out, according to Thompson. And like any local restaurant, there are regulars who stop in every so often.

Most of the advertising for Grill 250 happens on Facebook. The page Thompson runs has more than 2,000 followers and more than 1,000 likes, but according to Thompson, there’s still a lot of people who don’t know Grill 250 exists.

Of the people that know it, one could say they’re good supporters of Grill 250. Thompson, of course, said his family is his biggest supporters of his business. He said his family drives up to Fairmont often and praises him for his cooking.

One area resident has become such a fan of Grill 250, she is often telling her friends about the restaurant. Diana Marple, who writes the Barrackville column for the Times West Virginian, is one of Thompson’s fans.

“Last year when we were decorating the Barrackville Covered Bridge, we purchased a couple of the Sicilian Pizzas and they went in a flash,” Marple said. “The crust was wonderful and it was baked to perfection with a generous amount of toppings. My stepdaughter got a steak hoagie that was enough for two meals and she really enjoyed it.”

Marple said she recently purchased a gift certificate for her pastor’s birthday and he was “very pleased with the

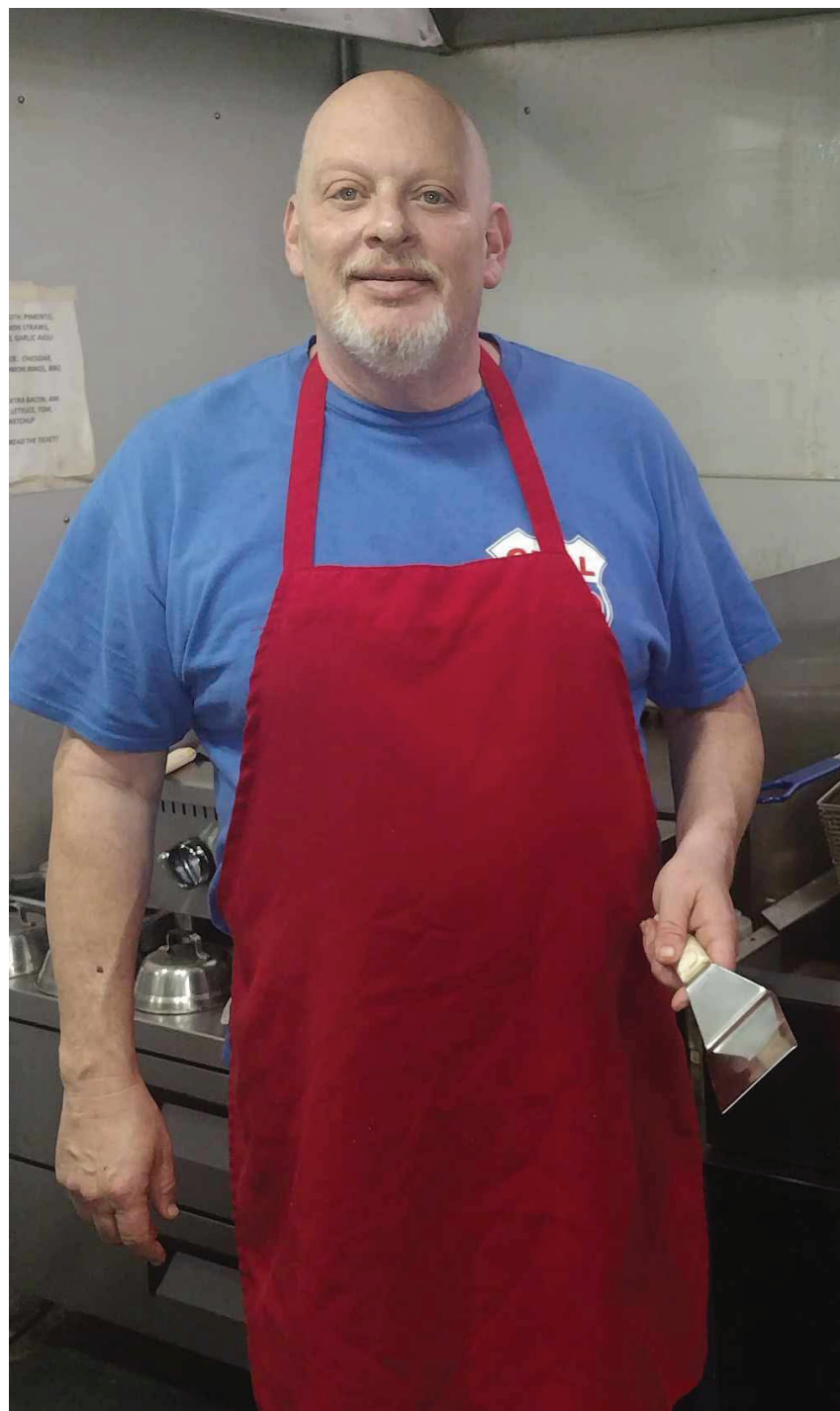


PHOTO BY COLIN C. RHODES

Clarksburg native Mike Thompson opened Grill 250 on Husky Highway in May 2023.

gift.”

“It is great to have a specialty restaurant that is consistent and dependable as Grill 250, we’ve gotten take out several times and have been satisfied with each purchase.”

Thompson also likes to add things to his menu. He said that about six months ago, Grill 250 started making pizzas, including 16-inch Sicilian pizzas and 12-inch round pizzas.

But pizzas aren’t the only new thing for Grill 250. According to Thompson, he very recently began considering the idea of franchising Grill 250.

“There might be a possibility that I might franchise the concept at some point in time,” Thompson said. “I just started talking about that in the last month. You might see that in the future as being an option for other places to want to open up a Grill 250.”

What's Good?



Steak Hoagies

Grill 250 proprietor Mike Thompson said his steak hoagies are one of the hottest-selling items on the menu.



Smash Burgers

Grill 250 proprietor Mike Thompson said smash burgers are a hit with his customers.



Pizzas

In the past six months, Grill 250 added pizza to its menu, including 16-inch Sicilian pizzas and 12-inch round pizzas.



Salads

Along with the house salad, Grill 250 offers grilled chicken and grilled steak salads piled fries.

With his 40 years of experience, Thompson's biggest piece of advice for anyone starting up a new restaurant is to focus on the quality over the quantity of food.

"It's got to be quality first," Thompson said. "A lot of people when they open

up restaurants, they miss that. I mean, I sacrifice profit to put out the best quality food that I can. By building volume I'll get back my money in the end."

And service is front and center of everything he does.

"It's gotta' be the best. Just serve the

best products that you possibly can. The best sandwich, the best hoagie, the best what it is you're cooking, make it the best you can. And then over time people will realize that, and you get their business."

Thompson added that he could be

buying the cheaper steak that other restaurants use for his burgers and earn double the profits he's making now. But because of his commitment to quality, he's willing to make that sacrifice because he wants to be known for making good food.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Tim McAteer holds two prepared plates at his restaurant on Feb. 27, 2025.

McAteer's: Come for the food, stay for the community atmosphere

By Esteban Fernandez

As early as 6:30 a.m., Rodger Petit can be found enjoying the first of many breakfast meals Tim McAteer will serve throughout the morning.

It's an early morning ritual Petit has been doing for 30 years. The French toast, home fries, crispy bacon, quesadillas, grilled cheese, chilis and other meals keep him coming back for more.

"They don't send anything bad out here," he said. "You'll never get a raw egg, you'll never get raw bacon, they cook for you and they love the attention of people coming back because they know they come back to them. They don't come here just to sit down. They come here for the food."

McAteer's parents started the restaurant aptly named McAteer's in

1958, making McAteer himself never far from the art of cooking. As a youth, he occupied multiple roles in the restaurant, from disher, store runner, to eventually making the food itself.

Before settling into cooking fulltime, he dabbled a little in other jobs. He worked for the US Post Office, at a glass plant and as a surveyor. In 1982, he chose to return fulltime to cooking in his early 20s. Now 66, McAteer is at the height of his cooking powers.

"Whenever I was away from it, I always wanted to go back to it," he said. "I really wanted to just see somebody's face and see them satisfied and see them enjoy a product. To me, that's a great joy."

Much time separates McAteer from what his first dish was. He said his first dish was most likely a cheese omelet, or

something very simple. The omelet has since become a very important staple of McAteer's cooking, since the restaurant offers a variety of them. The omelet itself is an ancient food form, with food historians believing the early version of the dish to have originated in Persia. The word "omelet" came into use in the mid-16th century by the French.

McAteer has modern variations of the dish as well, such as the Western Omelet. The Omelet can also be known as a Denver Omelet, depending on location, but some also argue the Denver Omelet is a variant of the western. Regardless, according to The Denver Post one traditional tale for its creation is pioneer women masked the taste of rotten eggs with chopped ham, green peppers and onions. There's even a plaque of the origin story on

California Street in Denver. However, green peppers didn't exist back in pioneer Denver, making the story highly unlikely. Instead, what most likely happened is the dish originated by Chinese immigrants who worked on the railroads out West.

The Western Omelet made its way to McAteer's thanks to a relative from New York State who had the recipe, which is what McAteer serves today.

While he is loathe to make a comparison to McDonald's, McAteer said the reason they're so successful is because of anytime one goes to McDonald's they can get the same product, whether it's Colorado, Kansas or West Virginia. McAteer strives to get that same level of consistency and judging by the restaurant's decades long longevity, he succeeds, with much better



An omelet prepared with two pieces of toast at McAteer's on Feb. 27, 2025.

PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ



Biscuits and gravy with bacon prepared for morning service at McAteer's on Feb. 27, 2025.

PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

results.

But just because there's consistency in the quality of the food, doesn't mean there isn't room for creativity or innovation. McAteer has three main cooks, and they all make the same product, an omelet, but they have their own way of making it.

"It's different how they prep it, how they sauté the vegetables or the meats, and I think it's good," he said. "I went to a restaurant in Arizona. All their omelets were served on a blue wheel plate,

which was awesome — with fruit — but they almost blackened the outside of the omelets. And I do them a little darker than my counterparts, but it's a skill set. It's all different, it's interesting how each person does them differently."

Duane Cochran has worked alongside McAteer for 25 years. Throughout his working life, Cochran has worked with many different cooks, and so with a degree of confidence can say McAteer is great in the kitchen.

"You just know, 95% of the time he's

going to get it right," Cochran said.

"One thing about McAteer's is there's a lot of special orders. People want this, want that, want to tweak this, add this, take away that, and he gets it right. He understands, he reads, takes his time but he's also quick."

Cochran said developing those kinds of skills take years and years. That much practice in a field can lead to burnout, which Cochran said he's seen in other cooks who have spent a long time behind a stove. But he doesn't

see it in McAteer. Instead, McAteer is comfortable in the kitchen, and doesn't seem frazzled or anything like that. He handles pressure well and makes it a fun work environment.

Weekend mornings are the busiest shifts at the restaurant, especially with the after church crowd. There might be 16-20 tickets up for McAteer to handle at a time, but he doesn't get frustrated. He just handles and deals with it really well.

That level of dedication has earned McAteer a lot of regulars. Cochran said it's not unusual to see a lot of people back every single day. Two or three times a week is not uncommon either.

"We really try to treat our customers special, every one of them. We know their names, we know their birthdays and stuff like that," Cochran said. "But ultimately, it's the food that brings them back."

Being across the street from Fairmont State University has turned McAteer's into an unofficial university institution. Older generations pass knowledge of the restaurant down to the next one.

Petit himself worked at the college as a member of its IT department. He arrived to McAteer's after an invitation from a colleague. How it usually goes is a coworker brings in a friend, and then they bring the entire family along. It's definitely a word of mouth place, he said. Part of its appeal is the comfort food the restaurant serves.

Petit said so much of life involves food or drink. Most of his colleagues from his Fairmont State days have died or moved on. Petit remains, as does Tim McAteer. Petit thinks the family atmosphere enhances the food because it makes the cooks want to excel at cooking for people they know closely. Cochran added customers who come in even ask for McAteer by name, wanting to know if he's in the kitchen cooking.

Cochran said McAteer is open to adding new dishes to the menu. The restaurant didn't use to serve biscuits and gravy, which led Cochran to suggest adding them as part of the repertoire. In response, McAteer started making fresh biscuits in-house, and soon they became a staple of the kitchen. Cochran also created a few omelets of his own, such as a pizza omelet.

McAteer said food is one of the most instrumental experiences central to being a human being.

"Like, the alumni come back, and they come here, and they go, 'I got this when I was here,'" he said. "They bring their family in, they bring their friends in. I think it's cultural. That's why we're so successful is because we take pride in that."

Cochran had a more succinct way of putting how food connects people.

"Everybody likes to eat, right?" Cochran said.

Catering and Care

How Linda Jack has made a name for herself outside of the Fairmont community

By Payton Caldwell

It's often been said that real cooking is more about following your heart than following recipes. If you spend enough time in the kitchen working on perfecting your craft, even the most difficult dishes will become masterful with time.

As a long-time caterer, nobody knows this more than Fairmont's own Linda Jack, owner of Linda Jack's Catering.

Jack, who can only be described as a seasoned veteran in the kitchen, has worked hard to maintain a stellar reputation during her time as a prominent chef and business owner. While her efforts may appear natural, though, she credits her start to early childhood memories spent in the kitchen with her mother and family traditions passed down over the years.

"My mother was an excellent cook," Jack said. "She used to put her pies in the window, and when she would sit them there I would sneak one away for

a family friend, Paul Cummings. She would always say, 'Who took my pie?' She knew where the pie went every time she asked, though."

"I'm originally from western New York, and we used to have some pretty good parties up there with all of our neighbors. Everybody would exchange recipes and stuff, and I got into that at a very young age. I now like to try new recipes and get into different things when I'm in the kitchen, but I don't really follow what they say. I just look at the ingredients and then put it together."

Although she never spent much time in culinary training apart from limited classes, Jack has established herself as one of the most renowned caterers not just in Fairmont, but in the business world as well. Her success story, though, is one that business owners should certainly aspire to replicate.

"A long time ago, United Way

here in Fairmont approached me, and they couldn't get anybody to do anything small at that point," Jack said. "Everybody wanted everything big, because that is typically where you make the most money. I didn't have the facilities back then except for my own kitchen, so I just did it out of there, and that's really how I got started."

"For United Way I did sandwiches, pasta salad, or just pastas like homemade lasagna. I also did what people now call my fabulous meatloaf or fabulous baked steak. I would say, though, my recipes for these are a little different than the traditional way, but they've turned out well and people enjoy them."

Apart from United Way, Jack is also most proud of a catering job she completed for Amazon, a job that from the start she believed to be one of the hundreds of prank calls her business receives on a daily basis.

"When the girl called me from Amazon, I thought it was a prank call because I get a lot of those," Jack said. "Some of them I follow up on, and this particular one I did, and I told her that I get all sorts of pranks so she knew I wasn't sure about the call at first. She told me she was serious, though, that it was actually Amazon calling, and they ended up hiring me for three months."

"For that job I did a hot breakfast and a hot lunch, and it was for two weeks out of the month. They were doing training for a specific company, and after the job was finished the lady told me that I had been rated number 10 on their list. She said that if they ever came back to Fairmont, my name would be the only one they would call on the list."

With the job oftentimes stressful due to having to schedule things ahead of time, Jack has mastered the ability to handily plan her schedule in a way that assures the happiness of her clients.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Linda Jack's Catering is known for creating great meals, but don't ask her for her recipe, because she doesn't use them.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

After years in the catering business, return customers refer to Linda Jack's meatloaf as her "fabulous meatloaf."

She specifically cited an incident with Homeland Security as a time when she had to think ahead to get the job done.

“When I was doing the Amazon job, Homeland Security was coming through the building at the time, and they were trying to get a different caterer,” Jack said. “He walked into the room and saw the food I had made and he wanted to know if he could have a bite. I had to tell him it was only for the current clients, so he shook my hand, told me he was from Homeland Security, and asked me to do a catering job for them that year on August 28.”

“I told him then that I couldn’t because I had another client scheduled, and I don’t ever push another client over because someone may be bigger. He said to me, though, “You’ll find a way.”

“I went back home, got a phone call from my other client who said they had made a mistake and scheduled the wrong date, but I knew then I was able to make both jobs work. I was really proud of that. I think you have to be proud of yourself at some time in your life, and that was one time.”

While her clients are certainly valued, Jack also credits her relationship with family, particularly her son, as something that helps her business thrive. As a mother-son duo in the kitchen, Jack believes that her food

would not be the same without Jeremy alongside her.

“My son, Jeremy, works with me in the kitchen, and he actually is a certified chef,” Jack said. “He graduated from Pittsburgh, and he came to work with me after the pandemic. We have our ups and downs like every family and everybody that works together, but he does a good job and he comes up with some really good ideas. I’m doing it my way, and he’s doing it the professional way.”

“He shops around for us and he knows exactly where to look for things we need. He can go into Sysco or whoever the vendor is and find it immediately on their website. He can also do things faster than me because I’m so detailed, but he adds in his own details too.”

Although the lessons she learned from her mother as a child have been a crucial part of her business model, perhaps the most significant lesson she has carried over into her professional life is the lack of recipes she uses on a daily basis. While many chefs have to follow a recipe step-by-step, Jack enjoys using the ingredients and doing things her way.

“I can follow a recipe but it’s really only the ingredients,” Jack said. “My mom was a great cook, but I’m doing the same thing she did as far as looking

at a recipe, closing it up, and walking away to make the dish. If I make something and I don’t enjoy it, I don’t serve it.”

For Jack, tradition is not only something valued within her own family, but respected among other families that seek her out for catering jobs. She fondly recalls completing a job for a Polish family who were searching for food to match the theme of their event.

“One lady was doing a Polish thing, and when she came in I had all the food laid out for her,” Jack said. “She ended up telling me she was going to tell everyone about me. We had everything from pierogis to kielbasa, and they were 100 percent happy with that.”

Despite many people over the years that have attempted to persuade her to open her own restaurant, Jack says she is more than happy with her catering business. If anything, she enjoys doing jobs for her clients and having customers ultimately seek her out for repeat jobs in the future.

“People have asked me to open a restaurant, and I always say no to that,” Jack said. “It’s a lot of headache, and although it would be fun, it’s not something I’m interested in. I feel I’m pretty lucky. My clients are not just my clients. I’m always proud to do work for them, and 99 percent of them are

comebacks which is great. They may not ask me this year or next year, but I’ll get them eventually.”

Among all of her recipes and “specialties,” even though she claims to have no dish that she considers as one, Jack has been praised on social media by many of her customers. One individual, Ron Smith, had the following to say about food she prepared: “Linda catered an event I attended, and it was great. The salmon was cooked to perfection. Her service was impeccable. Very professional.”

Another customer, Delores Jackson, praised Jack for her effort on each of her prepared dishes. “I had the most amazing food at our AmeriCorps training. Linda and her crew did an awesome job. I will definitely be telling people about her.”

As the lead chef in her kitchen, the most important part of her catering journey has been completing every job to the best of her ability, and more importantly, establishing that her business comes from a place of love.

“If somebody says to me one of my dishes is great, I tell them thank you,” Jack said. “When they ask for a recipe, though, I tell them there isn’t one. I just put a lot of love into it. To get into a catering business, you have to like people. I’ve been doing this for many years and I’m proud of what I do.”



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Different types of pasta dishes are also a hit with customers of Linda Jack’s Catering.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Rick Toothman with one of his burgers at Rick's Steakhouse on March 13, 2025.

Rick Toothman is carving a niche at his restaurant in Bellview

By Esteban Fernandez

It may have started as a job, but over time, Rick Toothman's skill as a cook has his customers convinced he offers the best hometown cooking with flare in Fairmont.

Toothman took over The Mason Jar on Pennsylvania Avenue two years ago, and turn it into Rick's Steakhouse.

"When I took over, I decided to do steaks because there wasn't any steaks in Fairmont," Toothman said. "We're getting ready to change some of our menus up now, because I'm going to get a lot of seafoods. I want to do

some seafood because there's really no seafood places here."

Toothman entered the food industry as a young man, moving into food service when he was 21. Prior to that he worked at Foodland, a supermarket chain. For 18 years, he cooked at Fairmont State, and left after an opportunity came up to run the Mason Jar.

Back in the day, he cooked so he could have money in his pocket, especially while he was going to school. But, something about the way meat

sizzled or broth simmered got Toothman hooked, because he made cooking his life. Throughout his long career in food service, he gained the skill to cook food made any way to order, as well as an intuitive grasp of flavor profiles. It's a talent guests to his steakhouse now cherish.

"My favorite thing to get here is a New York strip," Buck Weaver, longtime customer, said. "It's unbelievable. You get a nice baked potato and a nice salad with their homemade dressing and it's superb.

I like my steak cooked rare, I want to taste the meat, and he does nail the rareness of the meat every single time."

Steak goes back to prehistoric times, people have eaten steak grilled over a fire for a long time. However, modern steak dishes most likely originated in Florence, Italy. According to D.C. Steakhouse, the word itself has its origins in both Scandinavia from around the 15th century. Served with beer or wine, the practice spread throughout Europe, with the term steak referring to a hindquarter cut of whatever meat was

available. Outside of the U.S., restaurant guests sometimes even have to specify they want a cut of beef, because alligator, gator or tuna steak might be what's being served.

Steak as it's known in the U.S. was introduced to North America by Spanish settlers. During the 1800s migration wave west, farming cattle was made possible by vast tracts of grasslands which at the time were used by Native Americans. Initially, steak was frontier food. The ribeye came from cowboys slaughtering their own cows and favoring simple cuts of meat.

The need to feed cities and make a living conflicted with the same needs of Native Americans, and battles ensued over the pastures. Railroads made shipping meat to the big cities possible. Industrial processing rose to meet demand for red beef, and in the late 1800s restaurants and fine dining establishments could be found locally.

The first modern steakhouse was in New York in 1837. Rick's Steakhouse descends from that very first one. Weaver said anyone can even go so far as to specify what temperature they want their steak cooked to, and Toothman or his staff will nail it every single time. Toothman has worked hard to make sure that regardless of who is in the kitchen, the consistency of the food is the same each time. Weaver said the kitchen staff is very skilled.

Toothman said some of the food pairings at the Mason Jar sometimes didn't make sense to him. For example, steak hoagies were made out of lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise, cheese and steak. The lettuce and tomato went inside the bun and the cheese melted on top of it all.

"Who eats a steak hoagie with lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise, you know what I mean?" he said.

Instead, once he took over, Toothman reworked the recipe to instead have



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

A bacon burger prepared by Rick's Steakhouse on March 13, 2025.

sauteed onions, mushroom and peppers in the hoagie.

Toothman didn't stop with the hoagie either. Weaver said he's had everything from frog legs to king crab legs served at the restaurant.

Trista Blackstone and her partner, both customers, sing praises of Toothman's hamburgers. Her favorite thing to get is the wings, but the new pizza Toothman recently started serving is quickly becoming a new favorite.

"It seems like there's more love in the food," she said.

The new seafood options are especially popular. On Friday nights when Toothman does shrimp, he can easily go through nine cases of shrimp.

On Saturdays when he does crab legs, he'll go through 70 pounds of the stuff. At the moment, he only has five steaks on the menu, but he plans to expand up to seven. Valentine's Day was especially busy for him, they sold over 100 steaks on Friday and 140 on Saturday. He had to scramble to find steaks for Sunday night's special, and fortunately with some after hours help from his food supplier, he found another 80 steaks in Buckhannon.

Toothman said he tries to upgrade his cooking skills all the time. If he sees anything he wants to try, he gives it a shot. He's not afraid to fail. Having the ability to cook for his own restaurant, rather than having to cook for someone else, is empowering. But he's still old school. His preferred way of doing business is to give people a firm handshake.

"We're not cooking for like, high scale," he said. "People like that. They come in here and usually if somebody had asked me for something in here, I'll have it made for him."

Toothman is also a cheerleader for his team.

He called one of the women who cooks in his kitchen, Zoey Summers, one of the best cooks in Fairmont. Now 19, Summers has worked with Toothman since she was 16. Once she was behind the stove, she picked up the skill pretty quickly. It took about a month to learn how to make the dishes the restaurant offers. She said Toothman caught on to the fact that Summers liked to go into the kitchen and mess around with cooking, after that he decided to

move her into cooking and her skills progressed from there.

Summers had prior experience from cooking at home for her family, as both her parents are good cooks. Watching Toothman and the others work improved her own techniques. When it comes to her favorite thing about cooking, her favorite thing is the aesthetics. For that reason, preparing barbecue nachos is her preferred activity.

"I know we're a steakhouse, but sometimes the steaks get a little bit outrageous," she said. "I like putting the diamonds and whatever on them, but sometimes it gets overwhelming, like the temperatures. You really gotta watch them, it's hard to cook those and do something else, because you gotta watch the temperatures and make sure they're sent out right."

Making sure guests receive exactly what they order is what Toothman prides himself on. Not only that, he comes out every single day to talk to customers and has come to know their orders first hand. He knows who wants peppers on their steak hoagie and who doesn't, and how many minutes on a grill another customer likes his steak at. If he gets an order wrong, he wants to know, because then he can make amends.

Weaver enjoys more than the food, he also enjoys the atmosphere and the company. He's seen people congregate on certain days and enjoy the food together.

"One thing we all have to do is eat, drink and breathe," he said.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

A close view of a bacon burger made by Rick Toothman on March 13, 2025.

Marion County Technical Center



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Maci Singleton, Kenzie Ammons and Sophia Larry in their chef's jackets at the Marion County Tech Center on Feb. 28 are all students of Chef Todd Stalnaker.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

A lobster and risotto appetizer prepared by the Marion County Tech Center ProStart Culinary Team on Feb. 14, 2025.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Cake and sauce desert prepared by the Marion County Tech Center ProStart Culinary Team on Feb. 14, 2025.

Technical Center students learn how food can build bonds for a lifetime

By Esteban Fernandez



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Kenzie Ammons, Kristina Spencer, Maci Singleton and Sophia Larry after demolishing their practice dishes on Feb. 14, 2025.

The next generation of West Virginia culinary talent is busy cooking at the Marion County Tech Center.

Maci Singleton, Kenzie Ammons, Sophia Larry and Kristina Spencer are on this year's ProStart team. ProStart is run by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, which runs the program as a two year, culinary arts and restaurant management course with industry backing for high school students. The ProStart team goes a bit further, practicing for six months before competing at state and national ProStart competitions, provided they can get

that far.

With Singleton, Ammons, Larry and Spencer on the team, it's never a question of "if" they'll reach nationals.

Each student found their way to cooking through their own unique path. While cooking connects each of them as they pass through high school, some will go deeper into the field while others will find themselves away from it. For now though, they're connected by their desire to improve their skills and win competitions. Amid all the cutting, dicing, baking, broiling and searing, the students have developed a sisterhood.

A common thread among the team

is that they joined for fun. However, Singleton discovered a passion for cooking that is leading her to attend the Culinary Institute of America after graduation.

"When we found the hospitality cup, I really found I had a true passion for this," Singleton said. "I was taking time out of my summertime, out of my days to only do this. I enjoy making food for people and seeing them enjoy the stuff I've created."

Singleton sees food as an art. Cooks are able to design a dish however they see fit, so it's also a form of expression for her.

"This is how I like my food, so

maybe someone else will like the food like this, too," she said.

Singleton excels at cooking meats. During competition, she typically does the entrée — steak, chicken or lamb. Her favorite thing to cook is chicken.

At the Skills USA competition, she worked on chicken for seven hours a day all summer. What makes chicken challenging, she said, is that people are convinced it has to be completely white or it can't be juicy or else it's raw. People are scared of chicken, she added.

"[Maci] is a very fierce cook," Larry said. "She follows a recipe, but when she gets in the groove, she's kind of

like, ‘don’t talk to me,’ you can just see it in her face. She’s so locked in on that. Nothing else matters. I definitely aspire to have that focus.”

Larry, 18, started cooking with her family when she was little. She mostly prepped vegetables here and there. Her mom worked evenings, so Larry would have to cook for herself. That responsibility sprouted its own inspiration and she eventually realized food didn’t just have to be fuel. A person can have a relationship with food that’s made all the more meaningful when they create a dish of their own.

“I have a dish that I make all the time that has been passed down through generations through my family,” Larry said. “I’ve kind of put my own spin on it but that kind of just gave me the inspiration.”

Larry’s dish is called macaroni and tomato sauce, and descends from the Great Depression era in which her grandmother lived. Much like today, the exorbitant cost of food, partially due to tariffs and other economic mistakes made at the political level, led people to adapt and create lower cost foods during the Great Depression. Popcorn is one example. Movie theaters started selling popcorn as a low cost snack, but its popularity allowed it to take on a life of its own and become a cultural staple.

For Larry’s spin on the dish, she started by testing different noodles. Typically, elbow macaroni is used, but Larry decided to try tuxedo noodles instead. For the sauce, she added feta, onion, salt and pepper, Italian seasoning and fresh basil. Anything to make the sauce more powerful.

Larry isn’t sure if culinary is what she wants to do for the rest of her life, but the class does inspire her. She just wonders if it will continue inspiring her for the rest of her life. The only thing clear to Larry at the moment, is that she wants to be her own boss.

She’s considering a management degree at Pierpont Community and Technical College. She’s also exploring what else inspires her outside of culinary. But even if culinary doesn’t become her professional life, it will still have a role in her day to day. She plans to cook for her household when she eventually has a family. She also has always wanted to make her own cookbook.

Kenzie Ammons started her cooking journey when she was three years old, cooking and baking with her grandma. When Ammons was six, her grandparents opened a restaurant and Ammons would help with whatever they needed. She said she’s kind of grown up in the food industry alongside her grandparents.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Maci Singleton catches some flames while cooking during a practice session with her ProStart Culinary Team on Feb. 14, 2025.

Ammons joined the class thinking it would be cool to take and help her develop a good life skill, and in doing so, she's become the team's dessert specialist. She's the polar complement to Singleton. While Singleton excels at entrees and meats, her weak spot is desserts. Ammons can cook entrees, but her skills are better suited to sweet foods. Together, they round out the team.

Ammons said her skill with deserts probably comes from spending more time with her grandma than her grandpa in the kitchen. Grandma focused on the desserts, while grandpa did the savory dishes.

Singleton plans to go into biochemistry at college, and then medical school for hematology. But cooking will still have a place in her life, because she sees herself working at restaurants while she works on her studies.

Competitions are exhilarating for Ammons. The crucible of the kitchen has forged some strong bonds for each of the students. Larry said when they all started the class, none of them knew each other particularly well, but because of the close nature of food work, they're now inseparable.

"I am the closest with Macy and Kristina and Kenzie than I am with anyone else," Larry said. "I feel like working with each other every single day, you really learn them as an individual, almost like your siblings. You're seeing each other every single day. Obviously, there's fights, we argue like sisters, but we love each other like sisters too. I think that makes up for it."

Ammons said food connects people because they're able to bond over it. Working in the kitchen, with food bringing them together takes on a whole different aspect, as there is kinship in working together to feed a group of people. Everybody loves to eat, Singleton said, but working together to make a meal creates a deeper bond.

"You have to work together," She said. "You have to know, understand other people's way of working. That's why it brings people together. I also think if you have a recipe that comes from your grandparents or whatever, you're sharing that with other people. You're sharing your family with other people."



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Lamb with potatoes and sauce prepared by the Marion County Tech Center ProStart Culinary Team on Feb. 14, 2025.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

The ProStart Culinary team at the Marion County Technical Center prepares one of the courses for their competition meal on Feb. 14, 2025.

Chef Todd Stalnaker believes a great meal is the starting point to a great conversation

By Esteban Fernandez



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Chef Todd Stalnaker stands with his protégés Maci Singleton, Kenzie Ammons and Sophia Larry at the Marion County Tech Center on Feb. 28. Stalnaker said he enjoys watching his students gain confidence in their culinary skills.

In the '90s, when Todd Stalnaker worked as a busboy at the Ramada Inn in Morgantown, the chef supervising his kitchen let one of the cooks go.

"He asked me to stay there for a little bit to help out," Stalnaker said. "He gave me a list of items to do and showed me real quick how to do them. I got the list done for him and, kind of, maybe he didn't believe that I

had done it right and everything, so he checked it. And he's like, hey, you got a natural knack for this. You ought to think about it."

After two years thinking about it, Stalnaker made the leap to cooking. He called it the best decision he's made.

Stalnaker now teaches culinary arts at the Marion County Technical Center. Before that he went through

culinary school, apprenticed for three years and then was hired on at Marriott where he spent 15 years doing caterings for universities, hospitals and other large entities. He has fine dining and casual dining experience under his belt as well.

"Had some good teachers along the way," he said.

Stalnaker has had the fortune of making some unique dishes during his

time in the kitchen.

During his apprenticeship, the Culinary USA team came to his school. The team captain was a graduate of the institution, so he brought in the olympic culinary team. Stalnaker said he was privileged to work with a couple of really good chefs that were probably qualified to be master chefs. Over the course of three days, Stalnaker and his fellow

students helped prepare a seven course dinner, which included ostrich, mushroom duxelles and red stag venison from New Zealand.

Stalnaker said organization has been a big thing for him throughout his career. When he was an apprentice, he was meticulous about every dish he put out. Working in fine dining, he said one has to be meticulous about every dish that gets put out, but speed is still essential. There's a lot of hungry customers sitting in the dining room waiting for the food to come out.

"Just learning different ways to make things better and faster," he said. "I wouldn't say my cooking style has changed it has definitely gotten better over the 35, 36 years I've been doing it. It's just a comfortable level. I like the certification level I'm at. There's no pressure to advance or anything."

Stalnaker describes his cooking style as a fusion of many different things. At culinary school, students learn a lot of French style techniques. Once those techniques are mastered, students adapt to how other countries cook. For example, Stalnaker said Asian cuisine uses a lot of wok and stir fry, while Caribbean cuisine uses a lot of barbecue pits and roasting. He said cooks learn to incorporate styles as they progress. Stalnaker said he wasn't sure he had any one different style, but cooking is about constantly learning and adapting. Stalnaker said it is possible to incorporate French style with pacific rim style cooking, one can adapt and create as one goes.

Stalnaker has even cooked alligator. "It's really no different than anything else," he said. "We use some alligator tails, so it's got kind of, flakiness, like seafood. You've just got to be careful with the cooking techniques and don't overdo it. Like with scallops, if you over do it a little bit, they get tough and rubbery. Ostrich is not much different than

roasting beef or anything like that."

One thing Stalnaker likes to do is roast meats, for which he tries creating sauces and chutneys to go along with whatever protein he's working with. During the pandemic, he got into comfort foods, like ratatouilles. A ratatouille is a stew of summer vegetables such as eggplant, zucchini, tomatoes, bell peppers and onions. Clams and oysters, Stalnaker likes working with less. And Lobster? He called it downright inhumane since the poor crustacean has to be boiled alive.

Stalnaker entered teaching after he was downsized by Mylan at their plant in Morgantown. The plant shut down in 2021. When that happened, the position teaching culinary art at the tech center happened to be open. Stalnaker knew the teacher, and he himself used to mentor students for her for competitions the school's cooking team was preparing for. After talking to the school's principal, he applied. A couple of weeks later, he made the transition to teacher. However, it wasn't clear if he had made the right decision during his first year.

"Not really bad students or anything, I just didn't know if I was ready for it or anything," he said. "As the year went on, I got more comfortable. I realized, I've been teaching people for 30 years how to cook, so it's not much different really."

Now in his eighth year of teaching, Stalnaker admits working with students reconnected to food. While he worked at Mylan, Stalnaker was out of the industry. Seeing his students get excited about cooking reignited his own fire to cook.

Stalnaker said he's learned a lot just from the act of teaching students. He was never really around younger people much before, but now that he sees a new generation deal with their own struggles and navigate their lives

he has learned a lot more empathy. He also learned a few new cooking techniques, thanks to cooking videos disseminated through new platforms like YouTube and TikTok.

Stalnaker has earned a lot of loyalty from his students.

"I wouldn't want to learn from any other chef," Maci Singleton, 17, said. "He definitely is very patient and also knows how to help all of his students individually, by how they learn personally."

Singleton is on the school's highly-skilled ProStart team, which has won competitions and competed at the national level. Singleton said Stalnaker has taught her how to be confident in herself and how to move past her insecurity. As a result, Singleton has improved semester over semester. She said Stalnaker is always willing to work hands on or one on one with his students whenever they need help. He makes himself available for practice whether it's at six in the morning or close to midnight. And when the team competes, his emotional investment is apparent.

"He's more anxious than we are," Singleton said. "He'll pace around, have a lot of inputs or or make faces."

While that can be nerve-wracking during competition, Singleton said he helps a lot during practice. Singleton

said it's crazy how Chef Stalnaker makes cooking look easy. His technique from years of being a chef clearly impresses his students.

Marion County Board of Education member Donna Costello regularly sneaks away to the tech center for a cup of coffee from the chef. She also, serendipitously, knows when the team is cooking for competition. She first met Stalnaker when she began her tenure on the board. One of the first places she went was the tech center. Since then, she's become a big supporter of Stalnaker, the team, and the tech center's mission as a whole.

"The combination of his experience and enthusiasm for culinary can be seen in his dedication to his students," she said. "Being able to witness the students in his class, whether it's baking cookies or preparing for competition, they display the same enthusiasm."

Stalnaker said food has the power to connect people.

"Just think about your house," he said. "You spend a lot of time around the dining room table in the kitchen. That's where people congregate. I've had some of the best conversations at a dinner table in a restaurant with other people, other chefs. So I just think a good meal can bring about a great conversation."

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MARION COUNTY SCHOOLS

After wandering through the workforce, Natalie Feltz finds her jam in culinary arts

By Esteban Fernandez



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Natalie Feltz, left, talks to her student, Meghan George, on March 3, 2025, at the culinary labs of Pierpont Community and Technical College located inside Middletown Commons.

The types of cooking ingredients available in West Virginia has changed in the last 20 years, and it's Natalie Feltz's job to make sure her students know how best use all of them.

Feltz teaches culinary arts at Pierpont Community and Technical College where she is coordinator for the Food Service Management Program.

"There's stuff you can get here that I never would have thought would have come this way," she said. "Just looking at the [Middletown] Commons, and how it's developed in the last three or four years. We're getting a lot more access to things than we had previously. And of course, with the internet, even if you can't find it on Amazon, you can probably buy it for a reasonable price."

Feltz isn't afraid to experiment. She tried making tortillas using a sourdough starter. While definitely far from the tortilla's origin as a corn based product, her experiment was

nonetheless a success. The tortillas had a different profile from regular flour tortillas and went well with the refried beans she provided.

Sundays were always spent at her grandmother's, who herself was a frugal cook.

Feltz remembers that if one didn't eat three or four plates, then that automatically meant something was wrong. Her grandmother made simple, delicious food, using her coffee mug as a measuring cup. Feltz remembered her grandmother joking that it was age that kept her hands from sticking to the dough, not that it was coating her hands in olive oil to prevent sticking. While Feltz watched her grandmother cook, those recipes transferred down to Feltz's cousin, who was able to preserve and share them with Feltz.

However, Feltz's earliest memories of cooking centered around her mom, who had to cook for five kids. Most of the cooking was out of necessity, and while her mother had talent in the kitchen, she fell back on a consistent repertoire to keep her family fed

without burning through too much of her energy.

When Feltz left home, she didn't know how to cook.

She initially thought her future lay in becoming a history teacher until that interest came to a screeching halt in World Civilization Three. She sold cars, makeup and otherwise kept bouncing around between fields. Feltz had her daughter young, and when her daughter was ready for kindergarten, Feltz went back to school. At first, Feltz thought she would become a dietician. Pierpont offered a pathway to that field, and it held the pathway where she could go into the kitchen without becoming a chef. The hours are notoriously less than amazing, and Feltz didn't think becoming a chef would be compatible with raising a daughter.

"But the more I got into school and schooling, and some of the labs, I realized I was really into it," she said. "I was reasonably organized compared to some of the people that said they were culinary majors at the

time. So I was like, alright, I'm just gonna keep going."

Eventually, that led to her joining a competition team. The good environment between Fairmont State and Pierpont allowed Feltz to obtain a bachelor's degree in business using her culinary education. That led to a masters, and after receiving her degree in 2017, she became an instructor at Pierpont teaching culinary.

After the two colleges split in 2021, Pierpont needed its own culinary teaching space. Feltz said they were the last to leave the Fairmont State Campus, but it also provided an opportunity because they could design a whole new kitchen lab from the ground up. The previous one couldn't accommodate what the program needed.

Now, Feltz teaches out of a large, multiroom facility that has everything a modern restaurant has. She considers herself a pretty frugal cook, who likes experimenting with what she has on hand in her pantry.

"I think people are scared to play



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Natalie Feltz pulls a finished tortilla out of a cast iron pan on March 3, 2025.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Natalie Feltz, food service management program coordinator, works a lump of dough destined to turn into tortillas at Pierpont's food lab at Middletown Commons on March 3, 2025.

around with different ways of eating, vegan or vegetarian, because they get in their head that, 'Oh, I don't like veggies because of this experience and yada yada yada,'" she said. "But you can just transform anything. So another take on the sushi was like, sushi roll in a bowl, right? You do all the components, even the Nori, but you just kind of dice it up."

As a student, Feltz was thrown by her instructor, Chef Ted Hastings, who told her to make potato soup, since that's what was available and they had to be used. She remembers asking where the recipe was when

he replied, one doesn't need a recipe for potato soup. Since then, her skills have grown to the point where she can whip something up without having to refer to a recipe based solely on what she has available. Now as an instructor, she sees her students sometimes struggle in lab as dishes don't turn out as expected. When that happens, she reassures her students and tells them to go home and try it again. That process of trial and error, and not being afraid to fail, is what creates better, more comfortable chefs.

"If you're not making any mistakes, you're not doing anything," she said.

"I think in life in general, if you don't make any mistakes, are you just sitting at home? Comfortably?"

What Feltz enjoys least is icing and decorating cakes, but that mostly stems from not practicing. She doesn't do it consistently enough to feel good with it. But between baking and making the icing, she'll get it 90% of the way there. She just prefers it if somebody else finishes the product.

Chapman Adair, baking and pastry instructor for Pierpont, has worked with Feltz for two academic years. He said Feltz is a very detail-oriented cook, who cooks with a lot of soul.

While intangible, soul is a very important ingredient when it comes to cooking.

"Food tells a story, and part of that story is telling the history of where you come from, or it's telling the origin of what has inspired you to do that, because the work is not for everyone," he said. "It's a laborious process. You're on your feet. It's long hours typically and to some, to do full scratch preparation takes a ton of grit to operate inside of a kitchen because of the type of work that it is."

Adair said when she teaches, she's engaged and clearly enjoys the work. He said one can see the passion come through when she's talking about the food she's produced or where it's led her to be. Adair added that Feltz is a product of Pierpont as well, and from the get-go, a guiding factor has been to help spread knowledge through the community because she has been a part of it.

Culinary student Meghan George is studying with Feltz at Pierpont. She came from a single parent home, and remembers watching her dad prepare meals. George always was interested in helping. It started with pancakes and George's love of cooking grew with each level of difficulty she achieved. Once George reached college, Feltz really unlocked George's potential.

"She is a great personality," George said. "She makes cooking fun. I always like any class I've had with her. I've always been excited to just go because the lab is going to be fun, even if it's a busy lab and we have a lot to do. She still makes it interesting. When I cook, it's interesting to see how much of her cooking has influenced me."

George said Feltz's creativity has inspired her own, and increased her desire to try new recipes and open up her experience to other cultures and food.

Chapman said food has a communal value that can easily draw in people. It can open up people to listening, because chewing forces want to stop talking and open up to the moment. When one shares a table, everyone stops and listens to a certain degree, he said.

"When you invite someone to coffee or breakfast or to your house, you're taking the time to get to know them a little better," Feltz said. "All cultures share that in common. Food is what connects people in general. I love telling students this. You'd be hard pressed to reach the end of our life and say, I know everything there is to know about food. It's not possible, so there's always something to learn and be taught by food and by people and what they bring with their unique experience and background."



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Natalie Feltz prepared bean dip, fresh sourdough-based tortillas and dipping vegetables as a dish on March 3, 2025 inside the cooking classroom at Pierpont Community and Technical College where she serves as a program coordinator.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Natalie Feltz used a sourdough starter to create the dough for her tortillas, working the dough until it was ready to partition, flatten and roll on March 3, 2025.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Natalie Feltz stretches a tortilla as part of the dough's flattening and stretching process required to form a tortilla on March 3, 2025.



PHOTO BY ESTEBAN FERNANDEZ

Natalie Feltz displays her finished dish, bean dip and homemade tortillas on March 3, 2025.

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Cooking is not work, but a form of community for Michael Core

By Eric Cravey

It's mid-afternoon on a Thursday and there's loud pop music blaring inside a kitchen on Fairmont Avenue concealed and silent from the customers.

The crew at Mikey C's is on fire.

They are smiling and singing along with the music while they slice and dice vegetables and meats — typically referred to as food prep — for the crowd the popular eatery expects for the dinner rush. It's almost like a scene from the Emmy Award-winning TV series "The Bear" minus the profanity.

Restaurant co-founder and namesake Michael Core, 47, created and launched the restaurant with his fiancé Shannon Constable-Vasconcellos in March 2023. Part of the atmosphere and design Core wanted is undergirded by fond family memories in which he grew up eating meals and sharing good times at both his grandmothers' homes.

"We always had big family functions and stuff like that," Core said.

"Growing up, my other grandmother, Rosemary Gearde, she was Italian, so every Sunday we always had the traditional Sunday dinner with people around the table — relatives, friends, family — you never knew who would just pop in. Sometimes, the entire Fairmont State basketball team would show up."

Core's success owning and operating restaurants — first with Backwoods Grill he and his father launched together in 2002 on Locust Avenue before moving to Marion Square — and now with Mikey C's, his food journey is one of self-determination and old-fashioned entrepreneurial spirit. However, he didn't wake up one day in his youth and say, "I'm going to be a chef."

"I didn't do a whole lot of cooking when I was younger, but then I would fool around and, you know, get into my first cooking job," Core said.

He was 18 and began working in the kitchen at Creative Gourmet Catering in Fairmont, which is no longer in business.

"We'd get there early, we'd make muffins, we'd have a soup of the day, but we always had some certain things those days," Core said. "And you know, that's where I learned different bases for soups, to try to create other recipes like I do today, and it brought out a



PHOTO BY COLIN C. RHODES

Michael Core, left, and Shannon Constable-Vasconcellos opened Mikey C's Cuisine in March of 2023 after years of separate restaurant experiences.

lot of different things that I learned just starting out, learning those certain little techniques to start doing different things."

Core then went on to Aquarium Lounge where he learned more cooking skills from former owner Jimmy Lamb.

Lamb gave Core the nickname "Freedom" because he knew he could trust Core to run the kitchen on days he needed a break from the hustle and flow of work.

"And I was working at a steel company, for Mont Levine, for a little bit and I'd still go there on evenings after work, just to cook, just because I enjoyed it so much," Core said. "You know, that was just my way of reloading. To me it's not work, you know."

That's around the time Core realized he was hooked. He was committed to the food industry to a point he enrolled in culinary school, which at the time was under the umbrella of then-Fairmont State College.

"I went through the first semester there at culinary school, and a building came available, and that's when I opened up the first Backwoods Grill in Fairmont," Core said. "My dad and I opened it when I was in college."

Leaning on one grandmother's Yugoslavian heritage and the other's Italian heritage, Core set out to create an atmosphere of community and family in the restaurant.

"People would come after the ball games, and it was just like a family atmosphere all the time. You know,

when we had a Christmas party, there were friends from all over coming to these Christmas parties that we would have," Core said. "We'd invite friends, staff, family, and it was a big event."

"And you know, having that welcomeness of family and friends always gathering around the table and just hanging out and having a good time was always a memorable thing in our family."

The community has stepped up tremendously to make Mikey C's a success. In a previous interview with the Times West Virginian, Shannon said they aren't in the business for the money.

"We're not in this to get rich," Constable-Vasconcellos said. "We literally want to do this just because we

love it. This is fun for us. We enjoy the atmosphere. We enjoy the creation.”

Core’s and Constable-Vasconcellos’ passion paid off in August 2024 when they were named the 2024 Small Business of the Year by the Marion County Chamber of Commerce. The night they won the award was reminiscent of a scene from the Oscar Awards.

As Chamber President Pat Snively read the details of their nomination, guests began chattering that ended in a crescendo of a standing ovation when Snively said the words “Mikey C’s.”

Core said winning that award could be characterized as his biggest food victory. He said the award came as a total surprise as he and his fiancé attended the dinner that night as mere guests. It was their first night away from Mikey C’s since they opened the business.

“So we’re sitting there just having a few drinks and eating and just, you know, not thinking that, we even stood a chance at something like this, and that’s when they called our names,” Core said. “She looked at me, and I looked at her, and we were both in tears, and I was like, ‘Wow, we weren’t expecting this,’ you know.

“And it was one of the greatest achievements, because I’ve been in this business like I said, over 20 years, and, you know, I’ve never received such a reward.”

“He and Shannon are both just such great people for this community and they’re very pleasant and people enjoy going there,” Chamber Board Chairman Chad Nuzum said. “He’s bringing that same great food that he’s always had and he’s just a staple of this community. People go there and he keeps people coming in the doors with their great service.”

Customers have told Core that they hang out on Facebook every Sunday evening anxiously waiting for him to post the restaurant’s daily specials for the week. He mixes up it every day to offer new and exciting dishes to expand and challenge everyone’s palate.

“I switch them up and very sporadically, different cuisine styles, you know, from Asian to Mexican and more,” he said. “I do a lot of Southern style foods and stuff. Tonight, we’ll have meatloaf and stuff. I just do a lot of different things, and it’s worked out well.

“I want different tastes, different textures, different ideas every week.”

For example, on a recent Friday night, one of his specials was New Zealand venison served with a wild mushroom sauce.

During his 27-year career feeding Fairmont, Core said he is honored to have served at least two generations of local families. He has customers



PHOTO BY ERIC CRAVEY

The crew at Mikey C’s turned down the music and scattered when co-owner Michael Core entered to pose for this photo. The kitchen is the nerve center of the entire operation.

who are now adults whose parents he previously served while cooking at his other locales.

“Working from one place to another with different people, you gain more knowledge, you know, because in the food industry, there’s always something new every day that you can learn,” Core said. “It’s a never dying industry where, you know, there’s always be something new that you have to chase.”

Core wants to offer new menu items all of the time. He also strives to offer twists on traditional meals. He is planning to launch sugar-free desserts and other menu items because he wants to offer healthy options.

“We try to cook everything fresh right here on site. Most of our chicken’s not breaded — it’s grilled,” Core said. “And, you know, I try to stay away from fatty foods. And, you know, try to reduce that back here, you know, try to offer healthy servings, things like that.”

In the spirit of constant improvement, Core never wants to become stagnant. He wants to explore new tastes and new flavors so he can offer them at Mikey C’s.

“You know, it’s just like sitting back and trying to explore a new world, you know, there’s so much out there that we don’t know about, you know, and bringing these different flavors and recipes that I have for the area here is just, it’s more rewarding than anything.”



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Rosemary's Angelucci's sixth love language

By Payton Caldwell

Whoever established that there are only five love languages clearly never met Rosemary Angelucci, of Farmington.

Described as a “local legend” by those who have had the privilege to taste her finest dishes, Angelucci, who turned 91 in January, has been a force to be reckoned with over the years when in the kitchen.

As the matriarch of a large family, it's a known fact that Angelucci's children and grandchildren are what drive her to not just meet expectations, but to exceed expectations when tasked with whipping up one of her specialties.

According to her granddaughter, Melissa Angelucci, cooking and family have gone hand-in-hand for many years.

“We have a large family and we're very close, but we've all been raised around her dining room table and her kitchen,” Angelucci said. “If you were to walk into her house right now, you would end up eating dinner. Food is truly her love language, and she's really used cooking for so many years as a way to show love and bring people together.”

“From the time I was young, I don't have any other memories that stand out like the memories I have of spending Sunday afternoons at her house. We'd have a table full of food that she made, people coming and going, neighbors dropping things off. There were always people around. Next thing you'd know, though, she'd be asking you to pull up a chair. Just in her family alone, there are 30 to 50 people, and she has raised us all to be extremely close. On Sundays that's just where we were.”

While she certainly is the matriarch of the family, Angelucci has also been the general in the kitchen guiding the troops for many years. Melissa Angelucci fondly recalls a time in the past few months when Rosemary ultimately decided to pass the torch.

“Last Christmas, she ended up standing in the kitchen while watching her granddaughters cook,” Angelucci said. “It just felt like in that moment she was passing the torch. For her, teaching us cooking and being present with her has been such an important part of her life. Being at her house with everyone sitting around the table talking about their week could not have happened without her cooking dinner for us.”

“We told her then that she's been running the show for so many years,



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Center, in back, Rosemary Angelucci is known for her big family get togethers and has never been known to prepare anything from a box.

but this year she sat back and let her granddaughters work in the kitchen. She still supervised, though, but it was really a full circle moment.”

“Through something as simple as cooking for her family, she instilled so much more in all of us than cooking. She truly instilled values in us. As we sat around the table sharing stories and talking through life with one another, we were also learning from her the importance of values.”

If there are chefs out there who would rather prepare a small meal without any advanced preparation, Angelucci certainly is not among them. For her, it's always been go big or go home, no matter what dish she is serving or how many people end up at her table.

“She's always served big meals, and one that I remember the most when we'd get together is spaghetti and meatballs,” Angelucci said. “The sauce would cook all morning until everyone got there. She'd make homemade bread to go with the meal, too.”

“She's always taught us that it's not about the big meals that go on the table, it's about making the table longer so others can join you. It's really about breaking bread with people, forming a relationship through sitting down and having a meal with someone.”

Although her family has been enormously influential when it comes to continuing to spend time in the kitchen, Angelucci has also chosen to show her affection for others through food in times of need.

“She has volunteered with the Farmington Fire Department in the past which was important to her,” Angelucci said. “She organized a fundraiser for breakfast which was a rewarding experience. She's made spaghetti dinners for people just because she's wanted to do that. She's made food for birthdays, wedding receptions, and for people who have lost a loved one.”

One example that Angelucci says is a reflection of Rosemary as an individual, though, was demonstrated through a batch of pepperoni rolls she made recently.

“My youngest cousin just moved to Alabama and her parents were going to visit, so she wanted to make sure she had some pepperoni rolls to send,” Angelucci said. “She ended up waking up at 6:00 in the morning just so she could have some prepared, and she made a couple dozen. That's just who she is. She's shared so much love through cooking.”

While her recipes and secret tips are both aspects of her life that have

been passed down through generations, Angelucci believes that Rosemary's greatest legacy lies in the way she has passed down the importance of family.

“The importance of family and supporting each other have both been things she's passed down to all of us,” Angelucci said. “Showing up for each other when it matters is something that matters to her. Even at 91, she's still showing up to her great-grandchildren's sporting events. If this tells you anything, we had to help her subscribe to ESPN+ so she could watch my cousin coaching.”

“She never misses watching us or cheering us on. She wants to be there for everyone, and she's taught us to love our people. Our family, friends, everyone close to you unconditionally.”

From Angelucci's point of view, Rosemary has several special dishes that have not just withstood the test of time within the family, but have made an impression on community members as well.

“Her spaghetti and meatballs are a specialty, and so are her pepperoni rolls,” Angelucci said. “She also makes wonderful stewed tomatoes, which have been a popular request put in by so many people. I honestly can't think of anything she's made that people haven't gone crazy about, because everything she does is homemade. She's never cooked out of a box.”

“I can remember going into her spare bedroom where she would have towels stretched over the bed with homemade noodles drying. Everything was from scratch, it didn't matter what it was.”

Angelucci's favorite? Rosemary's fantastic pancakes.

“She makes the best pancakes,” Angelucci said. “When we were all growing up, we lived right next to each other, so she would make us breakfast for school each morning. Most of the time she would make us an egg and bacon sandwich so we could just take it with us on the bus, but on pancake day she told us ahead of time to be early.”

“If anyone were to come to Farmington, anyone who knows her would say spaghetti and meatballs are her best dish. I just don't think there's anything she can't make.”

With all of the lessons Rosemary has provided her inner circle over the years, Angelucci says that she's still learning from her to this day. Their journey together, which started when Angelucci was just a child, has been

one that will remain with her forever.

If anything, Angelucci believes Rosemary still has a lot to give to those who ask for it.

“Even when I was a little girl, she would have me stand beside her in the kitchen and tell me to just be patient,” Angelucci said. “I’ve learned so much from her over the years. She just enjoys the process of cooking, and what brings her the most happiness is seeing everyone enjoy the meal she has cooked.”

“Recently, I asked her if she could teach me how to make pickled eggs. She told me to come to her house, and she showed me little tricks she’s learned over the years. When I took them to the event I attended, everyone was telling me how good they were. I took so much pride in that, though, because I could tell people my grandmother helped me.”

For the Angelucci family, the idea of a communal space is extremely important to having a happy and healthy life. For Rosemary, it’s been her bread and butter for so many years. Now, as she continues to make others smile with her famous recipes, she also is setting the table for future generations to continue her legacy.

In any case, it’s a legacy worth remembering.



In front, at left, Rosemary Angelucci has a reputation of being able to cook anything and do it well.

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Local legend of Kingmont



PHOTO BY PAYTON CALDWELL

Breads are one of Rosemary Fantasia's specialties.

Rosemary Fantasia and her seasoned specialties

By Payton Caldwell

As a member of what she fondly calls, “The Little United Nations of Kingmont,” local kitchen savant Rosemary Fantasia is more than just a master in the kitchen.

To many, especially her close family and friends, she’s a local legend who pours her heart and soul into every dish she prepares.

A former career education teacher at East Park, Fantasia has been around the block and passed along the lessons she’s learned throughout her life in the kitchen to anyone willing to learn. For her, though, the journey truly began with spending time in the kitchen as a child with her sister, mother and grandmother.

“I have a sister who is 13 months

older than me, and when I was a little girl, Santa Claus brought us baking pans,” Fantasia said. “We weren’t allowed to work with the stove until I was probably six or seven years old, but I spent a lot of time rolling out pie crusts for my mother. I had a little baking kit that I remember using so that was a fun time for me.”

“We spent a lot of time at my grandmother Simonetti’s house in Rivesville, and that’s where I really began to learn a lot of the recipes that I still have today.”

Growing up around family and friends, particularly those who lived in Italy or immigrated from other countries before coming to the United States, Fantasia began to incorporate

her heritage and family traditions into every recipe she attempted in the kitchen. Essentially, there was almost nothing more special than being able to carry on these dishes and delicacies that had been a part of her family for generations.

“We had so many neighbors here in Kingmont of different backgrounds,” Fantasia said. “Some were Polish, Italian, Ukrainian, all from different places. When I was growing up, the Kingmont mine was just across the river, so many people came here to work there. It was with those people and through family, especially my dad’s grandmother, that I started making dishes that had been popular in my family for a long time.”

“I was taught how to roll out my own spaghetti noodles and alfredo noodles, and I learned how to make desserts like Easter Bread and Easter Cheese Pie. My Godmother, who was very important to me, also taught me how to make a sponge cake, and those are all things I still try to make for family gatherings today.”

With so many of us choosing to eat at restaurants rather than focus on having a home-cooked meal due to the hustle and bustle in today’s society, Fantasia says that it is extremely important for her to be around family and eat together as much as possible. She credits this to her late father, who often wanted the family to eat at home rather than visit

a restaurant for dinner.

"My dad was someone who really liked family time, and because of that we didn't eat out much," Fantasia said. "We spent a lot of time at my grandmothers and my aunts, and often on Sunday afternoons we would all get together for a big family meal. For us, it's really a communal thing. Even now, we still try to come together for things like picnics on the 4th of July, and we always get together on the holidays to eat as a family."

While she feels that there are many recipes that her family often requests whenever they join together for a meal, Fantasia believes that some of her best dishes are those she makes for special occasions.

"We always have lasagna for every family holiday, and my sister [Gina] and I decide beforehand who is going to make what dish," Fantasia said. "I've done Italian Wedding Soup for baptisms, and I always do the Easter Bread. I typically make mine without icing on it, but you can make it so many different ways."

With all of the excitement surrounding the big family events, which Fantasia cherishes, she also enjoys the simple moments in the kitchen, particularly with her nephews Nicholas and Wyatt, who both work hard to replicate their aunt's recipes.

"Tradition is very important to me, and I really enjoy being able to pass things down," Fantasia said. "With my nephews, though, they like to be in the kitchen with me. For example, Nicholas loves pancakes. So when we are together, we always make them together. A lot of the time he will ask me, 'How are you doing this?' I always tell him that I can give him the recipes, but my end product will not taste like someone else's."

"In the kitchen, I'm very hands-on, so any time I can make something with my nephews or teach others my recipes I enjoy it."

During her time at East Park, Fantasia recalls having to pick an item or idea every 9 weeks for the students to learn. Her idea? A cooking survival skills class, a memory she now laughs about when thinking of the initial response from her students.

"We had to come up with some sort of idea or concept for the students to learn at that time," Fantasia said. "When I created the class, I ended up having nine boys sign up. At first, I think they thought it was a true survival skills class, so they were surprised whenever they learned it was entirely different from what they thought it would be. They ended up getting really into it, though, and even took some of the lessons they learned

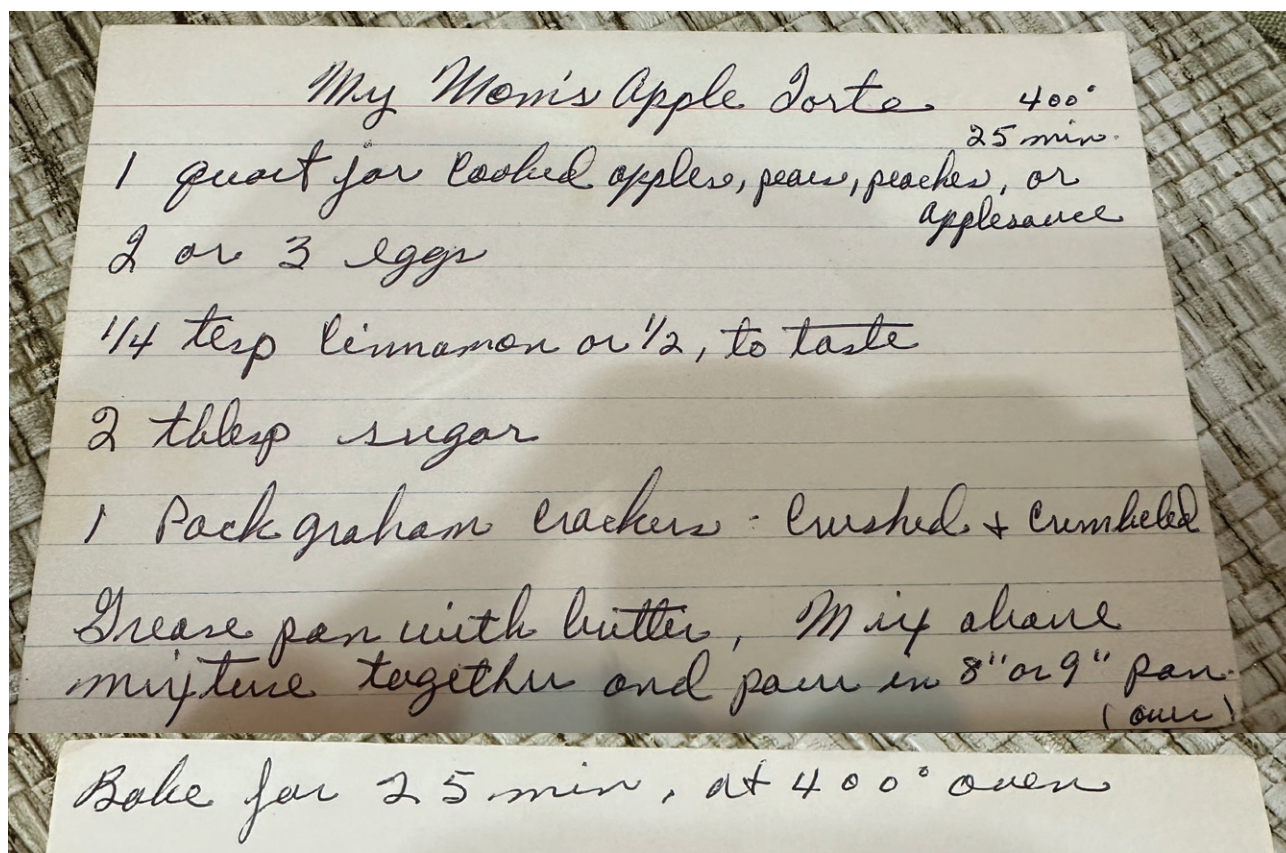


PHOTO BY PAYTON CALDWELL

Rosemary Fantasia still has handwritten recipes her grandmother gave her from years ago.

home with them."

"As I've gotten older, I've come across some of them from time to time who have told me they really valued that experience."

Along with her close bond with her nephews, who surely admire and respect Fantasia for her work in the kitchen, the local legend has also touched the lives of other family members and close friends. Family friend Kevin Willfong, for whom she often cooks, has nothing but glowing praise and affection for such a talented individual.

"I married into an Italian family 48 years ago and have been treated to many fabulous meals over the years," Willfong said. "One of my all-time favorite treats, though, is Pita Piata. It's a cake/cookie that is generally prepared during the Christmas season. Rosemary made one for me this past Christmas, and it was one of the best I've ever tasted."

"It's at the top of my all-time favorite Christmas treats. She truly is a wonderful cook and the most kind and generous person."

The Pita Piata, which has become a fan favorite among many, is also one that Rosemary herself thinks fondly of. She believes it is one recipe that has remained intact for so many years and will surely stay popular within her inner circle for years to come.

Fantasia's brother, Nick Fantasia, echoed Willfong's sentiments, specifically thanking his sister for maintaining family traditions.

"My sister Rosemary walks in our

mother's footsteps," Fantasia said.

"She makes large gatherings seem simple, and she's always willing to share the secrets in the recipes. She always makes enough for other guests. Rosemary and all of my sisters have embraced our family traditions and make everyone feel like family."

While she has certainly done a remarkable job of upholding family traditions and values over the years, Fantasia also believes traditions can make or break future generations. In a sense, she knows that without the lessons, recipes, and advice she has received and learned along the way, she would not be able to successfully replicate dishes and desserts in the kitchen.

"I think that the people who come after you know who they are because

of tradition," Fantasia said. "It's the family recipes that will live on forever, and even after I'm gone I hope our family continues our traditions and passes them down the same way they were passed down to me."

If you were to step inside her kitchen, "home" would be the best word to describe the feeling of walking in Fantasia's footsteps. From the pictures that line the refrigerator to the cups awaiting their return to their respective shelves occupying the counter, one thing is abundantly clear.

Rosemary Fantasia isn't just a legend among her peers. She's an individual who can make anyone feel at home in her presence, especially when one of her special dishes is in hand.

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Use two types of paprika for the best Hungarian chicken paprikash

By Christopher Kimball | Milk Street

Chicken paprikash is a saucy blend of chicken, onions, sour cream and paprika. To create their version of the dish, the cooks at Christopher Kimball's Milk Street blend techniques they learned from chefs and home cooks in Budapest, Hungary.

Serves 4 to 6

Hot and sweet paprika are defining elements, along with a generous amount of sautéed onion. The spice brings a touch of heat, a rusty hue and thickening power. Seek out fresh, quality paprika, and look for brands produced in Hungary. Jarred roasted red peppers, blended to a smooth puree, bring a silky sweetness. Fresh, finely chopped banana pepper adds tangy, fruity notes.

In this recipe from our cookbook “Milk Street 365: The All-Purpose Cookbook for Every Day of the Year,” we blend techniques from restaurant chefs and

home cooks who taught us their recipes during our visit to Budapest, Hungary.

In addition to a generous amount of onion, sautéed until sweet and softened to create a flavorful base, there are a couple other keys to achieving fullness and complexity in the iconic dish. Paprika, both sweet and hot, is a defining ingredient. The spice adds a touch of heat, a rusty hue and helps thicken the stew.

Multiple forms of peppers are essential for depth and range of flavor. Jarred roasted red peppers, blended to a smooth puree, bring a silky sweetness;

fresh banana pepper, finely chopped, adds tangy, fruity notes.

The paprika should be bright red, not dull brown, and full of fragrance. Seek out fresh, quality paprika, and in particular look for brands produced in Hungary.

Don't stir the sour cream into the chicken mixture while still on the heat. Remove the pot from the burner, push the chicken to the sides and whisk the sour cream and the remaining pepper puree into the braising liquid in the center. This gently warms the sour cream so it won't separate.

Hungarian Chicken Paprikash

Start to finish: 1 hour 40 minutes (25 minutes active)

Ingredients

½ cup drained jarred roasted red peppers
2 tablespoons lemon juice, divided
4 teaspoons hot paprika, divided
1 teaspoon white sugar
Kosher salt and ground black pepper
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
1 ripe medium tomato, cored and chopped
2 banana peppers or wax peppers, 1 stemmed, seeded and finely chopped, 1 stemmed, seeded and thinly sliced, reserved separately
¼ cup sweet paprika
2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed
¾ cup sour cream

Directions

In a blender, combine the roasted peppers, 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice, 1 teaspoon of the hot paprika, the sugar and ½ teaspoon salt. Puree, scraping the jar as needed, until smooth, about 30 seconds. Set aside.

In a large Dutch oven over medium-high, heat the oil until barely smoking. Stir in the onion, tomato and finely chopped banana pepper. Cover, reduce to medium and cook, stirring often, until the tomato has broken down and the onion is softened and light golden brown, about 10 minutes.

Stir in the sweet paprika, remaining 3 teaspoons hot paprika, broth and half of the pepper puree. Bring to a simmer, then cover, reduce to low and cook, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes.

Add the chicken and stir until well coated. Bring to a boil over medium-high, then cover, reduce to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until a skewer inserted into the chicken meets no resistance, about 40 minutes.

Off heat, stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon lemon juice. Push the chicken to the side; add the remaining pepper puree and the sour cream to the liquid. Whisk to incorporate, then stir to combine the sauce and chicken. Taste and season with salt and black pepper. Serve garnished with the sliced banana pepper.



PHOTO BY CONNIE MILLER

Paprika, both sweet and hot, is a defining ingredient. The spice adds a touch of heat, a rusty hue and helps thicken the stew.

Buttery pistachios bring sophisticated flavors to tangy-sweet lemon bars

By Christopher Kimball | Milk Street

Lemon bars are prized for their tangy sweetness, but the bright acidity of lemon juice can read a little one-note. To bring balance to this sunny dessert, the cooks at Christopher Kimball's Milk Street incorporate a small measure of fruity, savory olive oil in both the custard and crust.

Makes 24 bars

Using egg yolks in addition to whole eggs boosts the richness and color. Buttery pistachios and fragrant lemon zest are mixed into the shortbread base, providing citrusy and nutty notes. With their subtle sweetness and vivid green hue, raw pistachios are worth seeking out. A dusting of powdered sugar is the perfect finishing touch.

Lemon bars are prized for their tangy-sweetness, but the bright acidity of lemon juice can overwhelm other nuanced flavors and read as a little one-note.

In our book, "Milk Street Bakes," we bring balance to the sunny dessert by incorporating a small measure of fruity, savory olive oil in both the custard and crust.

If you have a bottle of top-shelf olive oil, this is the time to use it, though high-quality supermarket brands work well, too. Just be sure to use extra-virgin olive oil, which has far more character than refined regular and light olive oils.

Using egg yolks in addition to whole eggs boosts both richness and color. Don't vigorously whisk the eggs and sugar when making the filling or the mixture will become aerated, which will result in a bubbled surface on the baked bars. Whisk gently and only until the eggs and sugar are combined. For incorporating the flour and liquids into the filling base, we prefer to stir with a silicone spatula to avoid additional aeration.

Buttery pistachios and fragrant lemon zest are mixed into the shortbread base, providing citrusy and nutty notes. With their subtle sweetness and vivid green hue, raw pistachios are worth seeking out. If you can't find them, the bars still are delicious made with roasted pistachios — just be sure they're unsalted.

A little heavy cream in the lemon filling tamps down any harsh, brassy notes and lends a smooth, round richness. The bars hold well at room temperature for up to three days. For the cleanest cuts, allow the bars to cool completely before slicing. Dust them with powdered sugar only just before serving, or the sugar will dissolve.

Lemon and Pistachio Bars

Start to finish: 1¾ hours (30 minutes active), plus cooling

Ingredients:

For the crust:

113 grams (8 tablespoons) cold salted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes, plus softened butter for the pan
145 grams (1 cup) raw pistachios (see headnote)
1 tablespoon grated lemon zest
195 grams (1½ cups) all-purpose flour
161 grams (¾ cup) white sugar
¾ teaspoon table salt
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 large egg white, beaten

For filling and finishing:

5 large eggs, plus 3 large egg yolks
375 grams (1¾ cups) white sugar
1 tablespoon grated lemon zest, plus 1 cup lemon juice
33 grams (¼ cup) all-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon table salt
½ cup heavy cream
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Powdered sugar, to serve

Directions

To make the crust, butter a 9-by-13-inch baking pan or glass baking dish. In a food processor, process the pistachios and lemon zest until finely chopped, about 30 seconds. Add the flour, sugar and salt; process until well combined, 10 to 20 seconds. Scrape the bowl and pulse a few times to ensure no dry, floury patches remain. Scatter the butter over the mixture and drizzle in the oil, then process until large, evenly moistened clumps form, 45 to 60 seconds.

Crumble the dough clumps into the prepared pan, evenly scattering the bits. Using your fingers, press into an even layer. Lightly brush with the beaten egg white and refrigerate, uncovered, until cold and firm, about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 350°F with a rack in the middle position.

Bake the crust until golden brown, 22 to 26 minutes. While the crust bakes, make the filling. In a large bowl, combine the whole eggs and yolks, sugar and lemon zest; whisk gently just until smooth (avoid aerating the mixture). Add the flour and salt; stir with a silicone spatula until combined. Stir in the lemon juice, cream and oil.

When the crust is done, remove the pan from the oven. Gently stir the filling to recombine, then pour it onto the hot crust; if any large bubbles rise to the surface, pop them with a toothpick or skewer. Return to the oven and bake until the filling is set, 24 to 27 minutes. Cool completely in the pan on a wire rack, about 3 hours.

Using a sharp knife, cut the bars in the pan lengthwise into quarters, then crosswise into sixths, creating 24 squares. Remove from the pan with an offset spatula. Dust with powdered sugar just before serving.



PHOTO BY MILK STREET

Lemon bars are prized for their tangy-sweetness, but the bright acidity of lemon juice can overwhelm other nuanced flavors and read as a little one-note.

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Take your burgers up a notch

Best Burger With Blue Cheese Butter

Fourth of July celebrations often take place in the backyard by the grill, and this year marks a perfect opportunity to expand your culinary repertoire. This recipe for “Best Burger With Blue Cheese Butter” courtesy of Eric Treuille and Birgit Erath’s “Grilling” (DK Publishing) offers a new take on a backyard barbecue staple.

Serves 4

Burger With Blue Cheese Butter

Ingredients

1 pound ground chuck steak
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
4 1/2-inch slices blue cheese butter (see below)
4 sesame hamburger buns, halved

Directions

Combine ground steak with salt and pepper. Divide into 4 equal-sized pieces and gently shape into 4 burgers about 1-inch-thick. Grill burgers and warm buns according to instructions below. Top burgers with butter and serve hot in sesame buns.

Outdoor cooking: Grill over hot coals for 3 minutes per side for rare, 4 minutes per side for medium rare, or 5 minutes per side for well done. Place buns cut side down on grill until warm and lightly golden, 1 minute.

Indoor cooking: Preheat a ridged cast-iron grill pan over high heat. Cook for 3 minutes per side for rare, 4 minutes per side for medium rare, or 5 minutes per side for well done. Place buns cut side down on grill pan until warm lightly golden, 1 minute.

Blue-Cheese Butter

Makes 15 servings

Ingredients

16 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
4 ounces (1 cup crumbled) blue cheese
2 teaspoons black pepper

Directions

Place ingredients in a food processor or blender; pulse until well blended. Wrap in foil. Place in the freezer until hard, about 45 minutes. To serve, roll back foil and cut into 1/2-inch slices. When slicing from frozen, warm the knife under hot water first. After slicing, always tightly rewrap the unused flavored butter roll in the foil before returning to refrigerator or freezer.

Best Burger Variations

- **Herbed Burger:** Add 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves or 1 teaspoon dried thyme, 1 crushed garlic clove and 1 tablespoon finely chopped onion to the ground steak.
- **Spicy Burger:** Add 1/2 teaspoon tabasco, 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce and 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard to the ground steak.

Cooks' Note: Overhandling the meat when shaping will result in a tough, dry burger. To guarantee a juicy burger, handle the meat as little as possible.



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

This recipe for “Best Burger With Blue Cheese Butter” courtesy of Eric Treuille and Birgit Erath’s “Grilling” (DK Publishing) offers a new take on a backyard barbecue staple.

Enjoy a unique and tasty take on pork

Matambre de Cerdo (Stuffed Pork Tenderloin)

Serves 4

Few foods boast the versatility of pork. Pork can be grilled, smoked, slow cooked, fried, or baked, and professional and amateur chefs alike know there's no end to the recipes where pork is the main attraction.

Cultures across the globe feature pork in their native cuisines, which means it's possible to go anywhere in the world and enjoy a new and delicious pork dish. This

recipe for "Matambre de Cerdo (Stuffed Pork Tenderloin)" from James Campbell Caruso's "España: Exploring the Flavors of Spain" (Gibbs Smith) showcases a Spanish take on pork. The recipe might provide insight into Spanish cuisine for those who have never been to Spain, while those who have might be instantly transported back to southwestern Europe with their first delicious bite.

Ingredients

2 pork tenderloins, trimmed of fat
Salt and pepper
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 yellow onion, diced
4 cloves garlic, slivered
1/2 cup finely diced jamón serrano
4 cups diced mushrooms
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
1 tablespoon chopped sage
1/2 cup Spanish white wine

Directions

Heat the oven to 350 F. Open the tenderloins with a full-length cut that goes about 3/4 of the way through the meat. Flatten out the tenderloin and season it on both sides with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Heat the olive oil in a skillet, and sauté the onion and garlic on medium heat for 12 minutes. Add the jamón, mushrooms, parsley, and sage; continue cooking for 20 minutes. Add the wine and cook for 5 more minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool. Spread the mixture over the flattened tenderloin. Roll the tenderloin around the filling and set it on a sheet pan with the seam side down. Roast in the oven for 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and cut into 1-inch slices. Serve 2 slices per plate.



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

This recipe for "Matambre de Cerdo (Stuffed Pork Tenderloin)" from James Campbell Caruso's "España: Exploring the Flavors of Spain" (Gibbs Smith) showcases a Spanish take on pork.

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Turn to seafood during Lent



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

When glazed in an easy sauce, this “Sweet-and-Sour Baked Salmon” will be the star of mealtime.

Sweet-and-Sour Baked Salmon

Serves 4

Skipping meat on Fridays is a common sacrifice Christians make during Lent. Meals can still be flavorful even if chicken, beef or pork may be off the table. In fact, Lent makes for an ideal time to embrace delicious vegetarian meals or those that feature

seafood.

Salmon is a hearty, flavorful and heart-healthy protein. When glazed in an easy sauce, this “Sweet-and-Sour Baked Salmon” will be the star of mealtime. Enjoy it, courtesy of “30-Minute Meal Prep” (Sourcebooks) by Robin Miller.

Ingredients

8 salmon fillets, about 5 to 6 ounces each
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/2 cup 100 percent pineapple juice
2 tablespoons ketchup
2 tablespoons light brown sugar

2 tablespoons rice vinegar, regular or seasoned
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/8 ground ginger
Chopped green onions for serving

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Coat a shallow baking dish with a thin layer of olive or vegetable oil.
2. Pat the salmon fillets dry and place them in the prepared pan. Season the salmon with salt and black pepper. Set aside.
3. In a small saucepan, whisk together the pineapple juice, ketchup, brown sugar, rice vinegar, soy sauce, cornstarch, garlic, and ginger. Set the pan over medium heat and bring to a simmer. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, until the sauce thickens, stirring frequently.

4. Spoon the sauce over the salmon.
5. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes, until the salmon is fork tender (a meat thermometer should register 145 F).
6. Reserve half of the salmon for a future meal. Refrigerate up to 3 days.
7. Top the remaining salmon with the green onions, and serve.

Tip: You can make this dish spicy by adding hot sauce or sriracha sauce to the glaze. You can also top the finished dish with crushed red pepper flakes.

Also, this thick sauce is versatile, so it can be used on chicken, beef and shellfish.

A meatless meal to enjoy during Lent

Herby Rice and Black Bean Salsa Burrito Bowl

Serves 2

The forty days and nights of Lent are a time for reflection and anticipation of Easter’s arrival. Fasting, which for many Christians includes skipping meat and animal products each Friday, also is part of the preparation. Individuals who are unaccustomed to going meat-free may need to expand their culinary repertoire to ensure Friday

meals continue to be filling and tasty.

This recipe for “Herby Rice and Black Bean Salsa Burrito Bowl” from Niki Webster’s “Rainbow Bowls” (Sourcebooks) is full of protein-rich beans, flavorful herbed rice and satisfying avocado. It can be enjoyed as a quick and easy, meatless lunch or dinner.

Ingredients

Splash of olive oil
100 grams sugar snap peas
1 avocado, flesh sliced

For the rice:

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
250 grams cooked basmati rice
Juice of 1/2 lime
1 teaspoon maple syrup
40 grams fresh herbs, such as coriander, flat-leaf parsley, mint and/or dill, chopped
Sea salt and black pepper

For the black bean salsa:

240 grams canned black beans, drained and rinsed
2 tablespoons sun-dried tomato paste
100 grams cherry tomatoes, chopped
Juice of 1/2 lime
4 tablespoons fresh mint, shredded
1/2 teaspoon sea salt flakes
Pinch of chili flakes

Directions

To make the rice, add 1 tablespoon of the oil to a frying pan with the cooked rice, lime juice and maple syrup. Fry for 1 to 2 minutes on a medium heat, then add the fresh herbs. Add the remaining tablespoon of oil and season with salt and pepper. Set aside and keep warm.

Set a small frying pan or griddle pan on a medium heat. Add a splash of olive oil and the sugar snaps and fry for 2 to 3 minutes until a little charred.

To make the black bean salsa, add all the ingredients to a bowl and stir to combine.

To serve, load two bowls with the rice mixture, black bean salsa, sugar snaps, and sliced avocado.



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

This recipe for “Herby Rice and Black Bean Salsa Burrito Bowl” from Niki Webster’s “Rainbow Bowls” (Sourcebooks) is full of protein-rich beans, flavorful herbed rice and satisfying avocado.

Shrimp Lo Mein

By Linda Gassenheimer | Quick Fix

I was hungry for an Asian-inspired quick dinner and thought of this dish. Lo Mein, which when translated means mixed noodles, is a staple of Chinese cooking. It's served at birthday dinners, because the noodles represent long life.

It takes a few minutes to prepare the ingredients, but only 5 minutes to stir-fry. Fresh snow peas and bean sprouts add texture to the dish. Oyster sauce, which is seafood based, flavors this dish. I find it's a tasty condiment and use it to flavor meat, vegetables and other stir-fry dishes. You can use stir-fry sauce instead. The results won't be the same but still good.

Serves 2

Shrimp lo mein

Ingredients

1/4 pound fresh or steamed Chinese noodles
2 tablespoons sesame oil, divided use
1 cup sliced onion
4 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tablespoon fresh chopped ginger or 2 teaspoons ground ginger
3/4 pound peeled raw shrimp
1/4 pound fresh snow peas, cut in half if large (about 1 1/2-cups)
1 cup fresh bean sprouts
3 tablespoon oyster sauce
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions

Bring a large saucepan filled with water to a boil over high heat. Add noodles to boiling water. As soon as the water comes back to a boil, drain. Set aside.

Heat a wok or skillet over high heat. Add 2 teaspoons sesame oil. Add onion and stir-fry 1 minute. Add garlic and ginger and stir-fry 1 minute. Add shrimp, snow peas and bean sprouts. Toss another minute. Add the drained noodles. Move the ingredients to the sides of the wok making a hole in the middle. Add oyster sauce to the hole. Bring the ingredients to the middle and continue stir-frying for 2 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste and the remaining 1 tablespoon sesame oil. Toss well and serve.



PHOTO BY LINDA GASSENHEIMER

Oyster sauce, which is seafood based, flavors this dish of shrimp lo mein.

Helpful hints

Angel hair pasta can be used instead of Chinese noodles.

Fresh or steamed Chinese noodles can be found in the produce section of market.

Countdown:

Assemble ingredients.
Boil noodles.
Make the remaining Lo Mein ingredients.

Shopping list

To buy:

1 package Chines noodles,
1 bottle sesame oil,
1 piece fresh ginger,
3/4 pound peeled raw shrimp,
1 package fresh snow peas,
1 bag fresh bean sprouts,
1 bottle oyster sauce.

Staples:

Onion
Garlic
Salt and black peppercorns



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Feed the crowd with these chicken wings

Virgil's Smoked Chicken Wings With Blue Cheese Dip

Hosts can impress their guests by serving up this recipe for “Virgil’s Smoked Chicken Wings With Blue Cheese Dip” from Neal Corman’s “Virgil’s Barbecue Road Trip Cookbook” (St. Martin’s Press).

Serves 4

Blue Cheese Dip

Ingredients

2 cups blue cheese crumbles, divided
1 cup mayonnaise
1/2 cup buttermilk
2 teaspoons hot sauce
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 cup finely chopped scallions
1/4 cup finely chopped celery
Marinade
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup hot sauce
4 tablespoons Virgil’s Dry Rub (see below)
4 tablespoons granulated garlic
4 tablespoons granulated onion
Juice of 1/2 lemon

Wings

Ingredients

8 large chicken wings
1/2 cup Virgil’s Dry Rub (see below)
Sauce
10 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 teaspoon cornstarch
4 tablespoons white vinegar
3/4 cup hot sauce
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Directions

1. To make the dip, combine 1 cup of the blue cheese, mayonnaise, buttermilk, hot sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and salt in the bowl of a food processor and blend on low until smooth.

2. Remove to a medium mixing bowl and fold in the rest of the blue cheese, scallions and celery, being sure to break up the larger blue cheese crumbles. Place in a covered container and refrigerate overnight.

3. Mix all the marinade ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Place the wings in a large container with a lid and pour the mixture over the wings. Toss until the wings are thoroughly coated. Cover and refrigerate for 2 days.

4. Preheat the grill or smoker to 245 F.

5. Spread out the wings on a sheet pan and wipe away any excess marinade. Sprinkle liberally with the dry rub, coating the wings all over.

6. Position the wings on the grill away from the direct heat of the coals or burners, and add hickory to the smoker or hickory chips on the coals or gas burners.

7. Cook the wings for about 3 hours, flipping every 30 minutes (their internal temperature should be about 165 F when cooked).

8. While the wings are cooking, cut the butter for the sauce into 1-inch cubes and refrigerate. Whisk the cornstarch into the white vinegar in a small bowl.

9. In a medium sauté pan over medium heat, bring the hot sauce to a simmer and whisk in the thickened vinegar. Return to a simmer, cook for 1 minute, and remove from the heat.

10. Add the cayenne and slowly whisk in the cold butter. Keep warm until serving.

11. Remove the wings from the smoker or grill and put half of them into a bowl, cover with the sauce, and toss. Repeat with the remaining wings and serve on a platter, with the blue cheese dip on the side.

Virgil's Dry Rub

Makes 5 to 5 1/2 cups

Ingredients

2 1/2 cups sweet paprika
1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup Texas-style chili powder
1/2 cup minced onion
1/2 cup granulated garlic
1/4 cup dried parsley flakes
6 tablespoons kosher salt

Directions

Combine all of the ingredients in a medium bowl and whisk together until completely incorporated. Transfer to a covered bowl with a tight-fitting lid. Store in a cool, dry place.



Slow cook some spicy wings

Spicy Soy Chicken Wings

There's no shortage of ways to prepare chicken wings, but for those who like their wings to have a little kick can try this recipe for "Spicy Soy Chicken Wings" courtesy of Andrew Schloss's "Cooking Slow: Recipes for Slowing Down and Cooking More" (Chronicle Books).

Serves 4

Spicy Soy Chicken Wings

Ingredients

4 lbs. chicken wings, cut into sections at the joints, tapered wing tips trimmed and discarded
Coarse sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2/3 cup soy sauce
2/3 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
1 teaspoon dark sesame oil
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/8 teaspoon hot chili powder, preferably habanero
2 garlic cloves, minced



Directions

Combine the chicken wing pieces with a generous amount of salt and pepper in a large zippered plastic bag. Close the bag tightly and refrigerate for at least 12 hours or up to 24 hours.

Preheat the oven to 225 F. Transfer the chicken to a baking dish in a single layer without crowding.

In a small saucepan, stir together the soy sauce, brown sugar, sesame oil, cayenne, chili powder, and garlic and heat to a simmer, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Pour over the chicken. Cover the baking dish with aluminum foil and cook until the chicken is nearly falling off the bone, about 3 hours.

Raise the oven temperature to

450 F and continue baking until the chicken browns and the sauce thickens into a glaze, about 10 minutes longer. Watch carefully near the end of the cooking time to avoid burning. Toss the wings in the sauce to coat and serve.

Variation: In a slow cooker:

Follow the recipe, cooking the chicken in a 6-quart slow cooker on high for 3 to 4 hours, instead of a baking dish in the oven. When the wings are cooked through, transfer to a bowl. Simmer the sauce with the lid of the cooker off until it thickens, about 10 minutes longer. Toss the wings in the thickened sauce and serve.



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Salty pancetta and fermented pepper paste

Zuppa forte

By Christopher Kimball | Milk Street

Serves 4

The rich, spicy paste-like mixture can be spread on crusty bread, though it's more commonly diluted and used as a soup base or pasta sauce. Zuppa forte traditionally was made with odds and ends of meats, including offal, but the cooks at Christopher Kimball's Milk Street use fatty cured pancetta to deliver deep, meaty flavor.

Korean gochujang stands in for harder-to-source fermented chilies. It may seem out of place, but the fermented paste delivers a similar complex spiciness along with welcome notes of umami.

Zuppa forte, also known as zuppa di soffritto, is an old-school Neapolitan dish made by slow-cooking meats with garlic and other aromatics, along with

tomatoes and preserved chilies, until reduced and concentrated. The rich, spicy paste-like mixture can be spread on crusty bread, though it's more commonly diluted and used as a soup base or pasta sauce.

Zuppa forte traditionally was made with odds and ends of meats, including offal, but in our cookbook, "Milk Street 365: The All-Purpose Cookbook for Every Day of the Year," we use salty cured pancetta as a stand-in. For best flavor, purchase a chunk of pancetta, which contains a decent amount of fat, and cut it yourself. The type sold pre-diced is too lean and cooks up with a tough, leathery texture.

A combination of deeply browned tomato paste

and canned whole tomatoes, blended until smooth and simmered in a skillet, yields a sauce with concentrated flavor. Don't use canned tomato puree or canned crushed tomatoes, which have slightly tinny, metallic flavors that only become more pronounced in the finished sauce. The flavor of whole tomatoes, blended until smooth, is fresher and cleaner.

Instead of harder-to-source preserved chilies, we use Korean gochujang, which may seem out of place, but delivers a similar complex, fermented spiciness along with welcome notes of umami. But if you can find it, spicy, tangy Calabrian chili paste also works well. Fresh basil and dollops of ricotta complement the richness and intensity of the sauce.

Ingredients

Pasta with Spicy Tomato and Pancetta Sauce

Start to finish: 30 minutes

Servings: 4 to 6

Ingredients:

14½-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes

2 tablespoons gochujang (see headnote) or 1 tablespoon Calabrian chili paste

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

4 ounces pancetta (see headnote), chopped

4 medium garlic cloves, minced

4 bay leaves

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1 sprig rosemary

Kosher salt and ground black pepper

1 pound penne, ziti or rigatoni pasta

½ cup lightly packed fresh basil, torn

Whole-milk ricotta cheese, to serve

Directions

In a large pot, bring 4 quarts water to a boil. In a blender, puree the tomatoes with juices and gochujang until smooth, 30 to 60 seconds; set aside.

While the water heats, in a 12-inch skillet, combine the oil, pancetta, garlic, bay, tomato paste, rosemary and ½ teaspoon pepper. Cook over medium, stirring often, until the pancetta has rendered some of its fat and the tomato paste darkens and begins to stick to the pan, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the pureed tomato mixture and bring to a simmer, scraping up any browned bits. Simmer, uncovered and stirring often, until very thick and the fat separates, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, when the water reaches a boil, add 1 tablespoon salt and the pasta; cook, stirring occasionally, until just shy of al dente. Reserve about 1½ cups of the cooking water, then drain the pasta and return it to the pot. (If the sauce is done ahead of the pasta, remove the skillet from the heat.)

Scrape the sauce into the pot with the pasta and add ¾ cup of the reserved cooking water. Cook over medium, stirring and tossing often, until the sauce clings and the pasta is al dente, 2 to 4 minutes; add more reserved pasta water as needed to loosen the noodles if the mixture is very dry and sticky.

Off heat, remove and discard the bay and rosemary. Taste and season with salt and pepper, then stir in the basil. Serve topped with dollops of ricotta.



PHOTO BY JOE MURPHY

A combination of deeply browned tomato paste and canned whole tomatoes, blended until smooth and simmered in a skillet, yields a sauce with concentrated flavor.

Homemade mac & cheese for any occasion

Crusty Mac and Cheese

Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients

- 1 pound elbow macaroni
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground white pepper
- 1/2 cup chicken stock
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 tablespoon hot sauce
- 1/2 tablespoon Creole mustard
- 1 1/4 cup Cheese Wiz
- 8 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 2-quart baking dish.
2. Boil the macaroni in a 2-quart saucepan filled with water, until it is al dente, or still has some snap when you bite it. Strain the pasta and rinse thoroughly with cold water. Set aside.
3. Combine the remaining ingredients, except for the shredded cheese, in a medium saucepan over medium heat. The mixture should be barely simmering. Whisk periodically. Cook for 7 to 10 minutes.
4. In a large mixing bowl, combine cheese sauce with pasta and about one-third of the shredded cheese. Transfer to the baking dish, covering with the remaining shredded cheese, and bake covered for 10 minutes.
5. Uncover and bake for 15 minutes, or until the top is golden brown.



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Tips to make soup more nutritious



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

These tips can give soup a nutritious boost.

Soup is a dish that wears many hats. When the weather becomes chilly, people often turn to soup to warm themselves up from the inside out. Soup, especially when soup is paired with a favorite sandwich, also can be a simple and light meal when one doesn't want to spend too much time in the

kitchen. Soup has been heralded as a remedy as well, a reputation that dates back thousands of years. In the twelfth century, Egyptian Jewish physician Moshe ben Maimonides prescribed chicken soup as a treatment for respiratory tract issues. And Penn Medicine suggests eating soup while ill is a good

idea because the meal is nourishing, easy to digest and often full of nutritious components.

People may wonder what they can do to tweak their favorite soups to make them even more nutritious, as many modern soups have gained a reputation as being sodium-heavy.

These ideas can give soup a powerful boost

Use a higher ratio of vegetables in the soup when compared to meats and grains. Vegetables are notoriously high in nutrients that the body needs to stay healthy, including antioxidants and vitamins.

Make your own soup stock from fresh ingredients. Doing so helps retain control over what goes into the soup, helping to reduce potential additives or other ingredients like sugar and sodium.

Vary the color of the vegetables. Aim for vegetables of at least three different colors. The colors of the vegetables often correspond to the nutrients and phytochemicals they contain. For example, carrots are high in beta-carotene. Beta-carotene converts into vitamin A, which is necessary for eye health, healthy skin and a strong immune system.

Replace the cream in soups with healthier ingredients. Soups that are cream-based tend to be loaded with calories and saturated fat. Instead, use Greek yogurt at the end (to prevent curdling) or even low-fat cottage cheese to amp up the protein content and give the soup a creamy consistency without the fat. Silken tofu or even a vegetable purée made from potato and cauliflower can add creaminess as well.

Swap meat for lean proteins in the soup. Lentils, for example, are a plant protein rich in flavor and nutrition. According to UC Davis Health, lentils have about 18 grams of protein per cup and also are high in fiber. Relatively inexpensive, lentils also can help keep meal budgets in check. Alternative legumes also can work in soups, as can seafood or lean poultry.

Add texture to the soup. Pumpkin seeds or flax seeds have taste and texture, and can be a healthier option for topping soups over buttery croutons or crackers.

Keep ingredients "whole" in the soup. Lean on whole grains, fibrous vegetables, fresh herbs, and lean meats to build a well-rounded soup that's bursting with nutrition.

Add some turmeric and ginger. If the flavor profile allows, incorporate some fresh turmeric and ginger to the soup. Health magazine says these ingredients are part of the same plant family and have been used in traditional medicine in India and China for centuries. Both are known for reducing inflammation and alleviating symptoms of digestive disease.

Experiment with different ingredients to create soups that are not only delicious, but nutritious as well.

Fast facts about slow cooking

Slow cooking is a popular way to prepare meals. From barbecue to simmering to braising, the methods of slow cooking vary considerably.

Many people may not realize that slow cooking can be a healthy and beneficial way to prepare food.

The following are some advantages to cooking low and slow.

- **Save money:** Cooking foods slowly helps to tenderize them, which bodes well when utilizing more fibrous or dense cuts of meat. Consumers looking for ways to save more on their monthly food bills can lean on slow cooking to produce delicious results with cheaper cuts.
- **Reduce the number of dishes:** Those who do the majority of their cooking in a slow cooker can mix ingredients that are typically prepared separately. Putting them together in the crock saves time and energy cleaning up.
- **Convenience:** Slow cooking allows cooks to step away from the kitchen and engage in other activities. Most slowly cooked foods only require sporadic check-ins while cooking.
- **Nutrient-dense meals:** The United Kingdom-based supplement firm Wild Nutrition® notes that because of the low temperatures utilized when slow cooking, the nutrients within foods cooked slowly remain more stable than they do when employing other methods of cooking. This means slow cooking may deliver more beneficial vitamins and minerals than other methods of preparing meals.
- **Soften ingredients while cooking:** Slow cooking at a low temperature for several hours will soften up tough root vegetables.
- **Intensify flavor:** Cooking over a long period of time can increase flavor, enabling cooks to use less sugar, salt or other ingredients that are often relied on to add more taste.

Slow cooking is a convenient and beneficial way to prepare healthy, nutritious and flavorful meals.



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

The following are some advantages to cooking low and slow.

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Biscotti are a dunkable delicacy

Semolina and Almond Biscotti

Yields 12 to 16 cookies

Cookies are a treat any time of the day, and many find biscotti particularly appealing. These crunchy cookies are equally at home with a morning cup of coffee as they are with an evening mug of hot cocoa.

Biscotti are hard, crunchy, Italian cookies that are baked twice. In fact, their name comes from the Latin “bis,” meaning “twice,” and “coctus,” meaning

“cooked.” Although they can be enjoyed on their own, their dry, crunchy nature makes them hold up well when dunked into a beverage. Biscotti were even once commonly dipped into red wine.

Though they might seem complicated, biscotti generally are easy to make. Try this recipe for “Semolina and Almond Biscotti” from “Butter, Flour, Sugar, Joy” (Sourcebooks) by Danielle Kartes.

Ingredients

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup melted butter
3 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 pinch salt

Directions

Preheat oven to 325 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a stand mixer, cream the sugar, butter and eggs until light and creamy, about 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt. Mix to incorporate.

Add the all-purpose flour, almonds, semolina flour, and baking powder. Mix until well combined, but don’t overmix.

Turn the dough out onto the prepared baking sheet. Pat gently to form one long loaf of dough roughly 14 to 16 inches long and 5 to 6 inches wide. Bake 30 minutes.

Remove the loaf from the oven and

23/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup sliced almonds
1/2 cup semolina flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
Optional: 10 ounces dark chocolate to melt for dipping

allow to cool 5 to 6 minutes before using a long knife to cut the loaf gently into 12 to 16 cookies.

Lay each cookie on its side and bake another 20 minutes, flipping the cookies midway through.

Cool completely to achieve that signature crunch. The centers will be a bit soft if eaten warm. These are perfect for dunking in coffee, tea or hot chocolate.

Optional: Melt the chocolate in the microwave in 30-second bursts and gently dip half of each biscotti into it lengthwise. Flip the biscotti chocolate-side-up onto a sheet tray and allow the chocolate to set.



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

Though they might seem complicated, biscotti generally are easy to make. Try this recipe for “Semolina and Almond Biscotti.”

Cherries are the star of this treat



PHOTO BY MICHAEL KARTES PHOTOGRAPHY

“Cherry Pie Bars” are not exactly a pie, but a pound cake with a cherry pie filling swirl.

Cherry Pie Bars

Yield: One 9-by-13-inch pan

“Cherry Pie Bars” are not exactly a pie, but a pound cake with a cherry pie filling swirl. They can be made for many different occasions, but make for something sweet on Valentine’s Day. Whip up this recipe from “Butter, Flour, Sugar, Joy” (Sourcebooks) by Danielle Kartes.

Ingredients

2 cups sugar
1 cup butter, softened
4 eggs
2 cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 21-ounce can cherry pie filling

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a 9-by-13-inch pan with parchment paper.

In a stand mixer, or with a hand mixer, cream sugar and butter on low. Add the eggs one at a time. Beat until just combined.

Add the flour, baking powder and salt. Spread a little over half the cake

batter into the pan. Evenly spread the pie filling over the top, and spoon the rest of the cake batter over the pie filling. It’s fine if the cherries show through.

Bake 35 minutes or until the top has turned slightly golden. Do not overbake. Allow to cool and slice into squares. Enjoy!

Lemon pound cake brings sunshine to the table

Lemon Poppy Seed Pound Cake

Makes 1 cake or 6 mini pound cakes

Cooking at home enables anyone to customize ingredients and gain control of the foods they eat. Too often commercially processed items are contain ingredients that compromise consumers' overall health. This recipe for "Lemon

Poppy Seed Pound Cake" is made from pantry staples.

Whether baking alone or with the family, try this recipe, courtesy of "The Pampered Chef® Stoneware Inspirations" (The Pampered Chef®, Ltd).

Ingredients

11/2 cups all-purpose flour
11/2 cups granulated sugar
2 tablespoons lemon zest
2 tablespoons poppy seeds
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup (11/2 sticks) butter, softened (do not substitute margarine)

4 ounces cream cheese, softened

4 eggs

2 tablespoons milk

1 teaspoon Pantry Double Strength Vanilla
Powdered sugar (optional)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 325 F. Spray Stoneware Fluted Pan with nonstick cooking spray. Combine flour, granulated sugar, lemon zest, poppy seeds, baking powder, and salt in a stainless, two-quart mixing bowl; mix well. In a stainless four-quart mixing bowl, beat butter and cream cheese on high speed of handheld mixer for 1 minute, or until blended (mixture will form a stiff paste).

2. In a small batter bowl, whisk eggs, milk and vanilla until blended. Add egg mixture to cream cheese mixture in four additions, beating 2 minutes after each addition. (Do

not undermix).

3. Pour batter into pan. Bake 55 to 60 minutes or until cake tester inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool cake in pan 10 minutes. Loosen cake from sides of pan; carefully invert onto a stackable cooking rack, keeping pan over cake. Cool completely.

4. Place cake on serving platter. Sprinkle with powdered sugar or prepare glaze, if desired.

For glaze: Combine 11/2 cups powdered sugar and enough lemon juice to make a thick frosting. Spread glaze over top of cake.



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

This recipe for "Lemon Poppy Seed Pound Cake" is made from pantry staples. Whether baking alone or with the family, try this recipe, courtesy of "The Pampered Chef® Stoneware Inspirations" (The Pampered Chef®, Ltd).

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