

*Rhonda Gayle*  
NELSON  
*S*

*A*  
Different  
LIFE











If ever there was a book I'm looking forward to, it's this one by Rhonda Gayle Nelson! I've been lucky to call her a friend for quite a while now and am thrilled to have had some very exciting shared memories with her. Our legendary trips with friends to St. Tropez are most certainly book-worthy, and I'm anxious to read her description of them and her many other exciting travels. Like Rhonda, I'm also a girl from a small town (Dupu, Illinois) so I love a rags-to-riches story, which I know she has! And, as a fellow foodie, I just can't wait to scoop up her family recipes and follow along with her full life of laughs, loves, and food! Congrats with love RGN!

**Candace Jordan**, *Chicago Tribune* social columnist, *Playboy* centerfold, media personality, award-winning *Candid Candace* TV host and blogger

Rhonda is one of those people who always makes a difference due to her kind heart, passion, and fun spirit. From being in our wedding, to sipping wine in Cabo San Lucas or visiting with her and her rescue animals, I have seen firsthand her strength and how she always allows her sparkle to shine. She has been in a unique position to witness the entertainment business from many viewpoints and one that her readers should find fascinating.

**Penny Gilley**, *The Penny Gilley Show*, RFD TV

A fun, folksy, entertaining read, *A Different Life* is a delicious glimpse into life on the road as lived by a not-so-ordinary couple, whose adventures through love, life, marriage, and everything in between are punctuated by real sweetness: down-home recipes they've collected along the way. I laughed, I cried, I made two batches of Mrs. Bertani's Red Sauce. If you're a Little River Band fan, and even if you're not, you're going to be a big fan of Wayne and Rhonda Nelson—adventurers, philanthropists, animal lovers, and genuine foodies—and you'll be an even bigger fan of their Bourbon Balls.

**Nicole Brochu**, board secretary, Florida Fishing Academy



ROG

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## Dedication

To my husband, Wayne, who encouraged and supported my vision and cheered me on every step of the way. Thank you for believing. There are no words to express my love for you.

To Mom, who taught me to be all I can be, learn from my disappointments, and to never give up on my ambitions. I love you.

In loving memory of all my family members no longer with us. You placed a mark on my life that I'm truly grateful for. You live forever in my heart.

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## *Introduction*

**H**ow'd this whole business get started? A girl, her love of music, spreading her wings, experiencing life's ups and downs, meeting the man of her dreams who just happens to be a member of a rock'n'roll band. A life she never dreamed of but is now living

For him, growing up in Illinois, being a musician was always in his blood. Choosing a music career over a conventional career lead him to California and ultimately to the band he is still a part of today. His road, too, was scattered with some of life's greatest highs and some tragic lows.

You start walking your way, I'll start walking mine, and we'll meet in the middle 'neath that old Georgia Pine. They didn't exactly meet under a pine tree but their walks through life brought them together and they did have a conversation under a tree in Minnesota.

He tried to tell her the life he lives is a circus. She knew with all of her heart he was her one true love and soul mate. She was doing as she had always done, fighting for exactly what she wanted—him.

She married her music man. Their life has been full. Memories made, stories to tell. Laughter, tears, heartaches, all the things that life brings. They have weathered it all together.

You'll get a glimpse of what life is like for them, from the early days up to now. Not only what you see from the outside but also a glimpse of what it's like on the inside. And the music lives on, always a part of their lives.



Photo by Leonard Bryant Photography



“LIFE IS A SONG—SING IT.  
LIFE IS A GAME—PLAY IT.  
LIFE IS A CHALLENGE—MEET IT.  
LIFE IS A DREAM—REALIZE IT.  
LIFE IS A SACRIFICE—OFFER IT.  
LIFE IS LOVE—ENJOY IT.”

SAI BABA



RHONDA



## Background

To say I've grown up with a very full life is an understatement. This book gave me an opportunity to really recall so many memories that I had either buried deep and forgotten about, or sadly, taken for granted. Just recently my mom pointed out to me that I have had opportunities beginning as early as seven or eight years of age to travel the world and experience things many people only dream about. I am truly grateful for this book project forcing me to remember and to understand just how blessed I have been and continue to be.

In deciding to embark on this book journey, I began to lay out my thoughts and come up with a vision of what this would look like. Throughout that part of the process one common element repeatedly came up: food. I know, sounds odd and I actually laughed and said more than once, "Why would I do a book that is filled with not only stories from all phases of my life, but also filled with recipes?" I am not a school-trained chef, although we've owned a restaurant, so it seemed to be a rather comical concept. But, as I dug deeper and deeper, I began to realize just how much food has been a common thread throughout my life.

From an early age, I loved food. I don't recall being a picky eater. I would try just about anything at least once.



Like most teenagers, I ate my share of fast food. Over time, I would often tire of them and gravitate back to my roots of home cooking.

Beginning as early as fourteen or fifteen years old I began to travel internationally, and was exposed to foods from all over the world. I was an exchange student in Sweden with a summer study program between my freshman and sophomore years in high school. I vividly remember arriving at my host family's home in Ahus. I was timid and scared, yet I was excited to embrace this opportunity.

The second night in Sweden we went to a small fishing village that was the home of the grandparents. We sat down to dinner, and there on the table were fifty to sixty shrimp with their heads on. I had eaten shrimp cocktails before, but had never seen shrimp served head and all. I have never acquired a taste for the head, which some people consider delicious. To this day, please just serve me shrimp that's cooked, peeled, and deveined, with no head. Back in those days when traveling abroad, you ate what was there. The age-old saying, "when in Rome, do as the Romans," most certainly applied to food as well as other things. Rarely did you see an American fast food restaurant or even items in grocery stores that seemed familiar.



## Daddy's Girl

To get a clear picture of my early years, a little background should be shared. I was a daddy's girl from as far back as I can remember. Daddy carried me around in his arms until my feet touched the ground. I could do no wrong in my daddy's eyes and whatever I wanted, Daddy would make it happen.



MOMMY  
WOULDN'T  
BE HAPPY IF  
SHE KNEW I  
WAS HELPING  
SPOIL YOUR  
DINNER.



When I was in the fourth grade, Daddy became sick. He was diagnosed with cancer, specifically melanoma, origin never determined. It was the mid-70s, when cancer treatments took a toll on the patient and were, from what I remember, quite rudimentary. My and my mom's world was shattered when he passed away a short eighteen months after he was diagnosed. I do have many, many wonderful memories of him and our life together before he became ill.

I clearly remember Daddy coming to pick me up from kindergarten, standing at the gate of the school with his arms open wide, and me running and jumping in his arms to be whisked away toward home. But first, we would always stop and get the epitome of Southern snacks, an RC Cola and a Moonpie. Occasionally, we would switch it up and get Coca-Cola in the little green glass bottles and a small bag of peanuts, put the peanuts in the Coke and drink up. Daddy and I would hurry and eat our snacks because the next stop was to pick up Mom at the end of her work day and head home as a family. Daddy always said, "Mommy wouldn't be happy if she knew I was helping spoil your dinner".



Deep Southern roots are who I am. I've had the blessed pleasure of living in and visiting some of the most amazing locales all over the world and being exposed to many different cultures. Over the years I've worked hard to lose my Southern accent because I thought it didn't sound sophisticated enough to be heard. I now know that was complete silliness. What I haven't lost are my deep Southern roots. The old saying says, "You can take the girl out of the South, but you can't take the Southern out of the girl," and that is very true. There are some things, like Sunday dinner, which was actually lunch with my family, that are ingrained in me and still warm my heart, much the same cozy way a warm cookie and glass of milk warms your heart.

Both of my parents were born and raised in deep South Tennessee, one little town not far from the other. They both came from families that raised and grew all of their own food.





# SWEET-HOT PICKLED PEACHES

(OR APRICOTS)

- 6 lbs** (about 18) **small fresh peaches**  
(can use apricots)
- 2½ cups water**
- 2½ cups cider vinegar**
- 4 cups granulated sugar**
- 3 cups packed brown sugar**
- 4 sticks cinnamon**
- 2-4 pieces fresh ginger root**,  
peeled and cut into strips
- 1½ tsp crushed red pepper**
- 1 tsp mustard seed**
- 1 tsp salt**
- 8 whole cloves**
- 1 small sweet onion**  
cut into wedges
- 1 medium sweet red pepper**,  
seeded and cut into strips

- Peel peaches (if using apricots, may be used unpeeled). Fill Dutch oven with water, bring to a boil. Lower peaches, a few at a time, into boiling water; let stand 30-60 seconds. With slotted spoon transfer peaches to a large bowl of ice water. When cool enough to handle, gently rub skin off peaches. Halve and pit any large peaches and set aside.
- Drain water from Dutch oven.
- Combine 2½ cups water, 2½ cups cider vinegar, sugars, cinnamon, ginger root, red pepper, 1 tsp salt, mustard seeds, and add cloves in Dutch oven.
- Bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve sugars.
- Reduce heat, simmer uncovered for 5 minutes.
- Add peaches, onion, and sweet pepper to mixture.
- Return to boiling.
- Reduce heat, simmer, covered for 5 minutes or just until tender.
- With slotted spoon, add peaches, onion, and sweet pepper to pickling mixture.
- Return to boiling.
- Reduce heat, simmer, covered for 5 minutes or just until tender, gently stirring once or twice.
- With slotted spoon divide peaches, onions, sweet pepper, and cinnamon evenly among four clean hot 1-quart jars.
- Pour pickling mixture into jars.
- Cool.
- Refrigerate at least 24 hours or up to 3 weeks before serving.
- Use slotted spoon to serve, drizzle with juices.



# FRIED CORN

(SERVES 6)



*Note, this is an old, old family recipe. I have always cooked this in a well-seasoned cast iron skillet and I have always used bacon drippings instead of butter as I prefer the taste the drippings give to the dish. Don't let the name fool you. Although it's called Fried Corn, the corn will not be battered like fried items as we know them. Back in the day of this recipe's origin anything that was cooked in a skillet with a little flour and bacon drippings was considered fried to my family. Today we would most likely use the term sauteed.*

- 6 ears corn**
- 1 tsp salt**
- 1/8 tsp pepper**
- 2 tsp sugar**
- 3 Tbsp all-purpose flour**
- 1 1/2 cups water**
- 3 Tbsp bacon drippings** (hickory smoked bacon drippings add a great flavor) **or butter**

- Shuck corn and pull off silks, then wash well under running water with a vegetable brush to remove remaining silks.
- In a large bowl, cut corn from the cob with a sharp knife. Cut down the cob all around just cutting off the tips of the grain.
- Make a second cut down the cob to get the remaining grain, then scrape up the cob with a tablespoon to get the milk.
- Add salt, pepper, sugar, flour, and water to corn in bowl and stir to blend.
- Melt bacon drippings (or butter) in a heavy skillet over low heat, stirring occasionally.
- Add corn and cook about 40 minutes.



Each family, while different in their own ways, were similar as well. Both raised hogs, cattle and/or chickens, along with multiple crops. Because this way of life was so much a part of my upbringing, I've come full circle back to longing for an area at our home where I can grow herbs and vegetables and get my hands dirty.



As much as I love all farm animals and would love to have a few, the neighborhood we live in, along

with my and Wayne's current lifestyle, doesn't exactly allow for that. I've done the next best thing and have enlisted the help of an organic farmer here in our area, Farmer Jay, to build some organic gardening boxes for the patio outside our kitchen where I will grow a few vegetables and herbs.





# GRANNY'S APPLE PIE

(FROM MOM)



- 9" deep dish pie crust**
- ½ cup brown sugar**
- 1 cup granulated sugar**
- 1 Tbsp white flour**
- ½ stick butter, melted**
- 1 egg** (let stand to room temperature)
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon**
- 1 generous cup grated apple**  
(Granny Smith, Pink Lady or Cripps Pink)

- Do not pre-bake pie shell.
- Mix sugars, flour, melted butter, egg, cinnamon, and grated apples well and pour into the pie crust.
- Bake at 350° degrees for 45 minutes or until well set in the center.
- Cool on wire rack.





## *Fresh Off the Farm*

As far back as I can remember, Daddy and Mom had a garden. They grew all kinds of vegetables, and my mom would spend hours and hours canning and freezing so that we would have home-grown vegetables all year round. What I now realize as clever tricks, my parents made games out of snapping beans, shucking corn, and shelling peas. As a typical child, when my attention began to wane, I ran off to play with our dog or create some other kind of mischief, leaving Mom behind to prepare the vegetables. Many times Granny, my mom's mother, would also be alongside helping.

My daddy, like his father and a few of his brothers, was a hunter and fisherman. He hunted mostly deer. At his family's homestead, Daddy's brother, my Uncle Roy, continued to raise cattle and hogs even while working at Ford Glass Plant in Nashville, which was a little over a two-hour drive each way from his home. Mom, Daddy, and I would visit as often as we could, and during the seasons of hog slaughtering and cow butchering, we'd bring home enough meat to stock the deep freeze. Between the meats, the fish, and the vegetables, our table was always diverse.



I wasn't a true tomboy through and through, but I was always curious about sports, cars, and motorcycles, and I loved all animals. After one deer hunting trip, Daddy had the deer hanging from the deck, dressing him out while I sat on the ground studying the deer and watching the whole not-so-pretty process. Daddy also had a fishing boat, and occasionally Mom and I would accompany him on a fishing trip. With the two of us along, the excursions were short but we always brought home fish. A few times he tried to make the trips a little more exciting by taking me to a catfish farm where the likelihood of my catching a fish was nearly 100%, instead of sitting for hours

bored in the boat. Thrilled beyond belief, we'd take the fish home and fry it up for dinner.

Several years after Daddy passed away, Mom married a wonderful man, Bill, who stepped into my life and picked up where Daddy left off. From early



on, he and I had a great relationship. He didn't try to replace my daddy or any of the traits I had acquired from my daddy. He stepped in and became my dad from that point forward.

Having both of these men in my life afforded me the opportunity to learn and shape my own thoughts and values based on what I received from the two of them—and they were very different individuals coming from very different backgrounds.







# MARINATED GRILLED ROAST

(FROM LINDA [BELCHER] KUZMICK)



Bill & Rhonda snowball fight, 1981

- 1 chuck roast**
- 1 tsp meat tenderizer** on each side of roast.  
Rub in well
- 2 tsp minced onion**
- 2 tsp thyme**
- 1 tsp ground black pepper**
- 1 tsp marjoram**
- 3 tsp lemon juice**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 1 cup white wine vinegar**
- ½ cup vegetable oil**
- Marinate the roast in Ziploc bag for 2-6 hours, rotating every hour.
- Grill on low-to-medium indirect heat for approximately 2 hours.



## Grilling

A new segment in my life had begun. We no longer had a garden. Not because Mom and Bill didn't like that sort of thing but because their work schedules no longer allowed, and because we lived more of a "city" life. Bill didn't grow up like my



daddy and he wasn't a farmer, hunter, or fisherman. Times were also changing. Farmers' markets were showing up here and there, and farmers would also come to town and sell their fruits and vegetables on the side of the road. We still ate much the same way, even without our own garden.

What Bill did love was to grill and this is where my love of grilling began. He would grill in any kind of weather. Rain, snow—it didn't matter. He taught me how to grill using a charcoal grill, but he didn't particularly like getting his hands dirty, so he mostly grilled on a gas grill. Thankfully, he taught me to master that skill as well, and grilling is a favorite way of cooking for me now. Throughout the summer and fall he would grill at least three or four times a week. Bill was a steak lover. He believed there was nothing better than a grilled steak and fresh cooked vegetables, which was a pretty typical meal at our house.

The recipe on the previous page came from a dear friend of my mom, Linda. After my daddy passed away, it was Linda who encouraged my mom to accept an invitation from Bill to attend

a wedding with him. That invitation led to their courtship and eventually their own wedding. After Mom and Bill were married, Linda knew of Bill's love of grilling and passed the recipe along. It became one of his favorites.

## Holidays

Bill and Mom loved the Christmas holidays and they had an annual Christmas Open House. We began decorating the house Thanksgiving weekend. Bill and I would go out and buy the tree and we'd buy the wreaths that Mom insisted be hung on each window of the house. Typically this open house would take place on the second Sunday of December. It was a big event—with upwards of fifty to sixty people, friends and business associates of my parents.

Mom would make all of the food herself. This was a time that Mom and I would spend in the kitchen together and when I began to develop my love for cooking. Every evening the routine was dinner, homework, and popping into the kitchen to help Mom. The menu for the event would be heavy hors d'oeuvres and desserts. Mom was quite the party planner and everything had to be just so. There were some items that were a must-have every year and then she'd always throw in new items, not wanting to repeat the same things over and over.

One staple of the Christmas Open House was the Festive Cheese Ball. Once I moved out on my own and began hosting my own gatherings, I kept this recipe handy and always prepared it. Over the years as our love of wine has developed and we often have friends over for wine and hors d'oeuvres, I've discovered this is a simple and delicious recipe to make as an appetizer to go with wine.





# FESTIVE CHEESE BALL



- 2 (8oz) packages cream cheese**  
softened
- ¾ cup crumbled blue cheese**
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese**
- ¼ tsp garlic powder**
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice**
- 4 Tbsp grated onion**
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce**
- 1 tsp horseradish**
- 1 cup chopped pecans**

- Let cheeses sit at room temperature for 2 hours to soften.
- Combine all ingredients, except nuts, in a bowl. Mix well.
- Shape into ball, roll in nuts.
- Cover with wax paper and chill until firm.





## College & Career

The natural progression of leaving home for college normally means surviving on micro-waved meals or fast food and tossing aside all things your mom taught you in the kitchen. That wasn't necessarily the case for me. I moved to Florida for college. There, I was fortunate to be paired with an amazing roommate, with whom I am still very close today. She had grown up with a similar family background. Her family would bring car-loads of meats and vegetables for us to stock up our fridge. We didn't make elaborate meals but we certainly ate far healthier meals than the average college student in those days.

I've always been drawn to fashion, food, and all things cultural. My path in college was aimed

at a degree in fashion merchandising. After graduating from college I stayed in Florida, briefly worked for a major retailer, and then set out on my own. I soon purchased a one-stop bridal shop where I discovered a niche in bridal gown rentals. I use the term shop rather than salon because the locale was in a working class neighborhood and my clientele was such as well. The shop allowed a bride to come in and purchase invitations, party favors, and all other items she might need to make her day special, and she could purchase her gown or rent one. We also had an in-house photographer who did bridal portraits there in the studio and would photograph the wedding as well. I don't know if the fact my shop was located right next to a large florist was actually strategic planning on my part or if that just happened to be the space that offered the least expensive rent, but we all developed



Rhonda, St. Tropez, 1991



a good working relationship and shared clients. Thinking back on that period of my life, I am amazed and proud that I was fresh out of college and running my own bridal shop.

It's odd how life takes you down roads that you would never expect and that's exactly what happened for me. My life took some crazy, yet amazing twists and turns during this time and led me from the bridal shop to traveling around the world and spending time in some of the most amazing places: Paris, St. Tropez, Monte Carlo, Milan, Amalfi, Tuscany, and Positano just to name a few. It was through these travels that my

love of food was reawakened and my appreciation for wine truly developed. I became fascinated with foods from other cultures and I guess you could say my tastes grew up during that season of my life.

## Travel

I was extremely fortunate during those years to spend every Fourth of July in St. Tropez. It was there that my love affair with moules frites (aka mussels and french fries) began. I can still see the beachside restaurant where I first experienced these little







creatures and immediately I was hooked. That was some 25 years ago and to this day I have never, and will never, attempt to cook them at home. There is just something about them that intimidates me in the kitchen. It's one of those things when I see them at the fish market and I say to myself, "What in the heck do you do with those things?"

I truly believe all of those traveling experiences, and all of the friendships I made during that time, were somewhat of a "grooming" procedure for me. I didn't realize this at the time, but looking back now, I know those experiences were some of the things that laid the common ground that Wayne and I would find once we met.

## *Losing Bill*

In 1998, my family experienced a horrific event that took the life of Bill. I have never had an incident like this affect my life and the life of other family members and friends like this one did. Yes, the death of my daddy and all of my grandparents was difficult, but they each had passed away over the years from illness. While it's never easy to say goodbye, you accept what is to come and you are able to process it and you understand that illness took them. You revel in all of the wonderful memories of them and begin to heal.

On January 14, 1998, the day after my birthday, I was to have dinner with Mom and Bill to celebrate. It was a tradition that we always went out to dinner for birthdays. The day is as vivid in my mind today as if I were actually living it. It was cold, gray, and misting rain in Nashville. My best friend since fifth grade called me. Her husband had been working for Bill. An accident had

occurred and her husband was being taken to the hospital by ambulance. I made plans to meet her at the hospital. They were new parents and the baby was only weeks old. I wanted to be there for her. I left where I was and made my way to the hospital. I began trying to reach Bill on his cellphone to let him know I was on my way. I couldn't reach him and I just assumed he was inside the hospital with no cell service. As I approached the hospital and was plotting where to park to get inside quickly, I saw a commotion just ahead of me in the middle of the street. I was still a fair distance from the ER entrance and wanted to try and get a little closer. Not really knowing what the situation was in the middle of the street ahead of me, I inched forward and all of a sudden I saw the sole of a shoe in the street. My heart went to my stomach and panic set in. I threw my car into park in the middle of the road and knew without any doubt that was Bill lying in the street. He had been crossing the street from the ER to the parking garage and was hit by a car.

That day changed all of our lives forever. In times of challenge such as this, each person handles the situation to the best of their ability and in their own ways. Families were torn apart and lives were altered that day. It's said time heals. The fractures that were created by that horrific accident have very slowly, over the years, begun to heal. Ironically, the music of Little River Band was part of the process. I couldn't know the experience would be common ground when I met the love of my life. Nor did I have any idea the music of Little River Band and their concerts would, years and years later, be one of the avenues of healing, allowing our family members to reconnect.

Prior to the accident, I had settled back in Nashville. It was only natural afterward that I jumped in to help Mom run the business that was Bill's. It was some of the most difficult times for our entire family. I found comfort in spending lots of time with my friends. We would spend almost every weekend together enjoying one another's company, cooking, going to concerts, and





having movie nights at one another's homes. Those were some of the hardest, yet some of the best, times of my life. The friendships formed during that period are still near and dear to me.

### *Meeting Wayne*

Wayne and I met in 1999. And, yes, it was at a Little River Band (LRB) show. Whenever people ask us how we met, I prefer to let him tell the story. We both absolutely remember the story pretty much the same way, which I think is remarkable. His version is what I like to refer to as the "bird's eye view" because he saw things from the stage. And coincidentally, it was a stage that was rather high off the ground. I'll save the details and let him share them with you later in the book.

What you'll hear me say throughout this book, and as some of you know firsthand, I've never done any-

thing conventionally. Meeting my husband and our courtship was no different. From the time we met in October 1999, until we married in October 2000, we saw each other a handful of times and I spent a lot of time on the road. Our relationship grew and developed while we learned about one another on the road.

Back in those days, LRB's lineup was comprised of musicians who lived in Australia and Ireland. Wayne was the only member who lived stateside. They toured much differently then than they



Buddy, Susan, and Valerie

do now. In those years, the tour roughly started in May and would go through August. Because of the logistics of getting the international folks back and forth, it was too expensive and disruptive to send everyone home during the tour. So when the bus rolled, it didn't come back for two to three months.

The year 2000 was no different and the tour began in May in Tunica, Mississippi. By this time, we

had only seen each other three times since our initial introduction. In my way of thinking, the fact that the tour started in Tunica and that they would be there for a week prior for rehearsals, was just one of the many positive signs that we were meant to be together.

I drove from Nashville to Tunica and stayed the whole week with him. If I thought I was smitten before, I knew without a doubt that he had my heart completely when I left him at the end of that week. We had a lot of time to



WAYNE  
AND I LOVE  
SHOPPING  
FOR OUR  
FISH AT  
OLD DIXIE  
SEAFOOD

*Boca Raton, Florida*







# SIMPLE FISH MARINADE

(FOR ANY TYPE OF MEATY, GRILLED FISH)



- 1 bunch green onions**
- 2-3 garlic cloves**
- 3-4 slices of fresh ginger** (½ inch in size)
- Low sodium soy sauce**
- In food processor, combine all ingredients and blend together.
- Pour over fish in a Ziploc bag.
- Marinate for at least an hour, turning every 30 minutes.
- Grill fish after marinating for at least an hour, basting each side when turned over.
- Discard remaining marinade.



talk and really get to know one another. I knew the life I was walking into wasn't the norm and would come with many trials, but I also knew there was something different about him. I couldn't, at that time, put my finger on one particular attribute that made me feel that way. I guess you could say I was working off a hunch. As the years have passed, I have come to discover all of those things that I knew were different about him. That initial hunch has proven correct time and time again.

During the week in Tunica, we played basketball together, took walks and ate at the buffets. If you know anything about Tunica you know that it's one casino after another and there's a never-ending supply of buffets. This was where I learned that Wayne doesn't eat red meat. He does eat fish, lots of fish, and chicken occasionally. Thanksgiving is always an excuse to eat at least one turkey leg, usually two. It's not that he avoids red meat because he doesn't like it. Believe me, I've had to shoo him away from my steak or lamb more than once. He really likes red meat. Simply, it does not agree with him.

At one of the casino buffets during the week in Tunica I introduced him to Red Velvet Cake. Mom



always made this cake at Christmas time and it is one of my favorites to this day. He, on the other hand, had never heard of it. Not surprising, though. He was a Southern California resident and had been for over 20 years. Red Velvet Cake is considered a Southern dessert. I chose the piece of cake carefully. I had little hope that it would even come close to tasting like my beloved homemade version. I took a bite of the cake and was most pleasantly surprised. Not like Mom's but it was a pretty good slice of cake and won Wayne over. I'm fairly certain we had Red Velvet Cake every day after that while we were there.

### *Tying the Knot*

October 1, 2000, was the day we chose to become Mr. & Mrs. I had thrown caution to the wind and planned the wedding from afar while staying out for days and days at a time with Wayne. We chose Shadowbrook as the location to get married. We knew we didn't want the typical



wedding, and from the venue down to all of the details, typical it was not.

As one friend put it afterward, it was more like a concert with our vows thrown in (although those were not typical either), followed by food, fellowship, and more music. The celebration continued that evening at a friend's house with more food, wine, cocktails, and music.



AS ONE  
FRIEND PUT IT  
AFTERWARD,  
IT WAS  
MORE LIKE A  
CONCERT WITH  
OUR VOWS  
THROWN IN.



# RED VELVET CAKE

## WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

(FROM MOM)

- ½ **cup butter softened,**  
room temperature
- ½ **cup shortening**
- 2 cups granulated sugar**
- 4 eggs** room temperature
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour**
- 1 tsp baking soda**
- ½ **tsp salt**
- 4 Tbsp powdered cocoa**
- 1 cup buttermilk**
- 1 tsp vanilla**
- 3 Tbsp red food coloring**

- Preheat oven to 350°.
- Grease 3 8-inch round cake pans or 2 9-inch cake pans.
- Cream butter, shortening, and granulated sugar.
- Add eggs, one at a time.

- In separate bowl, combine flour, baking soda, salt, and cocoa.
- Gradually add flour mixture, in little batches, to the butter mixture, alternating with the buttermilk.
- Once all of the flour mixture and buttermilk have been combined well with the butter mixture, add vanilla and red food coloring.

- Pour mixture into pans and bake for 25-30 minutes or until wooden pick comes clean from center.
- Remove from oven, allow to cool on wire racks.

### CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

- 1 (8oz) package cream cheese,** softened
- ½ **cup butter,** softened
- 1 (1 lb) box of confectioners sugar**
- 1 Tbsp vanilla**

- Blend the cream cheese and butter together and gradually add the sugar.
- Stir in the vanilla until light and fluffy.
- Frost between the cake layers, on sides and top.





MANUEL'S TEAM  
TRANSFORMED  
THE TOP OF  
THE DRESS  
INTO THE MOST  
BEAUTIFUL,  
HAND-BEADED  
CREATION THAT  
I HAD SEEN



*manuelcouture.com*



Normally one would expect a bride to be upset if all things weren't perfect and if everything didn't go off without a hitch. I suppose since this wasn't his or my first rodeo, specifics didn't so much bother me. We had a list of a few things we didn't want, and we left the rest of the plans up to the planner. She and I would talk by phone and one by one, I'd sign off on the decisions she had made. It wasn't until the actual day that I saw the whole plan in action.

You might have guessed it. My dress wasn't a typical wedding dress and it was in two pieces. When I purchased it, I thought it was beautiful but I felt that it needed a little extra something. Through a friend, I was able to employ the services of Manuel's team and the top of the dress was transformed into the most beautiful hand-beaded creation that I had seen in a long time. Because this process was so intricate, it took hours and hours to complete. I was not the least bit concerned that I didn't have my dress several days before the wedding. But I will say, at the end of the business day on the eve of the wedding, I became a little concerned that it wasn't complete. But this too worked out fine and my dress was delivered to me at 9:30 p.m. that evening during the rehearsal dinner.

In true form, one of the funniest things that happened that weekend still makes us laugh and I now realize it set the tone for the future of our lives together. We got married on a Sunday. On the Friday before, we were running all over Nashville, making sure folks from out of town were settled, dealing with last minute preparations, etc., when all of a sudden I looked at Wayne and said, "We've totally forgotten to get our marriage license!"

It was 4:10 p.m. and we were about ten minutes away from the building where we needed to get the license. Wayne drove as fast as he could without breaking any laws. We whisked into the parking lot, ran up the stairs (no time to wait on the elevator), flew into the office and proclaimed we were there to get our marriage license. I think the lady working either had pity on us for not remembering or actually recognized Wayne from LRB and was in awe because she sweetly said in her Southern accent, "How fast can you fill out the paperwork? You've got six minutes until we close." I don't know if anyone could read what either of us wrote. Our handwriting was something almost caveman-like but we got it done and walked out of there with our marriage license.

It took our village of friends to get the last-minute things done that evening and the next morning but we had the most wonderful day. Just recently, on a visit to Nashville with friends from Florida, we stopped by Shadowbrook and spent a little time looking around and talking to the owner. It still had the same magical feel as it did the day we drove up and knew that it was the place for our wedding.

I believe both Wayne and I are a smidgen surprised that 17 years later we are still in the thick of this crazy lifestyle. Not surprised by our bond and our love. Surprised that the road is still the core of our lives. Wayne and LRB continue to move back and forth across this country touching people's lives with their music and I am along for the ride. A ride like no other. LRB is an avenue that affords us the opportunity to work with charitable organizations all over the country and give back to communities and organizations. We are also blessed with friends and family in every corner of this country, and when we get to their cities, we have the added bonus of spending time with them. It's certainly not the lifestyle for everyone and there are always choices and sacrifices that are made to accommodate tour dates. But, without a doubt, I would not change one thing that's transpired over the last seventeen years.

With my favorite cocktail in hand, I say, "Ad multos annos!" Cheers to many more years!





## VODKA GIMLET

- 2 oz vodka** (I prefer Chopin)
- 1 oz fresh squeezed lime juice**
- Add vodka and lime juice in a shaker filled with crushed ice.
- Shake vigorously and strain into a martini glass.
- Garnish with a lime twist.



HOW DOES A BOY FROM ROME,  
ILLINOIS, END UP BEING THE BASS  
PLAYER AND LEAD SINGER FOR  
LITTLE RIVER BAND AND  
CONTINUE TOURING STRONG  
36 YEARS LATER?





## *A Long Way From Rome...*

Rome is a small town on the Illinois river. At the time it had a Sinclair gas station, a tavern, and a grocery store. Wayne and his parents moved there when he was five after living in Peoria. I've been told their house was on a small road that separated the front lawn from about 500 acres of corn, or soybeans, or winter wheat, depending on the time of year. It was about a mile to Rome Grade School, home of the Rome Ravens. Sounds exotic, but the school didn't even have a gym. Because of this, the basketball team practiced in the parking lot until it got too dark or iced over. According to Wayne, the Rome Ravens didn't win many games (actually he thinks they may have not won a single game).

Rome Grade School graduated his class of twenty-one students and his next stop was just two miles further up the river, in Chillicothe, Illinois, for high school. After his freshman year, his father had a change in jobs requiring them to move to Lockport, Illinois, near Joliet.

The move was a pretty traumatic one for him. Here he was, a self-described country hick who had finally made some friends in high school and was really beginning to feel like he was a part of something good. There were a couple of guys who liked to do a bit of doo-wop at the local drive-in. He began hanging out with them and harmonizing at the drop of a hat with no rehearsal or planning—just singing. The move meant being uprooted from those comfortable things to a very urban school. As he recounts, his pants were too short and his letter jacket from Chillicothe didn't mean squat to the city boys.



I didn't know Wayne's mother or father. His mother passed away long before I met him, and his father just shortly after we met. Growing up, he says his mom rarely cooked and when she did it was horrible. Both of his parents worked. He even describes them somewhat as workaholics. His mom usually came home late every evening and left early the next morning. His dad traveled at least four days per week. He was pretty much left to fend for himself most mornings and nights. He recalls for breakfast he would have cereal with a half-pound of sugar in the bottom of the bowl. Each day he would make a liverwurst or bologna sandwich on white bread and add a handful of pretzels for his school lunch. At night, he'd put a Swanson pot pie in the oven for dinner. When TV dinners arrived at the Rome, Illinois, grocery freezer, he felt as if he was eating on tin-foil-china at the Plaza Hotel in New York. As one might imagine, meals made by others especially for him to enjoy has always meant an extra expression of home, love, warmth, and family, things he grew up without much of. My love of cooking has paired very nicely with his love of EATING.

## *The Boys in the Band*

Lockport Central is where he finished out high school. He earned a few letters in track, football, and basketball, and in the summer of '67 he joined a band, which was the turning point of his deciding he wanted to be a musician. And, boy am I glad he did.





# MRS. BERTANI'S RED SAUCE

(FROM AL BERTANI)

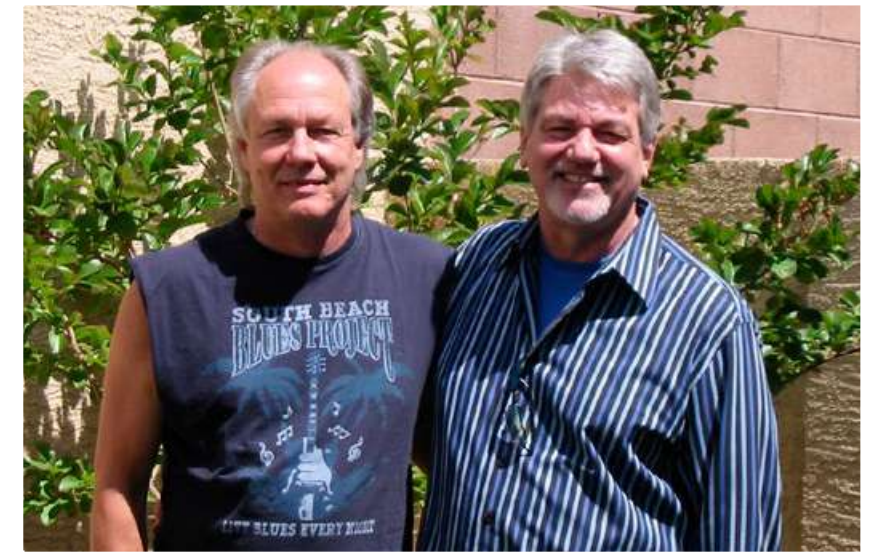


Mr. & Mrs. Bertani

- 1 **large can of tomato puree OR Italian tomatoes** (sub fresh tomatoes when season allows)
  - 1 **can tomato sauce**
  - 2 **cans tomato paste**
  - 2-4 **cloves garlic**
  - 2 **Tbsp olive oil**
  - 1 **tsp parsley**
  - 1 **Tbsp oregano**
  - 1 **Tbsp basil**
  - 2 **Tbsp sugar**
- Peel garlic cloves and sauté them until golden with the olive oil and parsley.
  - Add the tomato puree (or whole tomatoes), tomato sauce, tomato paste, oregano, basil, and sugar.
  - Cook over high heat for 30 minutes, bringing to a boil, stirring frequently.
  - Reduce heat to simmer for 2-3 hours.

A couple of his high school friends were starting a garage band. They really were just messing around playing music and not particularly taking it seriously. One of them had a Hammond organ at his house, another had a drum kit, and yet another had a guitar amp. Wayne asked to join them as the singer since he had been exposed to quite a bit of music and theater as a child. Because they truly were, and expected to be nothing more than, they called themselves the Unknowns. After a couple of clandestine gigs held at backyard parties, with the smuggled Hammond organ in tow, they soon realized they actually liked being in a band. They also discovered there was already a group out there with the same name. A new name was born, The Sound Investment. They became a five-piece band because the organ player had to quit. The Hammond organ was no longer allowed to leave his house and the band was no longer allowed in his house, per his parents.

Now that the remaining guys were serious about being a *real* band, The Sound Investment needed a new place to practice and learn new songs. Wayne's best friend to this day, Al Bertani, was the band's drummer. His kit was set up in the basement of his parents' house. Where better to rehearse so they didn't have to move that whole setup around a lot? Al's house. His mom and dad, Mary and Joe, were beyond patient and generous with them. I have heard from both Al and Wayne they made a lot of noise getting their set list together, and I'm betting a lot of it wasn't very pleasant to listen to from upstairs.



Wayne and Al



# MINI CRUSTLESS QUICHE CUPS

(FROM ALBERTANI)



**6-8 4" pie tins** (you can use large muffin tins as well)

**Pam or spray bottle of olive oil**

**4 eggs**

**2/3 qt fat-free half and half**

**1 (8oz) bag grated Swiss cheese**

**1 green pepper**, chopped

**1 red pepper**, chopped

**1 white onion**, chopped

**cayenne pepper** to your liking

**black pepper** to your liking

- Mix chopped peppers and onion, add cayenne pepper to taste and set aside.
- Add 2/3 qt of half and half, and black pepper to eggs and lightly beat.
- Preheat oven to 400°.
- Spray Pam or olive oil into mini pie tins to grease bottom.
- Ladle a layer of egg and cream mix into pie tin, then add a layer of Swiss, then a layer of vegetable mix. Repeat this method until pie tin is almost full.
- Cook at 400° for 15 minutes until browning starts.
- Then reduce heat to 325° for another 25-30 minutes to fully cook quiches.



Al's mom, Mary, would always feed the boys before they started to practice. She was responsible for introducing Wayne to authentic Italian spaghetti sauce, homemade and slow cooked with fresh ingredients. Almost fifty years later, Al shared the sauce recipe with Wayne and me. Al is quite the cook and has passed along some of his more simple recipes to Wayne. One of them is easy and makes for a great breakfast meal when you are in a hurry. Although Wayne's kitchen skills are limited, he does make a mean crustless quiche. I am sure Mrs. Bertani is looking down on me thinking *a Southern girl can't possibly make Italian sauce*, but boy do I love to try!

From that time until the end of their college days The Sound Investment played almost every weekend. After they broke up, Wayne joined up with #7 Bigsby Street, which had horns, original music, and nightclub gigs. Basically local rock star status!



The Sound Investment

## Movin' On Up

Around the summer of '73, it was decided that maybe a "real" career would be a better option. Wayne sold his equipment and quit the band to be part of a graduate scholarship program at the Northern Illinois University Speech and Hearing Clinic. After three months of total immersion in that program, he knew in his heart he wasn't meant to be a clinician, and music was indeed the career he wanted to pursue. Talk about something being meant to be; he was able to buy back his gear from the same guy he sold it to, and moved to Chicago to start his new career.



The city had more than its fair share of tasty treats in store for the boy from the cornfields. Chicago was full of cuisine that neither DeKalb, Illinois, nor Rome, Illinois, had to offer. It's where he had his first Mexican meal, his first Vienna hot dog covered with relish, chili, peppers, and onions. And most deliciously, and still unique to the world of pizza pies, deep-dish Chicago-style pizza. His favorite restaurant for pizza in the city is still Gino's East on Superior, where he carved his initials into their downstairs wooden booths in 1968. According to Wayne everyone did this. My favorite pizza restaurant in the city is Lou Malnati's on North Wells. One of the members of #7 Bigsby Street showed Wayne the magic of having hot pizza and cold milk for dinner. I'm not sure I get the magic part but you gotta love Chicagoans and their love of pizza.

These days he and I order the vegetarian pizza whenever we get back to Chicago. We've even been known to have Malnati's shipped on dry ice to us in Florida. But back then Wayne was a meat lover. The problem was his body wasn't happy with it.

In '75, he discovered he needed to stop eating meat while he was on a two-week tour with a former member of Rufus, Paulette McWilliams. They were given rooms in a band house for two weeks in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. The house had its own kitchen and everyone chipped in to buy food rather than eat junk during their stay. He had been suffering with a few stomach issues. A band member, who was vegan at the time, suggested Wayne follow the same diet as he for the time they were there. Wayne says that two-week diet changed his life.



GINO'S EAST



LOU  
MALNATI'S



VIENNA  
BEEF  
CHICAGO  
STYLE  
HOTDOGS





# NEW ORLEANS BAR-B-Q SHRIMP

(FROM REENIE SANDERS & JUDY KESTNER)

*This is one of those recipes that you just go by what looks right. There's no real set measurements but trust me this one is DELISH!*

**2 lbs shrimp**, shells on, rinsed well (I prefer to use without heads)

**1 lb butter**

**Equal amount olive oil to butter**

**Lea & Perrins Worcestershire & Lea Perrins white Worcestershire**

**low sodium soy sauce**

**10-12 cloves garlic**

**Juice of 1 lemon and 1 lime**

**paprika**

**cayenne pepper**

**Tabasco sauce**

**Old Bay seasoning**

**chili powder**

**dried rosemary**

**dried basil**

**dried thyme**

**dried cilantro**

**3 bay leaves**

**dried parsley**

**mixed color peppercorns**

**black peppercorns**

**Cream sherry**

**Champagne**

- Melt butter and place in large baking dish.
- Add enough olive oil to match amount of melted butter.
- Add in garlic cloves.
- For all other ingredients except shrimp, go back and forth, across the olive oil, butter mixture, adding a layer of each ingredient on top of one another.
- After all ingredients are added, mix well with your fingers.
- Add shrimp and mix gently with your hands so that shrimp are covered with mixture.
- Bake uncovered 45-50 minutes at 350°.
- Serve with French bread.

Although he loves the taste and smell of cooked meat, his stomach just cannot handle it. "Going veggie," as he loves to refer to it, straightened out all of his stomach issues, and he's never looked back. Since then, he has become a "fish-a-tartan." He will occasionally eat chicken and is the first to raise his hand for the huge turkey leg at Thanksgiving. Mainly, it's all things veggie. The man loves himself some green beans and peas!

## California or Bust

Just like any music city, Chicago had layers of musicians, all working together and crossing one another's paths here and there. Over time, a friend from one of the many bands Wayne had worked with headed for Los Angeles to further his career. He called Wayne, mentioned he had a job for him, and told Wayne he needed to give the West Coast a try. Wayne packed up, leaving his wife at the time and their infant son behind with family, and headed West for what was to be a seven-week tour. Unfortunately, as is so typical in the flakey music business, the tour only lasted seven days. In the end, it was nothing more than a lot of travel and one show for which the band didn't even get paid. Instead of payment, the tour manager left them a note to the effect that management had cancelled the tour. Basically, good luck to you all getting home from New Orleans.

Wayne decided to go back to California and give it another try. After Jim Messina hired him, he moved his wife and son to Los Angeles. Working with Messina is where his path crossed with Little River Band and was how he came to be hired by them. For a guy from the cornfields of Illinois, he'd pretty much hit the big time with the LRB gig. Not only did he have the LRB gig, he had a new baby daughter as well.

At that time, all of the members of LRB were Australian and lived Down Under, as they





RHONDA AND  
I MET AT A  
LITTLE RIVER  
BAND SHOW IN  
NASHVILLE

WAYNE

say. Wayne was the only band member who lived stateside. He and his family moved to Australia for a short time but ultimately decided to make Southern California their permanent home. They wanted their children to grow up with their grandparents nearby.

*When a Man  
Loves a Woman*

**F**ast forward to 1999. Both Wayne and I were divorced and concentrating on our careers and being involved in charity work.

Entering into a dating relationship was the farthest thing from either of our minds. When you least expect to find true love, it hits you right in the face.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, I wanted Wayne to share his version of how we met. *Here it is in Wayne's words ...*

Rhonda and I met at a Little River Band show in Nashville. At the time we were a six-piece band and I stood in the back row next to the drummer. Because I wasn't yet the lead singer, I had the luxury of observing our audience from that perspective, free of pressure. That night at the Wild-horse Saloon was an industry night, set up for LRB to showcase new songs. The VIP section was in front of the stage and filled with boring record-label types and the band knew they were in for a long evening.



From the \$8.00 ticket section at the back of the venue, I observed four very attractive women heading forward. Rhonda was leading the charge to get up to the stage in front of the suits. She bribed the befuddled security kid and there they were, front and center. And of course, who follows pretty women to the front of a concert? Guys. Lots of guys. Who follows guys? More women. At one point, Rhonda turned to the VIPs with arms outstretched and a "what's wrong with you people" look on her face and the party was on! At this point I have to be honest, I wondered if she was crazy, tipsy, or a bit of both. But whatever she was, it was good fun watching the scenery change at the front of the stage.

When LRB finished and we took our bow, she and I made eye contact (difficult not to notice them!) and I mouthed "thank you." Although she singlehandedly saved the night for LRB, I figured I'd never see her again, another face in the crowd. Turns out she knew many in that VIP section, and the four "pretties" were asked to come backstage for a meet and greet.

What I found out, she was neither crazy nor tipsy. She was the designated driver of her group for the evening. We drank water and talked about our mutual interests in working for nonprofits and traded email addresses and the band signed her jeans. I threw in the next three tour dates and cities, just in case. Four days later she traveled to New Orleans for a fall music festival. We had dinner and I lost her rental car. That alone made me *certain* I'd never see her again.

During the following seven months we saw each other a total of two times: once when I travelled



The jeans I wore on the night of October 13, 1999. Members of LRB autographed my jeans.



to Nashville on business and once on her birthday. I spent four of those months in Australia producing a new CD for LRB. Although neither of us were looking for a long-term commitment, by the end of that seven months we both realized we were in one regardless.

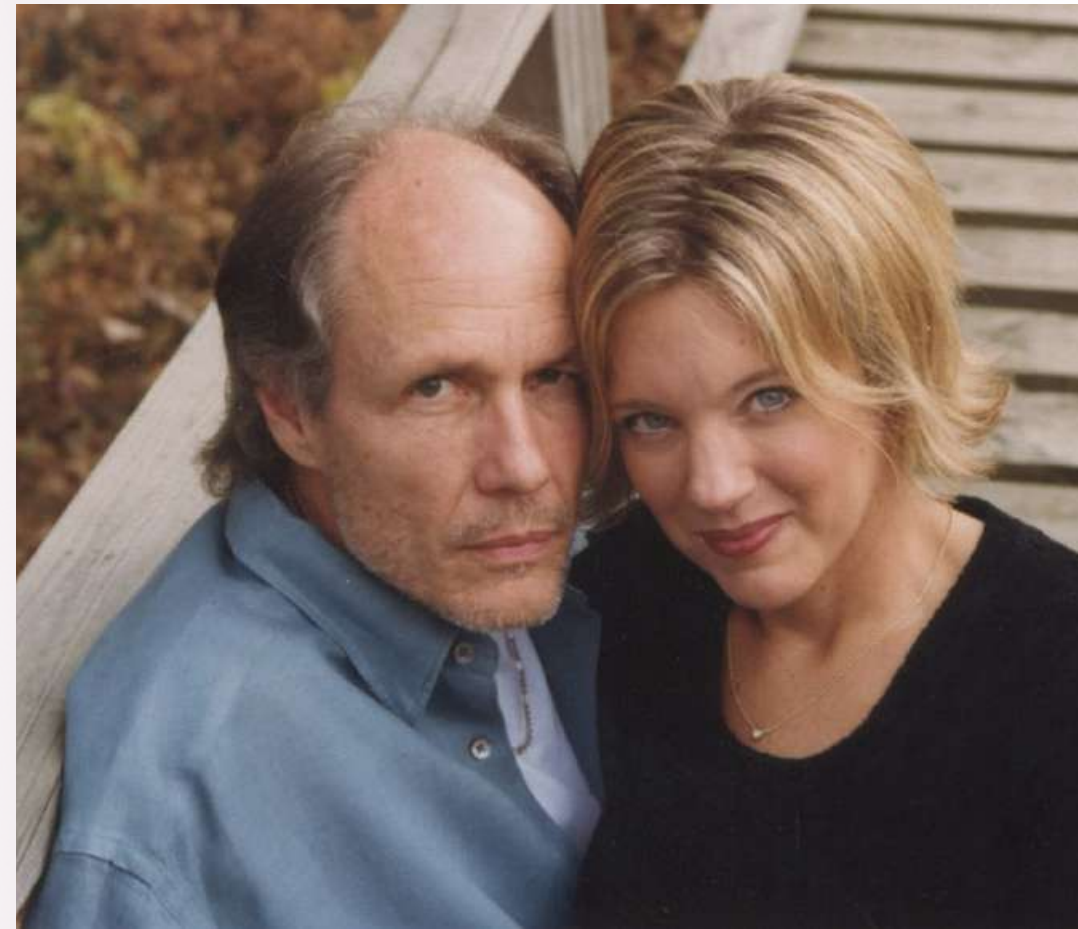
### *Road Romance*

Our courtship was tour-based. Rhonda joined me on the road whenever it was feasible. During one of those visits, things on the bus were a bit more crazed than usual. I tried to express to her that I had serious reservations about her joining up with our circus. I didn't want to add that kind of misery and uncertainty to her life. We sat under a tree one afternoon and talked about our hearts versus our heads, which wasn't an easy conversation for this ex-math major to fathom. Shortly after that conversation, she left for Ireland on a two-week trip with her mother. By the time I saw her next, my heart had taken full control of the matter.

As soon as their plane landed back in Nashville from Ireland, Rhonda drove down to a show in Atlanta at Chastain Park. We were working with Chicago that night, one of my favorite bands of all time. Rhonda met up with one of her best girlfriends since high school, Meg. They've been friends since high school and they are true partners in crime. Turns out Meg's birthday is the same day as my son's. On their way to the venue that evening, Meg said to Rhonda, "He's gonna ask



The hotel where we got engaged.



you to marry him tonight!" (Not sure how she knew, I certainly didn't!) Nevertheless, there was a lot of synchronicity in the air that night. All I knew was I was happy to see my girl and meet her friend.

After LRB was finished, we all stayed for Chicago's whole set. We stayed side stage, singing along to the songs and getting swept up in the great music. I was really happy to connect with something and someone so important to Rhonda's past because we had spent so much time on the road in my world. But when it was all over and we were back at our hotel, I couldn't fall asleep

and I can fall asleep in a hurricane! I even got up and paced room 409 (a little more synchronicity) for fifteen to twenty minutes. She finally woke up and asked "What's wrong?" I knelt on the bed and said "Will you marry me?" It came out like I had planned it for weeks. That's what had me so wired that I couldn't close my eyes. The head couldn't process the incoming message from the heart. She screamed and probably woke up the whole fourth floor. So we left and had a "proposal breakfast" at IHOP. How's that for glamorous?



## *Gain' To The Chapel*

The wedding was on October 1, 2000, next to a beautiful creek in the hills just west of Nashville. Rhonda found an old stone lodge called Shadowbrook, which is still family owned and operated by a woman in her 80s who had grown up there. The peace and

quiet of the grounds was so intense you could actually hear yourself think. The last mile of the country road was so curvy, I started to worry about people leaving after a drink or two. But all went well. Most of the friends and family that were there said it was more like a small concert in the woods with a wedding thrown in. But what did they expect? After the reception, we adjourned to a friend's

house for beer, wine, cocktails, gourmet pizzas of all kinds prepared on the spot by a private chef, a package Rhonda had bid on and won in a charity auction, and some more music. We gathered around the house piano and a couple of guys played guitar. It was a magical day. Although I've been proven right about the circus, Rhonda was right about us.

~ WAYNE



## *Twists and Turns of the Road*

Make no mistake—we've seen our share of hard times and hurt. We had much in common, but came from very different worlds. The music circus is much more chaotic and bizarre when you're able to see behind the curtains. There is so much stigma that comes with being the wife of a rock'n'roll musician.

The notion that every musician on the road is out there partying it up every night is just so far from the truth. And there's always that one person who gives you the "yeah, right" look and has already made their assumptions about what your marriage is or isn't. It took a long time for me to sort out the truths and myths



and come to terms with all of that bullshit. Stepping into this world fresh, I didn't really grasp or know how to prepare for the amount of time spent alone when the band's tour bus had to roll. It was very hard to say goodbye so often. On the flip side, Wayne had spent twenty plus years in the same town, yet I had no problem changing addresses quickly. Just as I had to adapt to some unconventional ways of life, he too had to settle into my reality and love of real estate, moving and renovating every residence we lived in. So, there were hills to climb and things to work out.

One of those things turned out to be a health condition that I was diagnosed with not long after we were married. It came out of nowhere and, if not under control, could be life-threatening. Being alone at times was scary and there was always that dark cloud on the horizon. We watched it hoping it would always move the other way, but it caught up with us more than once. And I'm here to tell you pale blue is not a good color for one's skin!

I have a condition now known as AERD (aspirin exacerbated respiratory disease). It used to be called Samter's Triad, named after the doctor who discovered the syndrome. The triad consists of aspirin intolerance, nasal polyps, and resulting asthmatic reactions, which to this day are still very random in their occurrence. The condition masquerades itself as various things but left untreated ends up with anaphylactic shock, which has taken us to the emergency room six times now.

The good news is, under new medications, dietary restrictions, and some holistic approaches, I have gained some measure of control over the symptoms. One side effect of AERD is the loss of taste and smell. Before those new medicines and other avenues were available, I had resigned myself to a life without taste or smell—not something that makes a lover of food and wine very happy.

Wayne might leave his wallet in the hotel, forget where he's left his keys or which hole he lost his golf club on, but he remembers all of the trips to the emergency room very vividly. Several happened while we were out on the road. One trip was during rush-hour traffic in a cab on a

Monday evening through the suburbs south of Chicago. With my inability to breathe and the cab driver's lack of driving skills, both of us were doubtful we'd survive that ride.

Another ER visit occurred in Minneapolis after we had returned to the hotel from an LRB show. Wayne phoned down to the front desk and requested an ambulance. The 911 dispatcher was told a member of Little River Band needed an ambulance. It was quite obvious from the minute they arrived they suspected something other than my not being able to breathe. The entire ride, Wayne was up front being grilled about what kind of drugs he and I were using while the guy in the back with me was asking the same questions. Ridiculous yes, but that is part of the stigma that goes along with what's referred to as a rock'n'roll lifestyle. Wayne wanted to strangle both of the attendants, but by the time my five-hour-plus stay in the ER was over, the shift had changed, I was breathing normally, and we were off to the next city on the tour.

Wayne really is one of the calmest and most laid back persons I've ever met. But I saw him come unglued like never before one night in Florida. It was probably the most heinous attack I have experienced since being diagnosed. The band was rehearsing there for several days. As usual, the attack came at about 2:00 a.m. We were in a smallish town, I





hated making a big scene with an ambulance, so Wayne drove us to the ER. I have never before felt like I wasn't going to make it through, but this time something was different. In the car, I pictured our pup in my mind and just kept thinking once we were in the ER all would be OK. I don't have a lot of recollection of the evening but I do remember pulling up to the ER door and it was locked. Wayne was pounding so hard on the door I actually thought he might break the glass. Putting a hand through the glass door is not good for a bass player. Eventually the security guard let us in.

There wasn't a soul in the waiting room, nor in the admitting cubicle. I vaguely recall the security guard saying, "Just go to the first room on the right and someone will be right with you." Five minutes...ten minutes...nothing. According to Wayne, the blue in my face was getting darker. After what seemed like forever and with no one coming into the room, he took matters into his own hands and headed down the hall to get someone. To this day what he found still blows my mind. There were six staff around a desk about to sing Happy Birthday to one of the nurses. I could hear him losing his temper. There were some four-letter words expressed and a guy finally came into the room. "Wow, she's turning blue!" he said. "NO SHIT you moron," Wayne snapped back. "Do something about it!" Hours later, after many heated discussions, my skin back to normal color, and without Wayne being arrested, we were able to leave.

## Home Sweet Home

The search for the perfect environment for us to live in has taken us from Tennessee to North Carolina to Nevada, with us finally landing in South Florida. We found all that we were searching for: a climate that seems to have just the right balance to help keep my condition under control, doctors who understand what my condition actually is, along with great friends and a wonderful "forever" home in a fantastic neighborhood. Through it all we have grown stronger

## LINGUINE WITH CLAM SAUCE

- $\frac{3}{4}$  **lbs linguine** cooked according to directions
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  **stick butter**
  - 4 large garlic cloves**, chopped
  - 1 bunch green onions**, chopped
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  **tsp red pepper flakes**, or to taste
  - 3 (6.5 oz) cans chopped clams**, drained, reserving broth
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  **cup dry white vermouth**
  - salt & freshly ground pepper**
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  **cup flat leaf parsley**, chopped (can sub  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Tbsp, dried) and additional fresh parsley for garnish, if desired
- Melt butter in large, nonstick, nonreactive skillet over medium-high heat.
  - Add garlic, green onions, and red pepper flakes, and cook for several seconds until tender.
  - Stir in clam broth, vermouth, salt and pepper, and cook for 4 minutes or until liquid is reduced by almost half.
  - Add clams and parsley and cook until heated through.
  - Toss immediately with hot pasta.



# ROSEMARY CHICKEN

(OR SALMON)

**chicken breasts** or salmon filets (with skin on)

**8-10 fresh sprigs of rosemary**, bought or cut from your neighbor's hedge!

**olive oil, sea salt, ground pepper**, to taste



- Preheat the grill to high.
- Prep chicken breasts or salmon filets (both with skin on) with a light spread of olive oil, sea salt, ground pepper, season to taste.
- Cut lengths of aluminum foil long enough to completely tent meat and rosemary.
- Once the grill is good and hot, drop the temp to low and place the rosemary on one side. Again, you need to make a plate for how much chicken or fish you are preparing so the meat is resting on rosemary, not the grates of the grill.
- Slowly bring the burners under the rosemary up until it starts to smoke. If it's actually flaming, back the heat down until you only see a bit of smoke.
- Place chicken breasts bone side down (skin up) or salmon (skin down) directly on the smoking rosemary.
- Place aluminum foil tents over the entire array of rosemary and meat.
- Leave grill on low and let rosemary and foil smoke the meat—45-50 minutes for the chicken, 20-30 for the salmon filets.
- If you wish for a crispier finish, you can remove the tents for a couple of minutes and turn the grill up for that finishing touch.
- Place chicken or salmon on a serving dish when cooked to your taste. There will be rosemary stuck to either—the salmon will peel off the skin, but the chicken is going to have some rosemary stuck to the bone side.





together by facing down every hurdle put in our way. Our love is deep, sometimes fiery, sometimes mellow, but always solid. He has always been and continues to be my rock and anchor.

When he isn't (or we aren't) on the road, one of Wayne's favorite things that I make at home



is pasta with clams. As Wayne doesn't eat red meat, seafood meals are pretty much a staple. He's always happy to share with people that he's eaten linguine with clam sauce in restaurants around the world, and he'd put my version above any of the others that he's tried. To hear that compliment always amazes me because for years I made it by feel due to my lack of taste and smell, so for me to feel my way through making his favorite meal was not only a miraculous success for me, but to him, a self-described kitchen moron, it was an extra expression of home and love.

Wayne does his best to give those feelings of love back by taking food to the grill. It's his kitchen in the backyard. He can be as messy as he wants and there's little to break. If he screws up what he's cooking he can scrape it away and start over. Make no mistake though, the inside kitchen is mine and I rule that room of the house. Everything has its place and I like it to be just so. He's not really allowed to be alone in my kitchen!

I don't remember where we caught on to the rosemary chicken recipe. I believe it was while living in Las Vegas and when I worried about borrowing so much from our neighbor's huge rosemary plants that were growing in his front yard. Eventually, we shared with him that we would quite frequently snip several twigs of the delightful herb at least once or twice a week to prepare this meal. Lucky for us, we were all good friends and he didn't mind. Wayne's bus mates, and those close to us, have claimed it's the best and moistest chicken they've ever had. You can substitute salmon filets with the skin on for an equally great meal. The salmon just doesn't need to cook quite as long.

One food item that Wayne *loves* is soup. He's been using his culinary "skills" to heat soup for years. It's an easy meal while traveling down the road on the bus, and with the introduction of the microwave it became super easy with little to no mess. I set out to create some of the soups Wayne's enjoyed on his travels. He'd be out on the road and tell me about a soup he'd enjoyed in a restaurant and I would begin trying to re-create it. Although many might think of soup as a winter meal, we eat it all year around. Sometimes, for sake of ease, and other times because it's refreshing and homemade. Most of the soups I prepare are hearty enough to enjoy with a salad and you've got yourself a meal. Here is one of his all-time favorites.

Gotta have dessert, right? As I mentioned, early in our courtship I introduced Wayne to Red Velvet Cake. But the berry lover in him did a little happy dance when he learned that I knew how to make a skillet cobbler with fresh blackberries. I'm pretty sure he thought I was going to burn the house down when he saw me putting an iron skillet in the oven, again showing his lack of culinary exposure and experience. It was also equally confusing to him when he realized I could make lamb chops in that same skillet. I don't prepare them often but when I do, I'm having to shoo him away due to the fact I pointed out earlier, meat doesn't agree with him. As much as he *loves* lamb, he's not allowed to sample.





## TUSCAN BEAN SOUP

**3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil**

**1 onion**, chopped

**2 leeks**, chopped

**1 large potato**, diced

**2 garlic cloves**, minced

**1 ¼ cups vegetable stock**

**1 (14 oz) can cannellini beans**,  
drained and liquid reserved

**2 cups shredded cabbage**

**3 Tbsp flat leaf parsley**, chopped

**2 Tbsp fresh oregano**, chopped

**¾ cup Parmesan cheese**, shaved  
**salt & freshly ground pepper**

○ Heat the oil in a large sauce pan.

Add onion, leeks, and garlic, and cook  
4-5 minutes until they begin to soften.

○ Pour in the stock and the liquid from the beans.  
Cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

○ Stir in the beans, cabbage, and half of the herbs.

○ Spoon about 1/3 of the soup into a food proces-  
sor or blender and process until fairly smooth.

○ Return this back to the soup in the pan and  
adjust seasonings to taste.

○ Heat for an additional 5 minutes or until  
thoroughly hot.



# BLACKBERRY SKILLET COBBLER

(IN A BLACK CAST IRON SKILLET)



- 1 **box of 2 refrigerated pie crusts**
- 2 **(14-16 oz) bags of blackberries**, frozen
- 1 **stick butter**, melted (for berries)
- 1  $\frac{1}{3}$  **cup sugar** (for berries)
- $\frac{1}{3}$  **cup flour**
- $\frac{3}{4}$  **cup sugar** (for crust)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  **stick butter**, cut into small cubes (this will be used on the top crust)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  **cup water**

- Heat oven to 350°.
- Unroll one pie crust and place in bottom and up the sides of a 12" cast iron skillet.
- Pierce bottom and sides of crust with fork.
- Bake 7 minutes; remove from oven.
- Increase oven temperature to 400°.
- In a large bowl, mix melted butter, 1  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup sugar, and flour.
- Put berries in bowl with butter/sugar/flour mixture; toss until berries are covered and mixture is crumbly.
- Gently pour berries into skillet, sprinkle water over berries.
- Unroll second pie crust over top of berries, sealing at the edges of the skillet.
- Scatter the butter cut into cubes on top of crust.
- Sprinkle  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar on top of crust.
- Cut tiny slits into top of pie crust.
- Bake approximately 45 minutes or until bubbly at edges and beginning to brown on top.





As you've learned from the previous chapter, my mentors in the kitchen were Mom and Granny. I know for a fact that neither of them drank any whiskey, so Wayne has Daddy to thank for his love of Mom's Bourbon Ball recipe. Mom made these every year at Christmas and I dust off the recipe during the holidays just for him. I truly believe Wayne could eat the whole batch at one sitting. I once overheard him describing them to someone, saying they are like a little cake doughnut hole, covered with powdered sugar, and loaded with Jack Daniels. Oh yeah, pass the Bourbon Balls please, quickly!

1992

Like the horrific event that took place in my family in 1998, Wayne and his family had experienced their own life-altering event. In September 1992, Wayne was finishing up a European tour with LRB. He was in London waiting on Lynnette, his wife at the time, to meet him. He received a phone call that their son, Brad, and daughter, Aubree, ages fifteen and thirteen respectively, had been involved in an accident.

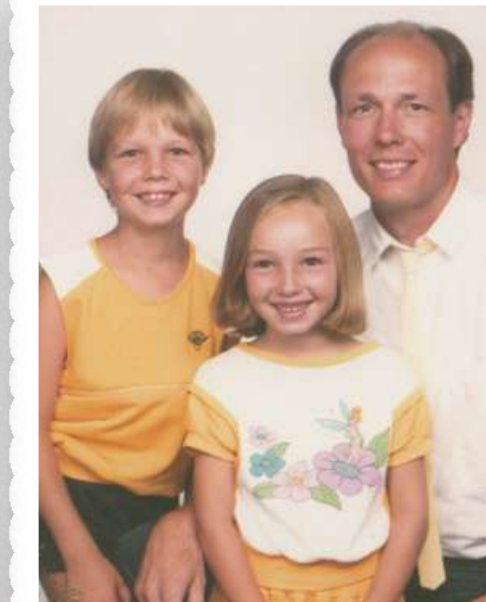
The kids, along with a neighbor and his son, were on the way to a hockey game. The boys played hockey and Aubree wanted to go to the game because she had a schoolgirl crush on one of the boys who played on her brother's team.

The call came to Wayne about midnight London time. He was told Aubree wouldn't survive; machines were the only thing keeping her alive. Brad had been injured as well but he had been stitched up and was going to be OK. There was still one person that did not know anything about the accident and that was Lynnette. She was still in the air, due to arrive in London around 9:00 a.m. London time. Wayne made his way to Heathrow, began organizing their return trip back to the States, and waited for her plane to land. They were on a return flight by noon.

You never understand why accidents like this happen and even if you dig deep and try to find comfort in some hidden meaning as to why they happen, the hole left in your heart is never quite filled.

Was it just a coincidence that both he and I suffered great losses that affected us very deeply prior to meeting one another? We don't have an answer for that. Those events were simply another line in the list of things we have in common. Truth be told, a line we'd both prefer to not have to claim.

I believe those events taught both Wayne and me a life lesson that we've all heard many times and seems so simplistic: Never take for granted the time you have with your loved ones, love them unconditionally, and always tell them you love them. Until you've experienced a tragic accident taking away a loved one, you don't understand the core meaning of those words. To this day we never hang up the phone or close our eyes at night without telling the other that we love them.







# BOURBON BALLS

(FROM MOM)

- 
- 2 cups vanilla wafers**, finely ground
  - 1 cup pecans**, chopped and finely ground
  - 1 cup powdered sugar**
  - 1½ Tbsp cocoa**
  - 3 Tbsp white Karo syrup**
  - 2 jiggers bourbon** (1½ oz = 1 jigger)
  - Sift powdered sugar out on wax paper
  - Mix all ingredients together well in large bowl and roll into balls roughly the size of walnuts.
  - Roll each ball in the sifted powdered sugar.
  - These are better if made well ahead of time and stored in a tightly covered plastic or ceramic container in a cool place.
  - Before serving it may be necessary to roll each ball again in powdered sugar.

*(Makes approximately 40)*





## *In The Limelight*

One would assume Wayne is an extremely outgoing and social person. What people don't realize is just how quiet and reserved he really is. While onstage, he interacts with the crowd and loves every minute of it, which is why after thirty-seven years with LRB, he still loves being on the road and singing those songs. But he's just as happy to be hanging quietly in the background. It's been said more than once that, of the two of us, I should be the one onstage and he should be the one side-stage.

For ninety minutes every night he plays, Wayne loves being onstage. It's there he feels he is providing an avenue for concertgoers to forget what troubles may be in the forefront of their minds, to take a break from reality and simply enjoy the music.

Although Wayne's not shy at all about having a cocktail or a beer, he never drinks on the day before a run of shows. Whether one or five in a row, he foregoes his favorite spirit or glass of wine at least thirty-six hours before he goes onstage. A much younger throat that didn't have to sing the whole show was able to rebound from a party or two. But the current "vintage" throat needs a little more TLC. The rule is no alcohol prior to or in between shows.

There was a time when the guys used to think alcohol freed them up and made them play better. For the most part, they know better now. It might free up their brains to make them *think* they play better, but the tapes don't lie. People pay good money to see LRB and hear their vocal power. He never wants to let anyone down, including the band. However, on the last day of a run, he loves having a Jack Daniels neat for the last five minutes of the set. If I'm in the crowd, I'm happy to bring that to him onstage. If the crowd doesn't like the music by that point in the show, a shot of JD won't make a difference.

HE LOVES  
HAVING A  
JACK DANIELS  
NEAT FOR  
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5 MINUTES  
OF THE SET





I GET ASKED FREQUENTLY  
WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HANG AROUND  
OR STAY ON THE BUS WITH EIGHT  
OTHER GUYS. I ALWAYS FIND THAT  
AN ODD QUESTION BECAUSE  
I HAVE DONE IT FOR SO LONG NOW  
THAT IT JUST SEEMS NORMAL TO ME.





A little history and a few facts seem in order here to understand what life out on the road on a tour bus is like. First off, without the band there would be no Rhonda and Wayne. I get asked frequently what it's like to hang around or stay on the bus with eight other guys. I always find that an odd question because I have done it for so long now that it just seems normal to me.

It actually is rather normal, except for the times when we are moving down the highway, in the tight confines of the bus, and you are reminded that your space is a little bunk. Once we arrive at our destination, we all go our separate ways, do separate activities, and round back up at 4:00 p.m., the usual soundcheck time, and the work day begins.

Everyone on the bus has a family back home. I am the only wife or significant other who spends a big portion of time on the road with the guys, because the others have children, careers or both at home that require their full attention.

All of the band members live in Nashville, except for Wayne and me. When the guys are home, each go in different directions working on other projects and enjoying time with their respective families. While we all get along just fine, we don't socialize as one big unit when we're

not on the road.

I would be sugar-coating things if I said everything is always perfect and happy. That's not reality. There are five band members, three crew, and myself, and if you count the driver, there are ten people on the bus. Ten very different personalities all spending an enormous amount of time together in very close quarters. We go from show to show, where inevitably nothing is ever as it



should be no matter how well the show has been advanced. Add to that, some of the most outrageous assumptions and expectations no one was warned about prior to arrival that are suddenly thrown at the crew and band once they arrive at a venue, and yes, things can get testy. But all in all, the atmosphere is happy and comfortable.

Everyone knows LRB has seen numerous changes through the years. The current lineup has been together longer than any other in LRB's history. Greg joined the band in 1999. I met him in May 2000 when they came back from Australia and began that year's tour in Tunica, Mississippi, with a week of rehearsal before the first show. That was also the first opportunity that Wayne and I had to spend any real amount of time together. I guess you could say Wayne, Greg, and I have been together sixteen years.

When you spend that much time with someone it's hard not to develop a relationship that's anything other than just a working relationship. Early on Greg and I connected on a brother/sister level. We've joked more than once we are brother and sister from different mothers. We have been through highs and lows with each other. We've spent many a late night enjoying a glass (or two) of wine solving the world's problems. We've vacationed together, and shared laughter and tears together. Truth be told, we push each other's buttons just like any other brother and sister.



Greg, Wayne, & Rhonda, 2000



## The Most Important Person on the Bus

There's one person on the bus who is absolutely the *most important* person on there. The driver. He's the one who gets you from point A to point B safely. He's the one who holds your life in his hands for all of the hours you're rolling down the road. And he's the one who above all must be happy. A happy driver makes for a happy bus!

We've had our share of drivers. What many people may not understand is that when you lease a bus, the driver usually comes with it as part of the package. We didn't always keep the same bus or driver all year, unless there were long periods of time that made sense to do so.

Naturally, just like with anything, some drivers are better than others. There have been times when I have been on the bus and thought, *if I make it safely to the next location, I'm flying home. I'm not riding again.* But in fairness, there have been drivers that we truly were sad to see go.

There's a saying: *What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.* With the introduction of the internet, we're not sure that's so true any more. But substitute "on the bus" for "in Vegas" and you have hit on a very important, unspoken, but well-followed tour bus creed.

That creed rules out most of the interesting bus stories that could be told here. But from my perspective, there are stories about drivers that I've particularly known that are close to my heart and shareable.



Bedroom on our bus, Magician

My first ride on a tour bus was with Joe behind the wheel. He had driven for Dolly Parton years before, so it was a joy for me to ride up front with him and listen to his stories about her. Joe was close to retirement, but loved LRB too much to stop just yet. But after years of spending time with musicians "borrowing" from him or helping themselves to his food and snacks, Joe had made it clear to everyone that his cabinet was off limits. If something of his was to go missing, all the guys were gonna hear about it.

One morning I got up earlier than usual and went to the front to see where we were. I hadn't slept well because the highway that night just wasn't kind and was very rough. Joe apologized when I got into the co-pilot chair. That's what the jump seat is referred to. There's no better way to see this country than to sit in that seat for a few hours. Anyway,



Front lounge on our bus, Magician

back to Joe that morning. He asked me if I was hungry. I said I was, but that he didn't need to stop just for me. He said, "I've got some Cheerios in that first cabinet if you'd like some." Now this not only shocked me but made my heart smile. You see, that cabinet Joe was referring to was OFF LIMITS and he'd just given me permission to not only open the cabinet but to have some of his beloved Cheerios, which are a favorite of mine as well. When Wayne got up and realized I was eating Joe's Cheerios, his look was one of shock and confusion. I just quietly said, "Joe said it was ok" and from then on, I was always allowed to share Joe's Cheerios.



Another great driver was Mark. He was always kind to me and we had great talks about his future plans. Born and raised in Louisiana, he didn't care for banks or bankers. I remember well his going to the Diamond District on one run to New York City and purchasing a stone that would blind you. It was truly stunning. He had a ring made for himself and I always commented on how much I loved the stone. He would always give Wayne a hard time about not purchasing that stone from him for me, telling Wayne I deserved it. It's never a bad thing to have the bus driver on your side and route for you to get a new diamond. Thanks to Facebook, we still keep in touch and just for the record, Wayne never bought the stone from him.

And then there was Roy who was an ex-Army Ranger. He stood 6'6" and was still cut like a V from shoulders to hips twenty years after he left the service. He called me "First Lady." I'm not sure where he came up with that name but I can only assume it's due to Wayne being the oldest member in the band and the eldest person on the bus. But I didn't mind one bit. It has a good ring to it.

He was a very smooth driver and somehow never hit the rumble strips late at night on the shoulder of the road. We marveled at how quiet it always stayed at night. One particular night I didn't sleep very well. I could hear something up front that didn't sound right. I went up front to investigate and as I got closer to the door that separates the driver from the front lounge, I heard what sounded like Roy in pain. He wasn't in pain at all. He was singing. And there we were, smack in the center of the interstate with the lane markers going down the center of the bus. Roy never hit the rumble strips because he drove in the middle of the road all night long. I had a good time describing that to Wayne and the guys. Roy kept us in stitches most of the time. Some of my favorites are remembering his saying that he needed to stop at the Walmark or CXV when in fact what he meant was Walmart or CVS. Oddly I knew exactly what he meant. He always had some kind of story to tell us and I'm telling you that man knew people in every corner of this country. He could talk on the phone from the time the bus rolled out of one city and into another.

Sadly, Roy passed away recently. We will always remember him and his big smile.

There are other stories that are funny now but in the moment, not only were they not funny, they were down right maddening. There was the time Wayne walked up to the front of the bus and pointed out that the bus was heading to Galveston when in fact the next gig was in Oklahoma. Thank goodness they were only a little over an hour out of the way. Not good when the driver doesn't know the right direction.

There was the time the bus pulled up to pick the guys up and they could see the bus moving toward them yet they couldn't see anyone sitting in the driver's seat. The driver was so short she couldn't see over the steering wheel and she'd never driven a bus with a trailer nor backed up a bus—she'd only driven one forward. Again, things you really don't want to know about or experience.

There have been satellites broken off the top of the bus because a driver went under a hotel's overhang and took it out, and there have been times when a driver just abandoned a bus in the middle of a city street after a gig and never returned to get it. The stories go on and on. The good news out of all of those stories is that there's never been a serious accident where anyone was hurt. And that is what counts.

For the past couple of years we have been incredibly blessed to have our current driver, Earl. He had driven for us in the past and we are more than happy to have him



Earl, our bus driver



AFTER  
DESCRIBING  
WHAT WE  
WANTED,  
HE SAID, “I’M  
ACTUALLY  
DRIVING  
YOUR BUS  
RIGHT NOW.”

  
RN Entertainment  
*rnentcoach.com*

back. I would say he’s probably driven close to half a million miles since driving LRB. There’s never been a time when I have worried or been anxious while riding with Earl. You just hop on the bus and go to sleep.

There are Earl stories galore. As a matter of fact, when we decided to go back to leasing one bus for an entire year, we called Earl first. After describing what we wanted, he said, “I’m actually driving your bus right now.” And so he was.

Earl is a gentle soul who is as patient and steady a driver as there is in the music business. His teacher made him learn how to navigate a city with a cup of hot coffee on the edge of the kitchen counter. If it fell, he failed and had to start over. I am pretty sure he didn’t spill a drop.

All kidding aside, Earl really is the master of bus drivers, getting all sixty-five feet of bus and trailer into any spot required without any mishaps. And for the most part, I think he really enjoys his gig with us. There have been times when we’ve (aka I’ve) pushed the limit a bit, but overall it’s a really good working relationship.

I tested his skills one day in 2015. After picking up our friends and me at the New Orleans airport, we asked Earl to take us to Whole Foods so we could stock up on some healthy food and snacks and maybe a bottle of wine, or five. Turns out Whole Foods is on a cobblestone neighborhood street that has never seen a tour bus. The street was lined with beautiful trees with branches hanging down low enough to scratch the paint on our brand new bus. It looked good on Google Maps, but not so much once we actually got to the street. It was much like threading a needle to find a place to park the bus.

First, Earl and Steve had to entertain a homeowner, whose car was blocked in by the bus, with stories of the band, after which they had to persuade the police to let them stay a few more minutes. When Earl saw us come out with three grocery carts full of groceries, he didn’t blink an eye. He and Steve got out and helped us load it onto the bus and into the fridge and drawers. Back into the driver’s seat, he threaded the needle again on the way out.

One of the most heartwarming stories about Earl involved a very long trip in nasty weather, from somewhere in Minnesota to somewhere in Maryland in a day and a half. After fueling up and driving a very long stretch, he stopped at a toll booth on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The lady in the booth said she heard a cat and said it was coming from under the bus. Earl pulled over and looked underneath. There was a tiny female kitten huddled on the back of a pan holding the batteries. She’d ridden there for close to nine hours and about 700 miles.

When we pulled up in the vans for our afternoon show in Maryland, there was Earl with the bus bays open, hand-feeding this little two-pound kitten and nursing her back to health. We named her Roadie Cat, and she stayed with us for about ten days until one of the crew could take her home to his girlfriend. She loved to sleep on the dashboard in the sun while Earl drove with his smooth jazz playing on the radio. Roadie now weighs almost twenty-five pounds and is living the high life in Florida.

We’ve been blessed with some great drivers who also happen to be great people. Some tours don’t view their drivers the way we do, but we maintain they really are the most important member of the tour every time they get

WE ASKED  
EARL TO  
TAKE US  
TO WHOLE  
FOODS SO  
WE COULD  
STOCK UP  
ON SOME  
HEALTHY  
FOOD AND  
SNACKS AND  
MAYBE  
A BOTTLE  
OF WINE,  
OR FIVE.





behind the wheel. I sleep better, and I know the other wives and significant others do as well, when I know Wayne and the guys are in dependable hands when the bus rolls.

## *Life on the Bus*

Life on the bus may seem like an anomaly to most, but to those of us who do it often, it's just part of our norm. It does take some getting used to and it's not without its hiccups and frustrations, but overall it's not too bad and we are afforded the opportunity to see a great deal of our beautiful country while rolling down the road between venues.

The first thing you must learn and respect when traveling around on the bus with ten other people is that there are bus rules. And it is *very important* that you know these rules and abide by them. Otherwise you might be on the receiving end of the ole stink eye and if you break a rule more than once, well let's just say you might find yourself walking.

**Bus rule #1** No double-dipping into chips or nuts or Cheetos after licking your fingers. Ugly. There are always bags of potato chips, nuts, pretzels and the likes on the bus. Let me just say there are a few of the guys that say eating Lays potato chips before they go onstage oils their throat. I say it's just an excuse to eat more than one potato chip. But never, ever take a chip out, lick your fingers, and put them back in the bag. GROSS!

**Bus rule #2** If you sleep in your stage clothes and wear them again the next night onstage, get help. You're probably hitting up something other than Gatorade a little too much, and never mind that you just plain stink.

**Bus rule #3** No door slamming. Do you really go around slamming doors at your own house? Probably not. Therefore, why do you feel the need to slam the doors every time you open and close them on the bus. It's really close quarters folks, everything can be heard loudly!

I must tell this story here. It's too priceless not to share. It was about 3:00 a.m. one morning. Greg and another member of the band at the time had gotten into a rather heated discussion and had made their way from the front lounge through the bunk area to the back lounge. There are two doors between these areas. One word led to another, doors slammed and tempers were boiling. Greg opened the rear door again and said rather emphatically, "Don't slam the door, you're gonna wake up Grandpa." He was referring to Wayne. No matter how irritated you are because you're trying to sleep and there were doors slamming and tempers flaring, that statement from Greg left me in stitches.

**Bus rule #4** No paper or #2 in the bathroom. As gross as it sounds, there's a very logical reason for this. If these items are put into the tank, there is no amount of chemicals that can completely remove the smell that these items leave behind. Just imagine the tanks on a bus that's five to ten years old and all of the wear and tear they've seen. That's just not a pleasing smell.

**Bus rule #5** Be kind to your fellow passengers, and please do not eat asparagus, cauliflower, or beans before boarding the bus. It just does not make for a rosy smelling ride.





## BREAKFAST CAN BE AT ANY TIME



*There are no windows in our bunks. So it could be 1 a.m. or 1 p.m. depending on the length of the trip. So breakfast happens when you walk out of the bunk area and start the coffee, or the Diet Cokes, or the breakfast smoothie. Your call.*

**Bus rule #6** We all have families back home and at times they need to get in touch with us so thank goodness for cell-phones. However, please turn the ringers off and figure out your way of being alerted to your phone. Some have chosen to ignore until they wake up, others leave the phone on vibrate and hold the phone, and others have opted for the most modern of technologies and wear an iWatch that vibrates right on the wrist. Whatever way

you choose is great—just please turn off the ringer.

## *Just What Do They Eat on the Bus?*

**A**s crazy as it might sound, it's not as hard as one might think to come up with a good meal while traveling on the bus. Typically, the bus rolls into a city mid-morning on the day of a show and the band, and me when I'm there, are dropped off at our hotel. The bus then takes the crew to the venue where they will live until after the show. The crew has one of the toughest jobs ever. They will begin their day sometimes as early as 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. and the day doesn't end until every piece of gear is loaded back in the bus and trailer after a show. This typically means they are finally stepping back on the bus at midnight to 1:00 a.m.

The band and I usually will find a restaurant nearby after being dropped off at the hotel and we get breakfast. Or, when it's a little later in the morning, we will go and have lunch. Again, contrary to what many may presume, we don't spend all of our time together and we rarely do group meals. There's the occasional time when a couple of us will share a meal together, but for the most part we move about separately. This isn't for any reason other than having different schedules, some wanting to go back to sleep, some having other work projects to do and preferring to hunker down in their hotel room and get them done. Sometimes it's just as simple as none of us want to eat the same food as the other and we go in different directions.

The crew has a completely different schedule and their meals are more structured. Because they are at a venue for a period of time that encompasses lunch and dinner, their meals are sometimes pre-decided via information given to the venues before arrival. Lunch can be a catered full lunch, having them order off of a menu for delivery or can also be festival food if the venue happens to be an outdoor festival. LRB is rather famous for playing just about every food festival there is across this country.

On show days, dinner is the one meal that we all usually eat together. Most of the time it's a catered meal at the venue. Occasionally, the venue will provide us a menu from a local restaurant and have us order our meals for arrival after soundcheck, which is normally 4:00 p.m. with dinner following in the 5:00 p.m. range. Nothing fancy is required. As long as there's a salad, a fish entree for those that don't eat chicken or meat, and a vegetable we are all pretty happy.

## BOGGY BAYOU MULLET FESTIVAL



*mulletfestival.com*

## BEAN BLOSSOM BIKER FEST



*ballsbiker.com*

## RIBFEST



*ribfest.org*



We are extremely lucky that we have one person on the bus, Steve, who loves to cook and when he has extra time at home will cook up some of the best tasting barbeque and fixings I've ever eaten. He's stocked us up with smoked ribs, salmon, turkey, and pulled pork more than once. It's great to be able to open the fridge and find some real good home cooking when rolling down the road. Steve was kind enough to share his recipes for his meat and fish rubs along with

his secrets for smoking meats on a smoker. I'll share the smoking recipe secrets at the end of this section. And don't think just because you don't have a true smoker you can't smoke these meats. He's provided a way for those with a gas grill to achieve true smoke flavor. You can find these instructions at the end of this chapter. You *will not* be disappointed.

I'm going to throw a little contradiction in here because sometimes you arrive at a venue that's at the corner of nowhere and nowhere and you're starving. There are



## RUBS & SAUCES

(FROM STEVE KIMBROUGH)

### PORK RUB

#### INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup light brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp chili powder
- 2 Tbsp dry mustard powder
- 2 Tbsp onion powder
- 2 Tbsp garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp fine sea salt
- 1 Tbsp coarse ground black pepper
- 1 tsp chipotle powder
- 1 generous cup grated apple

### CHICKEN & POULTRY RUB

#### INGREDIENTS

- ⅔ cup chili powder
- ⅓ cup brown sugar
- 3 Tbsp sea salt
- 4 Tbsp garlic powder
- 4 Tbsp onion powder
- ½ tsp jalapeño or chipotle powder

### BEEF RUB

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup coarse ground pepper
- ⅓ cup sea salt
- ⅓ cup chili powder

### PORK, CHICKEN, POULTRY, & BEEF RUBS

- You may want to run the brown sugar through a flour sifter to make sure you don't get clumps. Then mix all together. Store in an airtight container in the freezer for freshness.

### FISH & SEAFOOD RUB

- Use the poultry rub recipe (above) and add ½ Tbsp Old Bay seasoning to it.

### SIMPLE BBQ SAUCE

- 2 cups natural ketchup
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 Tbsp maple syrup
- 2 Tbsp honey
- 2 Tbsp fresh squeezed lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 3 Tbsp molasses
- 1 Tbsp onion powder
- 2 Tbsp garlic powder
- 2 Tbsp smoked paprika

- Mix the liquids in a saucepan over low heat.
- Next add the powders one at a time, stirring as you go.
- When they are all well-blended, let them simmer, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes.

*This is a mild sauce. If you like a bit more kick add 1 tsp chipotle powder and 1 Tbsp ground black pepper....For something different take the above sauce and mix it half-and-half with yellow mustard.*



only a couple of options and if you've taken the first option of venturing into that buffet at a casino or into a restaurant at the so-called hotel and you can only attempt to identify the food

presented by the little cue cards in front of the dish, you run straight back to the bus and start getting creative.

This is when you reach for what-

ever might have been left over from the rider food the night before. There's always a selection of fruit and juices on the rider and what's left over after a show comes on the bus with us. This is a perfect example of when the bus Ninja is put to good use. Make up a big smoothie and you're no longer hungry nor do you have to be subjected to matter presented as food. All kidding aside, there are times when you know the next stop's food selection is so notoriously and consistently awful that you choose to do a one-day cleanse.

Before the bus rolls on a run, someone has been to the store and stocked up on things like nuts, snack bars, cereal, nacho chips, cheeses, crackers, hummus, deli meats, etc. This allows for some choices when you run into a situation like mentioned above. Bus nachos are a very common snack, especially when the show is over and the bus is loaded and rolling down the road at 1 a.m. Everyone is coming down off the high of a show and snacks are in order.

Another contradiction to what most may think: The beverage selection on the bus is quite tame. Some may even say it's rather boring. There's always a selection of coffee. Good grief, *do not* deny some on the bus their coffee! Greg is the master tea brewer and brews up quite the

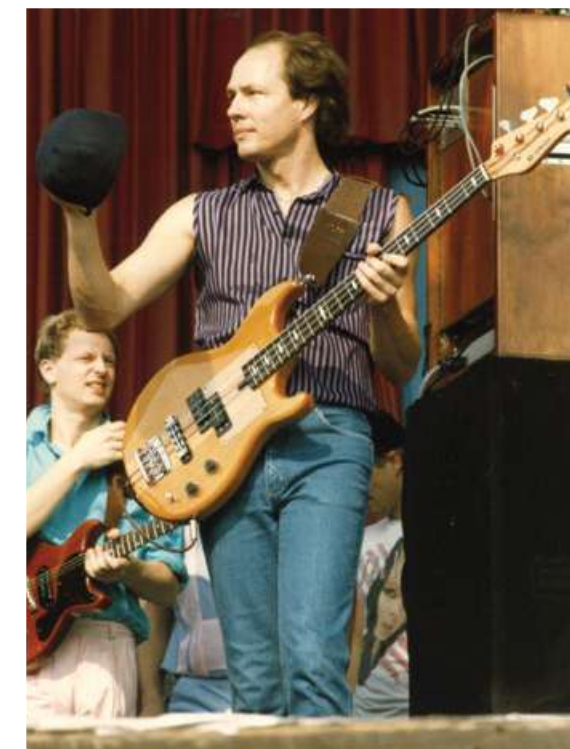
delectable cup of tea. There's always a selection of loose teas, milk, waters (sparkling and still), Gatorade and Nuun tablets for rehydration onstage, and Diet Coke, which is Chris's version of coffee. Yep, like I said, rather boring! We do keep a twelve-pack or two of microbrew or a local beer and a bottle or two of red and white wine but it's not like the bus is a rolling liquor store.

As cool as all this sounds, we have had a few experiences that didn't go so well. One that comes to mind was the band condo that we were supposed to share way back when we first were married, in 2002 or so. Now let me just say another unspoken rule is we don't *ever* share rooms. We are all adults and those days are long over. Dues have been paid by the guys long ago. It just does not happen. However, this particular place was again at the corner of nowhere and nowhere, no hotel for many, many miles. It was a resort of condos that is quite popular in the area. They had allocated two condos for band and crew.

This day was a nothing short of a sauna-like day. A summer show, outside, in some pretty stifling Midwest heat and humidity. By the end of soundcheck we were all soaked. The band showered in one of the condos. Wayne and I were using another. I pulled back the curtain and saw two footprints on the floor of the shower. I was so disgusted and freaked out at the same time. No way in hell was I putting myself in that shower. The footprints were *in* the floor of the shower—gunk and grime about a quarter inch deep where folks had been

## COFFEE & HYDRATION

*Peet's Coffee, Dunkin Donuts coffee, Starbucks coffee, Eight O'Clock coffee, Dooar's and Nuun tablets for hydration.*



Stephen and Wayne, 1980s



standing and showering for years. Of course, Wayne, thinking I'm being a little overly dramatic, pulled back the shower curtain to see for himself. We closed up our bags, headed back to the bus and I took my "shower" via the bathroom sink on the bus.

## *An Anniversary Celebration*

The year 2010 was LRB's thirty-fifth anniversary year. It also happened to be Wayne's sixtieth birthday and our 10th wedding anniversary. We decided to celebrate, big. This

was going to be one hell of a party but there was a catch. We needed there to be a show in our home city, which at the time was Las Vegas. Somehow, someway the agency was able to get a show booked out there at exactly the time of year we needed it. The date was signed, sealed and delivered, so to speak, and the weekend was May 10, 2010. The planning began.



I planned a four-day event. We had friends coming from all over the country as well as Europe and Australia. We kicked off the weekend on Thursday by having a dinner for twenty-five people at our home. These were the folks who had traveled internationally as well as some dear friends who have been with us through thick and thin.

For the evening's menu, we grilled Wayne's famous Rosemary Chicken, Rosemary Lamb, and Rosemary Swordfish. Early in the planning, I decided that I would love to serve risotto as it seems to be something most folks enjoy. I already knew what our meat dishes would be and risotto seemed an easy dish that complemented all. The problem was that every experiment I did with risotto in the weeks leading up to the event just didn't make me want to turn cartwheels and for this I needed cartwheels.

I began to play around a little bit and decided to whip up an asparagus risotto one evening for dinner for Wayne and me. The minute we tasted it, we looked at one another and knew without a doubt this was the one.

The evening came and while the weather wasn't the most cooperative, we figured out a way to move everyone inside comfortably and had one of the most magical evenings. I'm sure the twenty empty wine bottles and a couple of empty gin bottles added a little something to the magic of the evening. To this day, I still have folks who were at that party talking about the risotto.

## *Bus/RV Life*

And sometimes the bus rolls with me, friends, and other family members on board. For those who've never experienced a tour bus ride, it remains as one of the big mysteries about life on the road. How does it work with all those people in that little space? Are there sixty seats on there? Nope, it's not that kind of bus.



# ASPARAGUS RISOTTO

**1 lb asparagus**  
**3 Tbsp plus 1 tsp butter**  
**½ cup shallots**, chopped  
**1 cup Arborio rice**

**½ cup dry white wine** (can use 1 Tbsp lemon juice and ¼ cup water instead of wine)

**3½ cups chicken stock** or vegetable stock for vegetarian option; can substitute some of the asparagus cooking water for stock

**½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese**  
**salt and pepper**

- Prepare the asparagus cutting off tough ends. Cut into 1 to 1 ½ inch pieces.
- Bring a saucepan with a quart of water to boil. Blanch the asparagus pieces for 2 minutes. At the end of two minutes, use a slotted spoon to remove the asparagus pieces to an ice water bath to shock the asparagus into a vibrant green color and to stop the cooking. Drain from the ice water bath and set aside.
- In a 3-4 quart saucepan, heat 3 Tbsp butter on medium heat. Add shallots and cook for a few minutes until translucent.

- Add rice and cook for 2 minutes, stirring until nicely coated.
- While shallots are cooking, bring the stock to a simmer in a sauce pan.
- Add the wine to the rice. Slowly stir, allowing the rice to absorb the wine. Once the wine is almost completely absorbed, add ½ cup stock to the rice. Continue to stir until the liquid is almost completely absorbed, adding more stock in ½ cup increments. Stir often to prevent the rice from sticking to the bottom of the pan. Continue cooking and stirring rice, adding a little bit of broth at a time, cooking and stirring until it is absorbed, until the rice is tender but still firm to the bite, about 15-20 minutes.

- Remove from heat.

*Note: The amount of stock given is approximate.*

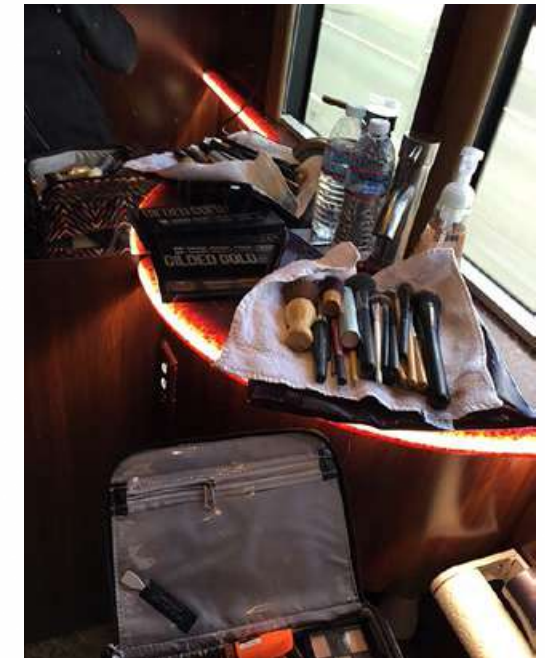
*You may need a little more or less.*

- Gently stir in the parmesan cheese, the remaining butter and the asparagus. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

The front area houses a seating area, eating area, and kitchen. The hallway houses the bunks, and the back area is either a lounge with a bathroom or it's a bedroom/bathroom. The bus also comes with all of the amenities such as a microwave, full-size refrigerator, cooktop, and running hot water. So life has a certain normalcy, albeit in a narrow space that becomes our home for as long as we are on the road.

The bunks (from four to twelve) are in the middle, separated from the front and back lounges by doors. Some buses have Enterprise doors powered by air, whoosh, beam us up Scotty, others slide, and some are regular doors. All the bunks have sliding curtains, reading lights, AC vents, and power outlets. Some have DVD players with drop-down screens. If you can get past the coffin feel, they're very private and peaceful. Nothing beats a good night's sleep in your bunk if the driver is smooth. The sound and feel of the bus as it rolls down the highway is like curling up for an eight-hour afternoon nap in the rain.

Overall bus life isn't really difficult or much different from being in a hotel. I won't kid you, after several weeks out on the road, I am always ready to head home, be in our house, and see our pup Macho and our friends at home. But I can't complain because it's a mighty fine way to roll around the country. And when we get the chance, we love to take the bus to an awesome RV Resort like the one in Destin, Florida where you park on the edge of the beach. The bus door opens and your toes are in the sand!



A girl has to make the most of the space she has.



## CAMP GULF

*campgulf.com*

## *Favorite Bus Road Trips*

### NOLA AND NAPA AND PARK CITY

So just where does our bus go when the band is not using it on tour? As I mentioned earlier, for the last couple of years we've kept the same bus and driver for the whole year. This allowed Wayne and me to take side trips when the band was not on the road. We've had friends come along on some of these trips and we've visited Wayne's son, daughter-in-law, and grandsons

as well as taking mini vacations for just the two of us.

Some of our most memorable trips are to New Orleans and Napa. I have to say, I consider myself a pretty seasoned bus rider. I can adapt

to life on the bus quite easily. Whether that means sleeping in one of the bunks, or forfeiting a hotel room at one of the tour stops, I've been around bus life long enough that I just roll with it. Having said that, for our friends, Jim and Kathy who joined us for a few side trips with the bus, it was certainly a learning curve for them. They came through and endured it like rock stars and once we got back home we were all still speaking and we're still the best of friends.

We've used the bus to stay in New Orleans twice. You wouldn't expect such a deluxe RV facility to be so conveniently situated in a city the size of the Big Easy, but easy describes the whole experience. The French Quarter



RV Resort is three blocks from the quarter and shares a wall with the famous St. Louis Cemetery on Basin St.

### FRENCH QUARTER RV RESORT & ST LOUIS CEMETERY

Our first trip that included Kathy and Jim was to New Orleans for Jazz Fest. Everyday started with an awesome meal, either in the Quarter or on the Esplanade near the fairgrounds. We mapped out our plan each day to hear some incredible music and hang out with close to 250,000 concertgoers winding their way between stages. From Gospel to Blues to R&B to Jazz, the music in the air was amazing. It was wonderful to be in the midst of that much humanity with no stress or hostility. The crowds were laid back and happy to be in the flow from one great act to the next.

At the end of the day, it was back to the FQRV Resort to freshen up and hit the Quarter for dinner. A ten-minute walk could get us to any one of a dozen five-star restaurants. We sampled as many as we could. There's nothing better than pulling the curtain on the bunk and getting some good bus sleep after such rich days. What could be better than New Orleans food, music, and hospitality with good friends. This was one of the best trips in a very long time!

Another fun trip was to California wine country. Turns out we have a lot more in common with Jim and Kathy than just good music and food. Wine fits



Our bus, Black Sabbath, at Turley Wines, Amador County, California

*Must stay...*  
FRENCH  
QUARTER RV  
RESORT

*fgqv.com*

*Must see...*  
ST. LOUIS  
CEMETERY

*saveourcemeteries.org/  
st-louis-cemetery-no-1*



CALISTOGA  
RV PARK IS  
CLOSE TO  
HUNDREDS OF  
CALIFORNIA  
WINERIES

  
*calistogarpark.org*

right in, too. So off to Napa, Sonoma and the Shenandoah Valley for a week between LRB shows.

The trip started with a quick hop to Vegas on Valentine's Day weekend. Kathy, Jim and I stayed at the Golden Nugget. Their multimillion dollar renovation makes this one of my favorite places to stay in Sin City. LRB had a show in Laughlin that evening. We met the bus and Wayne the next morning at the airport. Not too shabby a way to begin the journey. Via the bus, it takes about nine hours to get from Las Vegas to Napa. That's a pretty standard length run for the driver. The four of us took a flight from Oakland, California, in order to get to Napa as quickly as possible and make the most of our time there. Earl drove the bus over and met us there.

Our home away from home with the bus on this trip was Calistoga RV Park at the north end of Napa Valley. To make things even more interesting, Greg and Steve stayed with us. Like us, Greg is a wine lover and he accompanied us on some of our visits to the wineries.

#### CALISTOGA RV PARK

**C**alistoga RV Park is a bit more rustic than the one in New Orleans, but nevertheless the bus parked there. As rustic as it was, we had the comforts of the bus and we were amongst all that the wine country has to offer. An added bonus to being so close to hundreds of California wineries, the RV park sits right next to a little public golf course. Its claim to fame is having hosted Bill Clinton for several rounds of golf several years ago. Wayne has taken up golf again, Greg is a great golfer, and Earl gets out and hits some too, so the clubs came out one afternoon for a round of golf.

Another very cool feature within three blocks from the RV park is a quiet neighborhood resort hotel offering hot volcanic mud baths. And we mean hot! Enjoy the wine by day and sweat it out in the evening.

The 2016 bus doesn't have the bedroom or extra bath in the back like our bus in 2015, so every day started with each of us making the trek to the showers. Then we hit the road. You put a little extra thought into putting a bag together to schlep to the showers but once you get it all in place and you've done it a time or two, you get used to it.

Traveling mountain passes in the bus with a trailer is not a lot of fun, especially for the driver, and sometimes it's impossible. We rented a car to move from vineyard to vineyard and to give Earl a few days for some rest and relaxation. Now let me just say, we work with Earl rather closely when we plan side trips. There's much to be considered when planning side trips because of the size and weight of the bus.

On this trip, we visited about a dozen wineries. Some of our favorites: Constant (a must visit at the top of Diamond Mountain), Darioush (we met Mr. Darioush), Gargiulo (an amazing acoustic guitar collection), B.R. Cohn (an amazing photo collection of concerts played there), Caymus (a classic), and Silverado (very peaceful scenery). On the fifth day we got a bonus. Departing Napa, we headed to the Shenandoah Valley, which is located just southeast of Sacramento. We made a stop at Turley (played a bit of bocce ball), Renwood (known for their Ports), and ended our wine journey with our friends at Helwig.

Helwig Wineries is very special to us. LRB performed there in 2014 to a sold-out crowd. It was a magical night, sun setting just before the end of the show with the vineyards as a backdrop to the stage, rolling California hills and grapevines as far as the eye could see. And this trip to Helwig was no less spectacular, but for culinary reasons this time.

We arrived just before sunset for some amazing photo ops. We then proceeded down to their





cellars. We started our evening sampling some of the local cheeses and olives along with their wines. The chef prepared a five-star dinner for us, including wine pairings with vintages that the public doesn't get to buy. They set the long table in the downstairs wine cellar, and spared no expense or embellishment. We couldn't have asked for a more fabulous way to end our five-day junket through central California than to be wined and dined by our friends at Helwig.

Then we were off to a venue in West Wendover, Nevada, for a Friday night show. If you've never heard of Wendover, it's exit 1 off I-80 at the Nevada/Utah border, where all the Utahans cross the border to gamble. Next morning we dropped the band and crew, sans Greg and Steve, at the Salt Lake City airport. Since the next LRB shows were in California, we decided the bus would stay out west. Earl headed the bus toward Park City, Utah, where Kathy, Jim, Wayne, myself, Greg, and Steve

would enjoy a few days in the snow.

After setting up the bus at the Park City RV Resort, we wandered the streets and watched skiers and snowboarders come down the mountain ending their runs in the



Having a fabulous visit with Helwig Winery staff. Even sat down to dinner in the wine cellar. Doesn't get any better!



BUTCHER'S  
CHOP HOUSE  
PARK CITY, UT



*butcherschophouse.com*

EACH  
AFTERNOON  
WE WOULD  
HIT ONE OF  
THE TRENDY  
APRÈS-SKI BARS

middle of downtown. Each afternoon we would hit one of the trendy après-ski bars and share a hot toddy or two with the skiers.

Did I mention Wayne and I do not like cold weather? During our time there the weather could not have been more perfect for two people who don't like cold. Each day yielded sunny, clear skies, no wind and only about 40 degrees. We didn't ski while there but we did allot some time to play in the snow via snowmobiles.

Kathy, Jim, Wayne, Greg, and I headed out to a ranch up in the mountains for an afternoon of snowmobiling. We got suited up and headed out on a trail to a play area where we were allowed to cut loose and have some unstructured fun with the machines.

After a lap or two around the area, Wayne noticed Greg was holding his shoulder in what looked to be an unnatural way. Turns out, the only experienced

snowmobiler in our group, who had lived in upper Minnesota, and owned one of these machines, had dumped his bike on a slope and broken his shoulder.

Our day of play ended with a long, slow, and painful ride for Greg, down the mountain and a 30-minute drive to the hospital.

My sisterly instincts kicked in and I tended to Greg for the evening making sure he had his meds on time, icing his shoulder, and getting him his tea. We had to send our Aussie home



## BRUSSELS SPROUTS

(FROM GINA DEROSA)



**Brussels sprouts**

**olive oil**

**sea salt and fresh ground pepper**

- Rinse Brussels sprouts well.
- Chop off ends and cut them in half.
- Lay out on baking sheet, cut sides up.
- Brush with olive oil.
- Sprinkle with sea salt and fresh ground pepper.
- Place in 425° oven and roast for about 30 minutes.





for a few weeks to heal and find a replacement guitar player ASAP to finish that California run of LRB shows. Lucky for the band, we have a good friend in Nashville that has sat in when occasion called and knows the set well. He joined us for those last few shows of that run.

Greg is healed now and we've gotten lots of laughs from that story. Despite the mishap, we are looking forward to another "bus-cation" this fall.

## *Meet the Guys!*

Some of the guys cook, some don't. But each guy has a favorite meal they love to eat when they get home. A few have chosen to share their recipes, others keep it close to the vest and the recipe(s) are TOP SECRET.

"WHAT I WANT WHEN I'M HOME"

**Rich**—Catfish Fingers, recipe on page 106

**Wayne**—Barbecue Shrimp, recipe on page 48



**Chris**—"One of my favorite meals is grilled chicken salad. The chicken is grilled with a four pepper vinaigrette marinade. The salad contains spinach and arugula, Roma tomatoes, cucumbers, carrot strips, avocado, quinoa, blueberries, cranberries, smoked bacon, glazed walnuts, Granny Smith apples, and sometimes honey roasted almonds. The dressing is a raspberry vinaigrette."

His favorite dessert is either fresh fruit parfait (vanilla Greek yogurt, strawberries, blue-

berries, blackberries, apples, cranberries, topped with granola) or a cinnamon raisin English muffin with butter and honey.

At home or on the bus, Chris chooses steel-cut oatmeal with fruit, coconut, brown sugar, and almond milk for breakfast.





# CATFISH FINGERS

(FROM RICH)



- 1 box McCormick Cajun Seafood Mix**
  - 1 pint milk** or half and half
  - 4-6 catfish fillets**
  - 2-3 Ziploc bags**
  - canola** or vegetable oil
- Cut catfish fillets into 3" pieces.
  - Soak in milk or half and half for a few minutes.
  - Put equal amounts of cajun seafood mix in baggies.
  - Drop equal number of fish fingers into each bag.
  - Shake fish pieces to coat.
  - Fry in oil on medium heat (preferably in an iron skillet).



**Ryan**—“Anything I cook”—usually a curried chicken. That recipe remains top secret.

**Greg**—Greg may be Australian through and through but he loves breaded chicken, scalloped potatoes, and green beans or corn. His Polish in-laws introduced him to real pierogies, stuffed cabbage, and the best kielbasa in the world. Although Australia is a rather long way to go to get it, his Ma’s macaroni salad is a forever favorite. And he will occasionally treat himself to a potato pancake or two.



## *Fan Stories*

**T**here are a few fan stories that have really stuck in my mind over the years. They are all very special and I love being on the road and meeting so many wonderful people. The stories here are just a few that for whatever reason I’ve never forgotten.

There was a guy who had served in the first Iraq war, 1991-92. He



said every time he and his squad loaded up in their tank to head out on that day's mission, they'd pop in a LRB CD (who knew tanks had CD players?) and listen to "Help Is On Its Way". On their return back to base, they would listen to "Cool Change".

Another story that comes to mind is about a couple in Texas. In the '80s, they had each gone separately with friends to the same LRB show and ended up meeting one another that evening. They fell in love and married. Twenty years later they decided to celebrate their anniversary with another LRB show in Houston. But they didn't know the promoter of the show had gone bankrupt and the show was cancelled. They were upset, not so much because the show that evening was cancelled but because they realized if a cancellation had happened twenty years earlier, the two of them would have never met. I have had the privilege of meeting them at a show in Las Vegas and spending time with them at a show in Louisiana. They are an adorable couple.

We have friends in the Midwest who would always bring their kids to the show. I've seen these kids grow up and go through the things all kids do, and just recently I saw the daughter graduate from nursing school. So cool to see a little chick spread her wings and fly.

Another funny story happened when we were in North Carolina. Some dear friends came to the show, accompanied by their friends who had their ten-year-old son with them. Jokes and laughter were flying and we all were having a great time. The ten-year-old had been sitting quietly reading a book. He looked up from the book and said directly to me, "You really are very random." A child wise beyond his years without even understanding why.

LRB shows aren't the only way we've met some wonderful people. Through our little handicapped Maltese Angel Rose's Facebook page, I met a wonderful lady who has a little three-legged pup. She's written a children's book about the pup and they go around to hospitals, nursing homes, and schools, teaching people about love and acceptance. She and I would talk via email and messages and really struck up a friendship. She also writes for a local magazine in her area.

The band was playing a show near her home, and she asked if she could write an article about Wayne and me and our dedication to raising awareness about puppy mills. Several tragic events had happened within quick succession in her family and the family was all gathering at her home the same weekend as the show. LRB is one of the family's favorite bands. We invited the family to be our guests at the show and we all had the most wonderful evening. It was as if we had all known each other for ages.

There are so many more stories that would take hundreds of pages to tell. All have their own special meaning. Not all of them end with deep friendships being formed, but the ones that don't are no less special. Each night after a show the band will go out and sign autographs, take photos, and meet the folks from the audience. This is the time where we often learn of these stories. Sometimes we've been an actual in-person part of the story, such as a marriage proposal and sometimes it's just a story about how LRB's music has touched someone's life.

I can't speak for the guys in the band and crew, although I am fairly certain they all have stories that stand out as well. I can honestly say, all of these stories have made a mark on me and I am proud of Wayne and the other guys for continuing to carry on LRB's music. I feel blessed to be a tiny part of people's memories with LRB.

As promised, to end the chapter, here are more recipes from Steve.





# PULLED *or* SLICED PORK BUTT

(FROM STEVE KIMBROUGH)



**shallow aluminum  
disposable pan**

**rub** (see page 89)

**food syringe**

**apple juice & apple  
cider vinegar mix**

*This is the most common meat to cook when you think of barbeque. It is also one of the most forgiving for newcomers. A good rule of thumb to the cooking process is 1½ hours per pound of meat. That being said it heavily depends on the consistency of your cooking temp. I highly recommend getting a heat thermometer or a probe. It is kind of like waiting on Christmas morning as a kid.*

- Remove meat from its container, rinse it in the sink, and pat it dry with paper towels. Place it in a shallow aluminum disposable pan. (Find the right size for your meat and make sure it has the shallowest sides possible.)
- Take olive oil or regular yellow mustard and lightly cover the meat. Make sure you get all sides.
- Generously sprinkle your rub on all sides. (You can use the rub recipe I have provided on page 89 or any commercial rub.)
- When you are done make sure the fat side is down in the pan. This lets it render better.

*Note: Another thing that some people do to make their meat moist is injecting. This adds liquid to the meat before cooking. A good simple formula for this application is half apple juice and half apple cider vinegar. Apples and pork go well together. Use a food syringe to apply your injection. Keep injections about an inch apart and cover the entire surface. Cover and let sit for 30 minutes or so. This is so the rub has a chance to set up. You will notice this in the color change.*

- When your fire is set up and you have smoke going, uncover your meat and place it on the cooker.
- Let it cook for an hour.
- In a regular spray bottle mix ½ apple juice and ¼ apple cider vinegar and ¼ water.
- After the first hour spray your meat with this. Repeat every 30 minutes.

Cooking with indirect heat you want to try to keep your temp around 275°. For those of you cooking on gas or charcoal grills, this is a little harder to do. 300° is acceptable. After 2½ hours of cooking you want to pay attention to the internal temp.

What you are looking for at this point is finished temperature. If you want pulled pork then the finished internal temp will be 205°. If you want to slice the pork then stop it at an internal temp of 170°.

- Remove the meat from the fire, set aside, and cover it with a clean towel.
- Let the meat rest and start to cool for approximately 30 minutes.
- Ready to eat.



# POULTRY BRINE

(FROM STEVE KIMBROUGH)

- 2 gallons water**
- 1½ cups canning or pickling salt**
- 3 Tbsp minced garlic**
- 1 Tbsp ground black pepper**
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce**
- ⅓ cup light brown sugar**

- Mix well in a nonreactive container.
- Add poultry and soak overnight.
- When you pull the meat out, rinse and pat dry.

# SMOKED MEATLOAF

(FROM STEVE KIMBROUGH)

- 1 lb ground beef**
- 1 lb ground pork**
- 1 large egg**
- 1 cup breadcrumbs**
- 2 green onions**
- 2 Tbsp pork rub**
- ½ cup barbecue sauce**

- Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix well.
- Transfer the mixture to a disposable aluminum pan. Always use a pan with the shortest sides you can find. When you transfer the mixture, keep it about ½ inch from the sides to ensure the smoke gets to your meat thoroughly.
- Put it on your grill using the offset cooking method or directly on your smoker.
- Cook for about an hour then check the internal temp.
- You want to end up with a 170° internal temp when you are done.



# 3-2-1 SMOKED RIBS

(FROM STEVE KIMBROUGH)

*If you are using a grill, set it up to cook offset as shown before. If you are using a smoker, set it up for a 6-hour cook. The two most popular styles of ribs are St. Louis and baby back ribs. The St. Louis have more meat and are more forgiving in the cooking. Baby backs are smaller and you have to watch them closer. They tend to cook faster.*

- Unpack ribs and rinse them off in the sink. Pat them dry with paper towels.
- Turn ribs bone side up. There is a membrane that runs along the bones. It needs to come off. Take a knife and pull up the edge of the membrane separating it from the bones. Now take a folded paper towel and grab the membrane and pull it loose from the bones until it is gone. This allows the smoke and rub to penetrate the underside of the ribs.
- Lay the ribs bone side up and use olive oil or regular yellow mustard and lightly coat the ribs.
- Turn them and repeat.

- Now take your rub, mine or a commercial rub, and generously sprinkle on both sides. Let the ribs set for approximately 30 minutes.
- When you are ready, place your ribs on the grill or smoker, bone side down.
- Let them cook for an hour at 250°.
- While they are cooking fill a regular spray bottle with apple juice or you can use half apple juice and half apple cider vinegar if you like it tangier.
- After an hour spray your ribs with the juice. This helps with the moisture.
- Spray again the second hour.
- When they have been on for 3 hours pull them off the heat.
- Lay out a piece of tinfoil and put in 4 pats of unsalted butter. You can also add a thin layer of brown sugar if you like it a little sweeter.
- Lay the ribs in, bone side up, and wrap the tinfoil tightly so the juice doesn't spill out and it keeps the heat in.
- Put them back on the heat for 2 hours.
- At the end of the 2 hours take your ribs out and uncover them.
- Turn the meat side up and put them back on the heat.
- Now if you want sauce on your ribs brush it on with a brush or a food mop.
- This last hour is so the ribs can tighten up and bind the sauce you have just applied. Keep an eye on them at this point as it might not take the whole hour for all this to happen and get the desired consistency.
- When they have reached your desired consistency pull them off the heat and let them rest for 15 to 20 minutes and enjoy.



NO MATTER HOW WONDERFUL AN IDEA  
SEEMS, IT CAN ALWAYS CAUSE ANGST  
ONCE YOU ARE TOSSED IN THE MIDDLE  
OF IT ACTUALLY TAKING PLACE.  
THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT HAPPENED  
WHEN WE PURCHASED WOODFIELD INN.



# BED & BREAKFAST



## Rooms and the Inn

You might ask why we were making such a big leap to buy a bed and breakfast after only a couple of years together? There was actually a method to our madness.

At the time, all the members of LRB, except Wayne, lived in Australia. That meant bus tours of five to six weeks at a time to minimize travel back and forth between the United States and Australia. Those long periods of time on the bus were starting to take their toll on everyone, including wives and families. Another factor was that my mom had sold some rental properties in Nashville and we either needed to reinvest the proceeds into a similar business, or face paying a substantial amount in taxes. Lastly, the thought of living on one property with my mom and pooling all our knowledge and resources into owning an inn seemed like a great way to live and work together.

So Wayne and I signed up to attend seminars about the wonderments and pitfalls of inn ownership. We worked on how to combine my experience as a wedding planner and a property manager with Wayne's experience in the entertainment business. The only real obstacle we saw was we had never run a restaurant, but we were willing to learn.

We also tied in visits to over twenty-five properties with LRB's tour schedule. We saw inns from Little River,



California, to Little River, North Carolina. No joke. In the end, the best option for us was Woodfield Inn, Flat Rock, North Carolina, just south of Hendersonville in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

I can see in my mind just as if it were yesterday, driving up the winding driveway on our initial viewing of the inn, thinking to myself how awesome it would be to own a property of this magnitude and to chat with all the inn guests and hear stories from all over. Sitting every evening on the front porch in the rocking chairs sharing our love of wine with others.

It all seemed and looked so majestic and fabulous. If I might say so myself, it was a stunning property. It's listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The back history is it had been a stagecoach stop for 150 years. It also served as a Civil War hospital from 1862-1865. It sat on twenty-three manicured acres, and had twenty rooms, and a restaurant where we could seat sixty. The property was widely known as a destination wedding facility as well, with three wedding gardens, an indoor reception area that could accommodate up to 300 guests, and an outdoor pavilion that could hold up to 500. At the end of this section there is a little more in-depth history of the inn.

There was a separate residence behind the inn. The upper level served as the main living quarters, which would be ours, and the lower level had been made into an in-law suite with a full kitchen, living room, dining room, bed and bathroom, which would serve as my mom's living area.





One of the beauties about this property was the living arrangement for us. Unlike almost every other property we had seen, the house behind Woodfield allowed us to have completely separate living areas away from the inn, which meant we could shut the lights off in the office and walk home, even if home were only at the back of the property. Now mind you, this became especially important as we moved along in the process of buying this property. We learned through research and stories that many suspected the inn was haunted and I was having absolutely no part of staying in that inn alone!

## *Training Day*

The day we closed the sale on the inn and became the new owners, Wayne and I met all other parties involved at the attorney's office. As soon as the closing was over, Wayne had to leave for the airport and I drove out to the inn to spend my first night as a proud new owner.

It was around 5:30 p.m. on a Thursday evening. There were some dinner guests starting to trickle in and of course the inn rooms were full because we had a wedding on Saturday. The staff greeted me and made me feel as at home as possible and immediately asked me if I was hungry. Food, that's it! That's what would make me feel better. I hadn't eaten all day and I was exhausted. I made my way into the dining room, sat down at one of the tables way back in a corner, and proceeded to order dinner.

My dinner came out. I took one look at it and thought, "Ok, it surely must taste better than it looks." Sadly it didn't. The tears began to pour like water from a faucet. I left the table and shot up to the office area. I was sobbing uncontrollably and I couldn't wait to be able to speak to Wayne on the phone. Finally the phone rang in the office, I picked it up and cried to Wayne, "What have we done? This is horrible."

To be fair to the chef, he was only making the menu items that he had been making under the direction of the previous owners. They gave him little room to be creative and expected no variety out of the kitchen. Once we got to know him and what he was really capable of doing, we took our menus in a much more upscale and modern direction. Left to be creative and walk outside the lines a little, he and his team were unstoppable.

Aside from the food, there were bigger problems that we hadn't expected in running an established and operating inn. There were plenty of leaks and lumpy beds in guest rooms and the house that was to be our living space was in desperate need of renovations before we could even move in ourselves. Why had we not seen the issues in the house prior to signing off on the deal? Let's just say clever staging marred a host of horrific cosmetic issues. And this meant that me, myself and I

had to stay in the inn alone until the renovations at our house were complete.

Remember I pointed out earlier we had heard stories and read in the guest journals in the rooms about ghost sightings. I was none too pleased to experience these when flying solo. Thursday through Sunday while the inn was full, I would sleep in our offices, which were in a converted two-bedroom apartment. Mondays through Wednesdays







# CHEESY SOUTHERN GRITS

- 5 cups chicken broth** (can sub with vegetable broth)
- 1 ¼ cups quick cook grits**
- 16 oz. shredded cheddar cheese**
- ¼ cup whipping cream**
- 1 tsp hot sauce**
- ¼ tsp garlic powder**
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper**
- ¼ tsp ground red pepper**
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce**
- 3 eggs**, lightly beaten
- ¼-½ cup shredded white cheddar** (or any other cheese to your liking)

- Preheat oven to 350° and grease a 2-quart baking dish, set aside.
- Bring broth to a boil on medium-high heat.
- Whisk in grits and bring back to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, simmer, stirring occasionally for 10 minutes or until grits are thick.
- Stir in cheese and next 6 ingredients, stirring until cheese melts.
- Remove from heat and stir in eggs.
- Pour into baking dish and top with shredded white cheddar (or other cheese of your liking).
- Bake uncovered for 40-45 minutes or until set and cheese on top is melted and slightly browned.



# SHRIMP & GRITS

- 2 lbs peeled, deveined shrimp**
  - 2 tsp Cajun seasoning**
  - 1 tsp dried Italian seasoning**
  - 1 tsp paprika**
  - ¼ cup butter**
  - 2 garlic cloves, pressed**
  - 1 cup chicken broth, divided**
  - 2 tsp Worcestershire sauce**
  - 1 tsp hot sauce**
  - 2 tsp all-purpose flour**
  - hot cooked grits**
- Combine Cajun seasoning, Italian seasoning, and paprika.
  - Toss shrimp in seasoning mixture.
  - Melt butter in large skillet over medium heat.
  - Add garlic and sauté 1 minute.
  - Add shrimp, ¾ cup broth, Worcestershire sauce, and hot sauce.
  - Cook 5 minutes or just until shrimp turns pink.
  - Remove shrimp with slotted spoon, reserving both mixture in skillet.
  - Whisk together remaining ¼ cup chicken broth and flour until blended.
  - Whisk flour mixture into broth mixture in skillet and cook, whisking constantly, 2-3 minutes or until thickened.
  - Add shrimp back into skillet mixture and cook 1 minute.
  - Serve immediately over hot grits.

I would choose a room to sleep in, which is how I discovered that all, yes ALL, of the beds were like sleeping on a bed of rocks. This didn't mean only twenty beds. Many rooms had more than one bed to handle families traveling together.

## *A Good Night's Sleep*

The beds in every room were *horrible*. Can I just repeat that, *horrible!* I was seriously dumb-founded when I read the guests' comments in each of the journals in the rooms. No one *ever* spoke of how lumpy and awful the mattresses were. Was it because this place was on the National Register of Historic Places, was 150 years old, and had rooms filled with antiques? Did folks just expect the beds to be this way? I don't know but I knew this issue, along with many others, had to change and change fast.

We were fortunate enough to have a friend who owned a mattress manufacturing company and who so very graciously offered us all new mattresses for the inn. The only thing we had to do was pay for the shipping. The truck left California with our twenty-eight mattresses, frames, and box spring sets, and we were alerted by the shipping agent to expect delivery mid-week.

Of course, Murphy's Law took hold: The truck ran into problems, and our delivery got rescheduled for a Saturday at noon, unfortunately a time when the inn was totally full. We cleaned out the barn behind the inn and got geared up for as many employees as we could spare from normal routine to be on hand to unload the truck. No one bothered to let us know that the truck wasn't arriving at noon. It was arriving at 6:30 a.m. Nor did they tell us that it was a full length fifty-three-foot semi that had made two other stops to deliver to other customers along the way and that the seventy-year-old driver was retiring after this his last run.

The catastrophes began to happen in rapid succession. The first call we received was from an



inn owner about five miles down the road saying the semi had just come through and hit their sign and did not stop. As we were reassuring him that we'd be down very soon to survey the damage, and that we'd deal with it and make it right, the owner of the little convenience store/deli/market across the road from our inn's entrance, which also had two gas pumps in front, was ringing the other line to let us know the semi had tried to make the turn into our long and winding driveway, realized he couldn't make it, and backed out into his fifteen-foot-tall illuminated Exxon sign.

Before we could even get out the door, the truck's driver had caused damage to not one, but



two of our fellow innkeeper's properties. The Exxon sign was hanging at a 45-degree angle which caused the market to close down for safety reasons. The truck was halfway into the ditch of the narrow road and the police had shown up. And it began to rain. It was 7:15 a.m., the inn was full, and we had two weddings that day.

We quickly came up with a solution: Send the semi driver to the large grocery store parking lot about three miles away, recruit the brother of one of our kitchen staff, use his flatbed truck, our pickup, and another friend's pickup truck to move the mattresses a load at a time from the grocery store parking lot to our property and store them in the barn until all of the inn guests cleared out on Monday. On the first trip back to the barn, Wayne was helping unload a stack of mattresses and box springs at the back of the barn. He devised a system: The mattresses were to be stacked on the left of the barn and the box springs to the right. When it came time to take them out and move them into the inn, this would allow for a faster transition.

However, there was one additional snafu. None of the guys helping us spoke English and could not understand what Wayne was saying. I was once again in tears and he was trying to direct them with hand signals and wanting them to move quickly. The first mattresses were being off-loaded and brought into the barn. Wayne was helping place them so that we would be able to fit all of the mattresses and box springs on a raised platform area in the back of the barn. I was inside the barn helping as much as I could. It was extremely hot, humid, and pouring rain.

I had said to Wayne 100 times, watch your head on that old shelf. You know that head of his doesn't have much protection in the way of hair. Sure enough he caught his forehead on the shelf and gashed it. Not knowing how badly he was hurt, he turned around to face the guys helping us and to take in another load of mattresses. They all stopped dead in their tracks and all you could hear was the rain pounding down. He now had rain, sweat and blood running down his face. The looks on their faces said it all. The gringo is loco!



# JUST LIKE CINNABON® CINNAMON ROLLS

## DOUGH/ROLLS:

- 1 package active dry yeast**  
(2¼ tsp or ¼ oz)
- 1 cup warm milk**
- ½ cup sugar**
- ⅓ cup butter,**  
softened
- 1 tsp salt**
- 2 eggs**
- 4 cups all-purpose flour**

- Dissolve yeast in warm milk in large bowl.
- Combine sugar, butter, salt, eggs, and flour in bowl and mix well.
- Pour yeast/milk mixture into the sugar mixture and using dough hook, combine well.
- Place dough in a well oiled bowl, cover and let rise in warm place.

for about 1 hour or until dough doubles in size.

- Roll dough out on a lightly floured surface—should be approximately ¼ inch thick and roughly 16" x 12".
- Preheat oven to 350° and grease a 9 x 13 baking pan.

## ICING:

- 6 Tbsp butter**
- 1½ cup powdered sugar**
- ¼ cup cream cheese**
- ½ tsp vanilla**
- ⅓ tsp salt**
- Mix butter, powdered sugar, cream cheese, vanilla, and salt in bowl and beat well until fluffy.
- Spread over hot rolls.

## FILLING:

- 1 cup brown sugar**
- 3 Tbsp cinnamon**
- ⅛ cup butter,** softened

- Combine brown sugar and cinnamon in a bowl.
- Spread softened butter on dough surface.
- Spread cinnamon/sugar mixture over butter.
- Starting with long edge of dough, roll down to bottom edge. Roll should be about 18" in length.
- Cut roll into 2-2½" slices.
- Place cut pieces in prepared baking dish.
- Cover with damp towel and let rise again for about 30 minutes or until double in size.
- Bake 20 minutes or until golden brown. Baking times will vary greatly.





Injuries aside, slowly but surely the carnival of pickup trucks and helpers unloaded the semi-truck and packed the barn with plastic-wrapped mattresses and box springs. Within minutes, the clouds parted, the rain stopped, and the temperature and humidity in the barn rose straight to 100 degrees. It was quickly to become a thousand square feet of science experiment if we didn't make a plan to get those mattresses and box springs out of there ASAP. We knew that we couldn't start changing out the inn rooms' bedding until at least Monday when all of the guests would leave so we were on a wing and a prayer hoping that they wouldn't become filled with mold before Monday.

But somehow we got through the rest of the weekend with no more craziness. Monday morning rolled around and our entire staff pitched in, clocking in on what would normally have been their day off. Every single one of those mattresses were changed out that day so the upcoming weekend would provide our incoming guests with brand-new mattresses. The first evening we had inn guests after the mattresses were all in place, I took the evening cookies around to the rooms and I have to admit, I was pretty proud of the fact we got all of those mattresses in place. Miraculously, they all fit the antique beds and most all of the linens still worked. It was the not-so-little things that brought smiles to our faces in those days.

And it was the really big things that wiped those smiles away, usually early on in the day.

### *It's Raining Buckets*

Wayne's first trip back to the inn was about a week later. He had not as yet had the opportunity to meet the entire staff, and there was a big wedding weekend coming up. On our second Friday as owners, we decided to get dressed up a little bit and be present in the restaurant to meet guests and diners.



Within a few minutes, the rain started to fall heavily and we discovered a leak letting water into the middle of the prep area of the kitchen. The restaurant was very busy, and the only person in the building that could be spared to go outside and try to stop the leak was Wayne. Still dressed in his nice shirt, dress shoes, slacks, yes believe it or not the rock'n'roller actually owned a pair of dress slacks and shoes, he headed out into the storm. There was

a broken gutter and a clogged drain right behind the wall where the water was coming in. The wall couldn't be repaired at that point, so the only thing to do was to reroute the water away from the hole in the wall. Not knowing where any of the tools were stored, bare hands were the tool of choice although in hindsight probably not the best choice for a bass player. After about fifteen minutes of digging through old leaves, mud, and other unidentified muck, the proud co-owner of the inn came back through the back door of the kitchen to see if the flood had been stopped. Mission accomplished. He headed across the parking lot to our house to throw away the nice duds and get back into jeans and a T-shirt. It wouldn't be the last time that clothes would be ruined.



## Valentine's Day Massacre

One of the lessons new restaurant owners get to learn if they're in an area that serves the seasonal tourist is that your opening day will not run smoothly. It's inevitable! No second guessing that, just go with it. The staff and the kitchen have been off for a few weeks and no one is really on their game for that first night back to work. Lots of destination inns like Woodfield choose to start their seasons with Valentine's Day. A romantic setting at the historic inn, paired with a beautiful dinner is always a big draw.

Those two things collided and together created the Valentine's Day Massacre. The kitchen staff spent the winter months either cooking in other restaurants in warmer climates or studying new techniques to create adventurous menus for our kitchen. They were eager to impress us with their new expertise. Subsequently, the wait staff returned to find new items on the menu and different procedures put into place by the kitchen staff with which they were not familiar. All in all, it was set up for a disastrous opening night.

I don't recall if our first such horror was the weekend before Valentine's Day or after, I just know it occurred in February 2003. We had sold every room as a Valentine's weekend package. We had hired music to be in the dining room and had roses in each room for the ladies. We had really stepped up the game and were set to have a great weekend. Great, however, it certainly was not. It was beyond horrible and we knew we were in trouble within the first 30 minutes of our restaurant opening for the evening. Nothing about the evening was going right, which I didn't know at the time, but that's how things roll in the restaurant business sometimes. I can remember thinking what a complete mess the whole evening was and dreading the feedback the next morning as guests began to checkout. The good news was that breakfast was always a sure hit with the guests and I knew Chef and his staff would pull that off without any problem.

As bad as that evening was, it had one silver lining. A pretty well-known local restaurant manager happened to bring his wife to the inn for dinner. By the end of their meal, he knew how badly our evening had gone, and why. I had heard he was there, managed to clean myself up from dishwashing, and went to his table to say hello. He just looked up and said, "You need some help, huh? Give me a call." That was the beginning of a great bond between him, Wayne, and me. We went to bed that night knowing we had been massacred, but with a good feeling about the future with David as our manager.

I can laugh about it now, but laughing was far from what I was doing during our second Valentine's Day Massacre in 2004. Did we not learn our lesson the previous year? Obviously not. The Valentine's Day package included a ten-course dinner. Yes, you read that right, ten courses. We didn't just serve dinner to our inn guests for that meal, the restaurant was open to the public and we had reservations for 125 people that evening. Just do the math. Ten courses for 125 people plus the additional forty people from the inn rooms; it spelled disaster. As you can assume, not all of those people were going to sit at the same time, which meant every time a table turned over, the ten courses of food started all over again. COMPLETE AND UTTER CHAOS.

The whole week and especially the day leading up to that evening, I had been rather nervous about how this was all going to work. We had held meeting after meeting with both kitchen and wait staff all that week, poring over all of the details. I left the inn to go over to the house in order to freshen up and get ready for the evening. I can still see as plain as day the whole evening in my







## ROSEMARY GARLIC LAMB CHOPS

- 6** lamb chops
- 4-5** Tbsp olive oil
- 6-8** large garlic cloves (use more to your liking)
- 10-12** rosemary sprigs (use more to your liking)
- unsalted butter**
- sea salt and black pepper** (ground)
- cast iron skillet** (best for this recipe)



- Heat olive oil in pan over medium-high heat on stove top.
- Lightly salt and pepper both sides of the lamb chops, lightly pressing in the salt and pepper on both sides.
- Add lamb chops to pan.
- Around the perimeter of the pan and in between the chops, lay sprigs of rosemary.
- Crush each clove of garlic slightly and layer around the pan and in between the chops as with the rosemary.
- Add a small slice of butter to the top of each chop and scatter thin small slices of butter around as with the rosemary and garlic.
- Cook the chops about 4-8 minutes per side depending on the thickness and the temp of your liking.
- When turning chops, baste with the juices from the pan.



mind. I had gotten out my black satin pants, black heels and a teal top that sparkled. I was ready to greet the guests and seat them, talk with them, and have a wonderful and beautiful evening, just like I had imagined way back when we were searching for a property.

I made my way over to the inn and when I walked in through the back door, one of our kitchen staff announced that one of the dishwashers had called in and was not coming. He was certain, however, that the other dishwasher could call a relative or two and have them come help. If that had been our only problem that evening, that would have been a walk in the park.

It went downhill from there. So much for standing out front and greeting the guests while sipping Champagne with them. Wayne and I, once again, ended up in the kitchen the entire night. Each of us in our fancy clothes, sometimes washing dishes, sometimes plating food, sometimes filling drink orders, sometimes garnishing plates. Whatever it took, we did it. And with each passing plate, I grew angrier and angrier.

The kitchen staff had gotten a little blasé about everything by this point in the evening. They figured they had screwed up the evening so the only thing left to do was cook the food and get through the night. I was mad, Wayne was mad, the restaurant guests were mad, and the kitchen staff were joking around and having fun. I vividly remember looking in front of me and seeing rows and rows and rows of tickets waiting to be filled and food needing to go out. I lost it and became someone I didn't know existed. I had a highlighter in my hand trying to mark off what food was going out on each ticket to keep some kind of order going. One chef joked with another and I looked up, threw the highlighter across the kitchen, and screamed in a voice that I don't even know where it came from, "I don't want to hear another word in this kitchen until every patron has been served their ten-course meal and the restaurant is cleared out." And with that, the kitchen was silent for the rest of the evening. Apparently, more than just the kitchen staff heard me.

It was very late. We were more than exhausted and ready to walk across the parking lot to our house. Defeated once again and not understanding why we had not taken a cue from the previous year, all we really wanted to do was get some sleep and prepare for the next morning when we would begin to assess the damage done. We heard a loud crash. We assessed the damage, not to the inn's reputation, but to our house.

*Tim-berrrrr!*

Around 7 a.m, freezing rain in the wee morning hours caused a 100-foot-tall pine tree that stood next to our house to get top-heavy with ice. Down it came through our roof, literally splitting our house in half. It missed the peak of our bedroom by inches and sliced through the two guest bedrooms less than a foot behind our heads. It sounded like a train had hit the house, then left behind the prettiest windchimes as the ice and pine needles rained down into the bedroom.

As we climbed out over tree limbs and made our way outside and down to check on my mom, our thoughts were first about how close we had come to dying in our sleep and how that







guest room saved Mom, as her bedroom was in the lower level and lay directly under that room. Saying a prayer of thanksgiving that we were all OK, our thoughts then quickly switched to , “What if we hadn’t bought the inn when we did?” The former owners’ son had slept in a bunk bed in the room that sustained the most direct hit, and he would have been in that room. Truly another blessing that lives had been spared and the damage could be repaired.

As luck would have it, that tree fell on a Monday morning. We had not only survived the Valentine’s Day Massacre, but we survived the 100-foot tree. I felt like we’d just come home from a war. So what do you do when your house has been cut in half? We packed up some clothes and walked down the hill to a pretty

nice alternative home, Woodfield Inn, for the duration of the repairs.

Before we had cleared out on the evening of the second massacre, I told the kitchen staff they would under no circumstances have Monday off as the kitchen was a complete disaster and needed to be cleaned from top to bottom. When they arrived at work and learned of our other disaster, they all quietly went right to work cleaning.

Wayne and I were in our office making the necessary phone calls and waiting on insurance adjusters when I heard a knock on the office door. I asked them to come in. Two of the guys

from the kitchen cracked the door about three inches. I guess they were testing my attitude. I figured they weren’t coming all the way into the office after what had happened the night before. They simply held up the highlighter that I had slung the night before and asked very quietly, “Hi, boss lady (my given name via them). We found this while cleaning and thought you’d need it back.” I couldn’t help but begin laughing. They began to laugh and all bygones from the night before were taken away. They knew it would break the ice and they also were trying to cheer me up. Not so much from the disastrous evening in the kitchen but from the horrific incident with the tree. Lesson learned from the kitchen debacle: stick to what you do best. Prior to that evening, we all had worked tirelessly on creating an incredible restaurant menu and there was really no reason to venture into the playground of multi-course meals. I remind you, we were a B&B in the mountains. We weren’t the Ritz-Carlton.

## *Wedding Bell Blues*

Changing the restaurant menu and the decor of the inn were necessary labors of love. And, I must say, every employee played a part in that labor. In order to keep our staff through the winter, we took that time to renovate the inn with each employee lending their other skills and chipping in. It was a win/win for all of us. The work got done and the staff got to keep their jobs and didn’t have to search for winter work. We renovated every room with fresh paint





and a whole new look. Every room in the inn went from what we laughingly called country clutter to each room being done in a different Ralph Lauren theme. Those themes staged against the vintage walls and the original wooden floors, which were assembled with wooden pegs not nails, transformed the look and feel of the inn into a rich, warm, and welcoming retreat. Despite all the trials that old historic building could dole out, we were, and as I look back, still are, very proud of our masterpiece.

There is no doubt that the most gratifying thing we did as inn owners was to help create wonderful weddings. Emotions always ran high with brides and grooms, and mothers and fathers who were helping plan the events and pay for them. Believe me, the mothers and some fathers insisted they have their say too in the planning. This meant there were a lot of people to keep happy, all with different opinions of what the bride's day was going to be. I readily admit there were times I sincerely wanted to pull out my hair and that of some others as well. But on each bride's special day, it was always a thrill to see the inn grounds full of wedding guests.

Most weekends, beginning in April through the end of October, were filled with at least one wedding, but we usually had two or three. Quite the feat for a traveling musician and his wife to pull off, while he's still out on the road and I'm left behind to try and figure it all out with the staff. Somehow, someway, probably by the grace of God, we got through it all. We created events that the patrons loved, and the inn was truly in its glory during that time.

I remember a couple of wrinkles that threw us all for a loop. One incident involved a woman who showed up mid-week and was adamant that she had to get married at Woodfield and it had to be the following weekend. It was going to be a simple ceremony, with only her, the groom, and a couple of family members. Her passion for being wed there was contagious. We took a look at our reservations and found a way for her to use a room early Saturday morning in order to prepare. That would give us time for her to vacate the room, clean it, and make it available for a late arrival with that evening's wedding party. We could accommodate her small party in our Garden Area, while prepping the larger area for

the bigger event scheduled for that evening. The bride agreed with this plan and was happy, until it was time for her to leave after her wedding.

While we were waiting for her to change and exit, she made it known to the housekeeper that she was going to stay in the room and that she wanted to spend the night at the inn with her new husband. The Champagne had flowed earlier in the day and she now felt it was her right to stay. Her stance: We were married here, therefore we shall stay here! Poor groom, he had slowly and deliberately eased his way out the back door as she and I were having a screaming match.

Tears were shed by her and me. We actually had to inform her the police would be called if she didn't vacate the room. Not a good way to end her wonderful day. Reluctantly she left and it became just another fun twist to a Saturday afternoon at the inn.





## *Molten Chocolate, Ma'am?*

The menu was always an obvious point of concern for everyone who booked a wedding at the inn. We set up tastings a couple of months in advance so that the bride, groom, and parents could sample dishes and make their choices. This allowed us to know how much to order, how to prep the meals, and to estimate cooking and serving times. We even took photos of the chosen items to make sure they came out looking exactly the same as the samples. Most wedding receptions went as planned. But there was an occasion or two with an added wrinkle thrown in.

One such wrinkle was a four-inch Chocolate Eiffel Tower to be included at each table setting. The bride and groom had gotten engaged in Paris at the Eiffel Tower and the bride's mother thought it would be a lovely touch to share this with everyone.



Flowers usually arrived mid-afternoon, and some moms and/or wedding planners would use that time to set things as they wanted in advance of the ceremony and the reception dinner. On the afternoon of the Eiffel Tower dinner, it was approximately 95 degrees outside and 95% humidity. The bride's mother, along with the wedding coordinator, descended on the dining room around 3:00 p.m. Did I mention the ceremony was taking place at 6:00 p.m. and the reception was to begin at 7:00 p.m.? That meant a full four hours for the handmade chocolate Eiffel Towers to sit after they were placed at each place setting.

I was shown the chocolate towers for the first time and was instructed that they were to be in place by 5:00 p.m. so that wedding guests milling around before the ceremony would see them. We tried with all our might to reason with the ladies and find another way for the towers to make their appearance. It was simply way too hot to put them out that early. (The inn had been retrofitted with air conditioning, but it was always a struggle to keep it cooler than 79-80 degrees in the 150-year-old building when temps were soaring as they were that day. This was always made known to each bride at our planning meetings. Most saw it as part of the charm of the setting.)

They wouldn't hear of any of our suggestions. As directed, the Eiffel Towers hit the tables at 5:00 p.m. and by dinner time at 7:00 p.m. they looked like flat, chocolate French coins! Tears were shed, wine was served, and coins were eaten. C'est la vie!

## *Innkeeper's Daughter*

On the second day after Wayne and I became the inn's proprietors, Chef and I began the process of transforming our menu into a much leaner and healthier offering of great food. Part of our focus was on fresh seafood that we would have delivered from the Atlantic coast two times a



# PEANUT BUTTER COOKIES



- ½ **cup creamy peanut butter**
- ¼ **cup butter**, room temp
- ¼ **cup shortening**
- ½ **cup granulated sugar**
- ½ **cup brown sugar**
- 1 **egg** (room temp)
- ½ **tsp vanilla**
- 1½ **cup sifted all-purpose flour**
- ½ **tsp salt** (omit if using salted butter)
- ½ **tsp cinnamon**
- 1⅓ **tsp baking soda**

- Preheat oven to 350°.
- Cream peanut butter, butter, and shortening together.
- Add granulated and brown sugars. Beat until light and fluffy.
- Add egg and vanilla, followed by sifted flour, salt (if using), cinnamon and baking soda. Mix until smooth.
- Form tablespoon sized balls of dough and place 2" apart on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper.
- Lightly press an X with a fork in the dough.
- Bake for 12-15 minutes.





OUR  
WOODFIELD  
INN SMOKED  
SALMON  
BECAME  
FAMOUS TO  
PEOPLE ALL  
THE WAY FROM  
ASHEVILLE,  
NORTH  
CAROLINA, TO  
GREENSBORO,  
SOUTH  
CAROLINA.

week. We leaned so heavily on that premise that we renamed the restaurant Pisces. Some dear friends even had a fish sculpted out of beautiful colored glass that welcomed patrons to the restaurant.



The kitchen team decided to try a hand at smoking salmon. As previously mentioned, Wayne doesn't eat meat, and he and I love smoked salmon with a bagel. They really

wanted to try this. With our blessing, they worked diligently on the recipe until they had perfected it. After perfecting the recipe, they smoked up a batch and brought it upstairs for Wayne and me to try. We were simply blown away. It quickly became an item offered as an appetizer on the menu and was also always on the buffets. Once people started tasting it, they would call the inn and request to buy slabs of it for special occasions. Our Woodfield Inn Smoked Salmon became famous to people all the way from Asheville, North Carolina, to Greensboro, South Carolina. Chef and his staff never gave up his secret recipe and sadly I have not been able to re-create it. But who can blame him? Every chef has a few secrets.

Meat eaters weren't being ignored. I'll attest to that first hand. We had a wonderful steak au poivre, a Kobe beef burger, and the most amazing lamb chops ever. Chef, his sous chef, and the other kitchen staff embraced the

challenge we had given them. They gave the area in which we were located an upscale choice for dinner. Other than the shaky Valentine's Day events, they rose to the occasion every night. There were Saturday nights that our staff had the 500 square-foot kitchen area humming. They could generally be found prepping for up to three weddings, expecting approximately 400 wedding guests each. They set up for each event, including shuttling tables, chairs, and food down to the pavilion area via golf carts while managing to keep forty to fifty restaurant patrons happy. Certainly not a small task. There was a great camaraderie during those times. Lest we forget, in the midst of all that craziness, every single morning the inn guests were able to order from a menu of six to eight gourmet breakfasts or make choices from our continental style buffet, and every single evening fresh baked cookies were delivered to each room.



EVERY SINGLE  
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INN GUESTS  
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SIX TO EIGHT  
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OR MAKE  
CHOICES  
FROM OUR  
CONTINENTAL  
STYLE BUFFET.





# CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES



- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 2 tsp hot water
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate morsels
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

- Preheat oven to 375°.
- Cream together butter, white sugar, and brown sugar until smooth and creamy.
- Beat in eggs, one at a time, mixing each in well.
- Add vanilla after eggs have been mixed in.
- Dissolve baking soda in hot water.
- Add baking soda mixture along with salt to batter.
- Sift in flour.
- Add chocolate chips and nuts.
- Drop by spoonfuls on ungreased pans.
- Bake for 10 minutes or until edges are lightly browned.



## *Buffet with a Flair*

I despise buffets. Having said that, the inn was famous, literally, for some of its holiday buffets. Our biggest weekends for buffets were Easter, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Easter and Mother's Day would easily have 300 to 350 reservations, and our Thanksgiving and Christmas Day buffets would top out at around 500 reservations for the day. This was an enormous amount of work for everyone and our kitchen wasn't a large kitchen by restaurant standards by any means. Every time the actual day rolled around, I would walk through the dining rooms just before the doors were opened. I couldn't help but have a huge smile on my face, filled with pride at the job our staff had done in creating these events.

The buffet tradition was one of the many we inherited when we purchased the Woodfield. There had been families coming to the inn for years and years for one or all of the holidays to celebrate them together on the historic grounds. One family that I recall in particular had been coming to celebrate Thanksgiving for fifteen years. During each visit they would take a family



photo on the grand staircase in the entry foyer of the inn. When they first started coming they were just a small family: Mom, Dad, four children, and grandparents. As those children got married and had families of their own, the family grew. The last year we owned the inn, I believe there were about twenty-five people lined up on the staircase for their family photo. No matter how tired we were and how long the day had been, moments like those made it all worth it.

About six weeks before each respective holiday I would start hounding our chefs to think about the upcoming buffet menu. I was adamant that each year we would retain the tried and true staples that everyone loved and expected, but we would also branch out a little, trying new and different items. Two of the recipes that I brought to the chefs for the Thanksgiving and Christmas buffets were from my Granny, festive sweet potatoes and cornbread stuffing.

These buffets had many different stations and areas of food. We even set up a kids-only buffet area for Easter and had some wonderful children's menu items along with an area where they could color Easter eggs, cut out paper bunny rabbits and eggs or just color pictures.

At the end of those incredibly long holiday buffets, Wayne and I, the staff and their wives, husbands, children, and significant others would all sit down to enjoy the holiday meal together.

Little River Band played its





# FESTIVE SWEET POTATOES

- 3 cups cooked mashed sweet potatoes**
- ½ cup sugar**
- ¼ cup milk**
- ⅓ cup butter, melted**
- 1 tsp vanilla**
- 2 eggs, beaten**
- 1 cup flaked coconut**
- 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar**
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour**
- ⅓ cup butter, melted**
- 1 cup chopped pecans**

- Combine the first 6 ingredients, mixing well.
- Spoon into a lightly greased 8" square baking dish.
- Combine remaining ingredients; sprinkle over top of sweet potatoes.
- Bake at 375° for 25 minutes or until golden brown.

# CORNBREAD-SAGE STUFFING

- 3 cups self-rising cornmeal**
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour**
- 1 Tbsp sugar**
- 1 tsp salt**
- pinch of soda**
- 3 cups buttermilk**
- 2 eggs, well beaten**
- 1 cup chopped celery**
- ¾ cup chopped onion**
- 3 Tbsp bacon drippings**
- 1¾ cups herb-seasoned stuffing mix**
- ½ tsp rubbed sage**
- 1 (10¾ oz) can cream of chicken soup, undiluted**
- 3 cups turkey or chicken broth**

- Combine cornmeal, flour, sugar, salt and soda, stirring lightly.
- Add buttermilk and eggs, mixing well. Stir in chopped celery and onion.
- Heat bacon drippings in a 10" iron skillet until very hot. Add 1 tablespoon of bacon drippings to batter, mixing well.
- Pour batter into hot skillet and bake at 450° about 30 minutes or until bread is lightly browned.
- When cool enough to handle, crumble bread into large mixing bowl.
- Add stuffing mix and sage. Set aside.
- Place soup in medium sauce pan.
- Gradually stir broth into soup.
- Cook over medium heat stirring constantly until thoroughly heated.
- Pour over crumb mixture. Stir well.
- Spoon into a well greased 13 x 9 baking dish.
- Bake at 375° for 35-40 minutes or until thoroughly heated.



own part at Woodfield. The years 2002 and 2003 brought LRB right to our front lawn. A Sunday afternoon concert on the lawn of a historical inn literally brought thousands. Like most happenings at the inn, nothing ever went as planned. The concerts were no exception. Both years it rained and was chilly but that did not stand in our way. The show went on and the crowd had a great time. One of the best memories of those shows was Wayne's closing remarks at the end of the last show. "The concert's over now get off my lawn." Laughter was heard all around. Little did we know, that was the last concert held on the grounds of Woodfield Inn.

Telling these stories has brought a few tears and a few smiles and several laughs. The two years we owned Woodfield Inn were an incredible learning journey. Our knowledge as business owners grew, our love of wine and food was taken to new levels, and our understanding of one of the hardest industries around, the hospitality industry, has led us to have a whole different viewpoint of, and



respect for, those who are in that field. We made some wonderful friends while there and I can honestly say, some of our staff and other vendors we worked with are still our friends today.

Sadly, the individual who bought the inn from us ran into some hard times and the inn was foreclosed on. It sat for a little over two years until another individual purchased it. It still operates as an inn but the days of the restaurant and weddings are no more. Wayne and I have been back a few times when we've been in town



to visit friends. After the second visit, with tears in my eyes, I said, "I cannot come back here." The inn sits perched on the rise of the property looking sad, tired, and worn. I make this next statement with all due respect to the owners before and after us. Sadly, in my opinion, and from what we have heard from others, the inn never saw nor has it ever seen, the glory days that it saw while it was under our ownership.

### *Chef Mike*

**C**hef Michael Atkinson grew up in Washington, D.C., and was exposed to big-city food from an early age. He cut his culinary teeth as a young boy working weekends and





summers for a renowned European chef at the Hayloft Dinner Theater in the D.C. suburb of Manassas, Virginia. The hook had been set.

He spent the late '70s and early '80s were spent apprenticing in Northern California, including at Clint Eastwood's Carmel restaurant, at the Hogs Breath Inn, in Portland, Oregon, at Jake's Famous Crawfish Seafood, and at the original McCormick & Schmick's. More culinary experience came at resorts in South Florida, the Caribbean, and on Cape Cod, and he collected many awards and accolades along the way as he cooked his way across the upscale culinary circuit.

Returning to the new family home state, North Carolina, Michael found his love for the mountains and opened Michael's Fine Dining in Banner Elk, North Carolina, where he spent five years finding his own culinary voice.

Moving to Flat Rock, North Carolina, in 1998, Michael reigned

### *Valentines Celebration Menu*

#### *Starters*

*Rich & Creamy Asparagus Soup*, topped with Black Truffle & and heart shaped pastry fleuron's...7

*Spinach Salad* with sliced Strawberries, Purple onion, Raisin Bread croutons, boiled Quail Egg halves And a Strawberry & Fresh Mint Vinaigrette...6

*Cupid's Baked Oysters*, on the ½ shell with sautéed spinach. Topped with a Crabmeat Mousseline, Parmesan Cheese and Red Caviar garnish...9

*Baked Brie* topped with Rose Petal Jelly and baked in pastry. Served with crisp Apple and Pear slices...7

#### *Entrees*

All main courses are served with homemade bread, Chef's selection of fresh vegetables and starch

*Sautéed Chicken Breast with Wild Mushroom & Bound with Marsala cream sauce and wrapped in Handmade Wild Rice Crepes...*18

*Hazelnut Crusted Duck*. Carolina Duck Breast, dusted with roasted Hazelnuts. Served with dual sauces: Fresh Raspberry and Semi sweet Chocolate with Cabernet Sauvignon...20

*Pan Sautéed Halibut with Seared Sea Scallop*. Served on a bed of Lobster Sauce accented with Wasabi, Cream Sherry and Champagne...26

*Beef Tenderloin in Pastry*. Grilled 6 oz Filet Mignon served in a pastry shell and topped with Black Truffle Béarnaise Sauce...24

\* Add two Crabmeat Stuffed Shrimp ...28

#### *Special Valentine Celebration Deserts*

*Don't Break My Heart*. Duo Heart Shaped Homemade Biscuits Filled With Chantilly Cream and Fresh Strawberries...6

*Champagne & Passion Fruit Sorbets*. Served In Baked Meringue with Spun Sugar Garnish...6

*Warm Chocolate Soufflé*. With Bitter Orange Sauce and a Scoop of Homemade Pistachio Ice Cream...8

Served Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> , 828-693-6016

over the stoves at the renowned resort Highland Lake Inn, where he continued to hone his “Garden to Grill” farm fresh, local mountain Appalachian cuisine.

After a brief hiatus to hike the Appalachian Trail, and to get married, Michael took on the challenge of running the kitchen at the oldest operating inn in North Carolina, the Woodfield Inn, where he was holding court when the Nelsons purchased the property and began breathing fresh life (“time for a cool change”) into the classic inn.





HISTORY OF WOODFIELD AND  
A TRAVEL WRITER'S REVIEW IN 2003

**W**OODFIELD INN (NRHP) GREENVILLE HWY.  
Built in 1852, the Woodfield Inn has been a favorite destination for travelers and vacationers for over 135 years, and is one of the most visible landmarks of Flat Rock. It is a three-story, hip-roof, frame structure with a two-story porch running the length of the building. The Inn was conceived in 1847 when several prominent landowners in Flat Rock purchased four hundred acres in the center of the community "with the design of promoting the establishment of a good, commodious tavern at or near the Saluda Road." Construction was completed under the direction of Henry Tudor Farmer, who purchased the property in 1853 and operated it as an inn under the name "Farmer's Hotel" until his death in 1883. Mrs. Annie T. Martin, a later owner, changed the name to the Woodfield Inn.

FROM HENDERSONHERITAGE.COM

**A**braham Kuykendall built an inn and tavern along the old Saluda Path (later Old Buncombe Turnpike) in the 1790s. John Davis opened an inn on his land in the 1820s in Flat Rock. In 1831, William Murray was operating the "tavern or public house" that originally belonged to Davis. Davis had originally sold the land where the tavern or public house was located to Benjamin Richardson. Richardson sold this tract of land to King. In 1835, King sold part of the "hotel tract" to George Summey. The Summey family operated a "tavern or public house" in the community for several years. Summey operated the tavern until it burned sometime during the Civil War. In 1852, Henry T. Farmer opened the Farmer's Inn along the Old Buncombe Turnpike (old Saluda Path). Plans for the inn started in 1847. This was NOT the first stagecoach stop along the Old Buncombe Turnpike, as several histories and websites indicate. The

first stagecoach stop on the old road was at John Davis' Oakland, an inn and stagecoach stop in the Green River community, near the state line, at the top of the "winding stairs" from Greenville County, S.C. In 1864, during the Civil War, Company E of the 64th N.C. Confederate Regiment was sent to Flat Rock to help maintain order. Deserters from both the Confederate and Union armies were hiding out in the mountains, stealing and committing other acts of violence. After Andrew Johnstone was murdered by a group of these bushwhackers, the company was sent to Flat Rock to protect the homes, valuables, and families of the summer residents from South Carolina who were living in Flat Rock during the war. The company's encampment was at the Farmer's Hotel. Owners in the early 1900s renamed the inn the Woodfield Inn. The current owners have renamed it the Mansouri Mansion.



*A cool mist floats across the Blue Ridge mountains, hovering above the gazebo and stretching across the gardens. I love this particular room, a corner room on the top floor. Instead of one window, like many of the rooms, it has three. The extra two make all the difference.*

*This is a good room for writing, a good inn for writing. Comfortable feeling, spacious, quiet. It's definitely out in the midst of nature, an ant the size of a small dog scaring the daylight out of me by deciding to show up on my bed for a visit. And a long-legged flying insect surveys the window to my left, as I type.*

*Soothing green and mauve tones decorate this room. I can hear birdsong from the grassy hillside just outside. I have morning time, a good hour before breakfast is served, to lean back against pillows, wrapped in high thread count linens, and ease into the day.*

Woodfield Inn was built in 1852, the oldest operating inn in the state of North Carolina. It's haunted, they say, with Capt. Morris' ghost, who was stationed here during the Civil War with his confederate soldiers. His room, with dark, masculine decor in blues and golds, is on the third floor. But he's a nondiscriminatory, equal opportunity ghost and is said to make his presence known in many parts of the inn.

I didn't choose Capt. Morris' room, which was available, nor the room known as "The Secret Room" (#22), which has a trap door to a room below the floor where valuables

were hidden from Union Soldiers. Instead I chose the Peony Room (#38), on the top floor in the far corner, for its light and view of the English garden and gazebo.

New innkeepers Wayne and Rhonda Nelson, who purchased the inn in August of 2002, have done a beautiful job redecorating the rooms, many of which have fireplaces. Two are spacious family suites, another a bridal suite. Each room is different, and all are wonderful. If Wayne Nelson's name sounds familiar to music fans, it's no coincidence. Wayne is bass player and lead vocalist for Little River Band. Away for a concert the night I was there, I did not get a chance to tell him how much I enjoyed both his historical inn and many years of fabulous music from his band.

The 18 elegant rooms are not the only treats at this historic getaway. Chef Michael Atkinson whips up some mouth-watering dishes in the Garden Dining Room, as I found out when I feasted that evening on Sauteed Chicken Breast with lemon, wine, garlic and capers, served with an absolutely fantastic medley of fresh vegetables. Presented on a square, contemporary dish, which provided a fun contrast to the historic surroundings, this delicious meal gave me a chance to sit peacefully in the Garden Dining Room and look out over Woodfield's 23 acres of blooming gardens. A culinary and visual treat combined. I only regretted knowing I would only be staying one night, faced with other menu choices such as Potato-Crusted Crab Cakes, Blackened

Mahi-Mahi and Maine Lobster. Seafood is a specialty here, though meat-lovers can be tempted with Filet Mignon, Rack of Spring Lamb or Pork Medallions with Shitake Mushrooms and Slivered Almonds.

If I had thoughts of going easy the next morning after my evening splurge, those thoughts were dashed when I sat down to a complimentary breakfast. On a sage satin placemat, with swirls matching the leaves outside my tableside window, landed a plate with a Belgian Waffle topped with Vanilla Bean Ice Cream, Banana Slices and Rum Raisin Caramel Sauce, served with slices of Applewood Smoked Bacon. OK, so there was an option for a granola and fruit cup meal instead, as well as some divine-sounding Huevos Rancheros and other egg dishes. But I'm not one to pass up a waffle.

After breakfast, I settled into one of many rocking chairs on the front veranda and took in the view, the same view that travelers have enjoyed for over 150 years. Blue Ridge foothill vistas, nature trails, soothing downslope of green grass, woodside pavilion below, all enjoyed by guests for many years before my own arrival. It's no surprise Woodfield Inn is a popular choice for weddings and corporate functions.

Typical of many historic inns, phones are not located in guest rooms. Before leaving, I hooked into one of two guest lines provided downstairs, checked email, then reluctantly packed up and headed into Flat Rock and on into Hendersonville, just three miles away.

One stop on the way deserves a note, though. I popped into Hand in Hand Gallery, located next door to the Wrinkled Egg, home of Flat Rock Bakery and the delicious Carribean Root Stew I had upon my arrival the day before. It turns out the Wrinkled Egg is housed in a building formerly known as Peace's Grocery from 1890 to the early 1980s, a regular destination of locals.

Also representative of the community activity on this block for so many years, Hand to Hand Gallery is packed with stoneware, paintings, stained glass, and other works of art by local artisans. Owners David Voorhees, who makes wonderful floral pottery creations, and Molly Sharp, who adds inspired, peaceful jewelry selections to the mix, were both present and very welcoming. I enjoyed browsing and visiting. David and Molly have created a gallery that feels like more than just a shop offering quality art. On this particular morning, it felt like a peaceful resting point before continuing on my way.

All in all, Flat Rock was a breath of fresh mountain air. I never did see the ghost of Capt. Morris at Woodfield Inn and I wasn't able to purchase all the goodies I found at the Wrinkled Egg and Hand in Hand Gallery. All the more reason to return someday. But there's always something else waiting ahead, down the highway, when experiencing life on the road. I finally pulled myself away and headed out.



FAMILY IS LIKE MUSIC,  
SOME HIGH NOTES, SOME LOW NOTES,  
BUT ALWAYS A BEAUTIFUL SONG.



FAMILY &  
FRIENDS





## Thank You for Being a Friend

If I had to sum up the many friendships Wayne and I have made all over the country, I would say that sums it up perfectly. We both came into our relationship with our own special friends and each of us has grown to love and enjoy those people as if we've known them forever. While LRB has provided many opportunities, one of the greatest opportunities has been meeting some amazing people who now have become lifelong friends as well.

No matter what state and town we have lived in, we've always been blessed to have wonderful friends. As I started this project and began to reflect back, it became obvious there are common elements in each of those friendships. The love of spending time together, laughter and enjoying fabulous food, and good wine and spirits weave us all together like a warm snuggly blanket.

A life where so much time is spent on the road can leave me missing our home, our family, friends, and pets. But that life also allows us to cultivate new friendships with people we might otherwise have never had the chance to meet. And that is precisely what we have been blessed with.



Wayne with Al Bertani

*A very dear and wise friend from long ago shared with me one evening while we were all sitting around discussing life, his analogy of people coming into your life. I've never forgotten it and over the years I have realized just how true it is. He said, "Your life is like a bus. People will get on, sit in the front, some people will get off, others will move to the middle and some you will ask to get off."*



MIKE STANGLIN

## BISCOTTI

FROM MARIA REDMAN



- 3 eggs**, room temperature
  - 1 cup sugar**
  - 1 cup vegetable oil**
  - 1 tsp vanilla**
  - 2½ cups flour**
  - 1 tsp baking powder**
  - ¾ cup chopped walnuts**
  - ½ tsp anise seeds**
- Roll into a ball and refrigerate at least a few hours.
  - Divide into three logs onto a cookie sheet.
  - Bake at 350° for about 25 minutes.
  - When log is brown, remove from oven.
  - Spray a knife with Pam and slice each log into biscotti pieces.
  - Turn biscotti pieces on sides, place on the same cookie sheet, and put back into oven until that side is light brown.
  - Flip each piece over and brown the other side.
  - Cool on wire rack.
- Beat eggs until fluffy.
  - Slowly add sugar.
  - Very slowly add oil, then vanilla.
  - Add flour and baking powder, walnuts and anise seeds.



# FROZEN CHERRY SALAD



- 1 can Eagle Brand® milk**
- 1 large can crushed pineapple (drained)**
- 2 cups miniature marshmallows**
- 1 large carton Cool Whip®**
- 1 can cherry pie filling**
- ½ cup chopped pecans**

- Mix all ingredients together.
- Pour into a large container that can go into freezer and freeze.
- Let set out 15-20 minutes to partially thaw before serving.





Before I married Wayne, I didn't fully grasp just how true this was. This quote began to ring true for me after Wayne and I got married and I met many people while we moved around or were on tour. From the music business to fans and other people, I soon learned that some people had ulterior motives for befriending me.



With Mike & Penny Stanglin

Those of you who know me personally know I love to talk to people and I'm truly not a shy wallflower. Those of you who don't know me personally can safely assume I'm not afraid to carry on a conversation with just about anyone. Perhaps that "talent," as I like to view it, is why Wayne and I are truly blessed with so many wonderful friends all over the world. Part of the beauty of this crazy lifestyle is the opportunity to visit these friends on a somewhat consistent basis. The visits may be cut short with not

enough time to do all the things we'd love to do in a visit, but it's time spent together and fun is always had by all. Of course, we've missed a few milestone birthday and anniversary celebrations along with a holiday celebration here and there, but I can honestly say somehow, someway we manage to not miss many.

## *Home Is Where the Heart Is*

LB tours have also provided a path to reconnect not only with friends from long ago but also with some parts of our families. Shows out West always afford us the opportunity to sneak in a visit, even if it's only a day, with Wayne's son, daughter-in-law, and the grandkids.

Because we do live on opposite sides of the country, if we had a normal work schedule, the visits would most likely be fewer and farther in between than they are.

A couple of years back, thanks in part to Facebook and also the tour, I was able to reconnect with two of my cousins on my daddy's side. I absolutely adore them and so love watching their kids grow up. My heart has an extra little happy spot because I have a connection again to that side of my family. Again, due in part to Facebook and



the tour, we were able to meet up with and spend some time with various family members from Bill's side of the family as well. In both instances, I had not seen some of these family members in more than

Above: My friend Susan; Left (left to right): Jennifer, my cousin; Meg, dear friend from high school; Kathy Jo, my college roommate and dear friend







# BUTTERSCOTCH CRUNCHIES

FROM MOM — BILL'S FAVORITE

- 
- 2 cups peanuts**
  - 2 large bags butterscotch morsels (chips)**
  - 1 large bag chow mein noodles**
  - Melt butterscotch morsels in pan over low heat.
  - Add peanuts and only enough chow mein noodles to coat well.
  - Drop spoonfuls on wax paper to cool.
  - Store in airtight container.



twenty-five years. As I've gotten older, and because I am an only child, it has become important to me to reconnect and to have that sense of family. Would this have happened without LRB, yes, probably so, but what might not have happened was the opportunity to get to visit and spend time with each of them more frequently.

There's been a standing joke amongst our friends as to what zip code we will live in and for how long. Wayne asks only that I give him our new address so he knows how to get home. Up until 2011, it was somewhat of a sport for us to move and renovate houses. When I say move, I don't just mean across town. We've done that too, but we've made a few major moves across the country. One of the many positive aspects of living with a touring musician is that you can live pretty much anywhere you want, as long as there's an airport nearby. Subconsciously, or maybe consciously on my part, it seemed to work out that we moved about every two years. But that has changed and I'm extremely proud to say we've been in our present home five years now.

It wasn't lack of feeling at home in any one particular place, and it certainly wasn't lack of friendships that were the culprits behind the moves. Actually, the hardest part about making a decision to make a major move was leaving behind our friends and family. Each and every place we've lived has provided us with long-lasting friendships.

After this last move, we both said we're not moving again. Famous last words that will bite us I'm sure. I'm not done renovating the home we currently live in, which would indicate it's not time to move on. My stomach actually turns a little to even think about leaving behind the friends we've made in this present city. From the moment we saw the first house in our neighborhood, something clearly stated "you're home." Having said that, situations change, opportunities present themselves, and we make decisions based on what is best for us at any particular given time. So who knows what the future holds. As this lifestyle has taught us so well to do, we just roll with whatever comes our way.

## *The Ties That Bind*

As you've learned throughout the pages of this book, I lost both my father and my second Dad (whom I refer to as "Bill"), and was without either of these incredible men for almost every milestone a girl dreams of having her father present for. At times through the years, I have literally broken down and cried when I think about the special moments I did not have the opportunity to share with either of them. That was especially true when I met Wayne and realized that we were going to be married. If there was one person who has come into my life that I wish those two men could know, it's Wayne.

Because of the losses of both Daddy and Bill, my mom and I developed a unique and special bond early on in my life. She instilled in me the values that she grew up holding dear. She has always been known to be the hardest of workers and a person who stands by her word. She is a woman of faith and has borne her hardships with utmost grace





and dignity. Life for her wasn't easy when she was growing up, and because of that, no matter what it took from her, she made sure I had everything I wanted over and above the necessities. She provided for and allowed me to experience many opportunities that she never had the chance to, and because of that, I truly feel I have been more able to adapt to the lifestyle I live today.

I remember so vividly how much my Granny (my mom's mom) adored my daddy and later on Bill as well. Both men could do no wrong in Granny's eyes and in turn, each of them doted on Granny. I remember many times thinking how I hoped when I got married that my husband and my mom would have the same relationship. That wish came true in Wayne. He and Mom get along fabulously and she thinks of him as her son. Likewise, he is so wonderful with

her and there are times when it's he who is the calm between two storms.

As with most mothers and daughters, amongst all of the wonderful times, there have been trying times and I know I have tested her patience more than once, but we always make amends, move forward and learn from one another. As an adult you see your parents through different



eyes. You understand more in depth their attributes and personality traits in ways you couldn't possibly comprehend as a child. Understanding all that she sacrificed for me in my childhood years and understanding her more in depth as an adult, there are no real words that can be written to say how much love I have for my mom and how much respect and admiration I have for her. Her first and foremost priority when I was a child was to make my childhood happy and carefree. As the wheel turns and she is in her golden years, it is now my turn to do the same for her.

I think it's safe to say when we women reach middle age, we are a little more guarded when choosing to whom we open up while forming new, deep and meaningful friendships. I have girlfriends to whom I'm still extremely close from many dif-

ferent phases of my life, yet making new girlfriends at this age can seem frightening. When Wayne and I made our last move to Florida, even though I was completely on board with the move, I suspected it would be a little more challenging







Because of Shelly Weil, we were introduced to the Israel Scouts Friendship Caravan and were blessed with hosting two scouts for two years in a row. A man and an experience that will never be forgotten.

to meet and form deep, meaningful girlfriend relationships than it had been in the past. But I knew whether there were two or ten friendships made, I would welcome them and I knew they would

probably be some of the deepest friendships I would make in my lifetime.

The move happened and as we began to get involved in our neighborhood, I was overwhelmed by the genuine welcoming we received. We have met so many incredible people and we've shared incredible times with all of them. Our neighborhood is like no other we've ever lived in and we've been

a part of so many exciting activities. There's never a shortage of gatherings to be a part of and sometimes (I know I've been guilty) we create excuses to get together when there's not a holiday, birthday, or sports event to celebrate.

As we've all experienced from our first day of school, you gravitate and become closer to some more than others. I have formed a bond with some very special ladies that I feel blessed to call my girlfriends. We have laughed, cried, and shared life's ups and downs. We are all in various phases of our lives with some only here for the school year while others travel back and forth from up north. Then there's me. They just ask for a spreadsheet of my travels. The one thing that is constant between us all, we know without any doubt, no matter where we are, we can count 100% on one another for whatever we may need. Having one true friend like this is amazing; to have five like this that live right outside my door is an incredible blessing.



### *Whenever I Call You Friend*

There are times when you meet someone and you are immediately drawn to them. Their personality exudes warmth and grace. Instantly you see their lovely and genuine soul shine through in everything they do. I was blessed to have two such women come into my life and I will forever have a piece of them stamped on my heart.





# CREAM PUFFS

FROM LUCY



## PASTRY

- 1 cup water
- 1 stick of butter
- ½ tsp salt
- 4 eggs, room temperature

- Bring 3 combined ingredients to a boil.
- Remove from heat and stir in 1 cup of flour.
- Mix well to make a paste-like consistency—may be lumpy.
- Add 4 eggs, one at a time.
- Each egg must be added in and blended well before adding the next.
- Mixture will be smooth and sticky.

- Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and drop teaspoonfuls of batter onto cookie sheet.
- Bake at 425° for 20 minutes
- Then lower and bake at 325° for 20 minutes.
- Let cool, slice in half and fill.

## FILLING

- 1 quart heavy cream
- 1 package instant vanilla (or French vanilla) pudding mix
- Blend heavy cream on high to make whip cream.
- When cream is almost thickened, add box of instant pudding.
- Continue until cream is thick and fluffy.





Lisa and Lucy

The two women I am referring to are the mothers of two of my dear girlfriends I introduced you to above. Both of my girlfriends spent the last several years being the caretakers of their moms. While some may perceive this to be a sort of inconvenience, to my two girlfriends, it meant they spent valuable one-on-one time with their mothers. Both Evelyn and Lucy were in their upper years and at various times their health was challenging. These ladies faced every day and every situation with the utmost grace that one can imagine.

Both ladies are gone now. Time spent with them was always filled with great stories and laughter. Due to my travel schedule, I didn't

always get to spend as much time as I would have liked with them. But

when I did, we'd laugh, talk, and share a meal or beverage, and I would always walk away with a new little piece of wisdom from them.

To this day, I still have a couple of emails saved from one and a voice message saved from the other. Crazy as it sounds, food and drink were a common thread for us and I'm blessed to have been able to share both with each of them.



Joanne, Evelyn, Kathy



NO FRIENDSHIP IS AN ACCIDENT.

O HENRY, HEART OF THE WEST





# CHICKEN & ANDOUILLE GUMBO WITH SHRIMP

FROM JIM BOCHICCHIO

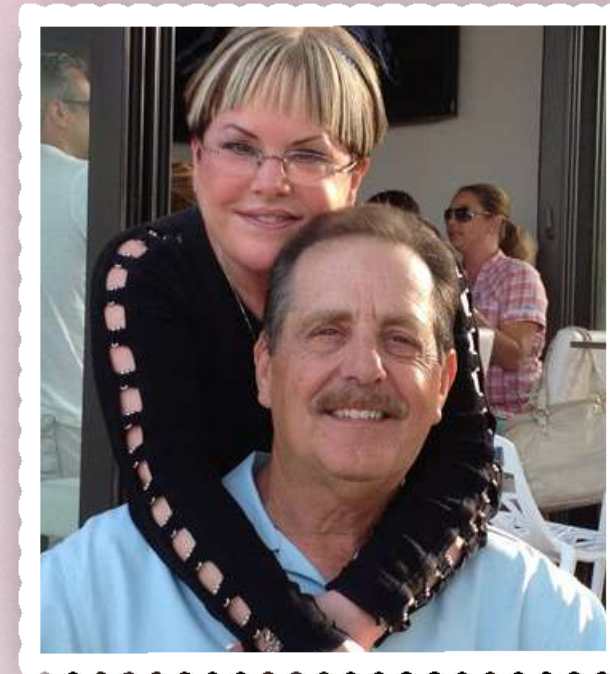
- 6 lbs chicken breast and thighs**, boned and cut into chunks
- 1 lb andouille sausage**, cut in half lengthwise then cut crosswise into ¼" slices
- 4 quarts chicken stock**, good quality, low sodium
- 2 yellow onions**, medium-size, diced
- 5 ribs celery**, medium, sliced
- 3 green bell peppers**, large, diced
- ½ lb okra**, sliced into ½" rounds
- 5 garlic cloves**, minced
- 2 bay leaves**
- 8 thyme sprigs**, wrapped in cheesecloth

- 1 ½ tsp Kosher salt plus pinch**
- 1 ½ Tbsp seasoning**, such as Chef Paul's Poultry Magic or Emeril's Essence plus more for sprinkling
- 3 Tbsp olive oil**, divided
- 1 ½ cups vegetable oil**
- 1 ½ cups bleached all-purpose flour**
- chopped scallions**, (green part only) for garnish
- cooked white rice**
- ½ lbs fresh large shrimp**
- fresh ground black pepper**
- 1 lime for juicing**
- crushed red pepper flakes**

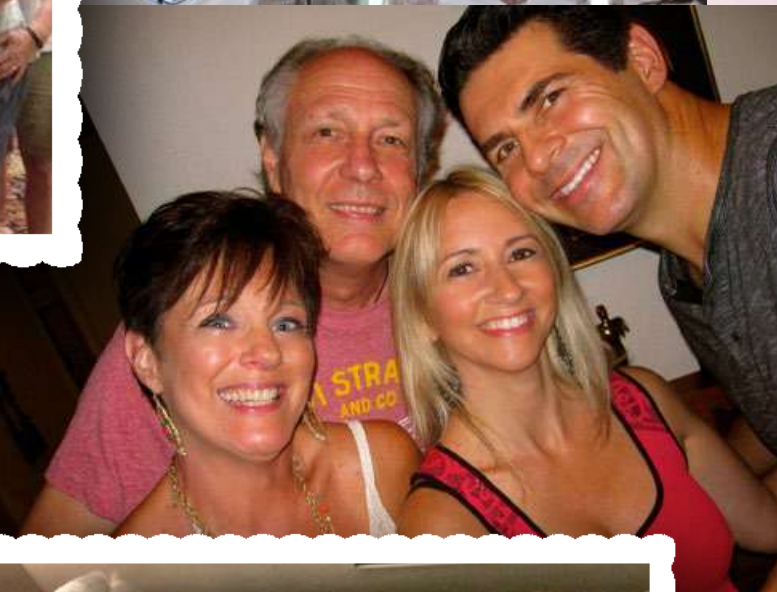


- Heat a sauté pan over medium heat.
- Add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and cook the andouille until just browned.
- Remove the sausage with a slotted spoon, set aside.
- Sprinkle the chicken with some of the seasoning, add to the same pan the andouille was cooked in. Sauté until just cooked through.
- Remove and set aside.
- Heat the stock in a large pot over low-medium heat.
- In a large, cast iron skillet or a Dutch oven over medium heat, heat the oil until very hot, but not smoking.
- Add the flour a bit at a time making sure it dissolves completely before adding more.
- Stirring slowly and constantly with a wooden spoon, make a dark brown roux, the color of dark chocolate, 20 to 25 minutes.
- Be sure to scrape the bottom thoroughly as you do this. Do not let it burn or the roux will need to be restarted.
- Remove from heat and add the onions, bell peppers, celery, garlic and okra to the roux.
- Return to the heat and cook, stirring, until the vegetables are very soft, 8 to 10 minutes.
- Add the 1 ½ teaspoons salt and the remaining 1 ½ tablespoons seasoning, stir to incorporate.
- Add the roux mixture to the warm-hot stock in small batches, stirring until they are well combined.
- Add the cooked chicken and sausage, bay leaves, thyme and seasoning.
- Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 1 ½ hours.
- It will reduce and thicken.
- While the gumbo is simmering, peel and devein the shrimp.
- Place in a stainless mixing bowl and toss in the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil, pinch of salt, fresh ground black pepper, red pepper flakes and juice of ½ lime.
- Place in refrigerator until the gumbo is ready.
- Cook the rice.
- Just prior to the gumbo being ready, heat the same pan used for the chicken and sausage over medium high heat.
- Add the shrimp to the pan and cook until just browned through about 2 minutes per side.
- Remove the thyme and bay leaves from the pot.
- Ladle the gumbo into individual soup bowls.
- Place a mound of rice in the center.
- Surround with the shrimp and garnish with the scallions.
- Add additional Louisiana style hot sauce if you like.









# VIDALIA ONION PIE

## PASTRY

- 1 deep dish 9-inch pie crust**
- 3 cups thinly sliced Vidalia onions**  
(can use any other type sweet onion)
- 3 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted**
- ½ cup whole milk**
- 1½ cups sour cream**
- 1 tsp salt**
- 2 eggs, beaten**
- 3 Tbsp all-purpose flour**
- 4-5 strips bacon, fried and crumbled**  
(can omit if not a meat eater)
- grated smoked gouda cheese**

- Bake pie shell according to directions.
- In a skillet, cook onions in butter until lightly browned.
- Spoon onion into pie shell.
- In a medium bowl, combine milk, sour cream, salt, eggs, and flour.
- Mix well and pour over onion mixture.
- Sprinkle cheese over top.
- Sprinkle bacon crumbles over cheese.
- Bake in 325° oven for 30 minutes or until firm in center.



# RUM NUT PUDDING CAKE

FROM MOM

- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 package yellow cake mix
- 1 (4 oz) package vanilla instant pudding mix
- 4 eggs
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ⅓ cup dark rum
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup butter
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cup dark rum

- Preheat oven to 325°.
- Grease and flour a bundt cake pan.
- Sprinkle the chopped nuts onto bottom of pan.

- Combine cake mix, pudding mix, eggs, ½ cup water, vegetable oil and ⅓ cup dark rum in large mixing bowl.
- Beat at low speed with electric mixer just to moisten mixes, scraping sides of the bowl often.
- Increase mixing speed to medium and beat for 4 minutes.
- Bake for 1 hour or until a wooden pick is inserted and comes out clean and cake begins to separate from sides of pan. Careful not to over bake.
- When done, remove cake from oven and cool slightly, then invert onto serving piece.

- While cake is baking, combine sugar, butter, and ¼ cup water in saucepan.
- Cook over medium-high heat, stirring until mixture comes to a boil.
- Boil for 5 minutes, stirring constantly.
- Add in ¼ cup dark rum and bring to a boil again, let boil 1 minute.
- Prick the inverted cake with a wooden pick all over the top.
- Carefully spoon the warm syrup over the warm cake and serve immediately.

# TURTLE CAKE

- 1 box German chocolate cake mix
- 1 (4oz) can Eagle Brand® milk
- 1 ½ lb Kraft® caramels candy
- 1 lb chocolate chips
- 2 cups chopped pecans
- ½ cup butter

- Make cake batter according to directions on box.
- Pour ½ of the cake batter in a 9 x 13 pan, bake at temperature on cake mix box until batter is just set, not baked thoroughly, about 15 minutes.

- In a sauce pan melt caramels, butter, and Eagle Brand milk. Do not boil. Mixture will be thick and sticky.
- Pour over baked cake.
- Place chocolate chip pieces over the caramel mixture on cake. Place pecan pieces over chocolate chip pieces. Spread remaining unbaked cake batter over pecans.
- Bake for 25-30 minutes.
- Serve cake warm with vanilla ice cream.



## Sandra & Gene

Friends do come to us by chance meetings and so was the case with these dear friends. They've seen us through the craziness of inn ownership and they spent weeks helping me search for a home in Las Vegas while Wayne was on the road. Through good and bad, we've walked through life together and shared each other's ups and downs, sometimes sitting in one another's living room and sometimes via phone. With Wayne away so much of the time while owning the inn, they became my anchor when he could not be.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHO'S GOING TO BECOME YOUR FRIEND.

FRIENDS ARE ALWAYS CHANCE MEETINGS.

STEVE GUTTENBERG



When we purchased the inn, Gene was the Sysco rep and like all other things with the inn we inherited him. Little did we know what a saving grace he would be to us and how he would, with complete honesty, navigate us through the processes of purchasing food for a restaurant and



event facility. As we got to know Gene through his weekly visits to the inn, business would get done and we'd joke around and make small talk. Over time, I learned about his wife, Sandra, and all the while hearing about her, I really thought, "Wow, I could really be friends with her." Here in her own words is the story of our meeting.



## LIFELONG FRIENDS COME IN ALL PACKAGES...EVEN SPARKLY ONES!

When Gene came home and stated, "You'll never guess who bought the Woodfield Inn!" He then proceeded to inform me that it was Wayne Nelson and his wife. I was euphoric! I'd been a *huge* Little River Band fan for years and years. When the day came to attend an LRB concert on the lawn of that inn, I jumped at the chance to meet one of my musical favorites. Now, there was one little snafu—Gene had already met Wayne and Rhonda and was becoming friends as well as doing business with them at the inn, and all he could talk about was how wonderful Rhonda was and how sure he was that she and I were going to be best friends. Hmm, we'll see. I mean, come on! Who is this woman who had made such an impression on my husband?

The long, meandering road to the Woodfield Inn for the concert only heightened my excitement to meet Wayne! The property was swirling with people and I was looking left and right for him.

"There he is!" Gene said happily. "Where?? I don't see him." Of course I was looking for a rock star, not a regular guy in jeans carrying a keg of beer over his shoulder! He promptly put down the keg and greeted me with a warm hug. He could not have been kinder and more welcoming. What a memorable moment that was!

As we wander through the crowd, I see this girl all dolled up. You know, perfect blonde hair, makeup, dressed to the hilt in a sparkly number, tall heels in the grass and yes—pretty. OK, very pretty. I immediately knew she had to be Rhonda since ladies in this little mountain town don't really dress like that. My inner voice was screaming, "We are so *not* going to be best friends!" while my actual voice was saying, "It's so nice to meet you" (inner voice growling at the fancy-pants blonde). Boy was my first impression wrong! We did in fact become the best of friends, lifelong friends, and chosen family.

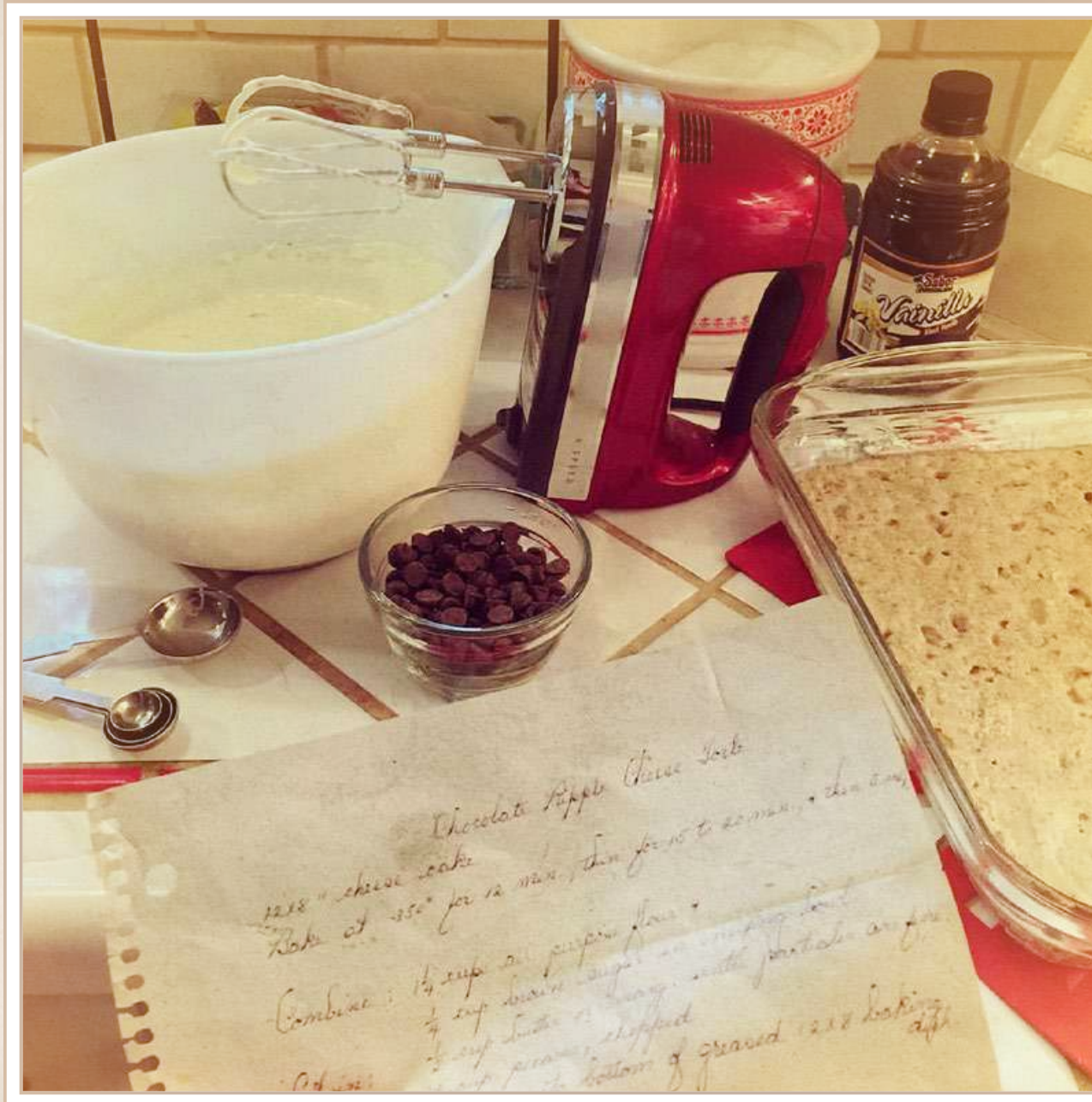
SANDRA BOETTICHER





# CHOCOLATE RIPPLE CHEESE TORTE

(FROM GENE & SANDRA)



## CRUST

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup butter, cut into small pieces
- 1/2 cup pecans, chopped

- Combine flour and brown sugar in mixing bowl.
- Cut in butter until particles are fine.
- Stir in pecans.
- Press firmly into bottom bottom of greased 12 x 8 baking dish.
- Bake at 350° for 12 minutes.

## MARBLE CHEESE FILLING

- 1/2 cup Nestles® semi-sweet chocolate morsels
- 2 Tbsp milk
- 2 (8 oz) pkgs cream cheese, softened
- 3 eggs, divide yolks from whites
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla

- Melt Nestle semi-sweet chocolate morsels with milk, then set aside. Keep warm or it will set up.
- Cream the softened cream cheese.
- Add 3 unbeaten egg yolks, beat well.
- Gradually add sugar and vanilla, mixing thoroughly.
- Beat 3 egg whites until stiff, but not dry. Fold into cream cheese mixture.
- Turn into prepared pan (first step, baked crust).
- Drizzle with melted chocolate mixture. Draw knife back and forth to marbleize.
- Bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes, until almost set.

## TOPPING

- 1 1/2 cups sour cream
- 2 Tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla

- Combine sour cream, sugar, and vanilla.
- Blend well.
- Layer over baked marbled mixture.
- Bake for 5 minutes.
- Chill before serving.



“WHOEVER SAID DIAMONDS  
ARE A GIRL’S BEST FRIEND  
NEVER OWNED A DOG”

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



PUPS



## *How Much Is That Doggie in the Window?*



**B**y now it probably goes without saying, Wayne and I love dogs. Their loyalty and unconditional love is extraordinary. We can't even begin to comprehend why so many dogs are mistreated and abused, but we're willing and able to help rescue some that need a good home. We support all the efforts of organizations set up to do the same on a bigger scale. Later in this section, I'll share some of the rescue organizations that we have been fortunate enough to give back to via Little River Band and/or

donations. Over the years, being involved with these organizations has given us insight to just how horrific puppy mills are and also the horrific ways people abuse animals. Helping to spread awareness about puppy mills and abuse is the only way these will cease to exist. Being a part of that mission is just one of our priorities.

Before I share a little about the rescue pups that have shared our home, it's important to point out a few things about opening your home to rescue pups. These dogs come from very challenging situations and they have lived hard lives. Even if they are youngsters, they have lived a life most likely in a crate with very little to no human contact and certainly not any loving contact. They

come with personality issues and many have health issues. Some of these are easily corrected with medical care, love, and patience, and some of them are lifelong illnesses controlled with medications. Many of these pups do not know how to play and live the life of a dog, and it takes time and understanding while they are trained. What is true about these pups is they are able to overcome these obstacles and they are so grateful, loving, and loyal.

## *It's a Dog's Life*

**T**hrough the years, I have taught myself about diet and supplements for our rescue pups because as with everything else in the puppy mill world, these pups have most likely never received proper nutrition. We tend to use an all-natural diet for our pups, which requires extra time to prepare, but we've found that it works wonders for them. In the case of being on the road with one of the pups, I use a freeze-dried food that simply needs to be mixed with water.

I have always cooked the pup's meals. It is fun and easy and has become a little distractor from work and other commitments to take the time to make their





# FIDO FUDGE

*(Remember chocolate is toxic for your pups, so give them some homemade treats instead)*

**1 cup shortening**

**6 Tbsp molasses**

**liquid egg equal to 8 eggs**

*(need to make this using whole eggs)*

**2 tsp vanilla**

**2 cups whole wheat flour**

**½ cup carob powder**

**1 tsp baking powder**

- Cream the shortening and molasses.
- Gradually beat in the other ingredients until smooth.
- Pour into a greased 8 x 8 pan.
- Bake at 350° for 25 minutes, or until done but not hard.

meals. There is no real rhyme or recipe *per se* to what I cook and I don't follow specifics. They eat a mixture of some form of protein such as ground 100% grass-fed beef, bison, veal, chicken, or lamb cooked on the stovetop. I will also cook any combination of vegetables such as peas, carrots, broccoli, green beans, and sweet potatoes and puree them. I make a mixture of both the protein and vegetables, trying to switch it up as much as possible. Occasionally, I will add in a little mashed blueberries, strawberries, or raspberries as a little extra treat. On the rare occasion I will add a very tiny bit of cooked brown rice, but I don't do that on a regular basis. If I want to make a big batch, rather than cooking the meat on the stovetop, I will mix the ground meat and pureed vegetables together, form balls, place in a muffin tin and bake. These can be frozen to make meals quick and easy. On our very hot South Florida days, I take ice cube trays, place a blueberry in each one, pour fresh pressed apple juice diluted 2:1 with water over the blueberries, and freeze for a fun, cooling treat.

## *Happy Tails*

**B**etween Wayne and me, we've known and lived with many breeds of dogs, but over our years together we have come to love the Maltese breed. I found my first, Igloo, in '99. He was in a basket with two sisters, being sold by a breeder on the side of the road in Tennessee. I had no knowledge of the puppy mill community, nor the horrible conditions some breeders subject their dogs to. I just saw a cute little white face and wanted him for my own. Ironically, after finding out about my breathing condition in later years, it turns out that Maltese is one of the perfect breeds for me because they have hair, not fur and dander. So no airborne problems for me with Maltese.

Iggie, one of his many nicknames, was a rascal. I lived in a three-story townhouse and he would go into a bathroom on the second floor, grab a mouthful of toilet paper on the roll, and



run down the stairs with that treasure trailing behind him. To Ig's end days, if a bathroom was available, he would try to find paper in it to shred. But after seventeen years together, that was probably his only unbreakable habit.

I can never forget the very first time Wayne came to visit me at my house and Iggy was only a few months old. I was so so worried that Iggy would chew Wayne's cowboy boots so I made sure that every time he took his boots off, I set them high upon a table. Now the funny thing is Ig had never chewed any shoe and if you compare Wayne's boots to the size of a several-month-old Maltese, Ig wouldn't have been able to get the boot knocked over much less his mouth on it to chew.



### *Help Is on the Way*

There's a funny/tragic story to tell about Maltese and one of the trips that Wayne and I took to Europe. Part of that trip included a week spent in Malta. One must-do on our list while there was to discover the origins of the little white lapdogs of Italian and French royalty. In the cab between the airport and our condo, we were perplexed as to why we weren't seeing any in the parks or on the streets of the island. The language on the island is quite difficult to discern, and for the most part English is widely used and understood, except for the older generations. We decided to ask the cab driver where we could go to see more Maltese dogs. The utter shock and horror on his face reflected back in the cab's mirror, and in his very broken English he told us that the only place where we could see Maltese were at illegal dog fights! What? Our sweet little white dogs were being fought for money? Did we really understand that right?

## PUMPKIN COOKIES

### FOR FIDO

**1½ cups whole wheat flour**

**½ cup canned pumpkin**

**1 Tbsp brown sugar**

**½ tsp ground cinnamon**

**½ tsp ground nutmeg**

**4 Tbsp shortening**

**1 egg**

**½ cup buttermilk**

- Preheat oven to 400°.
- Combine flour, cinnamon, and nutmeg.
- Cut in shortening.
- Beat the egg with the buttermilk and pumpkin and combine with the flour mixture, mixing well.
- Stir until a soft dough forms.
- Drop by the tablespoon onto an ungreased cookie sheet and bake for 12-15 minutes.
- Let cool before giving to Fido.



I was in tears. The tears coming down my face broke the tension that had developed between us and the cab driver. Words were not needed. He realized right away how horrified we were and explained that the whole breed had been wiped out in tsunami-like floods that had swept the islands centuries before. Now the only remnants of the breed were brought in from the mainland of Italy and were made to fight each other not unlike Pit Bulls in the U.S. We made sure he really understood we weren't there for that and pondered what kind of evil trains dogs to kill their own kind. Once back home, I dove into researching what we were told. While I've not found much to substantiate our old cab driver's story, just the thought of the possibility that such horrific happenings could be part of their history tore my heart apart. And so began my intense love affair with Maltese.

Not long after that trip we entered the world of dog rescue. There had been a horrible case of animal abuse by a woman living in a nearby town. She was running a Maltese puppy mill out of her home. A 2,800-square-foot house with 240 dogs in crates stacked five high and fifty wide on the first floor. There were no pans in the bottom of the crates, so feces and urine were literally raining down on the poor dogs at the bottom of the stack. It was also discovered that she was cutting the vocal cords of some of the worst barkers to keep them quiet. Once exposed, some of her workers described that she would inspect newborn puppies and if they didn't meet her criteria, she would take them to various local businesses' dumpsters and toss them in, still alive!

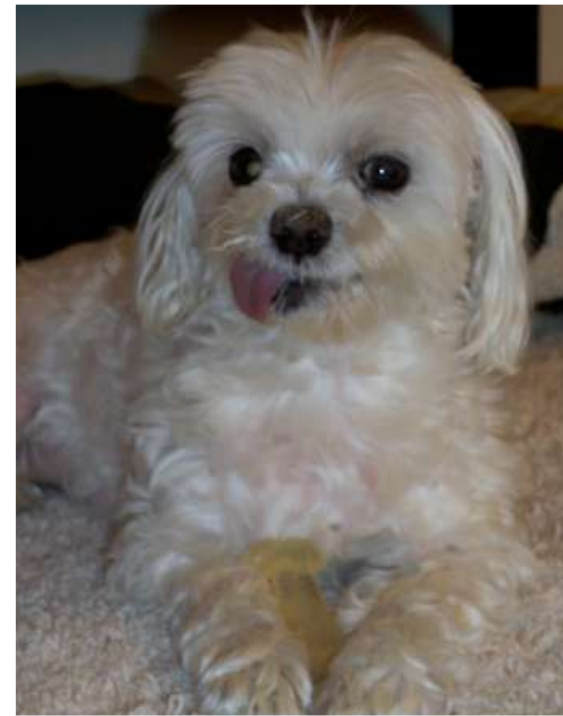
The horror of this so-called breeder's story only gets worse. She had two disabled children who also lived in her home. When Animal Control and Child Protective Services were finally informed of the situation, both kids and all of the dogs were confiscated, and court cases ensued. The dogs were evidence for the court case and had to be either fostered or sheltered until rulings could be rendered by the courts.

As soon as we heard about the case, we wanted to help by giving one of the dogs a good home

and hoped to find a companion for Igloo. By the time we were able to work our way through the red tape, there were five pups left. Remember the ones at the bottom of the stacks of crates? These five that had not been adopted were ones that had lived for several years underneath all of the other pups. Three of the dogs we saw were blind and swaybacked because of their years of living in a crate. One was severely withdrawn, and another one, who had the name Kujo at the time, would do nothing but continuously growl, always seeming to be grumpy and mad, for understandable reasons. She spoke to us. Actually they all did, but this little girl named Kujo was the only one that had no one interested in her. The other four, despite their medical issues, all had families interested in adopting them. Kujo was handed to Wayne and she immediately

curled up and went to sleep on his chest. That pretty much sealed that deal! We filled out paperwork with an attorney (because it had been a legal case all paperwork for the dogs' adoptions was required to be handled through an attorney) and took her home on the week of Thanksgiving 2004. Her name was officially changed to Snowball.

For months she did nothing but sit and stare at us, probably wondering when her mistreatment would resume. She didn't know what a toy was or how to play with Igloo. She ate and existed just sitting and staring until one day Ig gave her a little shove with his nose and she shoved back.





That was the beginning of the sweetest playtime between them. Snowy had learned how to be a dog living without fear and misery.

I had the fever about doing whatever I could to save the world one dog at a time. I constantly looked at rescue sites, and joined Maltese rescue clubs and forums. Wayne was sure the clock was ticking for dog number three. His perception wasn't wrong but it was several years later when I found our next rescue.

We were living in Vegas at the time. Ig and Snowy were the best of friends and Snowy had really blossomed, learning how to be a pup and enjoying life. I was scouring rescue sites one evening and I saw a darling little Maltese girl. Her photo, as perfect as it was, should have been a clue or red flag that something wasn't quite right.

The description said she was approximately twelve to thirteen years old, that she was a bit underweight, and was blind and possibly deaf. In the photo, a little tiny female Maltese was perched on a maroon velvet pillow with her hair looking lavishly brushed and her top knot done with a velvet bow. She was located in Phoenix, Arizona, which was only six hours away by car.

Wayne was on the road at the time but was due home in a few days. I sent an inquiry email to the contact person listed and she immediately responded back. As the email exchange began there were more and more things that didn't seem quite right but I was determined Bella was supposed to be with us.

I also sent Wayne the photo and although he was a little reluctant to have a third dog, he agreed and had me arrange the pick-up date and time based on his return. Off we went with Ig and Snowy along too, to pick up Bella. About halfway through the drive to Phoenix, all communication with Bella's person stopped. I was in tears wondering what had happened to her. Was she still alive? Had this lady tricked me?

We proceeded to our hotel, and eventually, the lady responded to an email and a time and

place was confirmed to meet the next morning. Another red flag—that place was in a park. So off to the park we go. Again, fearful that the lady wouldn't show up and something bad had or would happen to Bella, I was beside myself.

There at the far end of the park, under a tree was a lady, who from all appearances could have been homeless, and she had with her this tiny, malnourished, tick—and flea-infested, almost hairless dog that couldn't walk properly. She introduced herself to us and to Bella. The look on mine and Wayne's faces was pretty priceless I'm sure.

Knowing we weren't going to leave this dog with this lady, we took a single piece of paper that was supposedly Bella's medical records, a leash, and a little dress and off we went with Bella. She was so terribly sick. Her breathing was somewhat labored, her eyes were gooey, and her ears were matted with what must have been months-worth of horrific ear infection oozing out. Wayne was positive this little girl might not make the car ride back to Vegas.

Seats down in the back of our SUV, I stayed back there with Ig and Snowy, holding Bella all the way home. I fed her ice cubes and just said prayers that we could get this baby home and at least get her cleaned up and let her know unconditional love and a soft bed for the evening.

She made it! When we got home we immediately started the task of cleaning her up enough to be comfortable until we could get to the vet's office the next morning.





One look at her and our vet was shocked that she made the journey and that she had even survived in her condition for as long as she had. Via a chip, we learned that Bella was sixteen years old, and toothless with a mouth full of infections. She was indeed blind and deaf and her back knee joints did not stay in place, the reason for her poor walking. She was barely four pounds. Other than that she was surprisingly healthy for her age.

Our love story began with Bella, to whom I gave the middle name Rose because to me she was as beautiful as any rose. I worked hard nursing her back to health. I found as many supplements as I thought were appropriate for her, I fed her an all-natural diet that I cooked and I worked diligently to get her infections cleared. Bella Rose thrived and as she began to feel better and know that she was loved, her feisty spirit began to shine through. She was very bossy, wanting to



eat when she wanted to, and she would sleep most of the time. Even though she was blind and deaf, she learned her way around our home and no matter what room she was in if I had been out and came home, her nose always told her when I was back. She would walk along the walls and come to the door just like Ig and Snow.

Bella Rose had a wonderful year and half with us. Ig and Snow didn't really interact with her because of her age, but she was always with me either in my arms or lying next to me whether it be at my desk, on the couch or while sleeping. Sadly at the age of seventeen and a half, Bella Rose gained her wings. I was devastated.

## *Tiny but Mighty*

The next little fella we rescued was Macho. We had moved to Florida and when I traveled to be with Wayne on the road, Ig and Snowy would stay at a pet resort. Many times I had seen this little boy Maltese running around and he seemed to always be there when we would drop off or pick up Ig and Snowy. The staff reported numerous times that Macho had decided he was Ig and Snowy's protector and would always hang with them, not letting other pups too close.

Turns out, Macho was living at the pet resort via a rescuer who pulled him from a shelter. He had been hit in the head several times causing him to have a ruptured saliva gland that would swell under his chin. The rescuer was friends with the owner of the pet resort, who allowed Macho to live there. She also didn't have the funds to get the required surgery to fix the issue, leaving Macho with a temporary drain in his neck so the swelling wouldn't occur. This made the little fella very undesirable for adoption to many. Imagine seeing a cute little pup with a drain that constantly leaked saliva. Not pretty.

Something about this little fella spoke to me and my heart ached that no one would take him and get him a simple surgery. He was so personable and friendly and he never let his medical issue take away from his outgoing personality. After many weeks of going through the pros and cons of adopting another pup, I convinced Wayne we needed to help this little guy. Plus he was





always playing with and protecting Ig and Snowy so the bond was already there.

After several consultations, we were referred to a wonderful vet who performed the necessary surgery and, as he put it, “gave him a little chin tuck because he was such a handsome fella.” He didn’t want a young pup like Macho to have a saggy chin.

## *A Rose by any Other Name*

The one pup that we’ve rescued and who touched my heart the deepest was Angel Rose. All of them are very special and touch me greatly but Angel Rose needed me and I needed her in a way that none of the others did.

In April 2013, I came across a website for Southern Comfort Maltese Rescue (SCMR) and a photo with a paragraph about a tiny Maltese pup who was paralyzed. She had been handed over to a shelter by someone claiming they had found her on the side of a road. Through various channels, SCMR had been contacted and they were able to take her into their program. The minute I saw her face, I felt a tug like no other.

I started the process of becoming her family and giving her the forever home she so deserved. Throughout that process, I got to know several of the incredible people affiliated with SCMR, including its co-founder, Mary. What I began to realize through the process of adopting Angel was how passionate each one of these folks were about saving the pups they rescued and finding them loving homes. Because of Angel’s needs they were especially selective of who would become Angel’s forever family.

The process of choosing Angel’s forever family was lengthy and filled with many phone calls, emails, and home visits.

During this time, Angel had been relocated to Chattanooga, Tennessee, SCMR’s home base, and was being fostered by Mary. She was also receiving physical therapy and being evaluated by different medical teams.

Throughout this process I had a great deal of contact with Mary. Though I had not met her in person yet, I could sense she truly had a heart of gold and would do just about anything possible to save these precious babies and to make sure they had homes where they knew nothing but love, care, and companionship for the rest of their lives. Because Angel was living with Mary and her husband, Richard,

she captured a little extra piece of Mary’s heart.

SCMR chose Wayne and me to be Angel’s forever family and the day we met Mary and Richard to pick up her up is a day I will never forget. She was the tiniest little girl I had ever seen with a spirit bigger than I’ve ever seen in such a little creature. She was full of determination and feist and did not let her disability get in the way of what she wanted. My heart was stolen instantly!



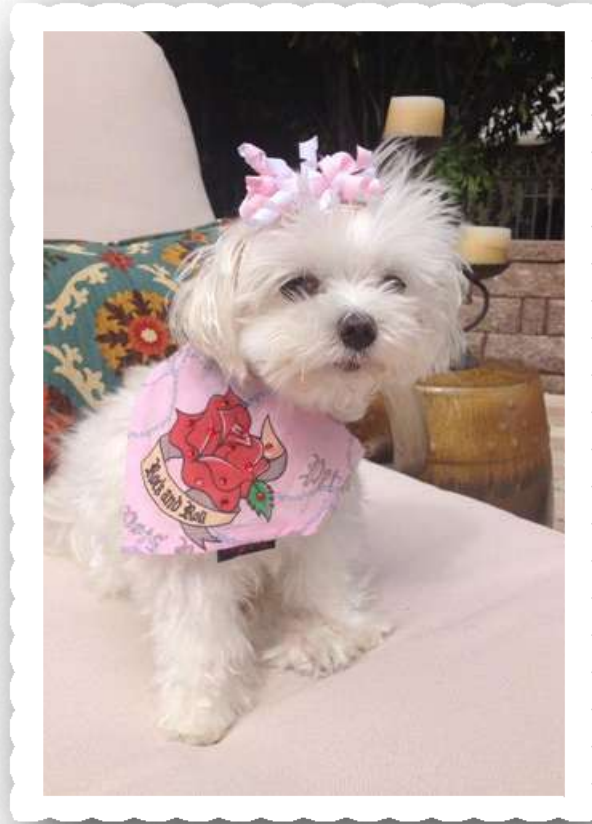


## Who Rescued Whom?

I learned something else the day we picked up Angel. Mary was battling cancer. I didn't know the whole story of her ordeal but what I did sense was Mary's journey had been made somewhat easier because of the pups of SCMR and there certainly was a very special bond between her and Angel.

We had two wonderful years with Angel Rose. She flourished and "ran" in her cart right alongside Igloo and Macho. She was always with me, my partner in crime, and she stole the heart of every person who met her.

Angel Rose was a teacher. She taught me, as well as others, about willingness and the spirit to overcome. She taught me that with a little faith, trust, and determination just about anything you set out to do can be accomplished. Throughout the time we had Angel Rose, Mary and I stayed in touch and I would periodically update her with pictures and stories of Angel Rose's latest adventures. Sadly, in December 2014, six short months after Angel Rose came home with us, our dear friend Mary lost her battle with cancer. About a year and a half after coming home with us, Angel Rose developed several different serious medical issues that eventually took her life.



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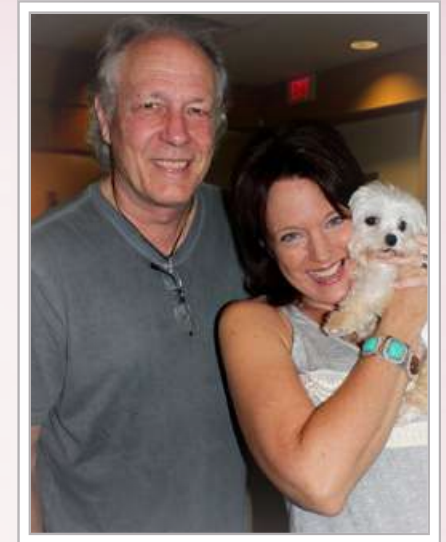
Boca Raton, FL 33496

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*In loving memory of Igloo, Snowball,*

*Bella Rose, and Angel Rose*

*In honor of Macho*





“DRINKING GOOD WINE  
WITH GOOD FOOD  
IN GOOD COMPANY IS ONE OF LIFE’S  
MOST CIVILIZED PLEASURES.”

MICHAEL BROADBENT

A photograph of a tall, slender champagne flute glass filled with bubbly champagne, sitting on a dark wooden balcony railing. The background shows a sunset over a body of water with distant hills, creating a warm, golden glow. The sun is low on the horizon, reflecting on the water and the glass.

WINE  
COCKTAILS  
& COFFEE



## Have a Drink with Me!

I have often heard that saying by Michael Broadbent and believe it to be so true. If I could add anything to the quote it would be the following words: “wine, a good spirit, or a good coffee drink.”

It’s no secret Wayne and I love beverages of all sorts. While working on this project, it was interesting to see the many different friends that either introduced us to new foods and beverages or were influential in developing our tastes.



We have friends who are amazing cooks and quite frequently share their love of cooking with us. We have friends who are incredibly knowledgeable about wines and have educated us and introduced us to some of our most favored vineyards. We have friends who actually study the intricate characteristics of various spirits and coffees, unlocking a new fascination of both within us.

Coming from a family that raised a great deal of what we ate, I grew up spending time with my grandmothers and my mom in the kitchen and seeing my grandfathers, father, and uncles hunting, fishing, and raising what would become food for our table. I was always fascinated with what went on in the kitchen. I watched and took mental notes as my grandmother and Mom would cook, and I wanted to be involved as much as possible when they were in the kitchen.

As I grew older and traveled the world, I was exposed to even more culinary delights and my tastes and fascinations continued to expand. I frequently read *Bon Appetit*, *Food and Wine*, and other culinary and beverage magazines. I never missed TV shows like *Hotel* and *Falcon Crest*. As

a child, instead of dreaming of being an actress, I often dreamt about owning a hotel, restaurant, or winery. Much like a rock’n’roll lifestyle is glamorized, I think I saw the same glamour in being the restaurant, hotel, or vineyard owner. What is surprising to me now is the fact that I never once considered a school and career path in culinary arts or hospitality. In high school or college,



while I did have jobs, I never held one as a waitress or fast food worker. Reflecting back, I am sure I could write a whole chapter on why that didn’t happen. That could be for another time.

But it’s safe to say, I have always been quite in tune with my culinary intuition. To this day, I love to cook and we love to entertain. Wayne has even found a few hidden kitchen talents and we enjoy being in the kitchen together. But because we spend so much time away from home, we don’t do nearly as much of either as we would like to do. When we are home, there’s nothing that I love better than whipping up one of Wayne’s favorite meals and if we throw a party, we’ve been known to go all out. Life is short so why not enjoy the things that bring you joy?

You won’t find our name on a vineyard but we did have the opportunity to have a few cases of wine bear the name of Little River Band.



# SMOKED TEQUILA OLD FASHIONED

FROM JIM BOCHICCHIO

**3 oz silver tequila**, premium quality

**18 cinnamon sticks**

**orange for garnish**

**Aztec chocolate bitters**

**orange bitters**

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED**

**oak grilling plank**

**baker's torch**

**fire extinguisher** (just in case)

**PREPARATION**

1 to 2 weeks in advance, add the cinnamon sticks to the bottle of tequila. The longer it steeps (at room temperature), the richer it becomes.

*This may be best performed outdoors:*

- With the baker's torch, burn a section of the oak plank roughly the size of the rim of the glass.
- Work the flame over the plank in a circular motion slowly about 6-8 inches off the surface.
- You want to generate as much smoke from a glowing plank as possible *without* it actually catching fire. Practice, practice, practice!

- As soon as you get enough smoke generated, place a cocktail glass upside down on the plank, trapping the smoke inside.
- Turn off the torch first!
- While the smoke is flavoring the glass, pour the tequila into an ice-filled shaker glass and stir to chill.
- Add a couple of dashes of each bitters.
- Turn the smoked cocktail glass right side up and fill with ice.
- Rim the cocktail glass with an orange slice and lay over the ice.
- Pour the tequila/bitters mix in over ice and enjoy.







Chappellet

### Vineyards

*Like friends have shared with us, I'd like to share with you some of our favorites.*

Constant



C A D E

[www.cadewinery.com](http://www.cadewinery.com)

C H A P P E L L E T

[www.chappellet.com](http://www.chappellet.com)

C O N S T A N T

[www.constantwine.com](http://www.constantwine.com)

D A R I O U S H

[www.darioush.com](http://www.darioush.com)



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Gargiulo

G A R G I U L O

[www.gargiulovineyards.com](http://www.gargiulovineyards.com)

R E V E R I E

[www.reveriewine.com](http://www.reveriewine.com)

R O M B A U E R

[www.rombauer.com](http://www.rombauer.com)

T U R L E Y

[www.turleywinecellars.com](http://www.turleywinecellars.com)

W O O D S I D E

[www.woodsidevineyards.com](http://www.woodsidevineyards.com)



Turley



# LIMONCELLO

FROM MARIA REDMAN

*If you've ever been to Italy and had some real homemade limoncello you've tasted a little bit of liquid heaven. My dear friend Maria made a batch last year and it was divine! She agreed to share her recipe with me and I can honestly say the hardest part of this whole recipe is waiting until it's ready to drink.*

**8 large lemons**

**1 liter of ethanol**  
(Everclear grain alcohol)

**5 cups sugar**

**1 liter water**

- Zest the lemons, peel only, no white.
- Combine the lemon zest with 1 liter of ethanol (grain alcohol).
- Cover and let stand for 3 days.
- Combine sugar and water, heat to dissolve the sugar.
- Combine the sugar water mixture with the ethanol (grain alcohol) lemon zest mixture.
- Seal tightly in glass jar and let stand for at least 8 days at room temperature, in dark, cool area.
- Filter through cheesecloth into clean bottle that can be kept in freezer, should you desire to store in freezer.
- Chill and serve.





## Coffee

Whether it's an extra strong morning cup of java to get your day going, a much needed iced coffee for an afternoon boost, a delicious cappuccino and a good book on a rainy Sunday afternoon, or capping off an evening

dinner with friends while sipping on a cafe doppio, there's just something about an artisan coffee drink that warms the soul. Some dear friends have mastered this craft and just one of the highlights of visiting their little bungalow is all of the wonderful coffee drinks they serve us! Pure love!

"Drink what makes you happy with friends who make you laugh!"



# CROWN & CRANBERRY

(MAKES APPROXIMATELY 1 SERVING)



**1.5 oz of Crown Royal  
splash of cranberry juice**

- Place a couple of ice cubes in a rocks glass.
- Top off with Crown Royal.
- Splash with cranberry juice.



Sometimes you have friends bring you something you've never heard of, doubt that it could possibly taste good, yet when you touch it to your lips you are blown away by its delicious irony.





## RHONDA GAYLE NELSON

is a philanthropist, music lover, and entrepreneur. She has owned and operated a wedding dress shop, managed rental properties, held real estate licenses in multiple states, and was an innkeeper at a historic 150-year-old bed and breakfast in the Smoky Mountains. Co-owner of a 45-plus-year-old company that writes and produces radio and TV jingles—Tuesday Productions—music lives deep in her heart.

Born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee, Rhonda is a true lover of country, pop, and the blues. That love led her to a Little River Band show in 1999 at the Wildhorse Saloon in Nashville where she met her husband, bassist and singer Wayne Nelson. This serendipitous meeting was the perfect next step in her life as they married a year later.

She is very active in animal rescue, children's charities, and cancer charities, and is currently a board member for the Florida Fishing Academy. When spare time is available, Rhonda loves biking, yoga, browsing art galleries, and shopping.

Passionate about good food and wine, Rhonda loves to entertain and host intimate parties and soirees when at home. Wayne and Rhonda are avid travelers, having traveled extensively both here in the States and abroad. A self-admitted shoe addict, Rhonda is also a chronic collector of rescue Maltese pups. Rhonda and Wayne have lived in several states but currently reside in South Florida with their rescue Maltese.







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