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Inside

Woman-owned restaurants
succeeding despite challenges

PAGE 4

Steak your heart on it

PAGE 8

Iowa's moveable feast

PAGE 12

Recipes

PAGE 17

Optimism in the darkness

THE DISH — PAGE 18



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Woman-owned

RESTAURANTS SUCCEEDING DESPITE CHALLENGES

Females now make up 60% of restaurant employees in Iowa.

By Jim Duncan

“Woman-owned” is now a proud designation. Restaurants are flaunting that signage. It’s been a long time coming. Women make up 60% of restaurant employees in Iowa, but men still get far more notice. Cyd Koehn of Cyd’s Catering explained the challenge for female owners.

“First of all, banks really don’t want to loan us money,” she said. “I have been running my business for four decades now, and I still get the attitude that this is probably a hobby and they don’t think I am in it for the long haul. I don’t think that happens to men.”

Mariela Maya

She added that she recently sat through a tasting, by a major supplier, with a male restaurateur and only he was offered free sample cases of products. She also said that she thinks female owners are more apt to encounter customers playing hard ball over things like cancellation fees, breaking contracts and renegotiating prices.

Still, woman-owned food businesses have played a huge role in creating the city's positive restaurant profile. Sixty years ago, women in the business were usually only owners in partnership with men. Johnny & Kay's was the most famous restaurant in central Iowa during the 1950s and 1960s. The Compianos spun that off into Kay's House of Pies, many of which are still represented with recipes served at Village Inn and Baker's Square. Red and Joe Giudicessi's Christopher's would likely have been called Red's, like their earlier place downtown, if not for the fact that they inherited a large, expensive neon sign that read Christopher's.

Female-owned Marge's and Sherry's were both successful on Ingersoll in the 1950s and 1960s but were short-lived. Marge Pardekooper's place was an upscale diner before those were a thing. It later became the signal People's Music. El Patio was female-owned in its original Valley Junction venue and also at 35th and Ingersoll until Dahl's bought them out. They remained female-owned a few more years in their present location on 37th Street.

After the early 1970s, Helen & Pat's and Chuck's in Highland Park were woman-owned. Linda Bisignano of Chuck's was a beloved dynamo who represented Des Moines restaurants and the Italian community as well as anyone. Totally dedicated to the restaurant, Linda lived above the space. Ann Tancredi of Anjo's in Windsor Heights owned the first truly European restaurant in town. After moving to Iowa from the Italian food center of Modena, she operated in Madrid for years. Legend has it that the Colby real estate developers offered her free rent for life to move her restaurant here. She kept

on running the place till she had a stroke, working into her eighties.

Alice Nizzi's family came to Iowa like Tancredi's and Kay Compiano's to work in Iowa coal mining areas. Her Alice's SpaghettiLand was a destination restaurant through the 1960s. It is still so fondly recalled that both a major street and city park in Waukee are named for her.

But women remained secondary in the popular mind as restaurant owners till the last 20 years. Some restaurants today still feature female partners — Star Bar, Table 128, Irina's, all the Dark Side of the Spoon restaurants, and Manhattan Deli are headed by husband and wife partners. Lola's Fine Kitchen is headed by brother and sister — Hannah Elliott and Taufeeek Shah. Their inspiration is the Pakistani and Filipino cuisines of their parents.

But female-run places are becoming more popular each year, particularly in the last dozen years. Christina Moffatt's Crème Cupcake and Dessert Lounge is a high-end bar paired with a superb bakery specializing in desserts.

Women-owned businesses dominate catering in town. Cherry Madole and Susan Madorsky have elevated lunch with the new Tangerine at the Art Center and the Tangerine-operated Big Room at Mainstream Studios. Taste to Go! is owned by sisters Andrea Williams and Emily Gross. Catering by Cyd is solely owned by Koehn. All three bring an attention to detail that few men are capable of doing in such an elegant manner. Madorsky was on the line in the kitchen of, perhaps, the most legendary of American restaurants — Jeremiah Tower's Stars. Madole worked some of the best restaurants in New York City. Trellis is owned by Lisa LaValle and usually staffs all-female help. LaValle's soups are the best in town. Her sandwiches, pastas and desserts keep her place in Greater Des Moines Botanical Gardens packed for lunches. Brandy Lueders' Grateful Chef also makes exquisite soups, among many things.

Mexican women have contributed



Cyd Koehn

by establishing some of the best Latino cuisine in town. Tacos Marianna's is as good a taqueria as Des Moines has seen. It has killer specials in midweek. Baja Cocina brings a real family atmosphere and a new style of Mexican cuisine. Baja calls itself "su casa, su rancho," and the busy kitchen is filled with three generations of chefs in the kitchen, grandmothers and their progeny. Most everything is made from scratch, and the tortilla dishes are made thicker than at most places. Shrimp dishes, ceviche and fish dishes are worthy of a place named for the land between the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortez.

Kim Anh heads the all-female family restaurant Pho All Seasons. She grew up in her parents' restaurant on Ninth Street. When an assessment for an ordered grease trap upgrade was more than the property was worth, the family moved to Phoenix and operated a Vietnamese restaurant there. A buyer offered more than the family thought it was worth. All the women in the family moved back to Des Moines, and the men stayed in Arizona. Fawn's is a woman-owned Asian restaurant with a legion of fans. Fawn Soulinthavong was one of the first people in town to offer a pan-Asian menu with Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese and Cambodian dishes. Des Moines likes that.

Three newcomers to Des Moines have regenerated the local food scene with special cuisines and stories. Brenda Tran's Vietnam Café is a testimony to female perseverance. The middle child in a family of five children, she took on responsibility to feed the family after bombing separated her father from the rest during the Vietnam War. Her mom and two older sisters went to work, so Brenda was charged with taking care of her younger siblings.

She traded their meager savings to buy sugar and began making candies. Traveling village to village by bicycle, she traded candy for rice as a very young entrepreneur. Because her uncle had worked for the Americans in the war, he was an early boat refugee to Iowa. He then invited his niece and her siblings to join him here. After seven years of red tape, they arrived in Des Moines 36 years ago, not knowing any English at all.

Tran worked three jobs and dreamed

of owning her own restaurant, as cooking for others had also been her sustaining passion. She opened Vietnam Café in the Merle Hay Mall food court 11 years ago, coming in early to cook and then working at a nail shop during serving time. Eventually she could work her own place full-time.

She survived the virus wars by upgrading her service with decorative bowls and personal contact with customers. She instituted a Friday "all you can eat" buffet, and it started bringing in as many as 500 customers a month. Intrigued by Tran's courage and love of cooking, many came back several other days of the week.

They return for more than appreciation of her indefatigable spirit. This place serves some of the best Vietnamese food in Des Moines, and Des Moines is famous for its Vietnamese restaurants. Among the specialties, which might change daily, are her bánh xèo, Vietnamese crepes inspired by the French colonial history; betel nut


leaf rolls stuffed with meat; bún riêu (crab soup); fermented seafood soup; and banana bread.

What does she think is the hardest part of female ownership?

"It's the physical challenge," Tran said. "Cooking is physical work. Heavy equipment must be lifted and cleaned."

Chrissy Johnson's Joppa Experience is a second example of female inspiration in the Merle Hay Mall food court. She grew up in the hard knock streets of southside Chicago's foster world. A single mom of a single mom, she dreamed of a culinary life and made it to culinary school. But to take care of her kids, she worked two jobs, one with the Chicago school system and one as a personal caretaker. Her daily regimen took her away from the kids from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

After many years, she moved her family to Des Moines. Here, she says "I bet on myself." Giving credit to the helpful organizations of Des Moines, she learned



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business skills at Evelyn Davis Center and opened Joppa in the midst of the corona wars.

She brought the tastes of her childhood to Iowa, like Tran. She serves southside Chicago all-stars — oxtail, catfish, greens, sweet potatoes, Chicago-style Italian beef sandwiches, steakburgers, Polish sausage, etc. She makes regular trips to Chicago for provisions.

Johnson says the hardest part of being a woman owner is the stress of fickle business during COVID.

“Today is payroll day for me, and I am crossing my fingers that I have enough business today to make it,” she said.

She also appreciates Des Moines.

“If you have an entrepreneurship dream, Des Moines offers the networking resources to make it happen. Chicago didn’t.”

Mariela Maya is a Peruvian immigrant. She came to the U.S. in 2001 and immersed herself in English language studies in her pursuit of the American Dream. She opened Des Moines’ first Peruvian café in 2019 with Fabiola Carlin. Maya says it was an effort to hang on to and share her cultural roots while becoming American. She reminds you that the first Peruvians were probably Asians 6,000 years ago. After Incan agricultural genius added to the cuisine, Spanish conquerors took it to new levels of fusion.



The Japanese population of Peru is the largest in the Americas, and their influence is huge in Peruvian cuisine, sometimes called




Chrissy Johnson of Joppa Experience

Nikkei. Some of America’s greatest Japanese chefs, including a guy named Nobu, came to this country, like Maya did, from Lima. Lunch specials, Peruvian and Nikkei dinners, and an aggressive happy hour have introduced many an Iowan to the fusion magic of Peru. ■

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STEAK YOUR HEART ON IT

America's favorite protein, in the year of COVID

By Jim Duncan



“We had everything before us, we had nothing before us.” Charles Dickens’ lens on the French Revolution was “so much like the present time that some of the nosiest authorities insisted on its being received for good or evil.”

The French Revolution birthed horrid evil, but it also created the modern restaurant. Robespierre’s gang murdered so many nobles that their cooks became a burdensome class of unemployed vagrants. Napoleon helped put them to work for the common man.

Restaurants in today’s recent reign of terror were amongst the hardest hit institutions. Government shut them down,

then it handicapped them, then it made labor and supply line shortages so severe that it became a struggle just to keep the doors open.

Among the great food lessons gleaned from the ravages of COVID-19, one of the most interesting was that there is no one way to predict how people will respond to inflation or terror. Just within the category of beef, the most susceptible meat to inflation, two utterly opposite reactions manifested themselves. Even as the price of USDA prime cuts of ribeye, filet and prime rib rose by more than 50% in a little more than a year, demand did not slack as expected.



Short rib from Little Brother



Flap steak is a hot new thing – courtesy of Iowa Restaurant Association

Des Moines' three totally USDA prime, aged steakhouses were full again during visits in late 2021 to Fleming's, AJ's and 801 Steak and Chop House. One waiter explained it by paraphrasing Jerry Leiber's lyrics to Peggy Lee's "Is That All There Is?"

"I think people have decided that, if this is how the world ends, then let's keep dancing, let's break out the booze."

This attitude manifested in many forms. No period in the last 50 years saw the extravagance of wagyu become so popular in Des Moines. Fareway, the small-town chain that represents the common man, sells it now, even at prices close to \$100 a pound. Fresh Thyme has wagyu weekends. Hy-Vee finds it if you want it, too. B&B now custom ages prime beef cuts, and they have a long line on special occasions like Christmas Eve.

At the same time, people who could not afford to pay the piper looked for new, less expensive cuts of beef to satisfy their steak lust. Chuck steaks, hanger steaks, coulotte, tri tip, round steak, flank, flap and short ribs all popped up on menus, even in the best restaurants in the metro.

Tenderizing technology has developed considerably the last 20 years. That makes it possible to buy cuts like round and chuck

that are easier to chew than they used to be. Hanger, coulotte and flank all have followings that did not exist a quarter-century ago. Hanger used to be known as butcher's steak because butchers would often save it for themselves. Cut from the high part of the short loin, it gets its name from the fact that it hangs over the diaphragm just behind the last rib. It's a remarkably tender cut, some think second only to the filet. It is well marbled, too, but its relationship to the diaphragm interferes with its popularity.

Europeans have historically been fonder of this cut than Americans. In Britain, it is referred to as "skirt," which is not to be confused with the American skirt steak. In France it is known as the onglet, in Italian the lombatello, and in Spanish as solomillo de pulmón or entraña. Django serves it in Des Moines. So does Mulberry Street Tavern, as butcher's steak. Proudfoot & Bird grills it over wood fire and serves it with a charred tomato chimichurri.

Coulotte is cut from the same neighborhood as the hanger. It is also sometimes called "cap" steak because it comes from the cap muscle, which is one of three that make up the top sirloin butt. It has a lot of marbling for an inexpensive cut and is popular in South America,

where it is also known as picanha. George Formaro of Orchestrate says he plans to introduce it soon at one of that company's restaurants. Flap steak, also from the sirloin butt, won an Iowa Restaurant Association contest for odd cuts of steak.

People sometimes think that hanger and flank steaks are interchangeable. Not in America where hanger is the best marbled of all secondary cuts and flank is the leanest. Flank comes from under the loins and behind the plate. It should never be cooked more than to medium rare. In France, where it is often braised for extra tenderness, it is called bavette. Flank steak in America is used most often in beef jerky and London broil. At Centro it is made exclusively for steak salad. At Terra Brazilian Grill, it is called alcatra.

The heart of beef is a muscle like most all steaks. Unlike most organ meats, it does not have a strong mineral flavor. Wrapped in fat, it cuts like a steak. Anyone who prefers a heavily marbled cut, like ribeye, will likely love grilled hearts. In Des Moines, I have enjoyed them at farm dinners and sometimes find them at Mexican and Asian supermarkets.

Round steak has been popular in the U.S. longer than these other secondary cuts of steak, yet it's harder than ever to



John Brooks dry ages all cuts of beef at B&B.

find in Iowa restaurants now. Usually pounded to tenderness, dipped in flour, then an egg bath and then Panko, it is best known as chicken fried steak, an almost regional dish today that is beloved in the South, particularly Texas and Oklahoma. Bubba's is the king of the dish in Des Moines. Good versions can also be found at Cracker Barrel and Machine Shed where it is called country fried steak. Drake Diner serves it for breakfast as well as for dinner.

Chuck steaks, sometimes large enough to be called roasts, and tri-tip are becoming more popular in Mexican applications. The meat has enough marbling that it can be seared and then braised to lend tender fillings to tacos, burritos and barbacoa. Malo uses chuck in its barbacoa.

Tri-tip is another cut relatively new to Des Moines. It's long been a favorite of California, where it is best known in barbecues. It comes from the same part of the sirloin as flank steak, and Gateway Market Café uses it in both their burritos and market tacos. Terra Brazilian Grill serves it as maminha.

Short ribs are catching on fast in Des Moines. They come from a part of the cow that borders brisket and the ribs. They are crazy tender when cooked slowly enough to break down their connective tissue and collagen. They also differ from "beef ribs" in that short ribs' considerable flesh is on top on the bone while beef ribs' minimal flesh is between the bones.

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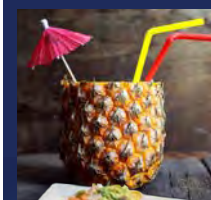


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Short ribs are rather seasonal in Des Moines, meaning it's a winter food. I have enjoyed awesome plates at Trostel's Greenbriar, but only as a special. They are more consistently found at Little Brother and Django, where they are the beef in their famous Bourguignon.

Salisbury steak, one of America's original "health" foods, is also coming back but not so much in Des Moines. When the famous 19th century doctor J.H. Salisbury advocated a meat centric diet, he invented this steak because it was much easier to digest than whole muscle meat. Today it is usually served with a heavy gravy that does not look all that healthy.

Des Moines steakhouses offer many classic European sauces — Bechamel, velouté, espagnole, hollandaise, and Creole and Provençal — plus de Burgo. Noah's has a cult audience for its steaks in Colbert sauce.

Vegetable steaks are becoming popular in steakhouses, too. One of the most frequently seen is the cauliflower steak, called "steak" because its thick parts look like bones. Gordon Ramsey has done a lot to popularize this dish. It's usually drizzled with olive oil and red pepper flakes and sometimes Parmigiano-Reggiano. It should cook at least half an hour to tenderize. Proudfoot & Bird makes a fabulous cauliflower steak with saffron couscous, golden raisin, pine nuts, and a sherry glaze.

Portabella steaks looked like they might become a thing about 10 years ago, but most steakhouses gave up on them in favor of



Prime rib from AJ's

smaller baby bellas, which are often stuffed. Eggplant remains the most commonly grilled vegetable steak.

Star fruit and jackfruit have been promoted by supermarkets here as steaks the last few summers. Rare among fruits, they have a solid enough texture to stand up to a hot grill. ■

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Iowa's MOVEABLE FEAST

The various riches of today's Iowa dining table are unique to this time and place.

By Jim Duncan

The term “a moveable feast” is used a lot these days, usually in contexts that have little or nothing to do with the original meaning or the famous meaning that Ernest Hemingway gave it. Before Hemingway, the term was used for festivals that were held on different dates each year — Easter, Mardi Gras, Thanksgiving, Hannukah, Diwali, Lunar New Year, etc.

Hemingway, whose wife, Mary, gave his book its title, invented a new meaning. For him it was a zeitgeist that never leaves the warmer chambers of one's heart and memory. “If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go, it stays with you the rest of your life.” This tale is a contemporary suggestion of an ultimate Iowa moveable feast in the Hemingway definition. The various riches of today's Iowa dining table are unique to this time and place.

PRE-DINNER CHARCUTERIE

Metro Des Moines rivals San Francisco Bay as America's best purveyor of charcuterie. That probably happened because the great seed company formerly known as Pioneer was attracted to Parma, the heart of Italy's greatest food region. Parma is home to D.O.P., which stands for protected designation of origin. Its unique prosciutto and cheese are protected from cheap copies by international law. Scientist Herb Eckhouse was sent to Parma for several years when working for Pioneer. He and wife Kathy fell hard as a young Hemingway for the charcuterie.

When they retired from Pioneer, the couple created an Iowa version of the great cured meats and salamis of Emilia-Romagna, the breadbasket of Italy which extends from Parma to Bologna. They named their company La Quercia, which translates to “the oak,” which is the symbol of Parma and should be of Des Moines. They persuaded Iowa farmers to feed their hogs a diet that includes acorns, like the hogs of pre-World-War-II Parma ate.



Des Moines rivals the San Francisco Bay for best charcuterie.

They are now America's top producer of quality cured meats, salamis and bacons. They support heritage breeds of pigs — acorn eating Tamworth, Iowa Cinta Sinese, and Iberico Americano. They support the highest standards of husbandry. They currently produce nine kinds of prosciutto, eight salamis, three bacon/sausages, three pancetta, and five specialty products from cuts of the pig north of the hams.

Add some great Iowa cheeses, like

legendary Maytag blue and those of cheese makers who use the organic milks of the Kalona area, and you can enjoy a charcuterie platter in Des Moines that you won't likely find west of Emilia-Romagna.

Some of the best charcuterie platters in the metro can be enjoyed at Django (where you can build your own), Centro, Eatery A, Cheese Shop, Cheese Bar, Anna Dolce, Harbinger, Mulberry Street Tavern, CharcuterMe, Purveyor, The Republic on Grand, WineStyles, and Proof.

SANDWICH COURSE

Iowa is gifted with the bacon makers, black dirt tomatoes and bread makers to make it the best place in the world to indulge in the BLT, at least between July and October. Iowa is home to Niman Ranch Pork, the free-range pig farmers alliance that produces only heritage breeds like Duroc and Berkshire. Their bacon is renowned nationwide. So is that of Oskaloosa's DeBruin, Wacoma's Vande Rose, Webster City's custom meats, Adel's Des Moines Bacon, Des Moines' Berkwood and Sioux City's Bacon Creek.

If Mike Dukakis was running for President now, rather than in 1988, he might fare much better in Iowa. He was derided here during his campaign for suggesting that Iowa farmers give up corn for arugula. Arugula was rare back then; now it's a rival to all lettuces on the contemporary BLT. Farmers markets have it and so do supermarkets.

Bread is something for Des Moines to take pride in, too. Before South Union and La Mie, Iowans would carry bread home from New York or San Francisco. Fancy Bread, the preferred BLT bread of delis like Graziano's and B&B, Mexican tortas, Vietnamese banh mis and Jewish challah give Des Moines the kind of bread diversity a great BLT needs.

Tomatoes, though, are the key. Nowhere do better tomatoes grow than in our famous black dirt. Being home to the Seed Savers Exchange, the world's great co-op for heritage and heirloom seeds, means Iowans can find almost any type of tomato still in existence. And the metro has its own mayonnaise, the mustard-seeded tangy Mrs. Clark's.



Loose meat sandwiches like this from Paula's are an Iowa icon.

In addition to the delis mentioned above, great BLTs turn up in season just about anywhere sandwiches matter. Gateway Market Café, The Station on Ingersoll, South Union Bread Café, La Mie, Paula's, High Life Lounge, Royal Mile, Iowa Taproom and Manhattan Deli all make a great BLT.

Because Maid Rite has always been an Iowa company, loose meat sandwiches are a state icon. Paula's and Brick Street make the most generous ones in the area.

Iowa's other local celebrity sandwich is the breaded pork tenderloin. B&B makes theirs with real pork tenderloin. Most everyone else uses tenderized pork from lower portions of the hog. You can find them at almost all diners and also in some fine dining places. Thick, thin, huge, small, with or without mustard, or ketchup, every meat-eating Iowan has a favorite. Japanese places call them tonkatsu.

Indiana has a restaurant that claims to have invented the sandwich, but Cedar Rapids' Bohemians were using pork instead of

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Iowa's tomato variety is best in America.

veal in Iowa to make wiener schnitzel back in the 19th century. So, Iowa can argue to be its inventor, too.

Jethro's, Brick Street, Smitty's Tenderloin Shop, Francie's Bar & Grill, Goldie's Ice Cream Shoppe, Iowa Taproom, Centro, Kelly's Little Nipper, Mr. Bibb, Night Hawk Bar and Grill, Norwood Inn, High Life Lounge, West Side Family, Drake Diner, Paula's, Chicken Coop, Whiskey River, and Proudfoot & Bird all turn out a tenderloin that has devoted fans.

EARTHLY COURSE

Because Iowa's soil is the most productive in America by many measures, it figures that we grow amazing things beyond tomatoes. Iowa calls itself the corn state, and everyone seemingly loves the short-lived sweet corn of late summer. The corn does freeze well, so creative restaurants serve sweet corn dishes beyond September.

Alba, Harbinger, Proof, Table 128, The Grateful Chef, Django, and Eatery A have

all come up with multiple ways to enjoy the pride of Iowa fields. Some of their creations include sweet corn potato soup, sweet corn salad, fritters, pancakes, relish, ice cream and, our personal favorite — sweet corn risotto.

More than 90% of Iowa's corn, though, is feed corn. Humans hardly ever ate it in Iowa till recently when Latinos taught us to love tamales and corn tortillas. Southerners spread the gospel of grits (Bubba, Cracker Barrel, HoQ, Motley School Tavern, Early Bird, Star Bar, Flying Mango, Drake Diner, Cyd's Catering), and culinary stars sold polenta (Americana and St. Kilda's Collective) as a food for kings not peasants. Tamale's Industry and Reyes' Tamales turn out their specialties in both savory and dessert versions. Taquerias like La Familia, Marianna's and Baja Cocina have taught us to love corn tortillas for reasons beyond the fact that they are much healthier than flour tortillas, particularly if one is watching his calories.



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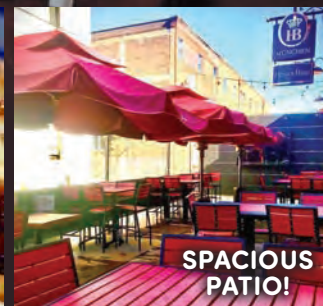
Iowa can claim invention of the breaded pork tenderloin.

No other vegetable represents the Iowa earth more than squash. The acorn squash, formerly known as the Des Moines squash, originated in Iowa. It's argued that the Sibley squash did, too. Squash soup is a favorite dish on menus during the half year of the short days. Alba, Proof, Harbinger, Table 128, Lucca, Eatery A, Cheese Bar, Trellis, Tangerine at the Art Center, Aposto at Café di Scala, Scenic Route Bakery, Gazali's, The Republic on Grand, and Clyde's Fine Diner have all served fabulous squash soups.

THE MAIN COURSE OF DES MOINES

Steak de Burgo is, without question, the tablecloth darling entrée of Iowa's capital city. Rarely seen outside Des Moines, almost every place in the metro serves a version of this classic. Its origins are argued as they have been for more than 80 years. Some think it started with Johnny Compiano of Johnny and Kay's. Others think Vic Talerico of Vic's Tally Ho created it. A Better Homes and Gardens cookbook of the 1950s credited the Compiano recipe, but our research found that Vic's was the first place to reference it on a menu.

Both Johnny and Vic were Italians who grew up, unlike most Des Moines Italians, in what was called the Francis Avenue neighborhood of Des Moines, around Broadlawns Hospital. That hood was not as insular as the southside. In Francis, immigrants from all parts of Italy, north and south, mingled with immigrants from other European countries. It has been suggested in *The Iowan*, without a letter of dissent, that the name of the dish originated with former Republican supporters of the Spanish Civil War. After being vanquished by the Fascist-supported Nationalists, many emigrated.



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In Catalunya and Valencia, a popular upscale dish was called bistek a ioli. It consisted of grilled steak, usually tenderloin, with a sauce of olive oil immersed in garlic and herbs, usually basil. Outside Barcelona, it was called bistek Barcelona or Catalunya. When the Fascists won the war, many things that referenced Barcelona, Valencia or Catalunya were verboten, a very Fascist word.

So clever chefs changed the name to bistek de Burgos. Burgo had been the Fascist center of operations during the war and came to represent all things Fascist. Immigrants to America brought the name steak de Burgo to Francis Avenue in Des Moines where the Compianos and Talericos (both couples were a rare mix of northern and southern Italian heritage) learned it. It's just a theory, but it's a romantic one, and steak de Burgo deserves romance.

Originally, its sauce was olive oil, garlic and basil. Today, butter has replaced olive oil because butter has become cheaper and olive oil more expensive. Greek Americans, like those who ran Johnny's Vets Club, added cream. Today, there are two distinct version of de Burgo, one with cream, one without it. Tally Ho on the Go, owned by Vic Talerico's son and granddaughter, is the epitome of the original. Some places even offer it both ways. Of the three all prime steakhouses in town, only AJ's offers it on the daily menu, with cream added to a white wine and garlic sauce. 801 has it on the Sunday menu (which is a bargain) and Fleming's, a Florida-based chain, has none of it.

DESSERT COURSE



Iowa is apple country, the original home of what became the Johnathan. Seed Savers offers so many apples it spins your head, particularly in late autumn when visitors can harvest anything on the ground free. Pie is an English thing that reached new heights in America.

For complexing reasons, apple pie is hard to find in the metro today. Crouse's in Indianola still offers a choice of several homemade pies daily. Paula's has pie daily, too. But the sine qua none of Des Moines pie is the Iowa Orchards apple pie, sold on site and served anywhere a discriminating host wants to impress guests. ■

RECIPES

A fresh take on family dinner

(Family Features) If your family gets stuck in a dinner routine rut, it can feel like you're eating the same recipes over and over again.

However, this fresh and unique recipe for Cuban chicken with salsa fresca might inspire you to think outside the culinary box and give your family members the satisfactory flavor they desire at dinnertime. With fresh ingredients and a wholesome flavor, this meal is perfect to add to your menu.

Find more recipes and family dinner ideas at Culinary.net. ■



CUBAN CHICKEN WITH SALSA FRESCA



Servings: 5

- 1 cup grapefruit juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 1/4 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts

SALSA FRESCA

- 1 cup grapefruit segments
- 1/2 jicama, cubed
- 1/2 red onion, chopped
- 3/4 cup grapefruit juice
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, chopped

DIRECTIONS

- Heat oven to 400 F.
- In large bowl, mix grapefruit juice, oil, garlic powder, cumin, paprika and red pepper until combined. Add chicken to bowl and turn to coat. Refrigerate 30 minutes or longer.
- To make salsa fresca: In medium bowl, mix grapefruit segments, jicama, red onion, grapefruit juice, olive oil, cilantro and jalapeno pepper until combined. Refrigerate until ready to serve.
- Remove chicken from marinade. Place chicken in baking dish. Bake 25-30 minutes until chicken is cooked through.
- Serve chicken with salsa fresca. ■

MOROCCAN ROASTED VEGETABLE SALAD



Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4

- Lemon tahini dressing:
- 1/4 cup tahini
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 teaspoons maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons cold water

SALAD

- nonstick cooking spray
- 6 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons ras el hanout or garam masala
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 4 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into long wedges
- 4 whole large carrots, chopped
- 2 red bell peppers, cored and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 packages (6 ounces each) Fresh Express 5-Lettuce Mix
- 1/3 cup dried apricots, sliced

- 1/3 cup slivered almonds, toasted
- 1 can (15 1/2 ounces) chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 2 tablespoons Italian parsley, chopped

DIRECTIONS

- To make lemon tahini dressing: In small bowl, whisk tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, maple syrup, Dijon mustard and salt. Add cold water; mix well. If dressing thickens, mix in more cold water.
- Heat oven to 400 F. Spray two baking sheets with nonstick cooking spray.
- In large bowl, mix olive oil, ras el hanout, salt and pepper. Add sweet potatoes; toss to coat. Transfer to first prepared baking sheet. Add carrots and peppers to leftover oil; toss to coat. Transfer to second prepared baking sheet. Bake 15-20 minutes, or until vegetables are tender. Let cool.
- Arrange lettuce mix on four plates. Top each with sweet potatoes, carrots, red pepper, chickpeas, apricots and almonds. Drizzle with dressing and sprinkle with parsley. ■



Optimism in the darkness

By Jim Duncan

After at least \$420 million in lost room revenue, Iowa hotels organized the **Iowa Hotel & Lodging Association**. It is being managed by Jessica Dunker of the Iowa Restaurant Association (IRA). That latter group announced \$1.5 billion in lost revenue through January, compared to the same time period prior to the COVID Age. One-third of IRA members said they do not believe they will ever recover from the viral ravages, that things have changed forever.

Eastern Iowa restaurants fared much better than the rest of the state. It is believed that they benefited from Illinois customers, because that state shut down more restaurants longer than Iowa did. Much less Restaurant Revitalization program money went to eastern Iowa because of this, too. The IRA now predicts that Iowa will lose 10% of its restaurants permanently because of the virus. That would be one of the best percentages in the entire country.

BEST CITIES FOR ASPIRING CHEFS

According to Lawnstarter, **Baton Rouge, Louisiana**, is the worst city in America for young aspiring chefs. **Madison, Wisconsin**, is the fourth worst and the worst in the Midwest. The seven best cities, and 14 of the top 15, were said to be in Florida or California. **Minneapolis, Minnesota**, at 84th, was the best-ranked Midwest city.

YIKES

In another survey, 28% of all **food delivery service drivers** admitted that they sample customers' food before delivering it. The IRA is trying to get legislation passed to ensure that delivery services only work with restaurants with which they have contracts. When third parties deliver food that has been partially eaten, customers complain to the restaurants, not the delivery services.

OPTIMISM IN THE DARKNESS

Despite the ravages of the virus, several new restaurants are coming to the Des Moines metro. **Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurants**, a 45-store chain out of Illinois, moves into the former Granite City Food & Brewery site in Clive. The **Ruth's Chris Steak House**, a Florida chain with more than 100 stores, opens on Jordan Creek Parkway in West Des Moines in 2023. That chain has been courted by local developers since before Jordan Creek opened.

Barrel House, a Davenport-based chain, will open its eighth store, in the East Village this summer. **Crumbl Cookies** is a phenomena that has opened more than 260 stores in just four years. It came to Ankeny in late January, and people waited for hours in line for cookies that start at \$4. The fast-growing vegan bakery chain **Cinnaholic** will give them some competition soon as they plan a March opening for a store in East Village.

The Breakfast Club is about to open its second store, in West Glen. The Chicago Cubs-themed **Centerfield Sports Bar** is the sister bar of the east side's CheapSeats Sports Bar. It opened this winter in Windsor Heights and hosts dart and pool leagues.

Arkansas-based **Slim Chickens** plans to open an Ankeny store in May. **Big Grove Brewery** of Solon and Iowa City will expand to Des Moines this year and to Cedar Rapids in 2023.

THE RICH GET RICHER

Several business journals reported that **McDonald's** is leading the way for all chains in converting customers to digital orders, with more than 21%... **John Deere** stole the show at the 2022 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the world's biggest showcase for high-tech innovations. Deere's self-operating tractors promised to revolutionize the costs of agriculture. Company stock has risen dramatically since the show. **Casey's** took over the former Price Chopper convenience store space on Ingersoll.

CLOSINGS

Java Joes left downtown after three decades of cutting-edge style... **DreiBerge Coffee** gave up in East Village... **Fat Tuesday** shut down on S.W. Ninth after a dozen years... **Fong's Pizza** closed its Drake store... **Godfather's Pizza** closed its Uptown store after 44 years.

NEW STUFF

Ricochet, a party joint with food and drink, opened in the Capital Square mall... **Parlor Pizza** opened on Urbandale Avenue featuring Detroit-style pies... **Senor Tequila Mexican Cuisine and Tequila Bar** opened on S.E. University... **Twisted Vine Brewing** will move from West Des Moines to East Village this spring... Lynn Pritchard will relocate his popular **Table 128** to S.W. Ninth in April... Jacob Demars (Marlene's and RI) opened a kitchen, **Next of Kin**, next to Kinship Brewery in Waukee. ■

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- Beechwood Lounge
- The Beerhouse
- BeerStyles Taproom & Gastropub
- Bellhop
- Ben's Burgers
- Bianchi's Hilltop Restaurant
- Big Acai Bowl
- Big Steer
- Big Tomato Pizza
- The Bistro by Iowa Culinary Institute
- Brightside Aleworks
- Burger Shed
- C Fresh Market
- Cancun Grill & Cantina
- Captain Roy's
- Cheese Bar
- The Cheese Shop
- Chicago Speakeasy
- The Chicken
- The Chicken Coop Sports Bar & Grill
- Chuck's Restaurant
- Classic Custard
- Club Car Restaurant & Lounge
- Clyde's Fine Diner
- Coach's Pizza
- Cool Basil
- Cooper's on 5th
- Court Avenue Restaurant & Brewing Company
- The Creamery Polk City
- The Dam Pub
- De Rice
- The District Bar & Grill
- Drake Diner
- Eggs and Jam
- El Patio Mexican Restaurant
- El Rodeo Mexican Restaurant
- Exile Brewing Company
- The Filling Station
- Firetrucker Brewery
- Flame Cantina
- Flame the Taqueria
- Fleetwood at Saylorville
- Flying Mango
- Fresh Mediterranean Express
- G. Mig's 5th Street Pub
- The Grateful Chef
- Great Escape
- Grounds For Celebration
- Hansen's Manhattan Deli
- Hello, Marjorie
- Hessen Haus
- The High Life Lounge
- Hiland Bakery
- HoQ
- In The Bag Corporate Cuisine
- Jesse's Embers
- The Juice Company
- Kava DSM
- The Keg Stand
- Kinship Brewing Company
- Kue'd Smokehouse
- La Barista Coffee
- La Michoacana
- La Mie
- Latin King
- Lucky Bamboo Asian Cuisine
- Lucky Horse Beer & Burgers
- Lucky Lotus
- Main Street Café & Bakery
- Mi Mexico Restaurant
- Mi Patria Ecuadorian Restaurant
- Mickey's Irish Pub Waukee
- Mitzi's
- Monterrey Express
- Nan's Nummies
- New World Kitchen
- Nick's Bar & Grill
- Noah's Ark Restaurant
- Nosh Café & Eatery
- Ohana Steakhouse
- Old Station Craft Meats
- The Outside Scoop
- Over the Top
- Paesano's Pizzeria
- Panka Peruvian Restaurant
- The Prime and Crown
- Purveyor
- Ramen Club
- The Ramen House
- Rita's Cantina
- Ritual Café
- Rolling Wok - Grimes
- The Royal Mile
- Scenic Route Bakery
- Secret Admirer
- Silk Elephant
- Simon's
- Skip's
- The Slow Down Coffee Co.
- Smokey D's BBQ
- Smokey Row Coffee
- Sonny's Pizza Bistro
- Star Bar
- The Station on Ingersoll
- Steamboat Boys BBQ
- Stormy's
- The Stuffed Olive
- Tako Korean Tex Mex
- Tally-Ho To Go
- Tasty Tacos
- Thai Flavors
- The Big Steer Restaurant & Lounge
- TJ's Bagels
- TrailSide Tap
- Trostel's Greenbriar
- Trellis Café
- Truman's KC Pizza Tavern
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