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Lake Oconee LIVING

VOLUME XXIII, NO. 2, SUMMER 2020

*The magazine that reflects the lifestyle of residents
of the Lake Oconee area and beyond.*

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| *from the editor* |

Sheltering for summer

We were all set to fly out March 13 to visit my sister across the country and, more importantly, take my daughter to her first-ever concert. She had been waiting patiently for this trip since she got the concert tickets for Christmas.

As the news of the coronavirus came flooding in, I knew in my gut that we would have to cancel our plans, though I couldn't say it out loud. There was a lingering worry that I might be overreacting which kept me from cancelling our flight until the day we were scheduled to leave. I ultimately made the call and broke the news to my invincible teenager. Then, the world seemed to change overnight.

Any question of overreaction was quelled a couple of weeks later when I got the news that Thelma Leys had passed away. We had featured a story on Thelma and her husband, James, two short issues ago as the Greensboro couple got ready to celebrate their upcoming 100th and 99th birthdays. Their 74th wedding anniversary was also coming up on April 4. That was the day Thelma died. James followed her 20 days later. They had both tested positive for COVID-19.

It was a moment that brought all of the chaos of the coronavirus pandemic into stark reality. Even today, when I put on a mask to go into a grocery store, I wear it for them. As veterans of World War II, the Leys knew the meaning of true sacrifice. The least I could do was sacrifice my comfort if it makes the world a little safer for people like them.

Their daughter, Bev Berardo, generously shared her story for this issue's special section, Life in Lockdown on page 51. In this section, we wanted to explore the different ways the Lake Oconee communities have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We wanted to hear from area businesses and organizations on how they've had to change and adapt during the pandemic and from local neighbors, like Berardo, on how they've carried on and stayed connected.

Throughout it all, theirs are stories of resilience. They show how communities come together to support one another and celebrate the blessings found in the simplest of times.

As we pull through this together, I hope your summer days are once again filled with sunshine and laughter and the presence of loved ones, even at a safe distance.

Stay safe and stay healthy.

Enjoy!



Andrea Gabre



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SWEET TEE OFF GOLF TOURNAMENT

Late Summer (check in for updates)



PHOTO COURTESY OF CUSCOWILLA ON LAKE OCONEE

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Fruit Cocktails

Make summer days a little sweeter with these refreshing cocktails with a fruity twist.



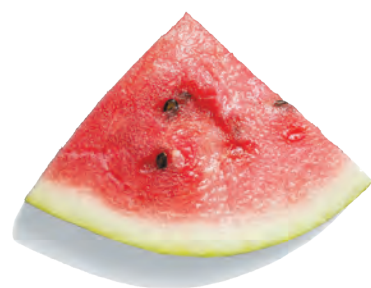
Summer days around the lake go great with an ice cold beverage

in hand, especially ones that bring out light, refreshing flavors with the right amount of sweetness that fruit can add. Whether blended and frozen or poured over ice, these fruity cocktails are made for a day on the boat, dinner on the deck, or any summer soiree.

Try watermelon in a sweet sangria made from

a base of white wine or Moscato. Combine the sweetness of pineapple with the citrus of a mojito or bravely try the unexpectedly smooth blend of grapefruit and jalapeno in your next margarita. Whip up big batches for party guests, or relax with a single glass. Just don't forget the fruit.

| *in the spirit* |



Watermelon Sangria

Serves 10

- 7 cups seedless watermelon cubed, divided
- 750 ml white wine
- 1 cup vodka
- ½ cup triple sec
- 1 medium lime sliced
- 1 medium orange sliced

Directions:

Place 6 cups of watermelon cubes in a blender and blend on high until smooth. Strain juice through a mesh strainer into a large pitcher. Pour the wine, vodka, and triple sec into the pitcher and stir to combine. Mix the remaining 1 cup of watermelon, the lime and orange slices into the sangria. Chill for 4 hours before serving.

TIP: Use frozen watermelon cubes and serve immediately after blending for a chillier concoction.

Pineapple Mojito

| *in the spirit* |

- 3 ounces rum
- 1 ounce triple sec
- 1 ounce pineapple juice
- 2 slices fresh pineapple
- 4 to 5 lime wedges
- 6 to 8 mint leaves
- mint sprig for garnish

Directions:

Muddle the pineapple, lime, and mint in the bottom of a cocktail shaker. Fill shaker with ice and add other ingredients. Shake well. Strain into a highball glass filled with fresh ice. Garnish with a sprig of mint.



| *in the spirit* |

Grapefruit Jalapeno Margarita

- Kosher salt
- 1 jalapeño slice
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1/4 cup silver tequila
- 3/4 cup grapefruit juice
- 2 tablespoons triple sec (orange liqueur)
- 1 tablespoon simple syrup (more or less, to taste)
- Sliced grapefruit and jalapeno, for garnish

Directions:

Rim glass with kosher salt. Muddle the jalapeño slice with lime juice in a shaker. Add tequila, grapefruit juice, triple sec and simple syrup and top with ice. Shake well. Strain into prepared glass filled with ice. Garnish with sliced grapefruit and jalapeno, if desired.

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Summer Reads

Whether sheltering in place or soaking up sunshine, add these titles by Georgia authors to your summer reading list.

STORY BY CHIP BELL



Summertime, and the reading is easy.

Plots are jumping, and the mystery's high. The big question is what book titles to grab, along with your sunscreen, when heading for the backyard or beach.

The Georgia Writers Museum in downtown Eatonton is your best source for “what’s hot” and what goes best with the sun and relaxation. We have three surprising and diverse titles to

The Third Life of Grange Copeland

My friend, best-selling author Terry Kay, is always a good source for great reads. As a Townsend Award winner and a Georgia Writers Hall of Fame inductee, Terry believes Walker's best book is her first novel, our featured title. You recall how *The Color Purple* kept you reading way past your bedtime? This 1970 novel reveals the magnificent tension between Walker's boiling fury and her groundwater of hope. Like driving two wild horses pulling a wagon at breakneck speed, her book unfolds with the emotional highs and lows of a literary roller coaster.

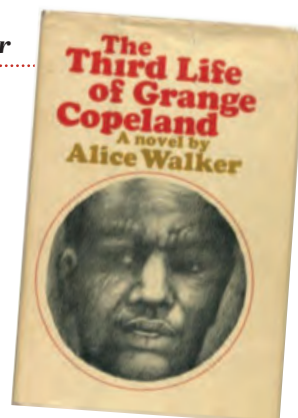
The plot plays out over three generations of African-American Georgia

sharecroppers. Grange Copeland starts his adult life happily married to Margaret. But the cruel white landowner exploits Grange, driving him hopelessly into debt. Grange turns his rage into heavy drinking, abuse, and adultery. Margaret gets back at him by having an affair with a white man, which results in a light-skinned baby. Grange abandons his family, and the roller-coaster ride of emotions goes on from there. According to Walker, the murder in the novel is based on one that happened in Eatonton.

"It was an incredibly difficult novel to write," wrote Alice Walker, "for I had to look at, and name, and speak up about

by Alice Walker

violence among black people in the black community at the same time that black people (and some whites)—including me and my family—were enduring massive psychological and physical violence from white supremacists in the southern states, particularly Mississippi."



The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South

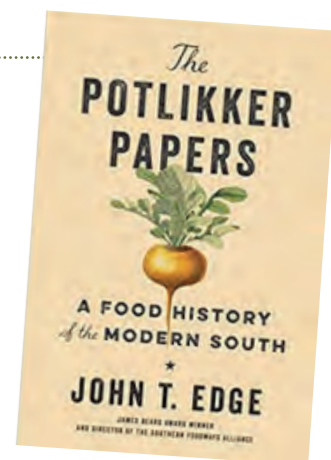
John Edge and I met last November at the ceremony inducting him into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame. He charmed the audience with his magical food stories. My favorite was his Old Miss masters degree thesis on the 1931 "food fight" that played out in the editorial section of the *Atlanta Constitution* between Louisiana governor Huey Long and newspaper editor Julian Harris (son of Joel Chandler Harris) over whether cornbread should be dunked or crumbled when

dipped in potlikker. Edge is a foodie's foodie, but he is not a recipe-type writer. He is a food historian and a magnificent storyteller.

Edge's book covers a 60-year period, telling the story of the South through food—from the kitchen of Georgia Gilmore, who organized cooks and bakers to sell food to raise funds to support the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott, to the modern Southern artisanal food movement. Want an appetizer? During the days of enslave-

by John T. Edge

ment, slave masters retained the collard greens for themselves and gave the potlikker to the enslaved, not knowing it contained most of the nutrients. John Edge will be the featured "Meet the Author" speaker at the Georgia Writers Museum on August 2.



Other Arms Reach Out to Me: Georgia Stories

When Michael Bishop spoke at the "Meet the Author" event at the Georgia Writers Museum last December, he told the enthusiastic crowd that as a young writer he could not decide if he wanted to be Ray Bradbury (bestselling author of the classic sci-fi novel, *Fahrenheit 451*) or Pulitzer-prize-winning novelist, William Faulkner. We are all fortunate he never gave up his confusion. Bishop has written award-winning science-fiction stories as well as highly acclaimed novels. He was a 2018 inductee into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame. And his newest book, featured here, won the 2018 Georgia Author of the Year Award for Short Story Collections.

Much like Flannery O'Connor, Bishop's stock in trade is darkly humorous stories crafted around eccentric characters in rather freakish situations. My favorite of the 15 stories is "Rattlesnakes and Men." Quick backstory: Bishop and his wife, Jeri, lost their son in 2007 to a shooter at the Virginia Tech massacre. Here is a teaser (but not a spoiler).

The small fictitious town of Wriggily in Nokuse County, Georgia, is the home of a biotech company that has genetically engineered poisonous snakes to live coiled around human limbs to serve as self-defense "carry snakes." The town passed an ordinance that required every resident to carry a self-defense snake. This, even

though every year more citizens were killed by the snakes than were protected by them. When a few citizens protest this practice, they are either attacked or driven out of town for threatening the town's way of life. The tongue-in-cheek fable unearths a collection of comical events, never straying far from its metaphoric message. And, as in O'Connor's short stories, there is always a miracle waiting at the end.

by Michael Bishop



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The Making of an Artist

Whether it be a formal education or a self-taught passion, local artists give insight into what makes an artist.

STORY BY JULIA OWENS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSE WALKER



The years spent pursuing the rite of passage to be considered an artist

can be uncertain, formidable, humbling, and intoxicating. Many paths to achievement exist: a fine arts college degree, art classes with an experienced instructor, online instruction, or pure ability – the options are numerous. There is no one path to completion. It is a lifetime of experience which defines the artist.

Four area artists; Barb Dikeman, Steve Kippels, Cathy McIntire and Frank Cassara, know all too well the excitement of selling a painting, winning

awards, and having their paintings hang in various galleries. They have also all experienced the frustration of having their art careers slowed to a discouraging crawl. As Cathy McIntire is known for saying, “Being an artist is a lifestyle.”

For Barb Dikeman, embracing the gift of being an artist is inspiring. It was through oil art classes with Gail Vail when she began to acknowledge her creative skill and talent. Her artistic progress translated to newfound confidence. “Through



Barb Dikeman

Gail's encouragement, I felt like I really was an artist," she says.

She is recognized by her peers as an excellent painter of realism. She is sometimes teased about using paint brushes with three hairs, but she produces exceptional realistic paintings with those three hairs. She admits her life before painting was missing a great deal because she was not really paying attention to all the beauty and colors around her. She says she sees so much more looking at life through the eyes of an artist. Her surroundings now take on a richness of color and detail, which she never fails to appreciate.

Every artist faces a challenge that must be overcome if they are to succeed and her challenge is to not become discouraged during the early stages of a painting. Being able to adjust, revise and possibly rework problem areas is a process that she says she must "push through."

"There is joy in painting. Being able to face and work through these challenges is extremely satisfying."

Steve Kippels lives in Greensboro and his primary medium is watercolor. Last year, Kippels was honored to become a signature member of the Georgia Watercolor Society.

While developing an interest in art beginning in high school and over the course of years, Kippels does not consider himself to be an artist.

"I don't make my living as an artist. I enjoy painting, and I think of myself as a painter," he says. As a painter, Kippels has learned he sees more now than he did prior to his painting career. "A trained eye sees much more than what is just needed to go about your daily existence."

When it comes to subject matter, portrait painting has been Kippels' greatest success and biggest disappointment. Portrait painting is the highest achievement a painter attains, explains Kippels, "and at that, I am only a beginner."

A challenge in watercolor Kippels faces is correcting mistakes. It is a skill, once learned, that allows him to explore options and variations in his paintings. The ability to correct mistakes moves him beyond his



safe zone.

Kippels words of wisdom to artists or painters? “If you are trying to make a living being an artist, have another way to pay your bills. Artwork pays about \$.05 per hour. Trust me.”

“In general, you must be open to critique but also develop an elephant skin. And remember that nothing anyone says to you about your work can be worse than the things you’ve already thought and said to yourself 100 times.”

— Jerry Saltz, ‘How to Be an Artist’

Cathy McIntire and her husband, Mac, live in Newborn. Surrounded by acres of nature, McIntire is never without inspiration for many of her paintings. McIntire has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Wesleyan College in Macon, and she has studied at the Atlanta College of Art in Atlanta. In September 2019, McIntire took first place with her painting, “I See Your Truth” in the Lake Country Fine Art Show in Eatonton. Her genuine surprise revealed the hope of so many hours at the easel. It was a grand moment for so many to share with her.

McIntire is the first to admit that formal



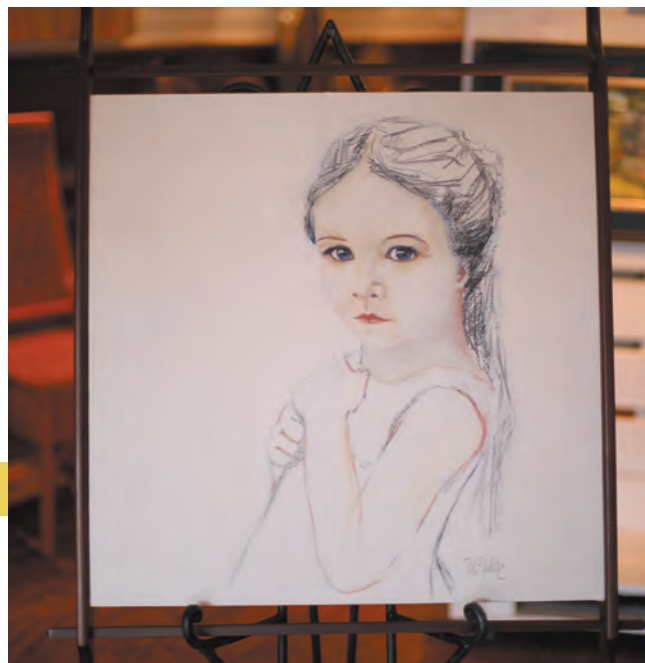
Steve Kippels

training can get one started on the path of an artist, but it is “the process of creating art that is the real teacher, and each work provides experience that informs the next work.”

McIntire says that for her to start a new painting, “Part of the process is to not plan too much. That forces me to spontaneously depend on my knowledge of design,

color, etc. to make it work. It creates the challenge of making nothing into something that is visually compelling.” Factored in to the two- to three-week session she may spend painting, McIntire admits that “cooking and cleaning sort of go out the window.” Thank goodness for good husbands like Mac.

Many artists have tales of rejection and



Cathy McIntire

over-the-top elation. For McIntire, one of her biggest successes was turned into a terrible disappointment. An established Atlanta gallery accepted her work, and McIntire says, “she cried with joy.” When she lost representation from the same gallery, McIntire says, “she cried with heartache.” Rejection from art galleries or art shows is very discouraging for an artist. “Having your work judged as not good

enough is very tough.” According to McIntire, it takes courage and commitment to go back to the drawing board.

McIntire’s philosophy is to not let anyone else define you. “Everyone has their own agenda, their own ideas. Believe in yourself.” Particularly good advice even if you are not an artist.

After boarding up their home on Seabrook Island, S.C., against hurricanes every fall for three years in a row, Frank and Linda Cassara decided a move was in their immediate future. Thankfully, that move brought them to Greensboro. “Not having the stress of a hurricane will be a tremendous relief,” says Cassara. After moving into their new home only a few weeks ago, Cassara says they are pretty

much settled. "Before the house project, I was painting two- to four hours a day, four days a week. I'm ready to get back to the easel."

It was a commissioned painting that was a turning point in Cassara's approach towards his art career. As he was completing the painting, Cassara realized he needed to paint every day to develop his skills. A new level of personal satisfaction soon followed. Cassara's mentor, Mark Horton, in Charleston, S.C., guided Cassara's artistic direction for several years. "I have seen great improvement over the years. I will never stop seeking improvement and growth." When asked what motivated him to paint, Cassara says, "Simply put, the desire to capture beauty I see and transfer that onto a two-dimensional surface."

As an artist in the making, Cassara believes his observations of the world have evolved. He is more aware of what he is seeing and always fine-tuning colors that would capture a scene. "The expression of what you saw in your mind comes to light," says Cassara. "The challenge for me then is to make the color and composition of a painting at least as, or more interesting and beautiful than the original inspiration."

They are as different as red and blue, yet these artists share many extraordinary qualities. The passion for their art, the satisfaction of laying fresh paint on a canvas and the willingness to spend endless hours perfecting their work. As Dikeman pointed out, adjusting, revising and evolving into a painter or an artist is pure joy.

Julia Owens is a freelance writer in Eatonton, Ga. These featured artists are members of The Artisans Village Guild, theartisansvillageguild.com, and are represented in The Artisans Village Art Gallery, in downtown Eatonton and at theartisansvillage.org.



Frank Cassara



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Caring Hands

Community partners join with Putnam Christian Outreach for an 'all hands on deck' approach to serving the increased needs of the community during a pandemic.



For more than 28 years, Putnam Christian Outreach has worked to serve

the Eatonton community “with caring hands and loving hearts” through food, clothing, and financial assistance for prescriptions, medical travel, and utilities. And through the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization certainly lived up to its name.

The outreach came in many forms and from

many community partners as schools shut down, businesses shuttered, and more and more residents found themselves in need of a little extra to get them through the tough weeks and months ahead.

Cars lined up for drive-through food distribution events and were met with an outpouring of



support from various community organizations.

Putnam Life Source and Golden Harvest Food Bank in Augusta provided boxes of food. The National Guard was on hand to help package and distribute them. The Episcopal Church brought diapers. The Oconee Regional Humane Society brought dog and cat food.

The Putnam County Charter School System was there two days a week to provide hot breakfasts and

lunches so its students didn't experience a gap.

PCO became a hub of helping hands.

"It's been such a wonderful community effort," says Vanessa Jackson, director of PCO. "We've been here for 28 years plus, and typically we only serve about 180 families. Last month, in April, we fed 388."

She says there were a lot of new faces that came through as a result of the pandemic.

"We had families that had never been in, which was so good," says Jackson. "The loving staff and volunteers made them feel good about it. A lot of people are not used to getting food from a food bank, but because of COVID, those people had to get in line for food and didn't know what to do or where to turn."

She's just thankful, she says, that this building was here for them.

The building on Industrial Boulevard in Eatonton houses not only

a food bank, but a thrift store that sells donated clothing, home goods, and small appliances to pay for the building's upkeep. There's also a "medical library" where people can check out various medical equipment like crutches, canes, or wheelchairs for temporary use. There's a chapel that offers 30-minute words of encouragement on the first and third Friday of every month.

They have a team that mentors children and a team that goes into local jails to meet with inmates one-on-one to let them know theirs is not a hopeless situation. They have a backpack ministry for students going back to school.

"It's just so great to see that, under this little small roof, we're able to house so many things," says Jackson.

Then there's financial assistance provided to qualifying families in need of help with utilities, rent, mortgage, food vouchers, or life-sustaining medications. Jackson says there has been a steady rise in applications since the pandemic began.

"We survive just on donations," says Jackson. "Thank God the community has been very generous."

The organization is supported primarily by individuals and area churches. Most recently, The Leadership Putnam Class of 2020 pledged to support PCO with the goal of raising \$5,000 for the non-profit organization.

Thirty years ago, the Eatonton-Putnam Chamber of Commerce established its Leadership Putnam program which involves members of the community participating in programs designed to strengthen leadership skills and learn more about their immediate community. Before moving on to become ambassadors for their hometown, graduates must work together on a final project to contribute to the community. Past projects have supported local government and non-profits and led to the development of the Plaza Arts Center.

This year, the Leadership Putnam Class of 2020 was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic and had to find a creative way to finish supporting their community while social distancing.

Class member Judy Fain, who serves on the board of Putnam Christian Outreach, was well aware of how crucial the organization would be in the coming weeks and months. She knew extra support would be needed to serve a growing number of those in need as unemployment numbers began their sharp increase.

"We started asking ourselves what we could do that's beneficial to our community and would make a difference right now," says Emily Holt, Tourism and Special Events Coordinator for the Eatonton-Putnam Chamber of Commerce.

Holt says Putnam Christian Outreach checked every box for the things the Class of 2020 wanted to support. "They all

agreed we wanted to stand behind their cause and help them through this pandemic."

Early on, before shelter in place orders were given, class members went to help stock the food pantry and help people apply for financial assistance for utilities or medication.

"As the pandemic went on, we had to be sensitive about how we went about helping because we knew people might not be willing to volunteer or bring donations because of sheltering in place, so we knew the easiest route would be to create a Go Fund Me campaign so people could provide exactly what was needed."

Linda Farley, who manages the thrift store at Putnam Christian Outreach said they were humbled and honored that the Leadership Class of 2020 selected their organization.

"COVID has hit us hard financially," says Farley. "We have to help more people and give out more food, so this donation will

relieve some of the financial burden we have so we can help carry the greater burden for our community."

Aside from monetary donations, nonperishable food and home goods are being accepted and can be dropped off at 151 Industrial Blvd. in Eatonton.

For more information, visit putnamchristianoutreach.webs.com, and to contribute, visit gofundme.com and search for Putnam Christian Outreach.



PCO partnered with other community organizations to distribute boxes of food to those in need during the pandemic. The Putnam County Charter School System, bottom left, provided hot meals for students each week along with boxes donated by Golden Harvest Food Bank in Augusta and Putnam Life Source, top right. The National Guard, top left, helped package and distribute food during drive-through distributions.



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Learning to Serve congratulates JMA student and Harbor Club resident, **Hunter Hudson**, for his service in the community. Hunter qualified for the **President's Volunteer Service Award as a Gold Medal recipient** for 100+ service hours for 2019-2020.



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A Summer Smash

Ice cream sandwiches are an easy and fun way to cool off on hot summer days, and varieties of these sweet sensations are endless.

STORY BY ALEX UGOLINI | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANDY ANGEL





| *at the table* |

Summer days in the south just simply call out for

the cool relief of creamy ice cream. When you take that sweetness and package it into an even sweeter ice cream sandwich, you get a fun and easy snack that can be served anywhere, anytime.

Ice cream sandwiches can be created in as many combinations as there are varieties of ice cream, toppings, and cookies. Part of the fun for any age is introducing your favorite cookie to your favorite ice cream flavor to create new sweet sensations. Make ahead for lakeside gatherings or bring the kids in the kitchen for a fun project.

Before you get started, make sure to clear out some room in your freezer. You will need a level spot and a metal pan or tray that fits in your freezer to load the finished products. If your freezer has a temperature dial, turn that to its coldest setting.

Get creative and try different pairings of your favorite cookie and ice cream flavor. It's hard to go wrong with any combination. Below are two of my favorites, the Georgia Classic and Summer Sprinkle Deluxe.



The Georgia Classic

The Georgia Classic may be familiar to you if you have had the opportunity to try one at the Masters tournament in Augusta. If not, whip up your own batch of sandwiches to cool off after a hot day on the course.

What you'll need:

- Sugar Cookies
- Wax Paper
- Peach Ice Cream
- 1 oz trigger scoop



Directions:

If you're in a rush, you can use a store bought cookie for this or pre-made dough. I used a gluten-free sugar cookie and it turned out lovely. If you buy a cookie already baked, it is important to keep in mind size and texture. Using a cookie with a 3- or 4-inch diameter is best. An overly crunchy cookie will break when pressing the sandwich and overly soft will produce the same results. It's better to buy the fresh in-house baked cookies from your nearby grocery store or local bakery than a shelf-stable name brand cookie. It is important to build your cookies in a cool kitchen,

and out of sunlight. If your kitchen gets hot in the afternoon, make these sandwiches in the morning.

After baking your cookie, allow ample time to cool. Place your freshly baked cookies or locally-baked cookies in a pan in the freezer for 15 minutes. It's OK to stack them at this point.

Leave your pan in the freezer and bring out your cookies and peach ice cream. Now begin building the sandwiches, two 1-oz scoops per sandwich is what I go with. Apply scoops to pan side of the cookie and then slowly and gently press other

pan side of cookie to lid your cookie. Sometimes rotating cookies slightly will help bind and distribute the ice cream between the cookies. Once this cookie is done, pop it in the freezer and shut the door. Repeat the process for as many cookies as you desire. Use wax paper to layer your cookies as you stack them and be sure to keep that freezer door closed in between creating cookies or pulling items out. After one hour, these beauties are ready to serve. If you're enjoying the sandwiches over the next week or so, individually bag them in sandwich bags.

Summer Sprinkle Deluxe

Directions:

In this rendition, we used a caramel toffee cookie, caramel toffee ice cream and rolled the cookie in colorful sugar sprinkles.

Following all the same steps from the Georgia Classic, assemble the first cookie and roll the exposed ice cream in the sprinkle plate until they are coated in the desired amount of sprinkles.

Some of my other favorite toppings I like include with this rendition are Oreo crumbles and toffee crumbles.



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Lost Art of ASPIC

*Greensboro brewery aspires to revive these gelatinous
culinary creations in the world's first aspic cooking
competition*

Story by Andrea Gable | Photography by Brandy Angel



Photographer Brandy Angel and her daughters, Alden and Alora, take a step back in time to experience one of the oddest food fads in history that holds a place in mid-century Americana. These modern-day aspic dishes were prepared by Alex Ugolini who plans to participate in the upcoming aspic cooking competition at Oconee Brewing Co. on Aug. 22.



I think Nathan McGarity secretly likes to see the look of polite disgust on people's faces when they learn what aspic is. Once the co-owner of Oconee Brewing Co. explains this culinary fad that has waned in and out of consciousness for generations, there's a recollection, usually of old recipes in church cookbooks or faded Jell-O advertisements that transports the memory back to the 50s, 60s, and 70s when cooks were suspending anything and everything in a gelatinous mold.

Usually the next look that flashes across the face is quizzical, begging the question, "Why would you want to have an aspic competition at the brewery?"

Then, you remember that you're talking a person who had the idea of sending the first beer into space with a high-altitude weather balloon, something that he helped make happen in 2017.

"We thought this would be fun and cheeky enough to fit the brewery and we've never been afraid to try something," says McGarity.

After all, there are competitive barbecue circuits across the country and chili cookoffs in nearly every small town in America. No one, he explains without irony, has ever done an official aspic competition.

Somehow, this outdated convention of sealing meats in naturally congealed jelly or fruits and vegetables in commercial gelatin powder has stuck around. It's even become an art form in many circles.

Perhaps it's the mild repulsion of the gelatinous art that accounts for its lingering appeal. Like a dog that's so ugly it's cute, or, as McGarity explains, a bad joke that's been told so often it's funny again.

He wants to let everyone in on that joke, making Greensboro the home of the world's first aspic competition on Aug. 22, and maybe even igniting a revival of the lost art of aspic.

"We'd love to see it take off," he says.

Take off like a beer in space.

History of Aspic

Aspic has a surprisingly long history and has been a culinary tradition across the globe for centuries. Some of the earliest recipes date back to the Middle Ages and were detailed in "Le Viandier," a manuscript created in the 1300s. It was a dish born of necessity in that era. In a world before refrigeration, the jelly that set up around parts of meat after it was boiled served as a preservative, keeping bacteria from reaching the meat inside. In fact, it's believed to be the explanation for the term aspic as the Greek word for "shield" is "aspis."

The early 1800s ushered in the golden age of aspics as French chef Marie-Antoine



AS·PIC

a savory jelly made with meat stock, set in a mold and used to contain pieces of meat, seafood, or eggs.



Calling all cooks!

Gather your culinary team and your most creative aspic assembly and compete in the world's first Aspic Cooking Competition on Aug. 22 at Ocone Brewing Co. in Greensboro.

The winner walks away with free beer for a year at OBC. Each competitor will receive a T-shirt and a case of beer. *Entry forms and contest rules are available at oconebrewingco.com*



Careme brought attention to the craft through his almost architectural preparation of a variety of molds and components. According to the Michelin Guide, these elaborate show pieces were part of the royal cuisine in the court of Napoleon. Soon, aspics were a part of classical French cookery. In his book "All Manners of Food," Stephen Mennell writes of one grand dinner in France with 52 various dishes, all set in aspic.

For Americans, aspics caught the public's imagination during the industrial revolution. Mass animal processing plants decided to capitalize on the gelatin by-product that was previously just going to waste. With healthy advertising and marketing, processors convinced the public that almost anything could be set in jelly.

By the 1950s and 60s, meat aspics were not uncommon on the kitchen table. Then came the production of commercial gelatin powders like Jell-O, and the mad-

ness began. Home cooks and marketing companies got creative with recipes and encouraged things like jellied hotdogs or canned tuna in lime Jell-O. Instead of the normal dishes of mostly fruit, chicken, or sliced meats, there were vegetable floating in lemon gelatin and canned fruits with celery suspended in ginger-ale flavored jelly.

Classic techniques of aspic fell away in favor of quicker culinary trends and Jell-O salads began to replace the definition of aspic in our collective consciousness. By the 1970s, aspics were beginning to be shunned as vintage creations of a bygone era – a food fad trapped in mid-century Americana.

Some tried-and-true aspics have survived, like tomato aspics that sometimes top salads at high-end restaurants or serve as appetizers at elegant functions, but for the most part, aspics have been relegated back to a bad joke.

"Though it's still with us in spirit, aspic has pretty much passed from our collective menu, victim of excessive commercial exploitation and easy visual jokes," writes Tim Hayward in a 2010 article in The Guardian. "Yet it seems like it might be fun and I'd love to give it a go."

Revival of Aspic

The culinary world is starting to chuckle once more at the bad joke that has become aspic. Some are captivated by the horror of bad vintage recipe and are curious enough to try them out. But others see aspics as an elaborate art form, much like in the days of the legendary Chef Careme in France.

Vehement defenders of aspics have from around the world have connected over Facebook to show off their culinary creations. One such post in the Show Me Your Apics group garnered thousands of likes. It was a pink Champagne and shell

stock cream reduction holding a lobster tail, set in a lobster-shaped mold. The creations range from bizarre to beautiful, like a translucent one filled with edible flowers and dotted with molded koi fish and swans.

To these creators of aspic, the process of assembling is just as satisfying than its taste. Often-times the final piece is more “art” than “edible.”

It's these aficionados and adventurous cooks who McGarity would like to draw in for the world's first aspic competition on Aug. 22 at Oconee Brewing Co. in Greensboro. For them, the brewery can give a creative platform to the art that no Facebook page could.

“I've always felt there was a culinary connection with the brewery, so hosting a food event is a natural fit,” says McGarity. “Also the brewery is so well tied with community that I felt it would be fun for everyone to have a competition and try it to see if it takes off.”

A limited number of culinary teams or individuals will create an aspic based on the criteria of the competition. Their finished pieces will be displayed at the brewery on Aug. 22 and patrons will vote for their favorites in various categories. Competitors will receive a T-shirt and a case of beer. The winner will receive free beer for a year at Oconee Brewing Co.

“We'd like to draw competitors from around the community,” says McGarity. “I think it would be fun for a father/son team to throw in, or local restaurateurs, or even a celebrity chef. I could see this event growing out of the brewery and becoming a much larger thing.”

While McGarity is naturally programmed to have the highest of aspirations for all his endeavors – to shoot for the moon, if you will – his main hope for this inaugural event is to see people come out to the brewery and enjoy an afternoon of cheeky fun. But he can't help but ask, “Who wouldn't want to be part of a community that is known for a world-wide competition?”

That's why I don't doubt it will succeed. If I did, the joke's on me.



Caprese Tomato Aspic

Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons (4 packets) unflavored gelatin
- 8 cups tomato juice
- ¼ cup shallot, minced
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons seasoned salt
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons celery seeds
- 1 cup fresh mozzarella, cubed
- Fresh basil chopped and whole leaves
- cucumbers
- chives

Directions

In a medium sauce pan, combine 1 cup of tomato juice with 4 tablespoons of gelatin powder, and whisk for 60 seconds. Combine remaining tomato juice, shallots, kosher salt, seasoned salt, Worcestershire, celery seeds. Place on stove top and bring to a near boil, whisking occasionally. Let cool on stove for 25 minutes. Pour into a greased mold of your choice. Add in chopped basil leaves. Let gelatin set up slightly in the fridge, between 60 and 90 minutes. Add in cubed fresh mozzarella. (Letting the aspic firm slightly ensures even distribution and suspension of mozzarella.) Aspic should firm completely in another 4 -5 hours. Flip the mold onto your desired plate and garnish with cucumbers, fresh basil leaves, and chopped chives. This dish can also be spread on an olive oil toast and drizzled with balsamic vinegar, glaze, or reduction.

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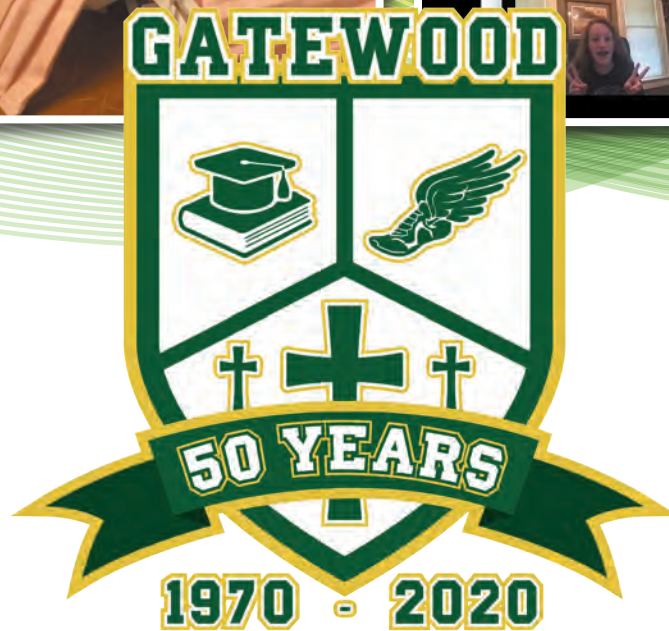
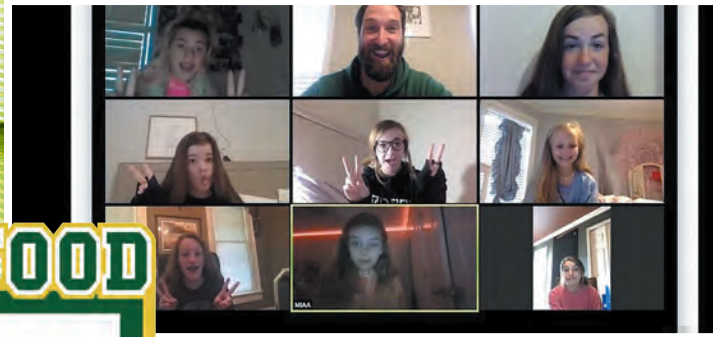
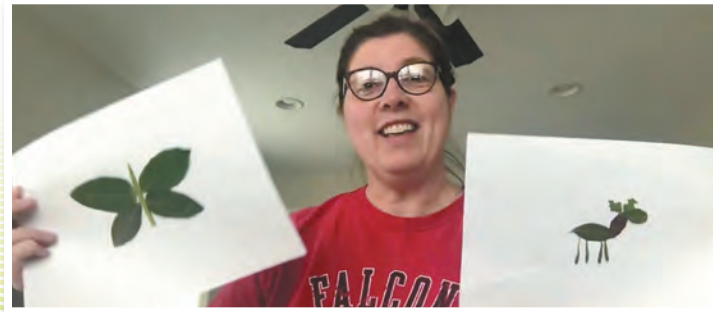


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CONFESSIONS OF A SERIAL GRILLER

Cookbook author, Matt Moore, explores the best methods and techniques for smoky perfection with some of the best grill masters in the South

PHOTOGRAPHY BY *ANDREA BEHREND AND HELENE DUJARDIN*

Matt Moore, author of “South’s Best Butts” and “A Southern Gentleman’s Kitchen,” begins his newest book with a confession.

“I’m a Serial Griller. It’s a messy job – but I take pride in my work. Truth be told, I’m not the only one who finds pleasure in standing among the smoke and the and the flames to pursue one’s craft. You see, for us Serial Grillers – no matter the season, the occasion, the meal, or the course – you can catch us all toiling over fire.”

He got it honest, he goes on to explain. With one grandfather a cattleman in Mississippi and the other a butcher in the family store in Valdosta, Ga., it was no wonder it passed down to him through his parents who now spend their days grilling at their home on Lake Oconee.

Throughout his travels as an entrepreneur, adventurer, musician, and chef, Moore met fellow serial grillers from all walks of life.

“No matter gender, race, or religion – Serial Grillers are all united by a passion for great taste,” he writes.

He introduces them to readers in his recently published “Serial Griller: Grillmaster Secrets for Flame-Cooked Perfection,” a broad collection of recipes curated from his tour across America. He tells their stories, shares their signature recipes, and learns tips from some of the best grill masters in the South and beyond.

Moore also offers his own tried-and-true grilling recipes for every part of the meal, from starters and salads, skewers and handhelds, to big plates and desserts. Part instruction manual and part story-telling, “Serial Griller” explores the best methods and techniques for diverse cuisines among the smoke-filled places where you can find the best grillers toiling over fire.



Matt Moore recalls late nights at The Grill in downtown Athens during his college days at UGA. He shares the history of The Grill and its signature flat top-griddled burger (see recipe on page 48) in his newest book, ‘Serial Griller: Grillmaster Secrets for Flame-Cooked Perfection.’





SKEWERED OKRA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound fresh okra
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon flaky sea salt

1. Open the bottom vent of a charcoal grill completely. Light a charcoal chimney starter filled with charcoal. When the coals are covered with gray ash, pour them onto the bottom grate of the grill. Adjust the vents as needed to maintain an internal temperature of 450° to 500°. Coat the top grate with oil; place on the grill. (If using a gas grill, preheat to high [450° to 500°].)
2. Toss together the okra, soy sauce, honey, oil, and garlic powder in a bowl. Let stand at room temperature for 10 minutes. Remove the okra from the marinade; reserve 3 tablespoons of the marinade and discard the rest.
3. Thread five okra pods onto two parallel skewers so that each skewer pierces the pods 1/2 inch from each end. Repeat with the remaining okra, skewering about five okra onto every two parallel skewers. Place on the oiled grates. Grill, uncovered, until slightly charred, 4 to 6 minutes, flipping the skewers once half-way through cook time. Transfer to a serving platter. Drizzle with the reserved marinade and sprinkle with the sesame seeds and salt.

DIRECTIONS

FLANK STEAK VIGNERON

WITH BLACK GARLIC BOARD SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (2-pound) flank steak
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 5 large fresh sage leaves
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves, stripped from the stems
- 2 black garlic or regular garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 fresh red jalapeno chile, stemmed and seeded
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

DIRECTIONS

1. At least 1 hour in advance of cooking, season both sides of the steak evenly with salt, then return the steak to the refrigerator.
2. In the base of a charcoal grill, pile cut dried grapevines on top of twisted newspaper. The vines should completely fill the base and sit just above the top of the grill, so don't pile them too high. Light the newspaper and allow the vines to burn until they turn gray (the fire will be very hot, 750° to 800°). Alternatively, for charcoal, open the bottom vent of a charcoal grill completely. Light a charcoal chimney starter filled with charcoal. When the coals are covered with gray ash, pour them onto the bottom grate of the grill. Adjust the vents as needed to maintain an internal temperature of 500° or more. Coat the top grate with oil; place on the grill. (If using a gas grill, preheat to high [500° or more].)
3. While waiting for the vines to burn down, chop the sage, thyme, black garlic, and jalapeno together on a cutting board until minced. Season with the pepper and add the olive oil to create a sauce.
4. Add the steak to the open grill and cook, flipping every 60 to 90 seconds, until an internal temperature of 130°, 5 to 7 minutes total cooking time.
5. Remove the steak from the grill and place on the cutting board, topping the sauce. Slice the steak thinly against the grain, allowing the meat juices to combine with the sauce. Portion the steak, adding more residual sauce as necessary, onto serving dishes, spoon board sauce over each portion, and serve immediately.

GRILLED CORN

WITH DILL BUTTAH AND FETA



DIRECTIONS

1. Open the bottom vent of a charcoal grill completely. Adjust the vents as needed to maintain an internal temperature of 450° to 500°F. (If using a gas grill, preheat to high [450° to 500°F].)
2. Stir together the butter, dill, lemon zest and juice, salt, and pepper in a bowl until well combined.
3. Place the corn on the oiled grates. Grill, uncovered and turning often, until charred on all sides, about 8 minutes. Transfer to a serving platter. Brush each corn ear with 1½ tablespoons of the dill butter and sprinkle with ½ tablespoon of the feta. Garnish with additional dill.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup (4 ounces) unsalted butter, softened
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill, plus more for garnish
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus ½ tablespoon fresh juice (from 1 lemon)
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
8 ears fresh yellow corn, shucked
1 ounce feta cheese, crumbled (about ¼ cup)

PORK GYROS

PORK

- 1/2 cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 pounds pork tenderloin, cut into 1/2-inch cubes

TZATZIKI

- 3/4 cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup finely chopped seeded cucumber (from 1 small [7-ounce] cucumber)
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar

FOR SERVING

- 6 (8-inch) pita rounds, halved crosswise
- 3 cups shredded iceberg lettuce (from 1 [8-ounce] package)
- 2 cups chopped seeded tomato (from 2 medium [6-ounce] tomatoes)



DIRECTIONS

1. Marinate the pork: Whisk together the yogurt, vinegar, oregano, garlic powder, paprika, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Add the pork and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours.
2. Meanwhile, prepare the tzatziki: Stir together all the ingredients in a bowl. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use, or up to a few days.
3. Open the bottom vent of a charcoal grill completely. Light a charcoal chimney starter filled with charcoal. When the coals are covered with gray ash, pour them onto the bottom grate of the grill. Adjust the vents as needed to maintain an internal temperature of 400° to 450°. Coat the top grate with oil; place on the grill. (If using a gas grill, preheat to medium-high [400° to 450°].)
4. Remove the pork from marinade; discard the marinade. Thread the pork evenly onto 12 (6-inch) skewers. Place the skewers on the oiled grates. Grill, covered and turning occasionally, until the pork is charred and a thermometer inserted in thickest portion of the pork registers 145°, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from the heat.
5. Wrap the pita halves in damp paper towels. Microwave on HIGH until softened, 30 to 45 seconds. Fill the pita halves evenly with the pork, lettuce, and tomatoes. Drizzle with the tzatziki.



GRILLED SALMON WITH CREAMY CUCUMBER RELISH

INGREDIENTS

4 (6-ounce) skin-on salmon fillets
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1/2 cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt
1/4 cup whole buttermilk
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh dill
1 small garlic clove, grated (1/2 teaspoon)
2 teaspoons grated lemon zest plus 1 tablespoon fresh juice (from 1 lemon)
1 cup chopped seeded peeled cucumber (from 1 [8-ounce] cucumber)
1/4 cup finely chopped red onion (from 1 [3-ounce] onion)
Extra-virgin olive oil

1. Brush the salmon with the olive oil and sprinkle evenly with the pepper and 1 teaspoon of the salt. Let stand at room temperature for 20 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, stir together the yogurt, buttermilk, dill, garlic, lemon zest and lemon juice, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt in a bowl. Refrigerate until ready to use.
3. Open the bottom vent of a charcoal grill completely. Light a charcoal chimney starter halfway filled with charcoal. When the coals are covered with gray ash, pour them onto the bottom grate of the grill, and then push to one side of the grill. Adjust the vents as needed to maintain an internal temperature of 400° to 450°. Coat the top grate with oil; place on the grill. (If using a gas grill, preheat to medium-high [400° to 450°] on one side.)
4. Place the salmon, skin-side down, on the oiled grates directly over the side with the coals (or the lit side of a gas grill). Grill, covered, until grill marks appear, about 4 minutes. Carefully turn each fillet over with a fish spatula and move to the oiled grates over the side without the coals (or the unlit side of a gas grill). Grill, covered, until just cooked through, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels and let rest for 5 minutes.
5. While the fish rests, add the cucumber and onion to the yogurt-dill mixture and stir to combine. Place a salmon fillet on each of four plates and spoon 1/2 cup cucumber relish on top of each. Drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil.

DIRECTIONS

BACON AND SWISS BURGER

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds 80/20 lean ground beef

12 strips bacon, cooked crisp

2 cups shredded Swiss-American cheese blend, or whatever you prefer

6 sesame seed buns

For garnish: mayonnaise, green leaf lettuce, tomato slices, dill pickle chips

1. Open the bottom vent of a charcoal grill completely. Light a charcoal chimney starter filled with charcoal. When the coals are covered with gray ash, pour them onto the bottom grate of the grill. Adjust the vents as needed to maintain an internal temperature of 350° to 400°. (If using a gas grill, preheat to medium-high [350° to 400°].)
2. Meanwhile, loosely form the beef into six ½-pound patties.
3. Place a large, seasoned cast-iron skillet on the grill grate over direct heat and preheat the pan for 1 minute. Add three of the patties to the skillet and smash each once with a spatula. Cook undisturbed, uncovered, for 3 minutes to develop a sear. Flip the patties, smash again, and then slide the spatula underneath each to free it from the surface.

Cook the patties for an additional 3 minutes, or until cooked to desired preference.

4. Evenly distribute the bacon and cheese blend among the patties, cover the grill, and cook just until the cheese has melted. Remove the patties. Repeat for the second batch.
5. Working in batches again, add the buns to the hot skillet, cut-sides down, and toast in the pan drippings until lightly browned, about 1 minute.
6. Evenly spread mayonnaise on the cut sides of each toasted bun, add the patties, and top with the garnishes. Serve.

DIRECTIONS



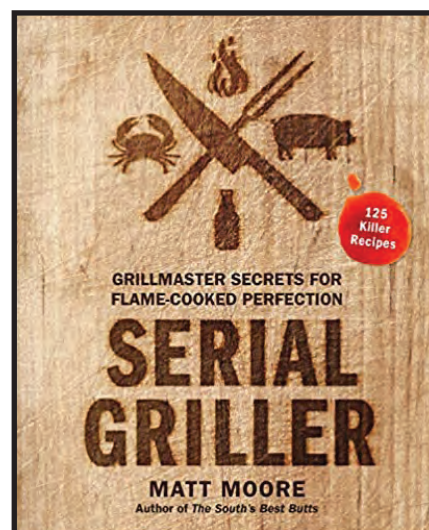
GRILLED CHOCOLATE POUND CAKE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for the pan
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 ¼ cups (10 ounces) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 ½ cups granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ cup sour cream
- ¾ cup heavy cream
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar, plus more for garnish
- 2 cups fresh raspberries

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 325°. Grease and flour a 9- x 5-inch loaf pan. Whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, salt, and baking soda in a medium bowl. Set aside.
2. Beat ¾ cup of the butter in the bowl of a heavy duty stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually add the granulated sugar, beating until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating until just incorporated after each addition. Stir in the vanilla. Add the flour mixture in three additions, alternating with the sour cream, beginning and ending with the flour mixture, and beating on low speed after each addition. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan.
3. Bake in the preheated oven until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean, about 1 hour and 15 minutes. Cool the cake in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove from the loaf pan and cool completely on a wire rack, about 1 hour.
4. Open the bottom and top vents of a charcoal grill completely. Light a charcoal chimney starter filled with charcoal. When the coals are covered with gray ash, pour them onto the bottom grate of the grill. Adjust the vents as needed to maintain an internal temperature of 350° to 400°. Coat the top grill grate with oil; place on the grill. (If using a gas grill, preheat to medium [350° to 400°].)
5. Cut the cooled cake into twelve (.5-inch-thick) slices. Spread the remaining ¼ cup butter evenly on both sides of the slices. Place the slices on the oiled grates. Grill, uncovered, until grill marks appear, about 2 minutes per side. Remove from the grill.
6. Whisk together the cream and powdered sugar in a bowl until soft peaks form, about 2 minutes. Place two cake slices on each of six serving plates. Top evenly with the whipped cream and the raspberries. Garnish with powdered sugar.



Serial Griller: Grillmaster Secrets for Flame-Cooked Perfection

By Matt Moore

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life

IN LOCKDOWN

In early spring, we faced down an invisible enemy – a novel coronavirus that was sweeping the globe and bringing with it not only death, but disastrous consequences for healthcare systems and economies.

We were asked to stay home. From there, we watched the world change. We saw businesses we love shut their doors.

We worried for our families and loved ones. We read.

We cooked at home. We supported one another, even while social distancing. We waited.

In the following special section, *Lake Oconee Living* looks at the ways the pandemic impacted lives at

Lake Oconee over the past three months. Through your stories we explore how things have changed, from the way we eat, the way we care for and help the community, the way we adapt business models, and the way we carry on.

HOW WE EAT PG. 52 | **HOW WE HELP** PG. 58
HOW WE ADAPT PG. 60 | **HOW WE CARE** PG. 62
HOW WE CARRY ON PG. 64

Food for thought

Changing the way we shop, the way we share, and the way we put food on the table in the face of a pandemic

WRITTEN BY LEARA RHODES

A large pine table sits in the middle of the kitchen. There is no tablecloth. As meal time approaches, what will be on the table to serve family, friends, and the future? A pandemic caused by COVID-19 virus has given our part of the world a chance to pause and evaluate food insecurity. As people are sheltering and venturing out for food and medicine, decisions must be made as to how people will eat. Locally, there are many ways to get food on the table, food to share with others, and food for thought.

FOOD ON THE TABLE

Food is essential to life but has taken on a new meaning as households and individuals are sheltering in place. Some people are anxious about going to a grocery store; others may not even have money to buy groceries with unemployment. Supply chains are disrupted with closures of restaurants and processing plants. Life seems to have changed. How are people putting food on the table? There are many ways such as grocery stores with delivery and pickup, national delivery services, farm cooperatives, local farmers, and restaurants with curb service and delivery.

Grocery stores offer revisions on how customers can shop. Some reserve the first hour of the day for seniors and people with underlying health conditions. Others, like Trader Joe's in Athens, limit the number of customers in the store at any one time. Masks

are worn. Safety is being stressed for all customers with social distancing. However, customers are frustrated that items are not available. Media photos have shown empty shelves for any paper product, hand sanitizer, alcohol-based wipes, disinfectants, and yeast. Grocery store managements are limiting some products to reduce hoarding. Limits have been placed on chicken and beef. Sales of ginger, garlic, and turmeric are increasing as people are trying homeopathic remedies. Customers, as a whole, have been courteous yet frustrated when products cannot be found.

Delivery employees have experienced customer frustrations. "People don't understand inventory in the stores and are frustrated when they can't get items," says Makala Richards, a full-service shopper for Instacart, a national delivery service. When Richards began the job with Instacart, work was busy and the money good. Now the volume of orders is quieter and Richards thinks that is because the company has hired more people. The customers' lists are typical of what most people want from a grocery; however, there is one thing Richards says is on every customer's list: toilet paper.

Toilet paper shortages are attributed to customers buying more than needed. Beware, during the Depression, food rationing began as a way to insure most people had at least a little food. Sugar, coffee, meat, fish, butter, eggs, and cheese were the main foods rationed in



order to prevent hoarding and to try to help stabilize the economy, according to "Food Rations Throughout History" by Carlie Doll.

Figuring out the supply chain has given other national food delivery companies a chance to compete. Besides Instacart, other options include Shipt, Walmart, Amazon Fresh, and Peapod, according to Lisa Rowan in her article for The Penny Hoarder. One option used locally is Misfit Market, a weekly or bi-weekly delivery of organic produce cheaper than the grocery prices, according to Paul Rowan in a review of the company for Saving Freak website. The produce sold by Misfit Market is deemed not for sale by major chains; it may have a bruise or blemish, or is too big, thus the name "misfit." According to the company website, they are working to help solve America's growing food waste problem as well as providing organic produce at reduced prices.

Saving money may be important, so driving to pick up one's groceries is cheaper than getting them deliv-

**EMPTY SHELVES**

Town area of Athens provides a grocery order form on their website. Owner, Fritz Gibson says, “We want to be a neighborhood food store, that’s been our intent all along.” He felt that though online groceries were happening with the big box stores, a neighborhood store would work. Before the pandemic, Gibson had customers come in once a week to buy a few items. Now that behavior has changed, these same customers are buying their main groceries through Half-Shepherd. Gibson says, “We are getting closer to shortening the supply chain.”

Groceries aside, there are special days that need to be celebrated and often with food. Heirloom had closed but opened briefly to produce Mother’s Day Meals. Daughter and father owners, Jessica Rothacker and Travis Burch, posted on their website: “Mother’s Day is such a sweet time for us at Heirloom. We love watching family gatherings with children all dressed up and everyone fawning over

Mom. While we are sad that we won’t get to experience your family joy in the way we usually do this year, we still want to be a part of this special day. Introducing Mother’s Day meal kits.” The menu was by item and would need to be picked up the day before.

Other restaurants have meal kits to finish at home with instructions from the chef. ExPat, a French-inspired bistro in Five Points, offers a variety of kits: vegetarian pasta, duck breast dinner, tomato and fennel poached cod, BBQ picnic, tomato and fennel poached cod, BBQ picnic, ramen, and brunch at home. Each meal kit has all the ingredients needed along with Chef Sasser’s notes on how to make the meal.

Food isn’t all that is offered for pick up. Jerry and Krista Slater, ExPat owners, wanted to try something different. On Saturday, May 16 at 6:30 p.m., a virtual wine tasting Q&A was hosted from their upstairs lounge via Zoom. To join in, customers order the Saturday Night Wine Kit: 4 wine selections in 3-oz sealed bottles, wine notes, and Chef Sasser’s fennel crackers; then the customer is able to Zoom for



ered. What started as a trend has gained numbers during the Pandemic. In some markets, the wait between ordering the

groceries and being able to get an assigned time to pick them up may be a week.

Waiting is not an issue when using a farm cooperative like Collective Harvest or Locally Grown. These cooperatives provide weekly produce and other locally made products chosen from websites, then customers pick up at a designated place and time. Both use only local farmers. And both have had limited strawberries.

Berries that a customer can pick such as raspberries, strawberries, mulberries, and blueberries are offered by local farms. Most of these farms require a reservation or have a strict time frame when customers may come to pick the fruit and berries. Ron Putman manages Miller’s Blueberry Farm in Watkinsville. “We are a certified bee friendly farm with no pesticide used on the berries,” says Putman. As a certified bee keeper, Putman has fresh honey available. The farm produces seven varieties of blueberries and two varieties of blackberries.

Variety is part of what makes some restaurants survive during the pandemic such as providing groceries. Half-Shepherd Market and Cheese Shop in the Normal



GROCERY DELIVERY

Q&A with the sommelier.

Unique cocktails are also offered through restaurants like The Place on Broad Street. Benjamin Ray, bar manager, has put together the following kits all for \$20: peanuts and Coke, serves 4; Lavender Lemonade (spiked), serves 6; and half gallon of Mimosa. Businesses are finding creative ways to “make do.”

Shortages inspired the Madison Chop-house Grille to “make do.” The management posted on their website that they were offering full menu, seven days a week throughout the lockdown. Plus, they would throw in that extra special something: a free roll of toilet paper with every paid order. They were one of the first in the area to reopen their dining area once restrictions were lifted.

Throwing in everything possible to stay in business during the pandemic has been Gary Sofen’s method. Owner of the new Lake Oconee Bistro in Eatonton, Sofen hired and trained 40 people for two weeks earlier this spring and after three hours,

they were closed by state regulations. Open again and following Georgia guidelines with groups of 10 per 300 square feet is easy since the restaurant is 6,000 square feet with several party-type rooms offering plenty of six-foot spaces between tables. Nothing is on the table, servers wear masks and gloves, everything is sanitized between guests.

“I am throwing everything I can at this to survive,” says Sofen. He uses his grandmother’s marinara sauce recipe and makes everything from scratch down to the salad dressings and breading. Sofen says customers at the lake want fish and ask for more sauté dishes. He gives them what they want and has two people working the sauté area to meet the demand. Observing that there are a lot of blue-collar workers in the area, particularly construction folks, he offers a lunch special. Sofen says, “I tell my customers we make everything here from scratch with a special ingredient: love.” Throwing in everything includes 30 beers on tap, wine menu, kid’s menu,

lunch menu. Everything. “We are very busy,” says Sofen.

FOOD TO SHARE WITH OTHERS

During the Depression, according to historians with The Ganzel Group in livinghistoryfarm.org, self-sufficiency carried over into social life. On radio and in women’s magazines, home economists taught how to stretch food budgets with casseroles and meals like creamed chipped beef on toast or waffles, chili, macaroni and cheese, soups, and creamed chicken on biscuits. Similarly, during the pandemic people are finding ways to share with each other, with the community and with friends, often through social media.

Large families are finding new ways to share the experience of putting food on the table. Heidi Hensley, an artist, and Karen McDonald, a kindergarten teacher, have six children between the ages of eight and 13. Every dinner has a protein, carb, and vegetable. To feed a family of eight, they order Misfit Market boxes, use In-

stacart, and pick berries at farms, which are frozen to make smoothies with a protein powder. A giant basket of fruit sits on the table. “Three of our kids eat four to five apples a day,” says Hensley. They go through two-and-a-half gallons of milk a week.

“During the shelter in place, the children eat what I cook,” says McDonald. Meals are basic with chicken, steak, pasta, rice, and raw vegetables. The most popular night is Mexican Night with quesadillas and tacos.

Eating healthy is important to these parents who are using this time to teach their children how to prepare their own meals. All six children make their own supervised breakfast and lunch. One child had a birthday at the end of May. Her favorite thing is a snow cone. So, Kona Ice, a shaved ice truck, parked in their driveway. Friends were invited to drive by, stop and get a snow cone.

Smaller families like Karen Miller Russell, a professor, and her 15-year-old daughter, prepare food as they shelter in place. Russell posts every day on Facebook and explains that she started 60 days ago when a friend wondered what people were eating.

“I started counting the days because I thought it would be funny to see what we were eating when the groceries started to run out at the end of my two-week stock of supplies,” says Russell. However, friends started asking for recipes. Russell had to restock as friends shared back and forth. “I haven’t had any trouble finding things to cook,” she says, “I’ve made old family recipes like when I taught my daughter how to make my mom’s spaghetti sauce, and some of our favorites, like spicy basil chicken or Cincinnati chili.” As they continue to shelter, Russell’s daughter told her mom that so far, they haven’t had anything “too terrible to eat,” and Russell keeps sharing her meals.

People have been sharing on social media. The following examples are from just one neighborhood. A group of four friends, The Traveling Ladies, have happy hour on Zoom every Friday with different beverages: a side car, scotch, water, and red wine. They talk about theatre, literature, articles read, and happenings. A physician’s business manager, Cynthia Dickerson, has been preparing dinner on Sunday and sharing with two households for two months. This week’s meal was country fried steak and gravy, mashed potatoes, and green beans. Another neighbor, lab manager for Agricultural & Environmental Services, Daniel Jackson, brought home Vidalia Onions and gave them to any neighbor who asked. Having been gifted some of the onions, Sandra Bussell, master gardener, emailed a recipe to the neighborhood called “Tuna and Bean Salad” (Insalata di Tonno e Fagioli).

“My mother made something similar when I was growing up,” writes Bussell. “My variation was to add a much higher proportion of Georgia Grown Vidalia onion to highlight Danny’s kind gift and because Vidalia onions are much sweeter, crunchier and juicier than regular onions. The Italian version would have had just a little finely sliced red onion and used white cannellini beans. I also used parsley, whereas the original includes basil,” says Bussell. She suggests that the recipe can be adapted based on what was available in the pantry.

People share in times of crisis and remember what their families shared with them, the recipes, the stories, the community. Back during the Depression there were lessons learned and offered concerning food. The first lesson was to stock up on ingredients for bread. Second, was to know how to make different types of bread.

Gary Nason, gardener and home chef, remembers, “My mom made bread weekly using a bread bucket that had a clamp that attached it



FOOD TO SHARE



BANANA BREAD RISES IN POPULARITY

to the kitchen table. A dough hook and crank handle attached to the top of the bucket. Mom would call for me in the morning to crank the dough before school in the fall and winter. I asked why my older brother or sister couldn't do the work. She quietly told me that I did it better, it was our secret. However, it was most likely because I was the hardest one to get out of bed in the morning. I am just shy of being 60 years old and still don't buy store bought bread. There is no comparison to home baked."

Annette Bergins, retired, reads Robin Sloan's "Sourdough" during the Pandemic shelter in place. According to Goodreads, "Lois Clary, a software engineer at a San Francisco robotics company, codes all day and collapses at night. When her favourite sandwich shop closes up, the owners leave her with the starter for their mouthwatering sourdough bread." Bergins reads the book and remembers having a sourdough starter in her refrigerator. She gets it out, feeds it, and then makes a loaf of bread.

Reading during a crisis can encourage

creativity and resourcefulness. During the Depression, books emerged about how to put food on the table. Fannie Farmer's "The Boston Cooking School Cookbook" and Irma Rombauer's "The Joy of Cooking" provided ways to use new foods and ways to not waste food. The takeaway was to eat every bite on the plate.

Along with the books came Aunt Sammy, a fictional female counterpart to the U.S. government's Uncle Sam, a creation of the US Department of Agriculture and its Bureau of Home Economics. Through the radio program Housekeeper's Chat, Aunt Sammy gave lively advice on food preparation as she encouraged women to embrace the radio and a host of modern consumer household products. The recipes she shared were gathered, in 1927, into a cookbook. A million copies were sold during the Depression. Today, the book can be found through the University of Arkansas Press.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The phrase "food for thought" came out

of the French Revolution as a positive way to think about something in order to improve it. During this era of reason, people began to shed the beliefs that were taught and started questioning things.

Brian Head, catering chef for LRG Provisions located in Five Points has had time to think. He is sheltering at home with his wife and son. Chef Head had worked with good interns from the Athens Community Career Academy, so when he learned that Emmanuel Stone, the Community Chef and Culinary Arts Coordinator at the Academy, was starting a program to provide meals for service industry workers and teachers, Head volunteered.

"I have learned a lot, like no one likes low-fat wheat bread and it goes to waste. We prepare 170 portions on Monday and distribute the food on Tuesday. We get food from restaurants that want to use things up before they spoil or from a restaurant owner who can order things from US Foods cheaper or from the Food Bank," says Head. Based on what is available, they have had to find creative ways to use a lot of diced onions or 400 pounds of pork. The results are a hodgepodge of recipes from curry to casseroles.

People who move the food chain along are waiting to see what the future may be; however, Head has been thinking. "This has been an eye opener for me," he says. "I am a workaholic putting in 60 hours a week, not seeing that much of my wife and son; I'd be cooking the whole time." How does he see the future? "We will have to slow down and think it through, run it way cleaner. We have to support local farmers." Head thinks that the real problem with food insecurity will be with unemployment.

"It is crazy that it has brought us to this. I don't want to go back to the way it was. We need to help each other and take care of our neighbors better. I want to build a humane work environment. Truth is, that environment is very fragile. I went from being the busiest I have ever been with weddings and graduation, to nothing. Now I am hanging out with my family. I am taking time to see the Spring.... has it always been this gorgeous?"



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A socially-distant soup kitchen

WRITTEN BY WILL BROADWATER

As the smell of spices fills the air, people approach the driveway of Greg and Eric Zock to receive servings of soup during the COVID-19 outbreak. The two brothers aren't the only Athens residents sacrificing their time and health to give food to those in need, but they've found a way to use their culinary skills to make soup and distribute it to people for free.

Soup is known to be able to spread rations of food out in times of need. For the most part, soups are easy to make and can be made in large batches to be distributed.

"Soup is mine and Greg's love language," Eric says.

On March 20, the Zock brothers made chili to distribute to their friends in the service industry as well as people in the Boulevard area of Athens. The chili was both gluten-free and vegan to accommodate various dietary restrictions. They asked that people bring to-go containers that the Zocks would clean themselves before serving the soup. However, they had some to-go containers on hand in case anybody did not have one. The two brothers are taking many health precautions in order to avoid spreading germs.

"When we go to the store, of course we're wearing masks and gloves and we try to only touch the things we need," Greg says. "When we get them home, we spray all of the packaging and wipe it down. When we cook, we wear gloves and masks and we ensure that the soup gets up to a high enough temperature where it would kill anything."

Their set up has been successful in minimizing contact with others.

"So, we have a turkey fryer with a big pot out on the porch and pretty much we'll have like three to five containers already portioned up in case people don't have their containers," Eric says. "Pretty much, people come to our driveway and if they have a container, we will take it inside to wash it. We serve the soup on the porch and then bring it to them, so the farthest they're getting is the end of our driveway."

The Zocks are taking precautions when preparing the soup by wearing gloves and masks to ensure the safety of the people receiving their soup. Greg and Eric have also been making deliveries to people who are currently quarantined due to immune deficiencies or other pre-existing conditions. The brothers deliver the soup by dropping it off at the person's door and letting them know it is outside as they are leaving.

"The community across the board has been ridiculously selfless, because it's been all walks of people," Eric says. "This is for every-

one, but it's really geared towards people without a paycheck. My friends in the service industry told me to give it to someone else. So that really stuck out, people being so generous and selfless in these times, even though they are struggling themselves."

Aside from a chili that was full of hearty beans and vegetables, the brothers also make a poblano corn chowder with fresh produce from local farmers. The Zock brothers say they are supporting local farms by using their produce and that many people, even some

small businesses, have made donations. The Zocks said these donations have gone a long way in purchasing the ingredients for the soup as well as getting the supplies needed for distribution. With the support from others in the community, they are eager to keep cooking different soups to feed those in need for as long as they can.

The two brothers have both had years of experience in the food service industry. They have worked in restaurants and know the proper precautions when preparing food. Greg graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in environmental chemistry and while getting his undergraduate degree, he and Eric worked at the Heirloom Café in Athens. For the past two

years, the brothers have been chosen to cook for UGA's Interdisciplinary Field Program and have spent summers traveling across the country with this program to prepare large

meals for the students.

The outbreak of COVID-19 left millions of their fellow service industry employees out of work and struggling to get the food and supplies they need to survive. The Zock brothers do not have a lot of resources, but are using their passion and talent in cooking to do their part to give back to the community, understanding that the act of giving is what makes us human, as giving makes us feel accomplished. We see someone who is less fortunate than us and want to give them a helping hand. To the giver, this could be one trivial action, while it could be life-changing for the person receiving it.

As the virus progresses, it is important to be a helping hand for someone, with our society being far from normal. Everyone is being affected by this virus, some more than others. The act of giving has grown amongst communities across the nation. People are coming together, becoming one, in an attempt to overcome this virus outbreak. This virus has taken us away from the hectic society that we are accustomed to and has brought us back to the roots of our humanity, where people are risking their health to provide a helping hand for the communities in need.



From left, brothers Greg and Eric Zock prepare servings of soup for the Athens community on April 5.

Paid with Purpose

Even before Georgia's Shelter in Place order went into effect on April 2, many small businesses across the state had already been forced to close their doors and were facing a frighteningly uncertain future. The following day, on April 3, the US Small Business Administration (SBA) brought hope with the release of its Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) that would provide loans to small businesses to allow them to keep their workers employed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nearly \$350 billion was released to fund the program and within days, that money was depleted. The demand was great throughout the country and banks, big and small, found themselves overwhelmed with loan applications.

Locally, BankSouth sprang quickly into action.

Neil Hediger, Vice President of Market-

ing for BankSouth, says the organization galvanized the whole process in all of their markets and employees worked 12- to 18-hour days to process the onslaught of loan applications.

"We created an automated system in less than 48 hours and got it installed and integrated so customers had an easy online portal to do business," says Hediger. "This really jumpstarted our ability to submit these loans, get them funded, closed, and sent to the customer quickly."

He says their first responsibility was to meet the needs of current customers, and from there, people had begun contacting them and getting referred to them who found themselves at a standstill with national banks.

Jim Strickland, Market Leader for BankSouth in Greene County, says they were processing three- to four-fold the number



of loans they normally do in a month.

"It was quite an undertaking, to put it lightly, for smaller community banks around the country and I'm so proud of what BankSouth was able to do," says Strickland. "It would not have been possible without our employees. They worked selflessly and played a huge role in our community."

Strickland says they also worked with Greene County Chamber of Commerce president Terry Lawler to identify a number of non-profits and minority and

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women-owned small businesses who are often “underbanked” by big banks. “We reached out to let them know we were available and they had options,” says Strickland.

Hediger says the work on PPP loans continues as they move into a “follow through phase” to make sure borrowers maintain certain requirements to have these loans forgiven and are kept up to date on the process.

“This program was bigger than ourselves,” says Strickland. “It was about getting our local businesses back to work so they could safely bring their employees back. It was ‘all hands on deck’ and to look back and see how everybody worked together, it just gives you the true meaning of what a community back is here for.”

Aside from the PPP loans, BankSouth found other ways to help local businesses. Early on in the pandemic, it quickly became apparent that some of the hardest hit businesses in the local economy was independently-owned restaurants. For this, too, BankSouth sprang into action. Executives began brainstorming options on how they and their customers could give back to local restaurants. They settled on “Paid with Purpose,” a program in which BankSouth donated 5 percent of the total bill directly back to the restaurant when a BankSouth cardholder patronized the business.

“The restaurants were really the first line of impact, so we began thinking about what we could do to support those so quickly hit,” says Hediger. “Because of our market share, we’ve got a lot of debit cards floating around, so we created Paid with Purpose which allows us to make that connection to local restaurateurs and have those dollars go directly back into their pockets.”

BankSouth kicked off its Paid with Purpose initiative in April and continued it through May, helping more than 150 restaurants in the Lake Country and its other markets throughout the state including Athens and Watkinsville, Atlanta, and Savannah.

Their goal, Hediger says, was to give back to non-corporately-owned restaurants whose owners put blood sweat and tears into their businesses to serve their communities. After all, he says, it’s what BankSouth strives to do each day.

“We’re here to support the community and that’s the thing that separates us from larger banks out there,” says Hediger. “We live here. We work here. We’re part of this community and anything we can do to keep it vibrant, strong, and healthy is really worth any amount of effort we can spend.”



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WRITTEN BY CHIP BELL,
GEORGIA WRITERS MUSEUM, EATONTON

The COVID-19 version of 1876 in Savannah, Ga., was yellow fever; more than 700 people died. One family at risk was Savannah Morning News editor, Joel Chandler Harris, his wife, Essie, and their two young boys, Julian and Lucien. They escaped to Atlanta and temporarily rented a room at The Kimball House. Harris' registration humorously read: "J.C. Harris, one wife, two bowlegged children, and a bilious [sickly] nurse." He was hired by the Atlanta Constitution as an associate editor.

You learn fascinating facts like these with a visit to Georgia Writers Museum, but with COVID-19 closing the museum doors temporarily, the museum found another way to share these inspirational and instructive stories.

Georgia Writers Museum now offers a series of 12 online, virtual mini tours about three famous local writers who spent part of their lives within 20 miles of downtown Eatonton. The series is organized into four periods of life, and each Monday, a five-to six-minute video offers an entertaining peep into a period of the life of Joel Chandler Harris, Flannery O'Connor, or Alice Walker. The first video, released in late April, focused on

the childhood of Joel Chandler Harris.

The process of video production is much like the creation of a play. Each writer's biography is researched, and a script is written and carefully vetted by an authority on the particular writer. James Marshall, board member of the Uncle Remus Museum and Harris historian, assessed the Harris facts; Dr. Bruce Gentry, professor of English at Georgia College and O'Connor expert, vetted the O'Connor facts, and Evelyn White, author of the most celebrated biography of Alice Walker, critiqued the Walker script.

Photos and illustrations are from a variety of sources, including Rose Library at Emory University, where the artifacts and papers of all three writers are housed, as well as the Georgia State Archives. Armed with a script and photos, the videos are crafted and narrated by locals Chip Bell, Paula Benjamin, and Lisa Ross. The feedback has been terrific, in fact; and with our revenues stopped cold, supporters are making donations thanking us for the online tours and helping us stay in business so we will be able to reopen.

All released videos are available at www.georgiawritersmuseum.com or on the museum Facebook page.



A pause, not history

WRITTEN BY SANDRA ROSSETER,
DIRECTOR, OLD SCHOOL HISTORY
MUSEUM

When we closed our doors in mid-March, the museum team at the Old School History Museum was stunned that a deadly virus was threatening us. How could this be? After all, we live in Eatonton, a caring small town where people feel safe, look after their neighbors, and delight in sharing the rich history of our area. A deadly virus that required distancing ourselves from those we love and those we serve at the museum was unimaginable. We just stared at each other.

Spring is always a busy time at the



OSHM with numerous student tours and special events on the calendar. It's also the time when we host hundreds of fourth graders for a special literary/music program complementing the history studies they have just completed. It's a magical day as some of our adventurous docents put on historical costumes and tell stories, the Kazanetti String Quartet plays period music, and we all step back in time. This year's fourth graders missed their special event.

It's the season when history students of all ages come to learn about the Native Americans who once lived in our area, and vacationers from far and near come to visit. Some people visit regularly, some follow the ante-bellum trail, and some simply find us. Regardless, they are lovers of history, and we love sharing our stories. This year our history lovers had to save their visit for another time.

The OSHM was recently invited to participate in a two-year educational research project. We were especially excited because we would be

working directly with the student participants. The research was just starting. Then the doors closed; that project is now pushed into the future.

As days passed and the virus drew closer, we knew our Sunday At the Museum lecture series was compromised. Our next speaker, Bill Kurtz of Madison, was scheduled for early May. He was returning by popular demand to tell mesmerizing stories of his grandfather, technical director for numerous films, including "Gone With The Wind." Fortunately, Bill has re-scheduled his lecture for May 2, 2021.

The pandemic has taken its toll on our well-planned events, and it has stolen memorable experiences from our students and visitors. As for our team of volunteers, we miss working at the museum, and we miss each other. Thankfully, we know happier, healthier days are coming!

Please visit our website oldschoolhistorymuseum.org

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Finding calm amidst the pandemic storm

WRITTEN BY DR. KIMBERLY HOFFMAN,
ADVANCED AUDIOLOGY & HEARING CARE

Many of my patients know that I battled internal shingles in 2019. It was beyond any pain I could have ever imagined and took several months to really figure out the diagnosis. All of my patients are what kept me going. Unknowingly, they motivated me each and every day to push through the pain, because they needed me.

I learned several lessons from this journey and one of the most important was that of meditation because I could not will the pain away despite medications. I have for years counseled my tinnitus patients on the role of relaxation and mindfulness as one of several additional solutions to hearing devices and noise generators that help make the tinnitus less noticeable.

My neuropathy, like the tinnitus for so many of my patients, could have been my only focus and that would not have generated any relief for me. I refused to have it take control of me and I had to learn how to manage it. I researched mindfulness and dealing with chronic pain and gained much valuable information. Additionally, I was loaned an excellent book from a patient and friend titled "Living Beyond Your Pain—Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to Ease Chronic Pain" by Dahl et.al which was priceless. I also began to use the app Headspace.

Now, there are many different apps on meditation out there, but this one works for me. I am also quite impressed that Headspace is offering free memberships to healthcare workers with an active NPI during this global pandemic.

Each day it is about finding resources that work for each of us. We have choices. Meditation to me is really about learning to view my thoughts and feelings with

perspective so that I can arrive at a place of peace and calm despite the storm. The storm could be battling chronic pain. The storm could be battling tinnitus despite using hearing devices to help mask it. The storm could be COVID-19. Whatever your current storm, may you find resources that help.

I, along with my staff, continue to be dedicated to serving our patients and our community despite the storm around us. We have remained open during this global pandemic to help patients in a low- or no-contact way. We know how essential it is to hear and we are finding new and innovative ways to help patients. We have introduced curbside services, implemented telehealth to connect to hearing devices remotely and provide much needed adjustments, and invested in new technologies to test patient's hearing curbside with little to no contact.

We are saluting our patients that are residents in nursing homes and have provided free hearing device cleans and checks. We are saluting our fellow healthcare workers and local restaurant owners by participating in The Rotary Club of Greene and Putnam Counties Project Healthcare Heroes where we are feeding our hospital workers from meals purchased at local restaurants.

We are saluting small businesses just like ours by shopping local and helping them to hopefully not just survive but thrive.

We are focused on much more than ears. We have been for years and will continue to have your back, Lake Country. It is a new day full of new opportunities. Let's rise up together.

*Be Well,
Dr. Kimberly*



A healing touch

WRITTEN BY CAROL VINCI,
SOUTHERN LASER MEDICAL SPA & HEALING ARTS

Time was moving at a very rapid pace for me, each year faster than the one before, always moving and hoping for more hours to accomplish the necessary chores and correspondence of each day. Energy was gone before evening finished and another day had been recorded. Then came coronavirus of 2020, COVID-19.

Time changed and hopefully so did we. The silence in the air followed as all sports events, concerts, movies, plays, dining out, shopping, education and work came to an abrupt halt. Every event can produce a valuable change in our life.

As the world stopped and became silent to normal activities, my focus turned to things much more important than the hustle and bustle of prior days. Being available to my family and extended family was a great blessing. Now I had time to help them in ways that I would not or could not have done with my daily commitments before. Intimate involvement in the sale and purchase of two homes and the packing and moving of these two siblings and their families has taken much time. It could not have been accomplished without this "shut down."

The timing was perfect for my widowed sister-in-law living in Athens. She was able to move in with us just before the world stopped. Had this plan not been in the works, she would have struggled alone during this crisis. Instead she was comfortable and cared for along this journey.

The Blizzard of 2020, that is the extreme cold winds of this virus and the great uncertainty to everyone's physical, mental, emotional, and financial health blew in, fear took center stage in many hearts. We at Southern Laser Medical Spa & Healing Arts began to hold on to the great promises of God's word for our families, friends, and wonderful patrons. So many years you have been a special part of our lives with your faithful support of our business and your love. This resulted in an emptiness because we could not see you and offer our healing touch to enrich your lives and ours.

Today the sun shines brightly and our vision is clearer than ever before. Our richest blessings in life are worth more than all the noise, and activities that we create, but in the faith by which we walk. The life we have been given is just a brief vapor here on earth. A time to love and reach out to make someone else know that it is better for them because we lived and loved generously. We can't wait to see you again.

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A romance gone, but not forgotten

WRITTEN BY BEV BERARDO

Their story started shortly after World War II and ended, 74 years later, amid a worldwide pandemic.

The original version of “An Officer and a Gentlemen” took place at Camp Atterbury just outside of Indianapolis. The officer, 2nd lieutenant Thelma Snell, met staff sergeant James Leys while both were tasked with processing discharge papers for servicemen who had seen combat in Europe. The romance proceeded quickly from meeting in September and being married the following April. They lived a life of adventure and longevity and I was blessed to call them Mom and Dad.

They followed the principles of God, family and country and taught us from an early age to always stand at attention with hand over our heart when the American flag passed by, proudly wearing their flag pins daily until the end.

Their story was shared in “For Love and Country” in the Holiday issue of *Lake Oconee Living*, a short time before the pandemic took centerstage.

News of the coronavirus began to occupy our news feeds early March and with the vulnerability to the elderly, at 100- and 99-years old Mom and Dad were at risk. Their assisted living facility stopped family visits by the middle



Bev Berardo, left, and her sister, Marjory Baal, celebrate their mother's 100th birthday last November with their father, James Leys. Thelma Leys passed away on April 4 – the couple's 74th wedding anniversary – after testing positive for COVID-19. James joined her 20 days later. He would have marked his 100th birthday in September.

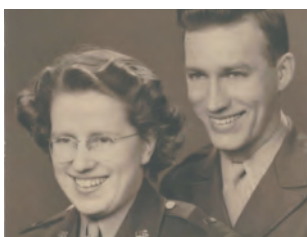
of the month and my only access was by telephone and through the window while delivering their favorite treat of chocolate chip cookies. Shortly, the virus spread among residents and staff.

Mom developed a cough with extremely low oxygen levels and was admitted to St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital in Greensboro on Tuesday, March 31 and tested for COVID-19. The compassionate and caring doctors and nurses made an exception to the their recently-instituted no visitors policy and allowed me access as she was quickly diagnosed as end of life. She was placed in isolation and I was

given Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and taught the proper way to wear and remove it so as not to spread the virus. During this time, COVID test were taking between five to seven days to get results.

The following day, Dad became symptomatic with a low-grade fever, lack of energy and dehydration. He was admitted to Good Samaritan on Wednesday, April 1 and also tested for COVID-19. He was placed in a separate isolation room across the hall from Mom.

I spent the next three days going between both rooms, changing PPE each



time. As Mom began to slip away, the nurses dressed Dad in a protective gown and mask and wheeled him across the hall to say their final goodbyes. Mom passed quietly and peacefully on April 4, their 74th wedding anniversary. Thirty minutes later we received her positive COVID-19 test results.

Due to my exposure to the virus, I was instructed to quarantine and isolate myself even from my husband for 14 days, no more visits to the hospital to spend time with Dad. The grief over losing my first parent and the fear for my Dad and me of contracting the virus was with me every minute of the day.

Dad remained at Good Samaritan for the next two weeks as his test was also positive for COVID-19. Unable to visit, I remained in contact with his caregivers by phone. For a while, it looked as if his symptoms had subsided and he would be one of the few at his age to survive the virus. He was released to return to assisted living under hospice care. I was thankfully able to see him briefly during the transfer but the no visitors policy was strictly enforced. Unfortunately, his miracle recovery was not to be. The infection in his lungs took over and he passed exactly 20 days after Mom. The virus had robbed me of the chance to share his last days.

When it was my turn to lose loved ones, it hurt like you would expect, but when the cause is a worldwide pandemic it is much harder to believe. For all those questioning social distancing and mask-wearing, think not about the inconvenience to you but about those who are the most defenseless to fight the spread of this disease.



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LOVE IN THE TIME OF COVID

After the pandemic postpones their wedding plans, a New York couple pulls together an unforgettable whimsical event while visiting family at Lake Oconee

STORY BY *Tia Lynn Ivey* | PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Robin Bish*

Weddings drum up all kinds of iconic imagery, from elegant white gowns to velvety tiered cakes, from fancy centerpieces atop fine linens to rings of gold exchanged between the bride and groom in front of all their loved ones. But when a worldwide pandemic puts the kibosh on large gatherings, what becomes of a wedding then? One couple found out that a dream wedding could happen without all the traditional trappings and still be the most magical moment of their lives.

Sammi and David Rosen, whose wedding was postponed twice due to the coronavirus pandemic, decided COVID-19 couldn't stop love, or their nuptials. The New York couple was

visiting family at Lake Oconee when they received news that their wedding date would be postponed for the second time. Instead of despairing, the eager couple stayed positive and got creative.

In less than 24 hours, Sammi and David, with the help of a few family members, threw together a whimsical wedding on the lake no one would ever forget.

Live streamed for family and friends from coast to coast, Sammi and David pledged their love and lives to each other at the end of the docks outside of their aunt and uncle's lake house on a beautiful spring day.

"It was a lot of fun. It was something cool and unexpected," says David. "We are both pretty

spontaneous and very adventurous. To do something like this, it just fit."

"We figured this was the most family we'd be around for a long time with the pandemic going on," says Sammi. "Our wedding was fun and interesting. It was a celebration of life and love with people we care about, both the family that was with us in person and those all over the country who watched on social media."

It all began with a magnolia bush from Uncle Peter and Aunt Norma Gordon's garden outside of their lake house. Sammi took one look at the flowers in full bloom and imagined her wedding bouquet.

"That's where the vision began," says Sammi. "That's when I knew





The impromptu wedding of Sammi and David Rosen of New York was livestreamed to family around the country from the shores of Lake Oconee. After 'Rev. Sam the Marrying Man' pronounced them man and wife, David took a more literal plunge before riding a jet ski off as newlyweds.



we could still pull off a wonderful wedding.”

Alison Gordon, David’s cousin and self-appointed maid of honor, jumped at the chance to plan a wedding on a whim.

“She went full-throttle to plan our wedding in less than a day,” says Sammi. “We agreed to it one night at dinner after drinking a bottle of wine and the next day we woke up to a wedding.”

“It’s great to plan a last-minute outdoor wedding, because you don’t need to plan for weather contingencies. It makes everything a lot more relaxed,” says Alison. “It was one of the most beautiful weddings I’ve ever seen, because it was all about the simple celebration of pure love. Sammi and David are a great couple, and we are so happy to have Sammi part of our loving family forever.”

With less than 24 hours to plan the wedding, Alison logged onto Facebook to find recommendations for the last-minute affair.

“I reached out to the Lake Oconee Mom’s Facebook page and they helped steer us in the right direction for the few vendors we needed for the small wedding. I called Richard’s Wine Bar for recommendations on a musician to set the mood. Since they have such great music acts there, I trusted their opinion. They put me in touch with someone who recommended Ronnie Pittman. His acoustic music and lovely voice added such a simple, sweet element that produced music from a speaker just couldn’t provide,” recounts Alison. “Norma and I harvested magnolia blossoms straight from the tree for the bride’s bouquet, which turned out really beautifully. It was an honor to bring Sammi and David’s vision to life.”

Norma and Peter Gordon, David’s aunt and un-



The newlyweds made do with gummy worm rings, a rainbow cake from Publix, and a bouquet of magnolias from the gardens of Peter and Norma Gordon, below.

Bride: Sammi Litt

Groom: David Rosen

Venue: Home of Peter and Norma Gordon, Lake Oconee

Dress: Goodwill of Putnam County

Photos: Robin Bish Photography

Officiant: Rev. Sam the Marrying Man

Acoustic Guitar: Ronnie Pittman

Cake: Publix, Lake Oconee

Flower Girls: Julianne Gordon, 5, and Josephine Gordon, 2

Wedding Coordinator: Alison Gordon



cle, purchased the lake house in hopes that their entire family could enjoy the relaxing and scenic environment. To their delight, they never imagined they'd be hosting a wedding.

"As family means everything to me, we purchased the house in Reynolds two years ago as a true family gathering place to build family memories," says Norma. "At a family dinner over Memorial Day the idea for this wedding materialized. Under the enthusiastic guidance of my daughter-in-law, and help from all family members, all of the details were taken care of within 12 hours. A beautiful, special, unforgettable wedding was born. What a truly special family celebration."

On the wedding day, David borrowed one of his cousin's spiffy outfits and Sammi donned a wedding gown

from the Goodwill that Alison hunted down for her.

"It was actually a beautiful dress. For \$50, I couldn't have done better," says Sammi.

Flower girls, wearing \$2 dresses from the Goodwill, pranced down the dock aisle with freshly picked magnolias in their hair.

Alison tracked down "Reverend Sam the Marrying Man" of Watkinsville to perform the ceremony and Pittman strummed romantic tunes on his acoustic guitar during the nuptials and reception. Sammi and David vowed to love and cherish each other until death do they part while sliding gummy worm rings onto each other's fingers to seal the promise. To honor the couple's Jewish faith and wedding customs, the reverend brought a light-bulb in a bag

for David to stomp on and break after the ceremony. After the couple's wedding kiss, David joyously leaped into the lake to celebrate.

"He 'took the plunge' by jumping in the lake right after he said, 'I do,'" says Alison.

The happy couple rode off into the sunset on a jet-ski with a "Just Married" sign on the back, taking a quick romantic ride across Lake Oconee. More than 500 people tuned in via Facebook Live and Instagram to bear witness to Sammi and David becoming husband and wife at long last. Sammi's brothers in California dressed in their wedding party attire as they watched together. Even David's 94-year-old grandmother tuned in from Florida.

"I think more people watched and got to see us get married this way," said

Sammi. “We still got to share our day with everyone we love, even though they couldn’t be there in person.”

For the reception, the bride and groom dined on a feast of homemade tacos, pigs in a blanket, and champagne. They swayed on the dock to Ed Sheeran’s “Thinking Out Loud” for their first dance as a married couple as family lit sparklers and set off fireworks. Sammi and David cut into a rainbow cake from Publix with children toys used as wedding cake toppers.

“We used Dora the Explorer for me and a G.I. Joe for David,” laughs Sammi. “It was perfect.”

Sammi and David’s impromptu wedding was not what they originally wanted, but it turned out to be everything they needed.

“We realized you don’t have to spend a ton of money for a wedding, when we already have everything that really matters,” says Sammi. “It was still magical.”

“We decided to make the most of a bad situation,” says David. “You’ve just got to find moments of joy where you can and remember what’s truly important. Life doesn’t always go the way you want it to go, but you play the cards you are dealt the best you can. We weren’t able to have a regular wedding, but we adapted and had the wedding we could. We didn’t cry to the universe over it, we made the most of it and it was still great. All that mattered to me was getting to marry my soulmate. Sammi is the love of my life and I couldn’t wait any longer to marry her.”

The now married couple embarked on a “road trip honeymoon” on their way back home to New York.

“We will never forget our Georgia wedding. It was perfect for us,” says Sammi.





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Raptors Revisited

Community rebuilds nesting platform destroyed by storms and ospreys return, bringing with them signs of rebirth and resilience

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIRGINIA C. LINCH

Last spring, a storm ripped away a man-made osprey nesting platform

on Lake Oconee, a place where I would escape to watch and photograph these majestic raptors and their young. It was an overwhelming loss to find their home gone and the surroundings silent.

I shared this experience in the Holiday issue of *Lake Oconee Living*, and following its publication, our nature loving community sprang into action with an outpouring of support worthy of the magnificent birds that soar above this region every day.

Janet Pearson, President of Rivers Alive, reached out immediately to coordinate the building skills of volunteer, Harris McCollum, with donated materials from Lake Oconee Ace Hardware. McCollum created a platform built on specifications from DNR for osprey nesting in the





Community volunteers worked with donated materials to construct a new nesting platform to install at Lake Oconee. Shown at left are Ben Brantley and Shane Wright of Charles Clewis Contractors. Below, the staff at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center, including (from left) Katie McCollum, Rusty Bryan, and Cheyenne Whitetree, are constructing a platform to be installed for the 2021 season.

wild. Georgia Power official, Clint Brown, enlisted professional contractor, Michael Clewis and his experienced crew of Ben Brantley and Shane Wright, to install the platform on a blustery winter day in December. This great group of folks worked together to have the platform ready for the 2020 mating season.

The staff at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center stepped up to build a platform as well. This platform was not ready until mid-January, when most projects came to

an abrupt halt with the pandemic outbreak that has changed priorities for everyone. We hope to install that platform for the 2021 season.

These elegant and fierce raptors begin scouting prime nesting locations in mid-January, laying claim as early as possible to their preferred spots. Many people were watching to see when or if any ospreys would stake a claim to this platform and while the lightning fast kingfishers were seen perching on it early on, we all

waited to see if ospreys would return to this location.

Ospreys do not require man made structures to reproduce in the wild as evidenced by the many natural nesting sites all over the lake region. The original platform in this setting had been used by many generations of ospreys over the years and provided a safe area that was accessible to wildlife viewers yet suitable for supporting osprey lifecycles.

Word of the sighting of seemingly random and haphazardly placed sticks on the platform spread rapidly between those involved with this project. While the building of the nest is an ongoing and lengthy process that continues during actual nesting and fledging of the young, the nests are notoriously poorly constructed.

I began scouting the area in mid-March and was thrilled to hear the distinctive shrill chirping alarm call as I left the path and headed for the nest. Silence was the first indication of a problem last spring. The ever-vigilant ospreys call warns all who know the sound, of an invader in the area. Stepping out into the site that was



A new hatchling emerged in mid-May from the ospreys' newly-constructed nest atop the platform created and installed by community volunteers including, from left, Ben Brantley, Shane Wright, and Michael Clewis of Charles Clewis Contractors.



desolate just last spring and now seeing that there was indeed a pair of ospreys building a nest, brought that moment of joy that nature shares with so many.

The apparently random pile of sticks was filling out the box frame mounted on a pole in a small cove. Both birds eyed me with a combination of curiosity and piercing suspicion, fearless. I made no attempt to come closer and they soon returned to the business at hand, or talon, both male and female scouting for sticks, while one would remain, guarding the site. They take turns collecting building material and their primary diet of freshly-caught fish, settling in each evening to begin their nighttime vigil.

Returning in April and hearing that shrill warning cry once again, brought a smile which only became bigger as I found the

female now in incubation mode. Hunkered down in the nest and while watching every move I made, she did not abandon her instinctive drive to keep her eggs warm. The male returned with a fish for her, and she moved only to give him room to come in. Although they generally only weigh about three pounds, their wingspan can be eight feet wide and that nest is a relatively small target. Factoring in the average of three eggs, there is not much room for landing.

He drops the fish into the nest, and she pounces on it as he tiptoes carefully around the edges, avoiding the center where the eggs lay. She flies off in a flurry of wings with her snack and he opens his beak silently, in a possible yawn, as he takes incubation duty while she devours her snack and watches from a nearby tree.

Observing the behavior of subjects for hours on end is part of nature photography. One learns so much by just being still, listening and allowing normal actions to continue. The carefree nest building and fishing attitude has drastically changed. They are now on a mission and even birds flying overhead are warned away



with a different series of calls and glares from glittering eyes that seem to assess each and every leaf movement, sound or scent, whether in the water below, the shoreline, or the sky above. The noise of the nearby traffic, boats, jet skis, and blaring radios fades away and one can almost understand how these birds of prey have adapted to human interruptions. People and their raucous machines are simply ignored, interrupting the gentler sounds of nature in brief moments.

Keeping an eye on the calendar and checking back mid-May shows yet another and different behavior. The female is sitting on the edge of the nest instead of incubating, there is the barest hint of white fuzz spotted between those piled sticks. The golden glare has changed into an intensity that can be felt on the bank. A fierce and protective stance is taken at my approach, not the humble incubation position at all. At least one egg has hatched and with that new arrival, both adults have become compellingly wary as well as ferocious. They display almost snarling beaks and extended talons while spreading their wings exaggerating their size in a sign of aggressiveness.

They soon relax and although they are cognizant of my presence, the initial barely suppressed display of hostility has gradually settled back into simple awareness.

Nature photographer, Herta Thomas of Fayetteville, Ga., made her first trip to Lake Oconee and was present at the discovery of the destroyed nest in 2019.

"As a nature photographer, I was thrilled with the opportunity to view the ospreys nesting in this location," she shares with me. "A group of our club members left the Atlanta area early and made the trip with high expectations. When we arrived, we were

stunned to see that the platform holding the nest, was no longer standing and a deep sadness came over me. Questions about the young in the nest bothered us all. Did they survive? Where did they go? To this day, the tragic event from that early morning sighting leaves an emptiness in my heart. That sadness was changed by the tremendous happiness with a recent visit after seeing the adults on the nest. I hope that these are the same parents who were able to begin again with a new family. Coming to the lake now, sitting by the nest with camera in hand, while watching these incredible raptors, fishing, feeding, changing shifts while enjoying the sunrise on the lake makes my heart beat a bit faster and the connection to God is real. I am very thankful for this little sanctuary; it restores my soul and gives me long term peace. Thank you so much for the people and hands who worked to make it possible to sit there, worship God and enjoy that peace."

I extend my own thanks to all who took part in this restoration project that has justified all the efforts. The disastrous event in the loss of the original nesting site has been restored by the unity and active participation of all involved. I view this small project as a symbol of what our community, state, country and the world can do to recover and flourish from the epic challenges we now face, and finding ultimate success in the days to come.

Virginia C. Lynch is a nature photographer and project director of Butterflies & Blooms in the Briar Patch in Eatonton where she lives with her husband, Ronald Lynch.

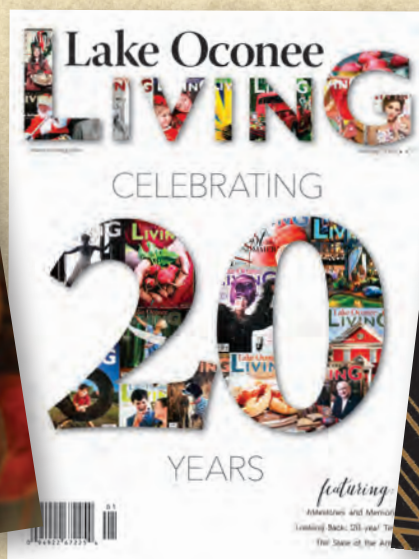
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