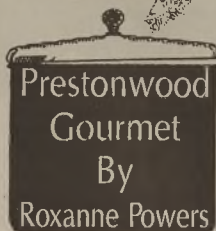


From partying with kids to savoring a Five Star dinner, the focus is food

By Roxanne Powers

March has inflicted its manic-depressive personality on my family in a big way this year. Along with its usual wet/dry, warm/cold shifts in the weather, this year March has seen fit to add laughter/tears, significant hellos/good-byes, birthdays/deaths.

An accident, a deacon dinner, a wake, (and the retirement party we missed for the wake), a family reunion, our child's seventh birthday party, a five-star dinner and the Easter holiday all laid claim to our time and emotions this month.



put those two little dots over that stupid little a, so just leave me alone while I figure out some way to mispronounce pronunciation!

When the daughter of a dear friend from my childhood called to say her mother had been given last rites, and that I should come to Austin, Texas, if I wanted to say good-bye, I began to make preparations for the flight.

However, my husband reminded me that my father's family reunion was just hours away from Austin, and the fact that it was to be held that weekend was perhaps not insignificant...our children had never met their great aunts, uncles, or even great grandparents. So, when the kids came in from school that day, we loaded them into the Suburban for a trip that for me, would include two reunions: One sad, and one joyous. Just a few short hours after my arrival at her side, my friend left us.

In an effort to offer some sustenance to her shaken and grieving daughter, (her mother had just been diagnosed with cancer three weeks before) I thrust my own freshly-made cup of Cafe Vienna into her hands. She took a sip, and a small expression of surprise passed over her face, as she pointed out that we, who have not seen each other for more than a decade, share an addiction to International Club Coffees! After sharing coffee, tears, hugs and vows to keep in touch, I climbed back into the Suburban with my family for the next leg of our trip.

The family reunion included the usual corny comments, jokes and exclamations on family resemblances; it also included my grandmother's not-so-usual strawberry

cake, and her disclosure for how to taste any pound cake (even boxed) taste as good as hers. But that's one little family secret 'n keeping to myself a while longer!

When six people travel 3,000 miles in five days, they will take desperate measures for escaping fast food. One evening we decided to try dinner at a truck stop. Jake, our three-year-old, must have decided that the truckers looked bored as well as lonely, for he launched into his entertainment mode when he overheard some of us discussing the death of his grandmother's dog, whom he hasn't seen for two years now.

In shocked tones, he queried, "Bo DIED?" When we assured him he had, he began to lock eyes with anyone whose attention he could catch, and with a desperately sad expression on his face would exclaim pitifully, "My dog died."

Just when he got good at this act and I was ready to send him around with a hat, the waitress approached our table, becoming his next victim. When she politely and reverently exclaimed, "Oh honey, I am sooooo sorry!" Holli managed to maintain some decorum as she quietly snickered behind her hand. Witnessing this, the waitress said to her sweetly, "Honey, that's not very nice!" Holli's control (along with the control of everyone else in the room) collapsed as she laughingly replied, "But you don't understand...he doesn't have a dog!"

Just as we began to feel comfortably close to the end of the meal, a lady with a substantial backside got up and walked out the door. Jake's eyes followed her every step before turning to us and loudly exclaiming, "DID YOU SEE THAT BIG BUTT?" Because the truck stop actually had good food, we decided that truckers started those greasy-spoon rumors to keep people like us out of there.

Last Saturday afternoon, I indulged in heart-shaped cream cheese and raspberry jam sandwiches and gingerale punch (Oh, and let's not forget the Barbie doll birthday cake!) with a house full of fluffy-dressed seven- and eight-year-olds as they tea partied. Hours later, James and I indulged in delicious herbed cream cheese and shrimp Crostini, and Peach Bellinis with a room full of fluffy-dressed

adults at a Five Star dinner held at Prestonwood. Don't get me wrong, I'm not comparing my culinary attempts with those of Chef Kaminski...there is no comparison, but it did occur to me that we were, in a way, merely re-enacting our children's tea party on a larger (and tastier and more expensive) scale.

Actually, maybe the similarities don't end there...when we and our table-mates, David and Vickie Brande, heard a familiar cracking sound coming from James' chair. I attempted a discreet wave to Edward Supplins (that is, if you can be discreet and frantic at the same time) and inquired if he had set us up to be the entertainment for the

evening by placing James in the chair he broke a year or so ago.

When a lady at a nearby table wore her Sgropin due to a mishap, we admired her cool response of, "Well, it's cold," as if she were responding to an inquiry about the weather. We truly felt regret for those involved. But we must also confess to feeling tremendous relief that this time at least, it wasn't us calling attention to ourselves.

When David shared some interesting and amusing facts with us regarding the making of cigars and insisted it remain a secret, I warned him in seven-year-old fashion that while I would honor his request, I would reveal that he had made the

request and that the cigar story had something to do with virgins. And, like a seven-year-old, I have little doubt that had anyone tried to steal a bite of my treasured Tiramisu, I would have hit them with no less than a leftover bite of Gnocchi!

The dinner was a result of Chef Kaminski and his wife Robin's trip to Italy, and what a nice way for them to bring Prestonwood members along! Humm, I wonder where they'll be vacationing next year?

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All these occasions have one common denominator: Food. This considered, it should come as no surprise that most of our society must deal with weight-regulating.

Perhaps it should be equally unsurprising that something so necessary to our viability should also vacillate between offering comfort and entertainment.

You know, like when a certain teenage daughter flips her car two or three times, and emerges with nothing more bruised than her psyche...so you offer to buy her a grinder. But friend and restaurant proprietor Terry feels sorry for both of you and gives you the grinders.

After all, you are dealing with the vacillating emotions that she's all right, but the car you bought for her just a few short months ago is totaled!

The next week, you go to a deacon dinner, and while there, suffer the indignance of losing 2-to-1, an argument with fellow church members about how to pronounce "pecan." Now this was an important issue because some of us were sensible enough to order pecan pie, while others of us ordered a whole coconut pie, in the guise that it was for our children.

Now, I'm not going to mention any names, but at least one of the people present is recently retired, and she and her husband sat across from us at the last deacons' dinner we attended. This person, and some others, insisted that they eat "pecan" pie.

I've maintained for years that I could never eat something that sounds like it sat by someone's bedside for nocturnal excrement purposes in the earlier part of the century.

Now, Allow me to dramatically clear my throat and puff out my chest in pride as I point out that some people may have won the battle that night, (only because of the majority rules rule) but that our pastor, the waitress, and Webster's New American Dictionary agrees with me and James.

Well...we must be more right anyway. At least the first pronunciation listed is ours...So there! Pi-kahn! Pi-kahn! Pi-kahn! Pi-kahn! Swallow that with your cold glass of milk!

Okay, so it wasn't Pi-kahn. It was Pi-kan with those two little dots over the a, but my computer keyboard is lacking the ability to

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