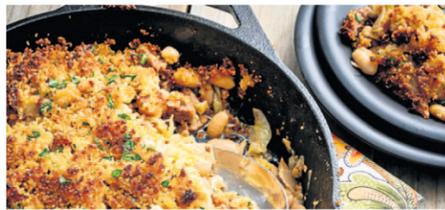


FOOD



« ONE-PAN MEAL

Cabbage, sausage and white beans make a hearty, must-try dish for right now. C3

SPRING COCKTAIL

A honey, water concoction mixed with gin is a perfect sip for a warmer season. C3

INSIDE

Like all foodies, I think we conducted the early-pandemic calculus of which restaurants we had to try to carry through this thing, the places without which we would be absolutely gutted.



JOEY LoMONACO / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

A typical restaurant outing with Katie and Effie at Kybecca on March 6, 2020, before the coronavirus outbreak shut down indoor dining around the country.

CHEERS TO INDOOR DINING HOPES AND DREAMS

A love letter to area restaurants

MY MEMORIES of that day have faded to sensory wisps.

The richness of the aioli in which we dipped our frites. The affable exchange with a waiter who graciously allowed us to stow our stroller near the kitchen entrance. The salinity of oysters appropriately dubbed “Old Salts” and the bite of the lemon I spritzed to tame them.

That visit to Kybecca took place on March 6, 2020, but it feels like a bygone era. Five days later, the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus a global pandemic. You know the rest.

At the writing of this column, I haven't dined inside a restaurant in more than a year. Neither has any member of my immediate family.

The reasons for said abstinence should be obvious. Indoor dining has been shown to contribute to spread of the disease, which has claimed more than half a million American lives. That doesn't mean it hasn't been a difficult adjustment.

My pre-COVID-19 Instagram feed teems with carefully framed shots of poached eggs, cocktails and craft beers (not together, that would be gross). To say that we were foodies, well, that would be entirely accurate.

But this isn't a sob story. It's a love letter: one addressed to the Fredericksburg-area restaurants that helped get us through that year. They nourished us, despite facing

existential threats stemming from the pandemic.

DEAR SUNKEN WELL

If the Fredericksburg area dining scene was a voice, it would be the burly, bearded baritone of Joshua Cameli.

“How's it going, gang?” We've dined at The Sunken Well so much (usually brunch, sometimes wings on Mondays) that I can practically hear the manager's welcoming query in my sleep. If that's creepy, I'm sorry, Josh. It's definitely creepy.

Like all foodies, I think we conducted the early-pandemic calculus of which restaurants we had to try to carry through this thing, the places without which we would be absolutely gutted. Several eateries came to mind, but the Well topped the list.

From \$2 pitchers of PBR as a UMW student (in retrospect, those bicycle rides back to Eagle Landing were of dubious legality) to bar seating with our newborn daughter wrapped, sleeping soundly on my wife's chest, we grew up there.

FLAVOR TEXT

Joey LoMonaco

So, about a year ago, we purchased a \$100 gift card with an unspoken understanding to not use it until the pandemic had ended. We still order brunch most weekends.

In time, Josh's catchphrase has been replaced by the sight of his beaten green Honda CR-V pulling into our driveway to deliver deliciousness in the form of Memphis Hot Chicken, Fried Green Tomato Eggs Benedict, or any permutation of brunch ingenuity.

“How's it going, gang?” It's going, man. It's going.

DEAR FOODE

I am not a planner. In elementary school, I received “needs improvement” marks in the areas of my report card concerning organization. So it should come as no surprise that less than 72 hours before our third wedding anniversary, I had yet to figure out dinner plans.

I cook every night, so that's
SEE LoMONACO, C2

Celebrate soul food six ways

FIND COMPLEXITY AND COMFORT IN THESE SOUTHERN CLASSICS

BY DANIEL NEMAN
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

The historian and scholar John Hope Franklin used to tell the story about the end of segregation in the South.

Blacks in his town were excited by the prospect: At last they would get to see what the white folks ate. But their first trips to previously all-white restaurants quickly turned to disappointment.

Southern whites were eating ham hocks, cornbread and collard greens. They were eating the same things we were, he would say.

The Black version of the food, of course, came to be known as soul food. And like other folk cuisines, in recent years it has split in two directions.

Most soul food is still the old-fashioned, down-home food that has been feeding families for generations. But there has also been a surge in upscale, gentrified soul food—soul food with a modern touch. We're talking collard greens pesto, charred okra and blueberry-sweet-



This loaded mac gets four cheeses, whole milk, butter and evaporated milk.

tea-brined chicken thighs. Give me the down-home soul food any day. You know, the soul food with soul.

I made a big batch of six old-school soul-food recipes, just right for a big Sunday dinner.

Much soul food falls into three main preparations: fried, smothered with gravy and cooked at a low temperature for a long time. The dishes I made fell neatly into all three categories.

I began, naturally, with smothered pork chops. It just isn't Sunday dinner if there aren't pork chops smothered in a gravy with

SEESOUL, C6



PHOTOS BY COLTER PETERSON / ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Serve a Sunday soul food classic of ox tails, sweet cornbread and slow-cooked greens with ham hocks.

Try something new in charcuterie trends

BY DANIEL NEMAN
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

I may have this wrong, but as far as I can tell, “charcuterie” is French for “a big plate full of stuff.”

Charcuteries are one of the biggest trends in the food world right now; you will find them on an ever-increasing number of restaurant menus, and small companies are popping up to bring them to you. Everyone likes them, and why not? They are big plates full of stuff.

Like so many other culinary notions, the idea of what a charcuterie is has evolved and expanded over the years, especially recently. But the original definition is still relevant: it is meat, often pork,

prepared in a number of specific ways—smoked, cured, patés, terrines, sausages, confit and a couple of deboned methods.

A charcuterie board, which is what most people (and restaurants) mean when they say “charcuterie,” is a platter offering several of these meats and preparations.

But that isn't nearly as fun as the current definition of the term. These days, the platter also includes a variety of well-chosen accompaniments. Cheeses, breads or crackers and a selection of complementary condiments such as preserves, pickled vegetables and more, are now considered necessary addi-

SEE CHARCUTERIE, C2



PAMELA_D.McADAMS / STOCKPHOTO