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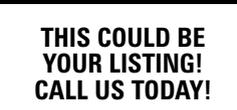
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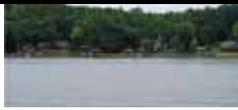
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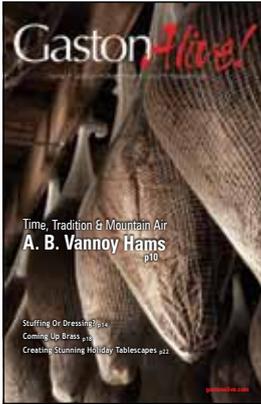
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about the cover



This month's cover was taken in West Jefferson NC, home of the A.B. Vannoy Hamhouse owned by Byron and Nancy Jordan. These hams have aged for nine months and will soon grace someone's holiday table. See related article page 10. Photo by Rick Haithcox, cover graphic design by David James.

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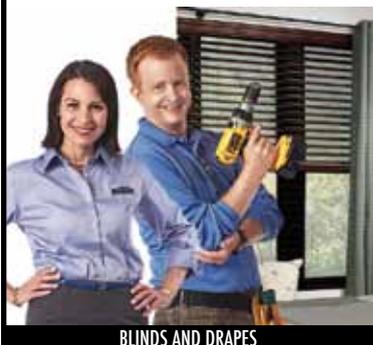
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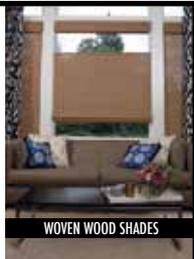
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Meet Byron & Nancy Jordan, Makers Of
Old Fashioned Hand Crafted Country Hams

A.B Vannoy Ham House

By David Hamrick

GA!: Tell me a little of the history of AB Vannoy Hams...

Nancy: A. B. Vannoy Hams was established by Burl Vannoy in the 1930's in West Jefferson, North Carolina, in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Burl and his wife Virginia lived in the little red brick house right next door to the ham plant. In those days when folks wanted to buy a ham, they would knock on the Vannoys' front door. They had no retail store, and business was conducted at home among friends and neighbors. Back in the day as many as seven country ham businesses flourished here in Ashe County, but the A. B. Vannoy ham plant is the only one that is still in operation.



GA!: Tell us a little about you and Byron, and how you guys come to be part of the Vannoy Ham story?

Nancy: After Burl Vannoy died in the 1970's, one of his daughters kept the business going until she decided to sell the business and retire in 1994. My husband Byron and I bought the business from the Vannoy family. We already owned a barbecue restaurant and were familiar

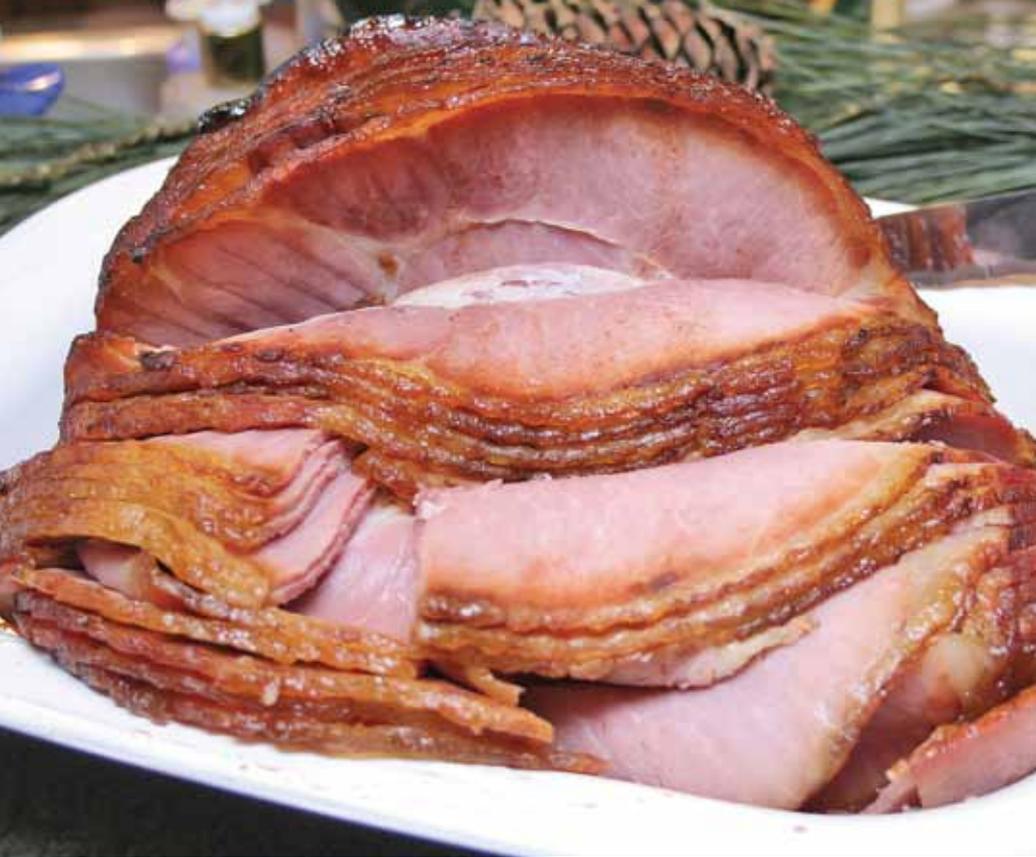
A.B. Vannoy

with dealing with food, but we had to learn the Vannoy ham curing process from scratch. From the outset we adopted the business philosophy 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' We have not altered or changed one thing and continue to cure hams exactly the way Mr. Vannoy did many years ago.



GA!: What is the difference in a "quick cured" ham like most are today, and the traditional nine month old fashioned process that you use?

Nancy: Our hams are "climate cured" the old fashioned way, but the "quick cured" country ham is the predominant type of country ham in the marketplace today. They are mass produced and sold in huge



Vannoy Hams

quantities to grocery stores, chain restaurants, and other places. There are some similarities between quick cured and climate cured country hams, but there are some very distinct differences. One major difference is that the quick curing plants may inject their hams with a saline solution to ensure that the salt gets to the bone. The Vannoy ham is never injected with needles. A quick cured ham is placed into and cures out in a temperature controlled room that may reach 90 degrees, while the Vannoy ham is hung on drying beams and dries by means of climatic conditions determined by the outside weather. The quick cured hams entire curing cycle lasts about ninety days. The Vannoy ham process takes nine months, with hams being received December through February; they cannot be released for sale before



>> Article continued on page 24.



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Stuffing vs. Dressing

The Perennial Debate

Every year about this time people start digging out their favorite family recipes and the debate begins... Is it Stuffing or Dressing, are they the same or not, do ingredients make the difference? Well, after extensive research and historical study I have an answer, and of course my 'Stuffing' recipe.

From a culinary side *The Joy of Cooking*, one of the iconic reference cook books ever published, says the difference is Stuffing is placed inside the object (bird, pork chop, fish, etc.) and dressing is cooked on the side and the dictionary terminology established in 1538 it seems to support this view.

The National Turkey Federation won't take a side, and states the terms are interchangeable. I understand in Canada Dressing contains no meat but Stuffing usually has it included. Some feel Stuffing is more moist while Dressing can have a crispier texture, but one thing is for sure, if you do 'Stuff' be sure to do it right before you cook and that it reaches at least 165 degrees in temperature (or take it out of the fowl and give it a bit more cooking while the turkey rests prior to carving).

Looking at it from a current usage point of view it seems to be a North / South thing. In the North, above the Mason Dixon Line, the white bread based side dish served at Thanksgiving is 'Stuffing' and here in the South the cornbread or rice based dish is 'Dressing'. From an ingredient point of view it seems the origin of the dish was what was available, which is how you end up with Oysters being included along the Coast and in Louisiana things like Andouille or chicken livers and rice.

Most recipes include bread (white, rye, biscuits, crackers, corn, etc.), some vegetables, seasoning and something to moisten the mixture. The exact measurements really depend on your tastes. My recipe, taught to me by my mom and that I have tweaked is:

Ingredients

- *Diced Onions and Celery sautéed in butter*
- *1 part spicy sausage 1 part sage sausage cooked and crumbled (save drippings to add later) or as a variation try minced Country Ham*
- *Chicken stock (If you really want to get into this make your own)*
- *Bread Cube and Crumb (I save my extra and cut it into cubes then dry it so I end up with a mixture of breads)*
- *Fresh sage (Chopped) you could use poultry seasoning*
- *Chestnuts chopped and toasted (replace these with oysters or chicken livers)*

Combine all ingredients and season to taste with salt and pepper. I like mine moist but it has to retain the texture not become a mush, so the amount of butter and chicken stock may vary. Cook covered in a casserole then uncover in the last 20 minutes to crisp up the top. This provides the texture without drying the overall dish out.

In the end, North, South, East or West where you grew up has more to do with dressing vs. stuffing and every families traditional recipes are the bedrock when we gather to celebrate and give thanks for our blessings. Each year in my house we work to find a balance between the tradition and something new so we can make new traditions and keep the ones we all hold most precious.

Till next month, Happy Thanksgiving!
Glenn



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Coming Up Brass

by Susan Lambert
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We are talking with Guy Evans, member of the popular local band, Coming Up Brass.

GAI: How long has Coming Up Brass been playing together as a group? Can you tell us a bit of the history of the band?

Guy: The band formed in 1992, focusing on Carolina Beach Music, and has been performing non-stop ever since. There have been a number of personnel changes over the years and after each change it seems we just get better. One thing we've always strived for is a really big, fat sound, so our horns are not simply there to play in the background, they are front and center. We're now a true variety band, playing songs from the 60's to today's top 40.

GAI: Who are the brass players and what instruments do they play?

Guy: Joey Dunlevy is our Sax man. He brings up to 4 horns, maybe even a flute, and he sings backing vocals. Jim Monroe and Steve Barnes are our Trumpet players who also play Flugelhorn. I'm the Trombone player with the bright Red or Yellow horn. I've been with CUB for over 15 years and love that I get to play some Chicago songs (my favorite!).

GAI: How many members are in Coming Up Brass? Singers? Guitar? Rhythm?

Guy: We are a 10 piece group with 4 horn players, a 4 piece rhythm section and 2 lead singers. Bryant (Doc) Bolin is our Keyboard player. He loves it so much I think he'd pay for the privilege. Mark Reese is our Bass player, and

Photo courtesy of Tom Pacheco.





Photo courtesy of Tom Pacheco.

boy, can he get funky! He's threatened to, but never actually broken out his Tuba for a couple songs. Steve Howell, our drummer, lays down the beat for the rest of us to follow. Sometimes he brings his mini-me to the shows, his boy T.J. T.J. is an air drummer phenom and the crowd loves him. Les Davis is our guitar player extraordinaire. He covers both lead and rhythm guitar parts, and sings backing vocals, and he makes it look completely effortless. As for singers, we've truly got 2 of the best around. Don Conrad can sing absolutely anything we throw

at him and knock it out of the park. Heather Elkin is our female lead, and can that girl sing! All I can say is you need to come hear her for yourself!

GA!: What is the inspiration of the Coming Up Brass for their type of music ? Chicago comes to my mind when hearing the band play.

Guy: Horn bands such as Chicago are absolutely part of our inspiration, as well The Blues Brothers, Delbert McClinton, and Carolina Beach Music groups, such as the Band of OZ, The Embers, and Chairmen of the Board. But you know what?... none of them have a female lead singer!

GA!: We enjoyed your performance in the Mount Holly Art and Music Festival. What's it like to be on the stage seeing people rockin' out?

Guy: There's nothing better than being onstage and seeing the crowd get into it, truly nothing. Bands/musicians feed off the crowd, who then feed off the band, and before you know it and big party breaks out!

GA!: What is a funny memory playing with Coming Up Brass?

Guy: We love to play wedding receptions because it's such a happy day for folks, and everyone is in a partying mood. We were playing one in Spartanburg where the guests were absolutely having a blast. When we started playing the Chorus section of "Shout" the groomsmen grabbed a table cloth and started tossing the groom WAY up in the air, and doing it right in time to the song. The bride was screaming "don't hurt my new husband!" He was going so high in the air I thought he was going to hit one of the chandeliers.



Photo courtesy of Tom Pacheco.

GA!: What types of venues does Coming Up Brass play?

Guy: We've played everywhere from someone's backyard to the convention center. We play at Festivals, Beach Blasts, Corporate events, Wedding receptions, you name it. One of our favorites is Belmont Friday Night Live.

GA!: Where can one go to hear Coming Up Brass?

Guy: Check out our website www.comingupbrass.com and find us on Facebook to get the latest information on upcoming gigs. We're lining up gigs now for Christmas and New Year's Eve, so if anyone's looking for a great band give us a shout.

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The Home Stylist

By Jodi Kines



Jodi Kines –Jodi has a degree in Interior Design from Winthrop University, and is the owner of Plan-It Design, LLC in Belmont, N.C.
Contact Jodi: jodi@planitdesign.us



Creating Stunning Tablescapes

When it comes to hosting dinner parties and family holiday meals it can be easy to devote all your attention to the food. But one aspect that is often overlooked is the table setting. “Your dining table and how it is presented is the first impression of any dining experience. The presentation should have function with design impact. It is a blank canvas that allows you to create a vision for your guests for that particular occasion.” This perspective was shared with me by local entertaining extraordinaire, Luke Manlove, Director of Catering Sales and Marketing at Dean and Deluca in Charlotte; he was kind enough to share some suggestions and inspirations as the holiday season approaches and many of us begin entertaining in our homes.

A thoughtfully decorated table can be just as important in helping to create a memorable evening for your guests as the feast itself. The right table setting will not only complement the delicious dishes you have prepared, it is also one of the best ways to create the desired atmosphere for the evening. With a few clever accessories and a little creativity, you can create a whole range of strikingly different settings to suit almost any style of entertaining. Dressing your table is much like decorating your home. An overall design concept and little inspiration can ensure it appears effortless, remains budget friendly, and still makes a memorable impact on your guests. Luke shares, “The best table presentations “tell a story” in that the food selections, serving pieces, and decor offer an insight as to how and why you created the design. Whether the menu was inspired from an area of the world that you travel or the serving pieces were an unusual find off an unbeaten path, these details tell stories which foster an atmosphere sure to leave a lasting impression. If you lack the experience but want to learn creative ways to entertain, I suggest looking through design and travel magazines, and staying away from mainstream entertaining print. These magazines will focus more on design





concepts and entertaining as the locals would in various parts of the world and will offer more inspiration as you put together your unique tablescape.

Once you have an overall concept in mind and, ideally, some inspirational images, you can begin styling your table. You want the overall design idea to follow through all elements – from the menu and the place settings to the linens and centerpiece. You want to layer textures and patterns, adding interest, giving your table personality, and allowing it to tell your story. Luke suggests, "... to "style" a table walk around your home and pull things out of cabinets, off book shelves, from walls and start laying them out on the table with your menu in mind.

Linens are a wonderful way to add texture and soften a tablecloth. Table cloths, runners, and place mats are expensive to purchase, rent and launder, so Luke suggests purchasing a yard of fabric and turning it into a runner or topper for your table without having to sew. For casual settings, you can use an old quilt as a table cloth, a burlap remnant for a runner or even inexpensive dishtowels as placemats. Luke and I both love the new trend of putting throw pillows against the back of dining room end chairs. It makes the setting feel more comfortable, casual, and welcoming to your guests.

Place settings are the next layer of the table that can add personality and even color to your design. Accent any basic, neutral place setting by adding chargers and accent plates; these can be family heirlooms (just use the salad plate from your grandmother's china) or even pieces purchased at thrift stores, yard sales, or your local retailer. Add a personal touch to your place settings with small details at each seat. You can add menus, placecards, or a small surcee for guests to take home. This is also a great place to add small 'themed' touches like mini pumpkins at each place for Fall or a pinecone with a spring of spruce or rosemary for the holidays. These are inexpensive and festive ways to bring your overall design concept to each individual guest's personal seat.

Possibly the biggest wow-factor of any tablecloth are the serving and centerpieces. Luke recommends using unexpected items for serving such as old wood cutting boards, large chalk boards or even marble floor tiles. Layer these over a big mirror or even an old window placed in the center to add big impact and interest. Add in the 'fun' decorative items that you pulled from around your home; stacks of books, vases at varying heights, and unique souvenirs from travel as well as the more traditional candelabras and fresh cut flowers will give your table the ultimate personality. Keep in mind the overall scale of your table; while you want it to feel full and interesting, you don't want centerpieces to overwhelm the actual place settings or be at awkward heights that make conversation hard for your guests.

Taking the time to 'style' your dinner table is a unique opportunity to showcase your personal style while really wow-ing your guests and making them feel special. Don't let the task overwhelm you; this should be the fun, easy part of entertaining guests in your home! Have fun with it and don't be afraid to take a design-risk! It's just one meal, so you're not committing to long-term design decisions; be trendy, be bold and be whimsical! Let your personal style shine & bon appetit!



>> Article continued from page 11.

Sept 1st. Finally, all the quick curing plants use chemical preservatives such as sodium nitrates and nitrites on their hams. Our slower, but time tested method does not require that these chemical preservatives be added- and you can taste the difference!

GA!: So the hams really are hand crafted, in that a lot of personal attention and care go into each ham?

Nancy: Absolutely. Out of necessity as well as out of a desire to produce a high quality product, each individual ham goes through at least 13 different steps; from the time it's unloaded off the truck, until it's placed in customer's hands or shipping box. Handcrafted is definitely the operative word. No ham ever leaves our plant without a lot of TLC.

GA!: What happens to a ham from the time it comes in your door, until the time it leaves?

Nancy: Each ham undergoes a mysterious transformation which is part science, part Mother Nature. When the ham arrives and is white and pink in color. Curing is synonymous with drying. As each ham "takes the salt," it begins to lose moisture bit by bit and become dryer. Gradually the ham changes color and consistency. As the meat gets firmer week after week, it changes color from pink to red and finally to brown. The salt acts as a natural preservative; the brown sugar balances the salt and adds a touch of sweetness. The entire cycle has a certain mystique, but it is a cycle that is both predictable and reliable. For over seventy-years, the process has worked, year after year, ham after ham.



GA!: Is it true that you guys sell out of hams every year-how many do you make or cure?

Nancy: We order approximately 2,000 hams every January to be cured out and ready for sale by Sept 1st. Our first boost in sales occurs in the autumn after the new hams are ready. We sell a fair amount for the Thanksgiving holiday, but by far our biggest sales occur at Christmas. Publicity in newspapers and magazines like *Gaston Alive!* have given us an extra boost in Christmas sales in past years. A few times in recent history we have run out of inventory by spring or summer, but we always have plenty of inventory for Christmas gift giving.



GA!: I know you can buy whole hams that require some preparation, but you also sell gift boxes, is that right?

Nancy: Yes, whole hams and half hams require preparation before cooking which may include soaking, marinating, and skinning. Our vacuum sealed products are designed for ease and convenience. Our gift box

includes three vacuum sealed packages of sliced center/biscuit cuts plus a small package of seasoning chunks. The slices are trimmed and deboned. They require little preparation and minimal cooking. The gift box is a popular item at Christmas.

GA!: Why do you think folks love your ham so much?

Nancy: First of all, in an age of instant gratification with texting, tweeting, e-mail, and cell phones, our customers seem to appreciate the fact that we still engage in an antiquated process that dates back to a simpler time and an era of innocence. We don't rush the process. We don't make shortcuts. We are committed to carrying out the tradition of Mr. Vannoy's style of old fashioned ham curing without any modernization. In doing so, we are honoring an art form, which unfortunately, is dying out. Secondly, our customers come back time and again because the Vannoy ham has a signature flavor. Two comments we constantly hear are "Hey, your hams don't taste salty at all," and "Your hams remind me of the ham my granddaddy used to cure." Mr. Vannoy used to say that his hams were cured with four simple ingredients: salt, brown sugar, fresh mountain air, and time. It's the perfect combination of those ingredients which make the Vannoy ham stand out from the rest. A true country ham connoisseur knows the difference and can taste the difference between a quick cured ham and our ham. In a word, it's the flavor.

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Map Pendant \$22



Sundrop Glass Pendant

Carry a bit of Gaston County with you with this fun pendant created exclusively for Gaston Alive! magazine. Kiln fired glass from upcycled Sundrop bottles, these pendants are each one

of a kind, handmade by a Gaston County Artist. The back of the pendant features a textured surface which magnifies through the front of the smooth round green glass. Approximately 1.5 inches in diameter, the pendant is finished with sterling silver wire and hung on a silver colored 2 mm, 24 inch ball chain.

Sundrop Pendant \$28

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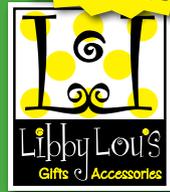
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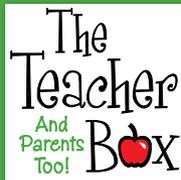
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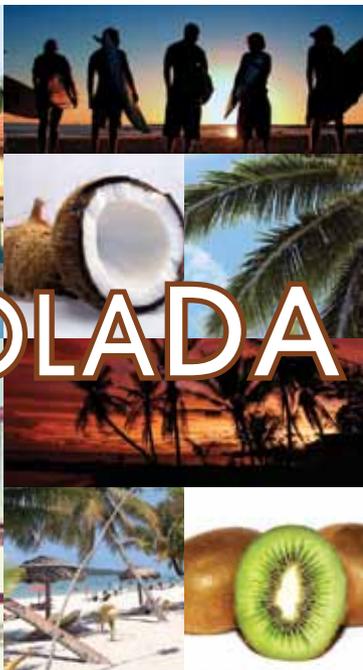
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