

GASTON ALIVE

MAGAZINE

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Springtime reminds us that there is always hope. After the cold, rainy doldrums of winter, and in spite of the troublesome events happening at home and abroad, spring always comes. Trees and plants that have been dormant show new signs of life, and I love hearing the children on my street playing outside and having a grand time. I even like the sound of folks cutting grass!

Spring is also a great time for many small businesses, both new and established. When you have the chance, please patronize a locally owned small business near you. You may have seen the meme on Facebook or elsewhere... "When you support your local small business you are helping a little girl get dance lessons or a little boy get a team shirt..." And it's true, you're not helping a CEO buy another vacation property or a helicopter, you are helping out a neighbor. When you buy from a small business an actual person does a little happy dance!

Wishing you a joyous spring,

David

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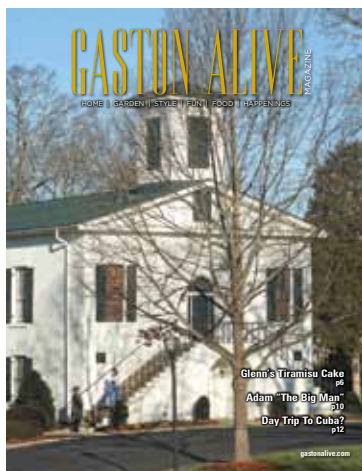
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DAY TRIP TO CUBA?



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on the cover



The historic courthouse in Dallas is on our cover this month. Also shown in period clothing are Jason Luker and Alexandria Pizza of the Gaston County Museum of Art And History. During 1857, the courthouse opened in the "Publick Square." There the county business and entertainment was conducted, and you could hear trial testimony and the latest music from traveling performers and singers. In 1874, architectural changes were made after a fire. The fence posts that surround the court square and the granite stairs were fashioned by John Campo, a Union soldier who made Dallas his home.

our staff

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COOKING WITH



GLENN

TIRAMISU CAKE

I don't know whether I was dreaming of Tiramisu or if it came up in conversation, but I've had a craving. I thought if I'm going to make Tiramisu, I should write it up for Gaston Alive! so I need to find a way to make it my own. In looking for a creative new idea on a tried and true favorite I started browsing recipes on-line and even on the packaging but wasn't satisfied with what I was finding. Many times when I have a Tiramisu out they can be soggy, very sweet, heavy or one note. So I was looking for something firm, lite and while having the essence of Tiramisu without being overwhelmed with coffee and cocoa.

My second thought was, if I can come up with this new version why stick to the traditional presentation. I originally was leaning toward a trifle, but it was a bit of three bears, too big or too small, but I never found one just right. I ended up utilizing a spring form to provide a more cake shaped dessert.

This got me thinking of what goes well with espresso and cocoa. Thinking back to my trip to Italy they always served a lemon peel with an espresso but I felt that might conflict with cocoa so continuing down the path I landed on hazelnut which is the perfect pairing for both.

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 oz of mascarpone
- 7 oz of crème fraiche
- 1 cup of sugar
- ¼ Tsp hazelnut flavor
- 6 eggs separated
- 7 oz Ladyfingers
Savoirdi (cookie)
- 1 cup of Espresso
- ¼ cup of Coffee Liquor
- 1 pint of whipping cream
- Cocoa Powder

Method:

This recipe has lots of whipping. I actually like to do it all by hand so things don't get over beaten. (It also helps me reach my daily activity goal.) Mix the egg yolks and the first four ingredients well, cook in a double boiler until the consistency of pudding, set aside to cool.

Brew the espresso, set aside to cool. Whip the cream. Whip the egg whites till stiff; I use a copper bowl which makes a huge difference in the consistency and stability of the whipped whites. Fold the egg whites into the cooled pudding. Mix the cooled espresso and coffee liquor and place in a bowl you can dip the cookies.

Now to assemble, spray your spring form well, I used one with a center core which I wrapped with parchment to allow it a better release. Cut the Ladyfingers in lengths which fit in your spring form about ¾ of an inch below the rim. In my pan this was just over half of a Ladyfinger. Layer some whipped cream into the bottom of the form. Dip each Ladyfinger quickly in the espresso mixture and stand up against the outer edge of the form leaving space between each cookie. Layer in the mascarpone mixture then place some dipped Ladyfingers horizontally in the form radiating out from the center. Follow this process layering in whipped cream, Mascarpone mixture, dipped cookies. Finish with mascarpone.

I froze this several hours to get a good set on the spring form. Invert on your presentation plate, dust the top with cocoa, add more whipped cream to beautify. Keep chilled prior to serving.

Options: more traditional would remove the hazelnut, something brighter might be to add in some lemon zest into the whipped cream.

Admittedly this cake takes some effort, but with Easter just around the corner this is a crowd pleaser.

Till next time, 'Make it Your Own',

Glenn



WHY COPPER?



I always wanted a copper bowl for whipping egg whites as I've always heard it makes them better. After some research there is real science behind why a copper bowl reacts with egg.

Most folks might use a mixer to make egg whites and some might accidentally have whipped them till they break, turn grainy and expel moisture. The reason is why people eat egg white omelets, egg whites are packed with protein.

In addition, if you've ever felt like eggs smell like sulfur you would be correct again. The sulfur molecules interact with the protein strands to make tight bonds. So tight they actually squeeze the water right out and create little knots.

The Copper bowl releases particles which interact with the Sulfur in effect neutralizing it while the copper ions allow the protein to form longer loose strands trapping more air and retaining moisture. Interestingly the color of egg whites whipped in copper have a light yellow hue.

If you can't get your head around the price of the 2.5 pounds of a fancy copper for whipping eggs you can always fall back on Grandma's trick of adding a bit of cream of tartar to the whites. It has a similar effect on the whites, but certainly not the culinary cool.

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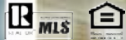
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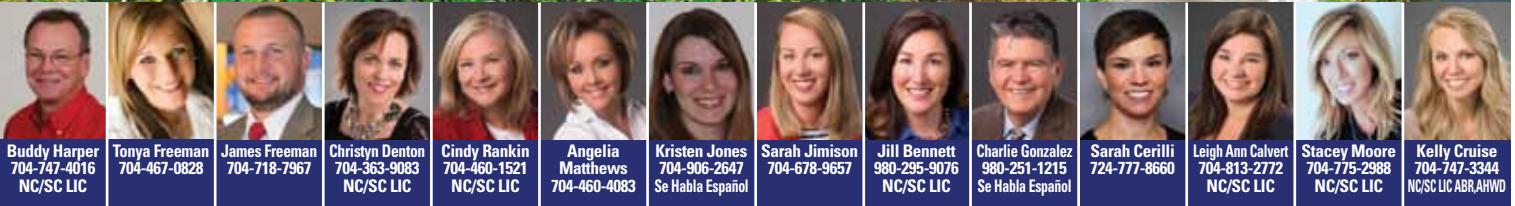
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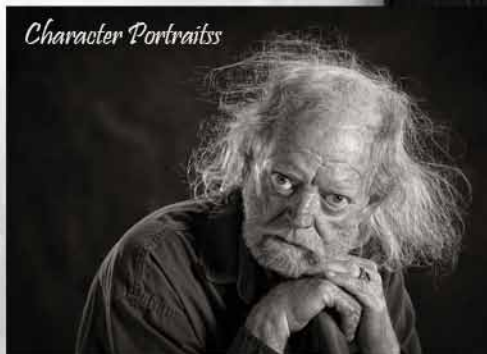
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BIG MAN, BIG GRIT



BY BEN DUNGAN



Photo courtesy of Angela Weaver.

He used to be the Big Man Around Town. Now he's the Big Man Around the Big City. But at one time, he was simply the Big Man Without A Job.

The story of Adam, aka "The Big Man", is ultimately one of hope, passion and determination. But it wasn't always that way.

Adam was riding high ten years ago, like so many in the housing industry. Some may say he was living the dream. He was working in construction, building marble and granite fireplaces.

The money was good. Life was good. That is, until the bottom fell out, thanks to the subprime mortgage crisis in late 2007.

It wouldn't take long for Adam, and many others in that industry, to find themselves on the unemployment line through no fault of their own.

Hindsight is a funny thing. Today we know how bad the subprime mortgage crisis actually was. In 2008, we didn't know how bad it would be or how long it would last. Adam probably thought he'd be back to work in a few weeks or months. Those few weeks and months, turned into two years.

After receiving unemployment for nearly two years, Adam had to make a choice - go back to school and maintain his unemployment benefits, or not go back to school and lose his unemployment benefits.

Sounds like an easy choice to me. Adam decided to enroll in the Broadcasting Production Technology program at Gaston College in 2010.

Adam was good at construction, but he had always had a passion for videography. The question was - would he be able to develop the skills to do this?

You see, Adam has a thing called 'grit' - a character trait that Angela Duckworth, a professor in psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, describes as the combination of passion and perseverance to achieve long-term goals.

After two years of being unemployed, you can understand that Adam's confidence probably wasn't where it should have been. But he kept showing up - listening and learning.

And then one day it all clicked. Adam produced two "Big Man Around Town" videos for a class project. These two videos were created much in the style of Guy Fieri's show *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*.

But this is when it all came together for Adam. This is the moment when he knew he could do this. The creative vision in his head could be translated onto the screen.

Adam would eventually go on to secure an internship at WCCB-TV in Charlotte helping out with their morning show "News Rising". His goal was to be so good that at the end of his internship they wouldn't want him to leave.



And that's how it worked for Adam. He was offered a part-time job as a Production Assistant. Just last year, he was promoted full-time as Director/Master Control Operator.

But that's not all. Adam continued to challenge himself and decided to take a freelance videographer position with the Charlotte Knights baseball team last summer. He even had one of his video shots take the #4 spot on ESPN's Sportscenter Top 10 Plays of the Day list last summer.

Adam is checking off his professional goals little by little. But it's bigger than that for him. It's about being a positive role model for his son.

Adam's son, Ethan, was just a toddler when things got tough ten years ago. Today he's in middle school. But over the years, I'm sure

Ethan has seen how just hard his dad has worked to achieve his goals.

'Don't listen to what people say, watch what they do'. I love that quote because it's so true. Actions always speak louder than words.

If Adam keeps it up, he'll amass quite the portfolio of videos for his son to watch. He'll leave a legacy that will last a lifetime.

And then one day Ethan can say, "Hey, do you know The Big Man? That's my Dad."



DAY TRIP TO CUBA

IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?

By David Hamrick



As it turns out, it is. There are direct flights daily to Cuba from Charlotte Douglas. In about two and a half hours you can be a world away and a few years back in time.

I have wanted to go to Cuba since I was in elementary school living in Hialeah Florida. About half of the kids on my street and at my elementary school were Cuban. I remember wondering why their houses smelled “funny”. Now that I know and love Cuban food, I realize it was the spices they cook with!

Technically, tourist travel to Cuba is illegal, but prior approval by the State Department is not necessary if you go for one of

twelve reasons...humanitarian, educational, religious, etc. I checked the journalistic box and no one asked for a business card or any supporting documents. Just check the box. You do have to have a Cuba Ready card, or Visa, which you can get at the American Airlines counter for \$100. That and a passport are all that is required as far as documentation.

I also converted some cash to Euros. You can convert American dollars in Cuba, but the Cuban government charges a ten per cent surcharge, on top of the exchange fees. Right now there are two currencies in Cuba, the Cuban Peso (CUP) and the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC). The CUC is pegged to the dollar and is worth about twenty five times what the CUP is worth. As far as I could tell, everything is priced in CUC's.

The flight was uneventful. I was one of about eight people in a plane that seats a hundred and something. Flying in from the ocean inland in Cuba we flew over farms and countryside. I saw a few tractors and work truck in the fields, but for the most part, the countryside was pastoral, but almost no people or cars on the roads. In North Carolina at least, it would be unusual to see a road without any cars for miles and miles.

The airport in Havana is small (think Greenville Spartanburg). After going through customs in Havana and converting some money, I took a cab to my B&B. The first thing I noticed was





square where people gathered at all hours of the day and night.

Havana, is beautiful, but crumbling. Almost all of the houses and buildings need at least paint, if not major repair. The roads were paved and decent, at least from the airport and in old Havana. Cuba is one of



the few remaining Marxist-Leninist socialist states, and as such they have traded education and health care for most of what we consider modern conveniences. Most government jobs pay about \$20 per month, with doctors making about \$67 per month, but this is augmented by a range of free services and subsidies.

This was just a "trial run", to see how difficult it was to get in and out of Cuba (it wasn't) and to see how welcoming the Cuban people were (they were). So if you have an interest in Castro, Hemingway and the home of the daiquiri, consider Cuba! ☺



his partner asked for directions to the Leon Azul (blue lion). After about twenty minutes I realized I had taken a picture of the proprietors' business card online, and this provided a more complete address.

There are hotels in Cuba, but I chose a room on

the old cars and the horse drawn carts. As I hurriedly tried to snap pictures of the old cars, I soon realized they are everywhere, and that there were going to be plenty of opportunities for photos.

My receipt from Air BnB evidently had an incomplete address for my B&B, and my cab driver didn't speak English, and I speak almost no Spanish. So we ended up stopping every few feet on this back alley while my cabbie and

Air BnB. In general, prices range from \$20-\$100, with many under \$50. The accommodations are not what many Americans are used to, but they are similar to how many Cubans live.

As I was only there about twenty four hours, I didn't see all of Cuba, mostly just Old Havana. I did take a ninety minute tour on the Hop On Hop Off double decker bus, and walked a lot. Right in front of my B&B was a city



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