

GASTON ALIVE

MAGAZINE

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

February means Valentine's Day is right around the corner- so here is your final warning guys. Happy wife-happy life, as they say. No sweetheart? Then you might be interested to know that February has other important days- February 10th is National De-worming day; February 12th is National Productivity Day, and the 24th is National Excise Day (whatever that is).

I've never seen a card for National Excise Day, and I'm pretty sure I don't want to see a card for National De-worming Day. Although they might not be any worse than some of the Disney Princess, pink pony, sparkles and rainbow cards I see on the racks—who designs these things anyway?

Regardless, however you decide to spend your Valentine's Day- here wishing you a great February!

Peace,

David

featured this month

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ROLLIN' ON THE RIVER?

BY DAVID HAMRICK



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NOTHING FUNNY ABOUT A COLD?

BY BEN DUNGAN



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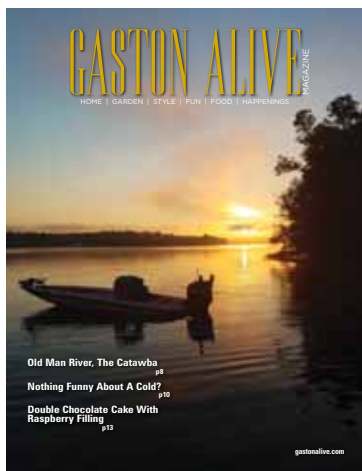
DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CAKE WITH RASPBERRY FILLING

BY SHELBY WILSON



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on the cover



On the cover this month is a scene at dusk on the Catawba River. See related story page 8. Photo courtesy of Brandon Jones and the Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation. Graphic design by David James.

our staff

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OLD MAN RIVER...

THE CATAWBA

By David Hamrick

A lot of you drive over the Catawba River every day and probably don't give it much thought. Or maybe you catch a glimpse of the fall foliage or the steam rising from the river some summer mornings as you brave 85 on the way to work.

The truth is that the Catawba was here long before any of us, and hopefully, will be here long after we are long gone. Named after the Catawba Indian Nation, the Catawba has been a major factor in the history and development of the region since pre-colonial times. During the 19th century, the Catawba was briefly made navigable through the construction of a canal system. During the 20th century, dams were created to create power for the emerging textile and other industries, as well as to provide drinking water.



Today, the Catawba-Wateree Basin is one of the fastest growing areas in the United States, and the Catawba-Wateree River is used for power production, industry, agriculture, drinking water and recreation. Duke Energy, one of the world's largest utility companies, holds the primary responsibility for managing the reservoirs and regulating development on the River.

Unfortunately, there are four major dangers to the river, and Duke Energy is involved in two of those- coal ash and what's called the energy-water nexus, or the stress that energy production puts on the river. The other two are storm water runoff and CAFO's, which are "concentrated animal feeding operations" such as hog and poultry farms.

Coal ash is a byproduct of burning coal to produce electricity. Within a 29 mile stretch of the Catawba River, near Charlotte, 120 million tons of coal ash is stored in unlined, impoundments (commonly referred to as coal ash "ponds"). These ponds sit adjacent to reservoirs (lakes) that supply over one million people with drinking water. North Carolina regulators ruled recently that Duke does not have to dig up and remove coal ash from seven locations deemed low risk, including the Allen steam station. Environmentalists counter that the only safe way to remedy the problem is the removal of the coal ash—that leaving the coal ash in unlined pits with a cap will not prevent toxic chemicals from leaching into the groundwater. Another issue is the expense, and whether Duke customers are on the hook for cleanup expenses.



The energy-water nexus has to do with, among other things, the loss of water in the power production process. Although there has been an increase in the use of renewable energy sources, the majority of electricity is still generated by nuclear or fossil fuel plants, which consume large amounts of cooling water. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Catawba-Wateree River is the fourth most stressed river from power production in the United States. Every day, 75 million gallons of water are lost during the process of power generation on the Catawba River. An additional unknown amount of water is lost through evaporation after cooling water is discharged back into the river.

With the incredible amount of new construction in Gaston, Mecklenburg and surround counties, storm water runoff has become a major issue. Impervious surfaces, such as roads, parking lots, and buildings cause major runoff. This runoff carries debris, chemicals, motor oil and sediment into urban streams and creeks – eventually, making its way to the lakes and river. Silt runoff from construction is another concern, especially at Lake Wylie. Because of the dam system, silt and runoff that go into the lake have nowhere to go. Many folks that live on the lake bemoan the loss of what were once open coves where the water is now feet lower than in previous years because of silt buildup.



The CAFO's or "concentrated animal feeding operations" have to do with large scale industrial animal feeding operations; again primarily hog and poultry operations. There are several concerns with CAFO's, but primarily the runoff from improperly stored waste in these facilities and the amount of water they consume.



Fortunately, in spite of the concerns about power production and clean drinking water, there is still much fun to be had on the river. Boating—including paddle boarding, canoeing and kayaking are fun summer activities. There is also the Belmont Rowing Club. Fishing is another popular pastime with many varieties of fish, including bass, catfish, and perch, among others. The river and Lake Wylie are favorites with many outdoor enthusiasts, who enjoy the river year round. We are truly fortunate to have this resource so close and accessible.



Old Man River- the Catawba- he just keeps rollin'...but he needs our help. The river has been there a long time, but it needs our care and protection so that we, along with generations to come, can continue to enjoy this most precious natural resource.

Special thanks to Catawba Riverkeeper Brandon Jones for his assistance with this article. Reach Brandon at brandon@catawbariverkeeper.org

SNIFFLING, SNEEZING... COLD SEASON



BY BEN DUNGAN

In the previous three winters, I have had two colds. Do the math - that means one entire winter season, I went cold-free. That also means I went an entire year without having to scour the pharmacy aisles looking to buy the right "nighttime, sniffing, sneezing, aching, coughing, stuffy-head, fever, so I can rest" medicine.

I even bragged about it. Deep down, I knew I probably shouldn't have, but I was proud. Friends and coworkers would come to me complaining how they felt bad and I'd in turn tell them how I went a whole year without a cold. I am sure it was exactly what they wanted to hear.

But all of that was before this winter. Karma has a funny way of revealing itself. In the last month, I've had not one, but two colds. Maybe I should quit bragging. Maybe I'm not as immune as I thought.

If April showers bring us May flowers, then Christmas hugs and handshakes bring us January coughs and sinus headaches. There's no way around it.



After a busy and stressful holiday season, our immune systems are shot. And as a result, you end up like me - two colds in one month.

When you're sick, everyone has advice. Especially the mothers out there.

All it takes is one cough, one sniffle or one sneeze, and mothers everywhere instantly become doctors. They dole out advice like doctors dole out prescriptions. Of course, the difference is, mothers do it with love.

"You should take this. You should take that. You need to drink hot tea. You need to eat

more chicken soup. You just need to rest." That's the problem with the common cold - everyone's an expert on how to treat it, yet nobody knows how to cure it.

Even the clerk at the WalMart self-checkout had advice. Usually self-checkout means, you know, you check yourself out. That's not how it works when you want to purchase any sinus and cold medicine. They need to approve that.

So in addition to the purchase approval, the Walmart clerk also tells me how sick she was the week before and how she finally beat it. She was probably a mother too.



She proceeds to rattle off a laundry list of all the vitamins and supplements she's currently taking including all of the B vitamins, all of the D vitamins, potassium, magnesium and I'm sure a half a dozen other things before I eventually tuned her out.

People mean well, especially mothers. But sometimes, all you want to do is curl up in a ball and just sleep.

But that's the problem with the common cold. It just knocks you back - but rarely knocks you out. Unlike the flu.

So we fight through it, go through our normal day-to-day routines. We carry on. We show up to work feeling subpar.

Maybe the reason we can't shake the icy clutches of the common cold is because we try to fight through it. We feel bad, yet not bad enough to warrant laying in bed all day.

A wise person once said, "An untreated cold lasts as long as seven days and a treated cold

lasts only one week." This wise person was probably a mother too.

There is no cure for the common cold. It is a viral illness that just needs to run its course. In an age of "on-demand" and "there's an app for that", there is no quick fix for the common cold. It's like a metaphor for the winter season we're in. Only way out of it is through it. Hunker down and ride it out.



The older you get, you realize your mom was right. And while there is no cure for the common cold, there is something healing and comforting in a mother's love, along with a side of chicken soup, and of course, rest.

Eventually, we all find a way to beat the common cold. Just not in the way we wanted to and not in the timeframe we had hoped for.

There's more winter weather ahead and more hugs and handshakes to be had. Just remember what your mother always said - make sure you constantly wash your hands and if you go outside this winter, make sure you wear a jacket.

We wouldn't want you to catch another cold.



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DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CAKE WITH RASPBERRY FILLING



BY SHELBY WILSON

This recipe makes a large 2 layer cake, or an even taller (smaller) 3-layer cake- depending on pan size (see instructions below). It turns out to be a very moist chocolate cake with a rich chocolate ganache frosting... with a surprise layer of raspberry inside! (I cheated and used Dickinson's raspberry jam instead of fresh raspberries). Yield: 12 to 14 servings

Prep Time: 40 min

Cook Time: 50 min

DIRECTIONS:

1. **Prepare cake:** Preheat oven to 300°F and grease two 10 inch cake pans, or three 8-inch cake pans. Spray pans with nonstick spray and then line bottoms with rounds of parchment paper- then spray paper too.
2. In a medium bowl combine chocolate with hot coffee. Let mixture stand, stirring occasionally, until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth.
3. In a large bowl sift together sugar, flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. In another large bowl with an electric mixer beat eggs until thickened slightly and lemon colored (about 3 minutes with a standing mixer or 5 minutes with a hand-held mixer). Slowly add oil, buttermilk, vanilla, and melted chocolate mixture to eggs, beating until combined well. Add dry mixture and beat on medium speed until just combined.
4. Divide batter between pans and bake in middle of oven 50 to 65 minutes, or until tester inserted in center of cake comes out clean.
5. Cool layers completely in pans on racks. Run a thin knife around edges of pans and invert layers onto racks. Carefully remove parchment paper and cool layers completely. Cake layers may be made 1 day ahead and kept, wrapped well in plastic wrap, at room temperature.
6. **Prepare frosting:** In a 1 1/2- to 2-quart saucepan bring cream, sugar, and corn syrup to a boil over moderately low heat, whisking until sugar is dissolved. Remove pan from heat and add chocolate, whisking until chocolate is melted. Add butter pieces and whisk until smooth.
7. Transfer frosting to a bowl and cool, stirring occasionally, until spreadable (It may be necessary to chill frosting to reach spreadable consistency).
8. **Prepare filling:** Puree raspberries in a food processor or blender. Press the puree through a fine-mesh strainer with the back of a spoon, removing the seeds. Heat the puree in a small pot with the sugar and cornstarch until mixture boils, stirring constantly. As it boils, it should quickly thicken. Let cool.
9. **Assemble cake:** Spread a thin layer of ganache on 1st cake layer- followed by a layer of the raspberry filling. Top with 2nd cake layer and repeat (if using a 3rd layer). If only using two cake layers, cover the top and sides with the remaining chocolate ganache frosting. Cake keeps, covered and chilled up to 3 days. Bring cake to room temperature before serving.

TIPS:

- * If you use frozen raspberries that are already sweetened with sugar, just leave the sugar out when making the filling.
- * If you only have two 9-inch round pans or two 8-inch rounds, you can choose to just make a 2-layer cake and then use the rest of the batter to make some cupcakes. Fill the pans no more than 2/3 full with batter- you don't want them to overflow when they rise while baking!



INGREDIENTS CAKE:

- 1 ½ cups brown sugar, packed
- 3 ounces fine-quality semisweet chocolate, chopped (I used Ghirardelli chocolate chips)
- 1 ½ cups hot brewed coffee
- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ cups unsweetened cocoa powder (not Dutch process)
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 ¼ teaspoons salt
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 3/4 cup vegetable or canola oil
- 1 ½ cups buttermilk
- 3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

INGREDIENTS FROSTING:

- 1 pound fine-quality semisweet chocolate, chopped (I used Ghirardelli chocolate chips)
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons light corn syrup
- 1/2 stick (1/4 cup) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

INGREDIENTS FILLING:

- One (10-ounce) bag frozen raspberries, thawed
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch



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