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the scoop



THE RISE OF THE ARTISANAL ICE CREAM SHOP

Article by Jonathan Shipley

For Molly Moon, it was German chocolate cake ice cream. Her grandfather watched her during the summer when she was a kid. They would go every day to the ice cream parlor, and every day Molly would get her chocolate ice cream. Now, as owner of Seattle's thriving Molly Moon's Ice Cream, she won't ever make

that flavor again. "The memory of it, the taste, can never be replicated." For David Lebovitz, it was chocolate-marshmallow swirl with chocolate sauce and buttered pecans. He spent his childhood summers outside his local Friendly's. The nuts cost five cents and came in a small waxed paper cup. Now, the man

who literally wrote the book on homemade ice cream (*The Perfect Scoop*), invents flavors all the time at his home in France, for ice cream lovers worldwide. For Kris Swanberg, it was, in her youth, birthday party cake and ice cream. "I would get my paper plate with a piece of cake and a scoop of vanilla ice cream,"

the owner of Chicago's hot Nice Cream says, "and mash them together into an ice cream pudding." Now creating flavors with bits of cakes and cookies in her own shop, Chicagoans are lining up around the block for it.

There are many lines around many blocks as ice cream shops



© Charly Bauer

They're using **INGREDIENTS** in new ways and creating **ICE CREAMS** that one normally doesn't find in a supermarket's frozen food aisle. Think honey lavender served at **BI-RITE CREAMERY** IN San Francisco, California. Think sweet corn and blackberry at **JENI'S ICE CREAMS** in Columbus, Ohio."

are popping up across the country, turning away from big production and cheap additives and turning inward. They're using local ingredients. They're using organic ingredients. They're using ingredients in new ways and creating ice creams that one normally doesn't find in a supermarket's frozen food aisle. Think honey lavender served at Bi-Rite Creamery in San Francisco, California. Think sweet corn and blackberry at Jeni's Ice Creams in Columbus, Ohio. Think caramel popcorn gelato at Tretino Gelato in Houston, Texas, and red currant at New York's Van Leeuwen Ice Cream, and sea salt caramel almond at Maple's Organic Desserts in Portland, Maine, and kumquat poppy seed at San Francisco's Humphry Slocombe. Small-batch, locally-made, local ingredients, and local pride equates to a burgeoning movement in artisanal ice cream shops.

"People are tired," Swanberg notes, "of putting any old thing into their bodies. They want real

food with real ingredients made by real people." She continues, "I can't tell you how many people have stopped by and said, 'You make this yourself? Wow! That's what's important—the human element.'" Lebovitz concurs, saying that small-batch, high-end shops "offer not only flavors that people like, but are part of the community."

It's the human element that is making these scoop shops thrive. Just as farmers' markets have taken bloom nationally, so have ice cream shops because of their unbridled interest in providing the best quality product to locals, young and old. "Take a mass-produced scoop against something created in small batches," proclaims food blogger Matt Armendariz, "and the difference can knock you on your head!"

In everyone's head who owns a parlor is making the dreamiest ice cream possible. For Molly Moon, who quit her varying jobs in politics and fundraising to open arguably Seattle's best

ice cream parlor, it started coming to fruition after working at the Big Dipper in Missoula, Montana, as she pursued her journalism degree. "It was the coolest place to be," she reminisces, thinking of her first foray in making her own ice cream. "I loved that it was a community gathering place." She made ice cream, whether it was El Salvador coffee, black licorice, or white mint Oreo, without thinking she'd ever be able to recreate that feeling in Seattle. She has. At any given time, rain or shine, people line up around the block for her salted caramel ice cream, her strawberry balsamic, and her rosemary Meyer lemon.

For David Lebovitz, former pastry chef at Alice Waters' fabled Chez Panisse Restaurant in Berkeley, he made ice cream to go along with his dessert creations. "I began doing the standard flavors, and then invented many of my own." Anyone with his cookbook and an ice cream machine can create sweet potato ice cream with maple-glazed pecans and anise ice cream and mocha sherbet and pineapple-champagne sorbet.

For Kris Hoogerhyde and Anne Walker, managing partners of Bi-Rite Creamery, they too fell into it as pastry chefs. "The greatest part of owning an ice cream shop," Hoogerhyde reports, "is seeing all the people coming in with smiles and sitting outside enjoying our ice cream." Marcelo Kreindel, gelato maker of Houston's Trentino Gelato, agrees. "When you eat gelato, you want to have a good time. Gelato means you want to enjoy the moment and pamper yourself. People look for better quality food while having fun. We provide that for them."

It's not as if these people were the first of their kind to enjoy ice cream and make it themselves.

Long before Molly took that first lick of chocolate, or Swanberg squished her birthday cake, or Armendariz sampled sorbet, there's been ice cream.

The history of ice cream and its predecessors go back millennia. Persians drank syrups cooled with snow centuries before Christ. Frozen rice and milk concoctions were created in China around 200 B.C. Nero, during his reign as Roman Emperor, had ice delivered to him by slaves and combined the ice with fruits, nuts, or honeys. Ice cream was a treat for the Caliphs of Baghdad. Ice cream was eaten in the tenth century in Cairo and Damascus. Kublai Khan liked ice cream. Marco Polo did too, and brought ice cream making techniques back with him to Italy. Catherine de' Medici enjoyed sorbet.

Ice cream in America came by way of emigrating Quakers during the birth of our nation. Benjamin Franklin enjoyed ice cream. George Washington, too. Thomas Jefferson served ice cream at Monticello. Dolley Madison served the treat at her husband's Inaugural Ball in 1813. African-American Augustus Jackson, around 1832 in Philadelphia, vastly improved the manufacturing of ice cream, and in 1843, fellow Philadelphian Nancy Johnson was issued the first U.S. Patent for a small-scale, hand-cranked ice cream freezer.

Once refrigeration became easier, ice cream's popularity skyrocketed. Baskin-Robbins opened. Dairy Queen, too. Ben and Jerry's. Graeter's. McConnell's, Farrell's, Cold Stone Creamery—the list of ice cream shops goes on and on. Today, Americans eat (per capita) more ice cream than any other country in the world, about fifteen quarts per person per year. And remember that ice creams,

gelatos, sorbets, and granitas are all different. Ice cream has a custard base of milk, cream, sugar, and usually some eggs. Gelato is similar to ice cream with lower portions of cream and eggs, and it's churned slower at a higher freezing temperature. Sorbets are dairy and egg free, and are made of, primarily, fruit juice and sugar. Granitas are sorbets but are churned by hand, forming ice crystals.

All of today's iced confectioners know this and perform their tasks admirably. Whether it's Mainer Kristie Green, at Maple's Organics, making s'mores ice cream, or Argentine Marcelo Kriendel, at Tretino Gelato, crafting green tea gelato, or the ice cream wizards at Humphry Slocombe perfecting a scoop of Guinness gingerbread, they are passionate about the process, now ages old, the ingredients, often times found just down the street or at a nearby farm, the product and the communities they serve.

"I want my shop to be the happiest corner in the city," Moon notes. Perhaps it is, and perhaps a little girl will enter her ice cream parlor tomorrow with her grandfather. She'll get her favorite scoop of ice cream, and that happy memory for her will last much, much longer than the drips on her cone. [AL]





RETOOLING

THE ANCIENT CRAFT OF WOODWORKING

Article by Marie Penn, based on an interview with Steve Casey

© Bryce Casey

“At that **POINT** in my life, I ate, slept, and **DRANK WOODWORKING**. *That is all I did...* I went to **GALLERIES, SHOWS**, and **museums** and cornered any woodworker I could *talk to.*”

Although fine craftsman Steve Casey had been taught early on that you won't get anywhere overnight, nothing prepared this entrepreneur for the life lesson he learned firsthand: when your livelihood is invested in the ancient craft of woodworking, it can take anywhere from a decade or more before you can catch a glimpse of your dreams coming true. Steve Casey, who picked up the trade at age nineteen and opened his own business three years later, has been on the artistic journey to worldwide recognition now for thirty-three years. “When I started my woodworking career, there was a renaissance of craft. There was an energy happening when I got involved. It was just amazing,” remembers Steve. “Everybody was into it. Everybody wanted stuff. And I thought that kind of thing would always continue.”

But like any trend, interest faded off into the background, leaving fewer and fewer craftsmen behind who can make a living. Yet despite the difficulties, Steve continues to push forward designing custom wood projects, focusing on home theaters and fine cabinetry as well as signature art pieces. “It is a very different market today. It's always a challenge, always a struggle,” he adds. “But I am doing it. I have made a major commitment here. I'm all in. I am too much into this to give it up now.”

This work ethic is nothing new to those who watched Steve grow up. Perseverance was a characteristic he always possessed, reflected most clearly in the hobbies he partook in as a young child. At twelve years old, Steve enrolled in a summer school shop class and turned an average bicycle into a working chopper, despite his teacher's skepticism. At age fifteen, he rebuilt his first car, blown engine and all. “I started doing pretty big stuff for a little kid. It just came naturally to me,” Steve reminisces. “And I remember those being defining moments in my life, just knowing that I could do my thing no matter how daunting the task.”

Long before woodworking ever crossed his mind, Steve's first love lay in metal work, and his stash of bikes in the backyard foreshadowed his dream of becoming a motorcycle mechanic. Unfortunately, Steve had a tough time landing a job in the field after high school, and ended up in a factory doing production work instead. “I was absolutely bored to death,” he reveals. “I remember thinking that there was no way I was ever going to end up being forty-five and still working at this factory.”

The job was the incentive this nineteen-year-old needed to figure out what he wanted to do with his life, although his direction was still unclear. In need of



© Dean Della Ventura



© Dean Della Ventura



© Randall Cordero

a hobby to counterbalance work and his social life, he enrolled in a woodworking class at the adult night school. “I wanted to challenge myself, so I thought I would take this class because I didn’t know anything about it,” explains Steve. “When I started, I was like a fish out of water. Metal working and woodworking are very different.

“I was getting very frustrated in the beginning,” he continues, thinking back to his first project. “I was making a little shelf for my brother, and it was not coming out right. I couldn’t figure out how to mill this wood to the thickness and dimensions that I wanted. I didn’t know what I was doing.” He contemplated leaving the class and never coming back, but ultimately stuck with it. Before long, he was staring at a fully assembled shelf.

The young craftsman pushed on with more projects, moving from simple lines and shapes to a table with turnings and carved legs. “In the middle of that project, the instructor asked if I ever thought about doing this for a living,” he recalls. “He thought I had some natural talent, and suggested I might investigate doing woodwork as a career. That kind of set the light bulb off.”

Encouraged, Steve enrolled at Cal State Northridge college and moved quickly through their woodworking program. “At that point in my life, I ate, slept, and drank woodworking. That is all I did,” describes the craftsman. “I went to galleries, shows, and museums and cornered any woodworker I could talk to.”

His first public exposure, and coincidentally his sale, came during a group exhibition show. “People were two or three deep just gawking at my wooden zipper sculpture like it was the most amazing thing they’d ever seen,”

narrates Steve. “At 10 A.M. that first day, a woman approached me and asked how much it cost. I didn’t even know that I could sell it!”

A year and a half after that fateful field trip, Steve pooled resources with another student and rented a 1,200-square-foot industrial space for a woodworking shop. “He was working on his separate business, and I had my own thing. But we shared the equipment, the space itself, and the rent,” discloses the craftsman. By the seat of his pants, Steve started working on original sculptural pieces and art furniture, and launched his career at twenty-one years old.

As the businessman gained real-world experience, he realized the original sculptures that he so enjoyed weren’t enough to keep food on the table and a roof over

his head. Steve soon focused his attention to fine casework and custom furniture. “It wasn’t so much about the physical work or my wonderful sculpture or my wonderful chair. What was really important to me was to be in a situation where I was creative every day,” he analyzes. “The work almost became secondary.”

When Steve separated his artwork from his career, all the puzzle pieces started falling into place. “My ultimate goal was to be able to set myself up like my mentor Sam Maloof did, which was to have my house and shop at a location where I was literally

walking across the driveway to my shop and to raise my family,” he reflects. “We eventually got to this place. We found this fabulous piece of property, and then a year later, I was actually able to build my shop. I was thirty-one years old and living my dream.”

His niche quickly narrowed to designing, fabricating, and installing home theater solutions. “Home theater furniture was the one custom piece that regular people seemed to need and really couldn’t find in the market place because there was no way for a factory to do what needed to be custom,” describes Steve. “Every

job I do is very different from the next. And I am pretty adept at deciphering criteria and giving people what they want within their budget—and having it integrate into their space, almost to the point where you can’t tell I was there. It just belongs there when I am done.”

The craftsman merges multiple factors together when planning a custom piece—from the lighting and speaker arrangement to marital disputes over how much equipment should be left showing. He then devises a design and builds the piece from start to finish. “We hand-build all the parts and assemble the whole thing in the shop. Once that is done, we’ll typically take it apart and do the finish work on it,” Steve illustrates. “I will reassemble it to make sure everything fits properly after the finish is done, and then break it down one more

His niche quickly narrowed to designing, fabricating, and installing home theater solutions.



© Steve Casey

**“But I think back to what Sam Maloof once told me—
whatever you do, don’t give up; you’ll be
successful because that is what it takes. You
just have to keep working at it.”**



© Bryce Casey



© Dean Della Ventura

time to carefully load it into the truck.” At the job site, he and his longtime assistant, Alex, permanently install the furniture seamlessly within the existing space.

Steve is a fan of using modern, contemporary materials for the interior of the structure (which adds to the stability and durability of the piece) before applying the exterior finish in the wood of choice. “I hand-select all the material for each project myself because I am very particular about how it is going to look,” he notes. “Part of what I believe I am getting paid for is making that extra effort and matching the grain, getting the colors right, and doing my craft. So I take that pretty seriously.”

Although this high quality work has kept Steve afloat over the years, the recent market changes have left the businessman staring at a crossroad once again. Not only are advances in technology making home theater systems virtually obsolete, but appreciation in hand-built items is falling to the wayside. “Woodworking is becoming less valuable. As unfortunate as that is, it seems to be the way of the world,” admits the craftsman reluctantly. “There needs to be a cultural epiphany

where we start to recognize that our strength is in our art and our craft. Maybe then we’ve got a shot.”

Undeterred, Steve opts to continue doing his small part to keep the craft alive. “I think that is the hardest thing to do. I get discouraged with it. There are many times in my career when I want to throw in the towel,” he reveals. “But I think back to what Sam Maloof once told me—whatever you do, don’t give up; you’ll be successful because that is what it takes. You just have to keep working at it.”

This is why you’ll still find Steve Casey in his shop working just as hard as he did when he first went into business—his current focus is set on becoming accessible to a wider range of customers. “For years, I have wanted to put an internet store together and get back into doing original work that I started my career on. The effort of the store is to make my signature pieces accessible,” clarifies Steve, who recently released a line of puzzle sculptures and squiggle leg tables. “For me, I am just going to keep on keeping on.” [AL]

www.stevecaseydesign.com



RECIPES FROM SOUTHERN APPALACHIA

Recipes excerpted from *Cider Beans, Wild Greens, and Dandelion Jelly* by Joan E. Aller (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2010) Food photography by Ben Fink



This recipe, from the Cripple Creek Bed and Breakfast Cabins in Crockett, Virginia, was handed down from the owner's grandmother. Cripple Creek is situated in the Blue Ridge Mountains on 35 acres of wooded hills and rolling pastures dotted with wildflowers, blackberry bushes, and apple trees. I just love blueberries, so I hope this recipe from Cripple Creek will become one of your favorites!

Oven-Baked Blueberry French Toast

SERVES 5

ingredients:

- 2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, at room temperature
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 large eggs
- 1½ cups milk
- 10 slices French bread, ¾ inch thick (preferably homemade or fresh store-bought)
- 2 cups fresh blueberries
- Maple syrup, for serving
- Confectioners' sugar, for serving

cooking instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 350°F, and lightly grease a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
- Beat the cream cheese, granulated sugar, vanilla, and cinnamon in a large bowl, with a stand mixer on medium speed, until well blended.
- Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Add the milk, and mix well.
- Arrange the bread in the prepared baking dish, and spread the blueberries on top of the bread. Pour the cream cheese mixture over the bread. Let stand for at least 15 minutes before baking (or cover the pan, and place it in the refrigerator overnight). Bake for 40 to 45 minutes, until golden brown.
- Serve with maple syrup and confectioners' sugar.



The moment you arrive at the Calico Inn in Sevierville, Tennessee, you can see why so many people come back time and again. It's an authentic log cabin with a view of Mount LeConte, the third highest peak in the Great Smoky Mountains. It was measured in the 1850s, but not much went on up there until 1924, when an enthusiastic hiker and explorer led an expedition of Washington dignitaries up onto Mount LeConte, where they spent the night. They experienced the rugged beauty and raw nature of the place, and about ten years later, Mount LeConte was protected and included as part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This recipe is one of the many delicious dishes served at the inn. Cranberry is one of my favorite flavors, and its addition to this pork roast makes a lovely dish.

Spiced Cranberry Pork Roast

SERVES 4-6

ingredients:

- 1 (2½- to 3-pound) boneless rolled pork loin roast
- 1 (16-ounce) can jellied whole cranberry sauce
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 tablespoons cold water
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- Salt

cooking instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 250°F. Place the roast in a baking pan.
- In a bowl, mash together the cranberry sauce, sugar, dry mustard, and cloves.
- Pour the mixture over the roast, and cover the pan. Cook for 6 to 8 hours, until the roast is thoroughly cooked and tender.
- Remove the roast from the oven, transfer it to a cutting board, and pour the juices into a saucepan. Skim off the fat. Bring the pan juices to a boil over medium-high heat. In a small bowl, combine the water and cornstarch to form a paste. Slowly stir the paste into the pan juices, and cook, stirring, until thickened. Add salt to taste.
- Slice the roast, and serve it with the sauce spooned over the top.

Note: To make the roast in a slow cooker, place the roast in the cooker, and turn the heat to low. Make the sauce as directed above, and pour it over the roast. Cover, and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours.



The first time that I tasted cider beans was at the local gas station. Here, in the mountains, folks gather at the local gas station to visit, have a meal, and catch up on the local news. Far from serving “fast food,” these little places present “home cookin’,” and it’s delicious. This good ol’ mountain recipe is very satisfying paired with cornbread or muffins.

Appalachian Cider Beans

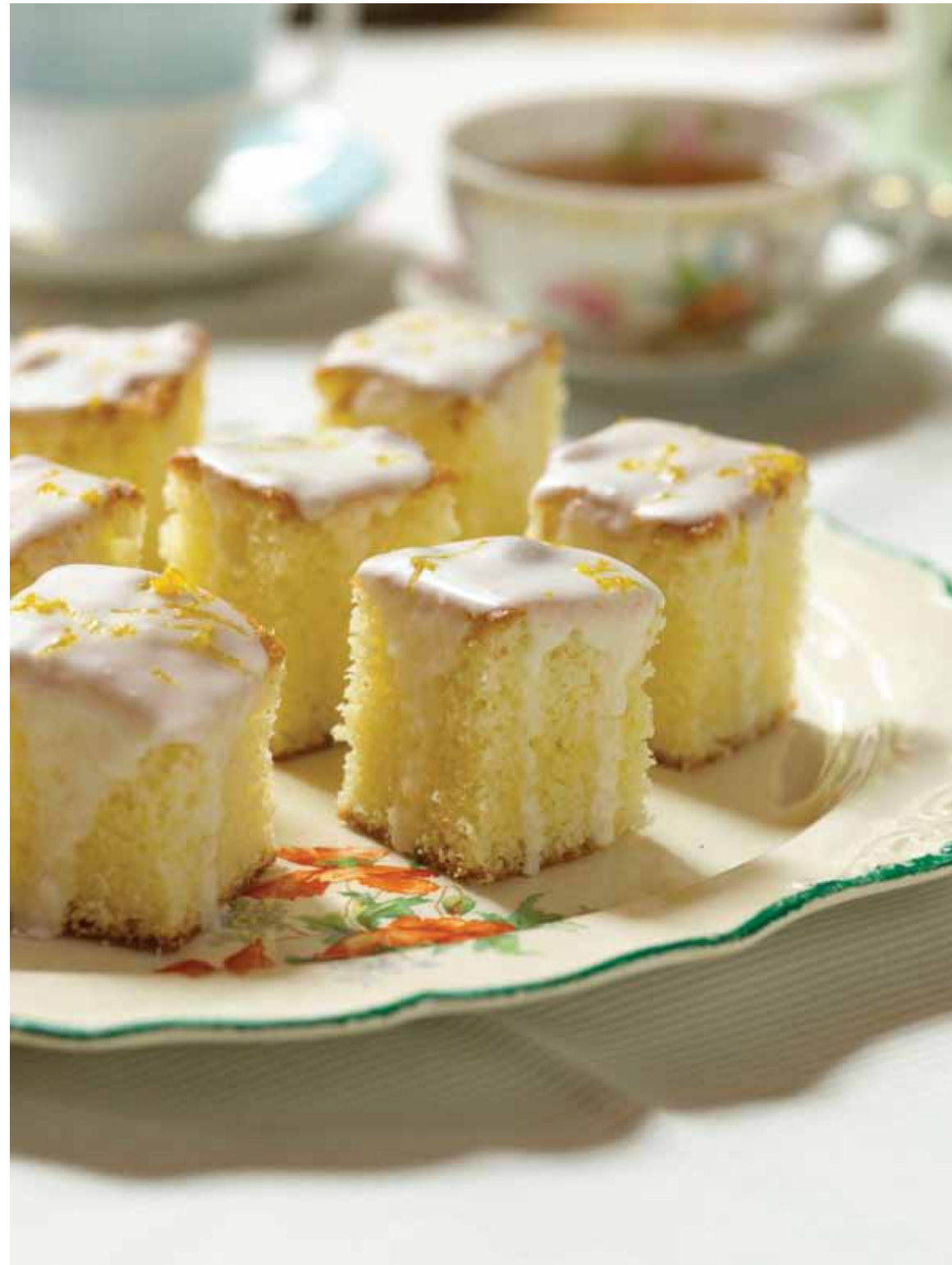
SERVES 8

ingredients:

3 cups dried pinto beans
 3 cups fresh apple cider
 8 ounces salt pork, thinly sliced
 2 small yellow onions
 6 tablespoons sorghum molasses
 1 tablespoon dry mustard
 2 teaspoons salt

cooking instructions:

- Pick over the beans, and discard any stones and wrinkled beans. Rinse well, and place in a large bowl. Add cold water to cover by 3 inches, cover, and let soak for 12 hours.
- Drain the beans, and transfer them to a heavy saucepan. Add the cider, and bring the beans slowly to a boil over medium heat. Boil gently, uncovered, for about 30 minutes. Remove from the heat, and drain the beans, reserving the cooking liquid.
- Preheat the oven to 300°F.
- Layer half of the salt pork slices on the bottom of a 2-quart ceramic bean pot or other deep baking dish. Spoon the beans into the bean pot, and then bury the onions in the beans.
- In a small saucepan, combine the sorghum molasses, dry mustard, and salt, and place over medium heat to dissolve the mustard and salt. Pour the hot mixture evenly over the beans, and top with the remaining salt pork slices.
- Pour in the reserved cooking liquid, and add hot water as needed to cover the beans. Cover the bean pot.
- Bake for 4 hours, and then uncover the pot, and add more water if the beans seem too dry. Re-cover, and continue to bake for 1 to 2 hours, until the beans are tender. Serve hot directly from the pot.



Tea cakes come in a variety of styles. Some are flat cookies, some are miniature cupcakes, and some are tiny little cakes decorated for the occasion. They're delightful and perfect to serve with a cup of tea or coffee. Whether you are having an elaborate tea party using your best finery or just spending a cozy afternoon with a few friends, tea cakes are the perfect treat. This recipe makes tiny, delicious cakes. When the dish comes out of the oven, there's an eggy aroma, but it soon disappears, and the combination of coriander and orange is lovely. You can ice and decorate them as you wish. I've included a frosting that I think you'll enjoy.

Orange Flower Tea Cakes

MAKES ABOUT 48

ingredients:

Tea Cakes

- 3 cups cake flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 5 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon grated orange zest
- ½ tablespoon ground coriander
- ½ cup half-and-half
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Icing

- 3 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 6 tablespoons half-and-half

cooking instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 350°F, and lightly grease a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
- Line the dish with parchment paper, leaving enough hanging over the sides so that you can use it to lift the cake from the pan. Once in place, lightly grease and flour the parchment paper. Set aside.
- To make the cakes, sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl.
- In a large bowl, combine the butter and sugar and cream until fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating after each addition. Beat in the orange zest and coriander. In a small bowl, stir together the half-and-half, orange juice, and vanilla. Slowly stir the half-and-half mixture into the butter mixture, mixing well. Slowly add the flour mixture, and stir until well blended.
- Pour the batter into the prepared baking dish, and bake for 40 to 45 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. Let cool on a wire rack. When the cake is cooled, use the overhanging parchment paper to lift it from the pan. Place it on a cutting surface, and cut it into 1½-inch squares.
- To make the icing, combine the confectioners' sugar, vanilla, and half-and-half in a medium bowl, and blend well. You want the consistency of a thick glaze that will drip down the sides of the cakes. Add more confectioners' sugar if it's too thin, or more half-and-half if it's too thick.
- Drizzle a little icing over each cake, and allow it to run down the sides. Let it set for a few minutes before serving.

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

Article based on an interview with artist Erika Iris Simmons



It's one thing to **STUDY HISTORY** from a textbook; it's another to get a **SENSE** of what life was like to those **PEOPLE** in it."



TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY AS AN ARTIST:

My name is Erika Iris Simmons, and I'm twenty-seven years old. I live in Atlanta, but I grew up in Orlando. My mother is an artist and fashion designer, so I was always encouraged to be creative and think outside the box. I don't know really when my artistic talent revealed itself. It just seemed to come out of me all at once.

I attended Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, majoring in Russian language and

literature. I loved studying the poets and avant-garde artists. The painting *The Demon Seated* by Mikhail Vrubel is my favorite. It's one thing to study history from a textbook; it's another to get a sense of what life was like to those people in it. And learning another language forces you to see the world through new eyes. I loved it. I never intended to be a translator or anything; I used to joke that I was studying to become a mafia princess. But when I graduated, I decided to become a makeup artist. It was while I was in makeup school that I delved into textbooks about sensation and perception. I was fascinated by how a little paint and powder could make someone look like someone else. As I studied optical illusions

more and more, I started looking at modern artists like Ken Knowlton and Vik Muniz who make composite portraits from strange materials. Taking their lead, I decided to try to make my own art.

WHEN DID YOUR INTEREST IN USING RECYCLED MATERIAL FOR ART BEGIN?

When I began making art, I had no money at all. I owed thousands in student loans and was waiting tables to make ends meet. I thought that the best ideas are often the simplest. Since I didn't have a lot of money to spend, I went through all the junk drawers in my house, looking for materials that could be useful. I tried all kinds of things: magazines, newspapers, credit cards, playing cards. Then as I was leaving for work one day, I noticed a stack of cassette tapes on top of a blank canvas in my room. I thought, "What ghosts could be hiding in those machines?" I pulled the ribbon out, and it reminded me of Jimi Hendrix's hair, so that was the first portrait I made.

WHAT WAS THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE LINE OF PROJECTS?

The idea for these pieces came from reading a book called *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* by Douglas Hofstadter. The parts of the book that interested me most dealt with the idea of recursion, or nested concepts. When I was creating the first cassette tape portraits, I was thinking about the data on the tapes—how the analog data was meaningful, and then how the arrangement of

the data (the tape itself) brought an additional layer of meaning (the illusion of the image of the singer). I thought, "Where is the music? Is it on the tape? In the mind of the viewer?" All kinds of interesting things to think about. I love most the idea that I didn't really add or take away anything. I tried to cut it as little as possible, but all of a sudden, it becomes something else.

TELL US ABOUT THE FIRST GHOST IN THE MACHINE PIECE YOU CREATED:

The idea for the first portrait struck me all at once, and I knew that it was a good idea. But I had never done anything like it before, so I had to be very careful. I had no idea how beautiful it was going to be. Even pictures don't do it justice; the shine of the cassette tape really sparkles in person. My cousin had one of his college buddies over the night I finished. He offered to buy it from me before the glue was even dry. I was very surprised with the outcome. I still am.

WHAT DRAWS YOU TO USING THE RIBBON IN CASSETTE TAPES/FILM REELS/ETC.?

I like using materials that have a mind of their own. They come with a whole history and language. In a way, I play with their connotations as much as their material form. I love the way that there are only so many ways you can use it beautifully. The happiest time is when I'm discovering something completely new in something I thought I knew well.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE?

I have a little note I keep over my

desk that says, "Minimal. Elegant. Magnificent." I don't know that those are the best words, but that's what I strive for.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO DESIGN THESE PIECES OF ART?

I am most motivated when I am trying to make art that is a metaphor. The more beautiful the idea, the more beautiful the art.

WHAT INSPIRES THE SUBJECTS OF YOUR DESIGNS?

The people I choose to portray are those whom I greatly admire. I also enjoy commission work too—bringing other people's ideas to life. Making something with sentimental value is most important.

AS YOU BECOME INCREASINGLY BETTER AT MAKING THESE GHOST IN THE MACHINE ARTWORKS, HOW DO YOU CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE YOURSELF?

There are so many different ways to use the tape, so many different textures. The joy is in figuring out how best to express the personality of the subject with whatever texture is best. It's a lot of fun.

WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF YOUR WORK?

The most challenging part for me is keeping up with the demand. These pieces take a very long time to make, so I don't produce many a year. At the same time, I try to keep prices reasonable enough that my next-door neighbor could buy one if he likes.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE ASPECT OF YOUR ART?

The best part is the creation.

When I am focused and working enthusiastically, time just stops, and I could be at my desk for ten hours. It's a great feeling.

TELL US ABOUT THE PROCESS OF DESIGNING YOUR AVERAGE GHOST IN THE MACHINE PROJECT:

First I draw out the basic shapes and contours that I want in the final image. Sometimes I draw right on the canvas lightly with pencil. Then I take many hours folding and sculpting the tape into the desired shapes. Sometimes I cut the tape to get a really photo-realistic look. Sometimes I try not to cut the tape, keeping it really chunky looking. I use X-ACTO knives for the fine details; it's also really helpful for delicately positioning the tape in the wet glue when your fingertips are too cumbersome. Once I have the basic facial features and outlines done, I go back and playfully add three-dimensional textures, and finally mount the cassette case on the canvas.

HOW DID YOU BECOME SO GOOD AT MANIPULATING THE RIBBON? WHAT TRICKS HAVE YOU LEARNED OVER THE YEARS?

I think the best trick is to really be playful with the material and not force it too much into shapes it can't take. I have several little knives that I use to anchor tape down in places while they dry. Also, I take a lot of breaks.

HOW MANY CASSETTE TAPES ARE USED FOR AN AVERAGE PIECE OF ART?

Almost every piece only uses ribbon from one cassette tape. It's amazing how much is in there. But the bigger canvases sometimes take two, or (very, very rarely) three.

I like using materials that have a mind of their own. They come with a whole history and language. In a way, I play with their connotations as much as their material form.



HOW HAVE YOU BEEN RECEIVED BY THE PUBLIC?

I've gotten a lot of support from the public. It's great to have found something that makes people light up.

TELL US ABOUT THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT IN YOUR CAREER:

Before I ever made it into any magazine or had any success, I sent some of my pictures in an email to my favorite artist, Ken

Knowlton. He personally responded to my email, and told me he liked my work. I don't think it gets better than that.

PHILOSOPHY AS AN ARTIST:

Do what feels good, and expect great things of yourself.

HOW LARGE ARE THE ACTUAL PIECES?

The best pieces are about twelve by sixteen inches because you can really appreciate the cassette

tape at that size. But I've done huge ones too, up to sixty inches.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE A PROJECT?

Lifetimes. A detailed twelve-by-sixteen-inch canvas can take a week. Some, like the Bob Marley, take about a month.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE FINISHED PIECE OF ART?

Some of the pieces I sell, some I keep, and some I give away. I don't make prints, only original work, and I am very liberal with my images, so if someone wants to print out a poster or something, I give those away no problem. It is a pleasure to share my work with people who enjoy it.

YOUR WORK INSPIRED A MUSIC VIDEO BY BRUNO MARS, "JUST THE WAY YOU ARE." HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

The director called me when he had the idea. We discussed his vision for the video, and he got my blessing for it. It is about ninety-nine percent the work of the animators. I actually created the girl's hair out of a cassette tape for them, which they then photographed and animated. It is very different from working with it physically because of the freedom of being able to imagine any shape and do anything with the cassette tape. I got emails from people all over the world who spoke about the nostalgia it brought back, and how connecting

the mix tape culture to a love story was really pertinent.

FUTURE GOALS FOR YOUR ART:

I would eventually like to have a community art program, open to anyone, to come and make big group art projects. As we finish the pieces, they would be donated to local libraries, schools, and hospitals. I know that art is a resource that can enrich people's lives, and it doesn't have to be expensive. We could recycle whatever materials are available, like phonebooks or newspapers (or even cassette tapes). It would also be a great way to say thank you to the teachers, doctors, nurses, and librarians who contribute so much. [AL]

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COMBINING COUNTRY AND COSMOPOLITAN

Article by Martha Steger

Nestled in the foothills, the piedmont of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the county enjoys a unique convergence of working farmlands, historical sites, and cultural opportunities that add the sophistication normally found no farther than the suburbs of major cities.



With no traffic lights (only one blinking red light) in the 267 square miles of Virginia's Rappahannock County, travelers sometimes have to pinch themselves to believe they're only

seventy miles west of Washington, D.C. Nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the county enjoys a unique convergence of working farmlands, historical sites, and cultural

opportunities that add sophistication normally found no farther than the suburbs of major cities.

The county's Indian name connotes its rural character. That

name comes from the Algonquian word for "rapidly rising and falling waters"; and even though the Rappahannock River's origin here in the county is 184 miles from the Chesapeake Bay, tidal fluctuations do affect it. Captain John Smith of Pocahontas lore at Jamestown explored the Rappahannock during his second exploration of the Chesapeake Bay in 1608. More than 400 years later, the county's minimum lot-density of one dwelling per twenty-five acres and its support of sustainable agriculture reinforce its authentic qualities that exude idyllic charm.

The luxurious Inn at Little Washington, founded by Patrick O'Connell and Reinhardt Lynch, put the county on the map soon after it opened in 1978. It became the first establishment in *Mobil Travel Guide's* history to receive five stars for its restaurant and five stars for its accommodation, and the first inn ever to receive AAA's highest accolade, the Five Diamond Award, for both food and accommodation. Though there are presently more than two dozen Washingtons in the United States, this town, as a local historical marker makes visitors aware, was the first Washington of them all.

You won't see "little" in front of Washington, Virginia, on any map of the state; yet, with its close geographical proximity to "big" Washington, D.C., the epithet was necessary early on. With the coming of the highly successful inn, "little"



Washington attracted a lot of attention from outsiders, who quickly realized that even county folk—in an area where many commute into the nation's capital—often couldn't refer to Washington (laid out by the seventeen-year-old surveyor, George Washington in 1749) without putting a "little" in front of it to avoid confusion. While the town today comprises a variety of accommodations, shops, galleries, two theaters, and museum, they all benefited from the initial success of the inn.

A MAGNET FOR SMALL BUSINESSES John and Diane MacPherson,



who own Washington's Foster Harris House Bed and Breakfast and the five-year-old Tour d'Epicure Virginia Cycling Adventures, are the first to say they were attracted to the area when they saw that such a small town (183 people in the 2000 census) could have a world-famous inn. With backgrounds in cycling, cooking, and hospitality, the MacPhersons have attracted the fitness crowd as well as gourmands. Their property is one of 375 properties participating in Virginia Green Lodging, which, in turn, has helped to make

Home; the Geneva Welch Gallery; the art-cooperative Middle Street Gallery; and Chris's Shop of Designs in Gold and Silver, where Christopher Goodine has been crafting distinctive jewelry for thirty-five years. The Packing Shed Gallery—located, as its name indicates, in an old packing shed—features regional artists. For a quick, healthy lunch, there's The Country Café, also on Main Street; and, on Gay Street, Stonyman Gourmet Farmer, originally a general store, now operated by Susan James and her husband Alan, who is



©TJ Cabrera

Other businesses sprang up within a few blocks of the inn once its fame spread; the entire town still only comprises the five-block by two-block grid originally laid out by George Washington.

Rappahannock County a green destination; Foster Harris uses only guest amenities made by companies with a commitment to natural ingredients, and it carries out recycling and electricity-saving measures as required by the program.

Other businesses sprang up within a few blocks of the inn once its fame spread; the entire town still only comprises the five-block by two-block grid originally laid out by George Washington. Among the shops on Main Street, visitors find R. H. Ballard Art, Rug, and

a contractor for the Agency for International Development in "big" Washington.

Just as locals can tick off family names of county farmers—such as Cliff Miller, known for his grass-fed beef—so they can tell you about Blue Ridge Boatworks, specializing in small, wooden boat construction and repair; JPC Designs, creating handcrafted home furnishings and accessories; and Peter Kramer Cabinetmaker, with his one-of-a-kind furniture pieces in a variety of styles.



© Gary Anthes



© Glassworks Gallery

Nearby towns in the county also benefited from the early recognition and success of the inn and continue to benefit from Tour d'Epicure because the bicycle tours (in addition to automobile travelers) go through them. The Corner Store, Thornton River Grille, and Rudy's Pizza in Sperryville to the south (which has a whopping population of 1,366) are prospering.

Neighboring Flint Hill is a settlement originally spurred on by the road-development campaign of Colonel Thomas Chester in 1735, when he sought to establish a commercial travel route. The town lies beside the historic Richmond Road, which was once the main road from the mountains to the state capital. The quaint village today offers antiques and specialty shops and

casual, family dining at establishments such as Griffin Tavern, a restored Victorian house with a wraparound porch and deck for outdoor dining.

No dining is complete without good wine, and Rappahannock County also has that in abundance: Gadino Cellars, Rappahannock Cellars, Oasis Winery, Sharp Rock Vineyards, Stillhouse

The newer, family-friendly

FARM TOUR WEEKEND,

also in autumn, allows visitors to

EXPERIENCE

personally what

the 'BUY FRESH/BUY

LOCAL' MOVEMENT

is all about."



© Carl Zitzmann

Vineyards, and Linden Vineyards. But for a bit more kick, head to Copper Fox Distillery in Sperryville for Wasmund's single-malt whiskey, where Rick Wasmund says his distillery is the only one in North America that malts its own barley. Though no sampling is allowed, you can take the tour and see different batches of barley going at once—being raked on the floor, steeping in the tank, drying in the kiln, and

being flavored with the smoke from burning apple and cherry wood. He finishes with fermentation in used bourbon barrels.

A WORLD-CLASS ACT

Rappahannock County is also a place where vision can ferment into something grand over time. An acclaimed summer music festival with the world-famous conductor and composer Lorin Maazel is now in its third year at



© Gary Anthes



© Gary Anthes

Castleton, a twenty-minute drive from Washington via winding, country roads.

The month-long July festival is an intimate one where you can chat with a graduate music student in Castleton's residency program or just relax and enjoy a fine, operatic performance. More than 200 young participants, who travel to Rappahannock County from all over the world, learn to be better

musicians as part of their interacting and mentoring during the festival. County residents usually host about half of the performers, as only a hundred can be accommodated at Castleton Farms, which comprises 550 acres of land that Lorin and Dietlinde Maazel began acquiring more than twenty-five years ago.

The couple put the first component of their vision into place in 1997 with the establishment of the Chateauville Foundation. The foundation's purpose, Dietlinde explains, is "to nurture young artists, foster collaborative artistic enterprise, and create opportunities within the community for shared cultural experience."

The intimate, acoustically superb Theatre House is the focal point of the foundation's activities and home to its most far-reaching programs, the Castleton Residency and the Castleton Festival. Last summer's program branched out in several new directions: symphonic and recital programs and an enhanced and expanded festival tent (with café) that provided greater production capabilities. Most importantly, the festival has added an extra week and substantially broadened the repertoire and artistic dimension of the season, with stage works of Puccini, Stravinsky, and de Falla, incorporating actors, choreography, and puppetry.

Brett Mitchell, at thirty-one the youngest of four assistant conductors at Castleton in 2010, said, "It's nice to be somewhere so ultimately beautiful, so pristine, that you don't have to leave to enjoy yourself. If you live in a big city, you have to pack up and drive several hours to get away from it all, but here, even though we're working, we're in this incredible environment."

If he had to choose between Rappahannock and the maestro, "Maestro was the bigger draw," he says. "There's never been anyone in history who has conducted as long as he has (fifty years), and he's worked with every great performer of that period."

Dietlinde and her husband take great pride in the way members of the county's community refer to Castleton as "our festival" and their residents as "the opera kids." She says they've come a long way since they converted two long, side-by-side chicken houses—owned by the managing editor of Time-Life, Ralph

Ingersoll, and his wife—into the Theatre House at Castleton.

But then everything in Rappahannock starts very simply, as with last fall's sixth annual Studio and Gallery Tour focusing on local artisans. The newer, family-friendly Farm Tour Weekend, also in autumn, allows visitors to experience personally what the "Buy Fresh/Buy Local" movement is all about. Cooking classes also have a strong following, as do art classes—but this is in keeping with the natural world that's such a strong asset. Just a fifteen-minute drive from Washington, Virginia, is the 105-mile Skyline Drive that runs north and south along the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Shenandoah National Park—so near and yet so far in terms of feeding one's soul in a timeless setting. [AL]

Martha Steger is a Midlothian, Virginia-based freelance writer and Marco Polo Member of the Society of American Travel Writers.



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www.visitrappahannockva.com



© Raymond Boc



TAILORED TOP FLOOR CONDOMINIUM IN HAWAII

Article based on an interview with Matthew Leverone of Leverone Design
Photography by David Duncan Livingston

WHEN DID YOU REALIZE THAT DESIGNING WAS YOUR PASSION?

As far back as I can remember, I had a passion for the arts and architecture. My father was a well-known graphic designer in New York City, and my mother had a good eye for fashion design. Although I grew up in the suburbs in New Jersey, my parents took my sister and I to the city as much as they could. At home in the suburbs, we would explore open model homes and visit local galleries. My father designed our first home, and my mother insisted on hiring an interior designer to decorate

it. The process intrigued me, and provoked me to seriously think about a career in design. My first official room that I decorated was my mother's master bedroom, master bath, and living room in a new house she purchased when I was in college. It was great fun and a wonderful experience.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE WHEN YOU FIRST DESIGNED AN ENTIRE HOME FOR A CLIENT?

When I finished my first entire house, it gave me such confidence, knowing that I can really do this. Maybe this is what drove me subconsciously—that I can do this on my own.

DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR OWN FIRM:

Since graduating from college, I've been working in the architectural and interior design industry. My entire career has been working in the design field. I have always known from a young age that design was what I wanted to do. I graduated with a BFA majoring in interior design from Arcadia University, which is outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I also studied at Pratt School of Design in New York during the summer months. I was fortunate to land my first job at my one and only interview with The Hillier Group in Princeton,



“The inspiration was the blue of the ocean waters, the beach, and **SEASCAPE GREENS**. We used a blend of simple, uncomplicated materials—**DARK WALNUT FLOORS**, rift-cut white oak cabinetry, *CaesarStone* counters and watery **GLASS BACKSPLASHES**, and comfortable furniture wrapped in **TEXTURED neutrals**.”

New Jersey. It was there I worked with a team of talented architects and designers, and I learned the “real world” of design. Four years later, I moved to New York City to work for other large firms such as Mancini Duffy and Walker Group/CNI. I went from designing corporate spaces to developing designs for national and international department stores, interjected with residential design. When I moved to San Francisco, I worked with a variety of interior design firms, which eventually lead me into the world of residential design. After working for so many design firms, I just felt the time was right to branch out on my own. I wanted more autonomy. So four years ago, I opened Leverone Design and never looked back.

WHAT DRAWS YOU TO INTERIOR DESIGN?

It’s the excitement of watching all my time and creative input come together, from the two-dimensional sketch to the actual completed environment. What I hope to accomplish through my work is to hear my clients say, “I love it!” I like knowing I can provide them with a space we are both proud to show others.

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE:

I would define my style as tailored

with a modern edge. I try to create inviting, comfortable interiors with a sense of sophistication. I put a tremendous amount of energy into every detail, so the eye can seamlessly scan a room without being drawn to one particular detail. I’ve been told that I have an eye for editing a room to perfection. I hope that’s true.

WHAT INSPIRES YOUR DESIGN CHOICES?

It’s really about the client. I usually ask for images from the client to develop a design direction. I sometimes create image boards to present to clients. It helps me understand what direction they want to take for their project. Exploration is an exciting time in the project. It’s when you begin to understand your boundaries and how far you can push.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU HAVE FACED AS A DESIGNER?

The biggest challenge as a designer is trying to help clients understand the value of a designer. We are here to guide the project and help the client explore the design possibilities outside the proverbial box—the design box.

WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY ON DESIGN?

First and foremost, I have a respect

for the rooms' architecture. Scale and proportion are very important; if the scale of the furniture is wrong, it can ruin a room. Utmost, I am very thoughtful in my approach to every project. I believe it is essential to edit a room. Take a look around and remove the one thing that might throw the room off balance.

TELL US ABOUT THE MAUI PROJECT:

My clients were looking for a retreat from the Canadian cold. They escape twice a year to their Maui condo. We had one meeting, and they hired me on the

spot. They liked the warm, comfortable approach I use in my interiors; this is what initially drew them to me.

The building is a 1980s concrete, eight-story condominium high rise located in Wailea, Maui. The top floor unit is 1,600 square feet including the lanai. It has an entry, open living room, dining area, kitchen, two bedrooms, and two full baths. The unit was purchased with furniture, like so many second homes on the island. It had a very dated look and needed to be completely re-decorated. We gutted as much

“This is where we had **SOME FUN** with color and **PATTERN**, starting with the rug—the statement for the room. **WATER BLUE TONES** are re-emphasized in the pillows and side chair, with **HINTS** in the bedcover.”

as we could and recycled all the existing furniture. Due to the unit size, storage was high on the list of priorities. Every space was considered in the design. The building had structural restraints, so we were limited to relocating walls, but we did our best to give the client a functional space that met their lifestyle. All the furniture was either new or custom to meet their needs. All in all, it was a dream project.

WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THIS PROJECT?

The inspiration was the blue of the ocean waters, the beach,

and seascape greens. We used a blend of simple, uncomplicated materials—dark walnut floors, rift-cut white oak cabinetry, CaesarStone counters and watery glass backsplashes, and comfortable furniture wrapped in textured neutrals.

HOW DID YOU ORCHESTRATE THIS THEME THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SPACE?

The architectural finishes were carefully and thoughtfully carried throughout the residence to establish cohesiveness. Colors were carried through with slight variations so not to be repetitive.

DESIGN DETAILS:

FOYER

The foyer entry has a flamed limestone floor, dark stained walnut bases, and louvered doors. The walls are painted a neutral color which was pulled throughout the residence. The focal point of the entry is the large painting by Deborah Oroppo. The custom server is made of bleached zebra wood. The accent porcelain objects are by artist Erin McGuiness, from the San Francisco Bay area.

LIVING AREAS

The open living, dining, and

kitchen areas have dark wide-plank walnut floors and bleached rift-cut oak cabinetry. Neutral colors with accents of white leatherette, water blues, and copper colors pull the outside in. I did not want to overpower the spectacular ocean and landscape views. The photography above the sofa is by David Duncan Livingston; they depict scenes of nearby beaches.

BEDROOM

This is where we had some fun with color and pattern, starting with the rug—the statement for the room. Water blue tones are



The guest bathroom is located off the entry hall. It was an obvious choice to pull the flamed limestone through on the floor and shower pan. We used neutral tones on the wall, dark wood cabinets, and honed limestone for the countertops.



re-emphasized in the pillows and side chair, with hints in the bed-cover. The fun lamps of sculptural wire and porcelain beads are from an artist in France. The artwork above the bed is by Laurie Reid.

MASTER BATHROOM

In the master bathroom, we repeated the bleached oak cabinetry and walnut doors. We used tumbled mosaic tiles in the watery blue tones in the shower and backslashes. The introduction of the stark white stone helped what was originally a very dark, dreary bath to become more spa-like in appearance—just what the client ordered.

GUEST BATHROOM

The guest bathroom is located off the entry hall. It was an obvious choice to pull the flamed limestone through on the floor and shower pan. We used neutral tones on the wall, dark wood cabinets, and honed limestone for the countertops.

FAVORITE PART ABOUT THE PROJECT:

Working with these clients and selecting the interesting artwork for the unit, like the Deborah Oropallo piece in the entry.

MOST DIFFICULT OBSTACLE WITHIN THIS PROJECT:

Probably the distance and time

zone factors. I only made two trips to the site—the first time to site measure and document the space, and the second time for our install. The project ran seamlessly. Although at times the distance factor reared its ugly head, it was nothing we couldn't handle.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF AS A DESIGNER THROUGH THIS PARTICULAR PROJECT?

It's important to have a positive and respectful relationship between the client and designer. When a client allows their designer to bring their best forward, it's a win-win situation.

HOW DOES THIS PROJECT HIGHLIGHT YOUR FIRM'S TALENTS?

This project demonstrates what can come to be when you have mutual respect and open communication between designer and client, when the client appreciates the design process. We worked as a team, respecting our boundaries, which allowed us to implement the design, right down to the details, as they were intended. Good communication, talent, and skill bring together great results. [AL]

www.leveronedesign.com

THE ART OF HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON

Article based on an interview with character animator, Morgan Kelly

You can draw a character or create a vignette or story, and imagine how it is going to move or how it will act. You can visualize it and see it as alive. But animation is a way to make that a reality.

TALK ABOUT THE PROCESS OF BECOMING AN ANIMATOR:

I have always drawn. Every job I had from high school was somehow art related, like working for a graphics shop or taking on freelance jobs doing caricatures, airbrushing, or designing someone's logo. I just always enjoyed making a living out of doing art. I went to an art school called

California Institute of the Art in Valencia, California, where I studied traditional, hand-drawn animation. After that is when I started working in animation at DreamWorks in 2003.

FILM CREDITS WE MIGHT BE FAMILIAR WITH:

The first one was *Shrek 2*. Then it was *Madagascar*, *Over the*

Hedge, *The Bee Movie*, *Monsters vs. Aliens*, and *How to Train Your Dragon*.

WHAT DRAWS YOU TO ANIMATION?

Animation brings drawings to life. You can draw a character or create a vignette or story, and imagine how it is going to move or how it will act. You can visualize it and see it as alive.

But animation is a way to make that a reality. You are also making something that gets a reaction from people. If you animate something and it just moves, that isn't that great. But if it actually affects people—it makes people laugh or it makes someone disgusted—you are connecting with people. I think that is the best thing.

GIVE US A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS OF ANIMATION:

Whether it is animated traditionally or on the computer, it is all done on a frame by frame basis, with twenty-four frames per second. When the twenty-four drawings are combined, it creates one second of movie imagery. You start with an idea, which turns into a script, which is then

turned into story boards. It goes through the computer for layout to set the environment, the props, the characters, the camera work, the choreography, and composition. It then goes to animation to create the performances. Music, light, and sound effects are added next. Each department improves the idea, while maintaining the original concept.

TRADITIONAL ANIMATION VS. COMPUTER-GENERATED ANIMATION:

I think they are really the same; the tool you use is just different. Traditionally-animated films are hand-drawn on paper, and that gets put onto the screen as a flat image. With three-dimensional animation, although you are working with a computer and

you are using three-dimensional models, it ends up being flat on the screen, so there is that similarity in it.

You need to have the same fundamental understanding of storytelling and movement and character. For instance, if someone is going to walk into their kitchen and drink a cup of coffee,



every character would do it very differently. It's important to keep that performance in sync with their personality.

Both formats are still active, although there are fewer traditionally-animated films these days. As the technology has been advancing, there's been more of an interest in computer-generated animation. It's an evolving medium. As the technology grows, it helps artists to be able to realize their ideas in a richer way.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED IN THE ANIMATION PROCESS?

Hundreds of people are involved in the process. There are usually about sixty-five animators.

DESCRIBE YOUR JOB AS A CHARACTER ANIMATOR. WHAT ARE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR?

I work off of the story boards or the pitch from the director to create the performance and the

theme. This includes the acting of the characters and their involvement with props and the environment. I am also responsible for coming up with additional ideas. It's important to contribute ideas to the shot as opposed to just knowing the character has to come in and sit down on a chair, for instance. If you come up with a way for the character to come in and sit down that is entertaining, then it is going to add more value. At the same time, it is also about keeping an eye on the overall picture—how that one shot works into the story, and why it is really meant to be there.

WHO DETERMINES HOW A CHARACTER LOOKS?

The directors are always guiding the overall vision, and they work with character designers who design the characters. That gets put through the modeling department, where they'll do a three-dimensional rendition of the

two-dimensional designs. That is the visual look of the character. The personality of the character comes from the script foremost. Then other details are fleshed out in the animation department as well—details like how exactly this character walks. Do they have a limp because of an injury, or are they always pigeon-toed? Do they have a confident walk? Are they always hunched over? And then also some personality attributes. Maybe they blink a lot, or they use lots of hand gestures or specific hand gestures that only that one character would do. We are trying to make each character into an individual so that they don't come off as generic.

For the film *How to Train Your Dragon*, the animation director did a lot of research on flight and how that would pertain to a dragon. He researched footage of birds flying, reptile movement, and mammals, and applied those

traits to some of the dragons. Some of the dragons would move and act more like a domesticated cat or dog, while others might move more like a chicken. They'd have quicker head movements. Another might move like a full pig or alligator—more lumbering and lazy. It's taking examples from life and characterizing and exaggerating it in the animation.

HOW ARE SCENES DETERMINED AND TASKS DIVVIED UP AMONG THE CHARACTER ANIMATORS?

The directors cast out the shots according to the animators. Normally, we will have a few shots to work on in a row to really be able to manage the choreography of the acting and the action over the cuts.

Usually, we get put on a sequence, and we do a few shots in that sequence. Once the sequence is done, the group you are in gets put onto a new sequence. And you get cast out shots from that

and with Hiccup falling off the dragon in the sky. I did a group of shots at the end with Astrid who is a love interest. She breaks through a crowd, and she thinks Hiccup is dead, and then you see her reacting to that.

The scenes are pretty sporadic, scattered all throughout the movie. It ended up being a minute worth of screen time. It is weird because it feels like a minute is short when I look at how I had been working on it for pretty much all of 2009. But when someone goes to the movies and they are caught up in that moment—when it's seen by millions of people in many different countries—it then seems bigger than just one minute.

WHAT PLANNING GOES INTO THE PROCESS BEFORE YOU BEGIN CREATING YOUR ANIMATION?

I draw small sketches of ideas. I will also shoot video reference

real world. And then it goes into the computer where there is a digital puppet with thousands of controls to move anything from the corner of an eyelid to rotation of the hips. I then pose out those key storytelling moments and try to make them seem like they are alive.

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN A CHARACTER/SCENE IS COMPLETE?

It is hard to ever say anything is done. Usually, you'll have a deadline you're working on. And even when it is called "done," you still feel like you could do one other thing to it. It is really complete when the performance and feasibility feels right, and there are no issues with the movement not feeling fluid or having texture.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO CREATE THE ARTWORK FOR AN AVERAGE ANIMATED MOVIE?

It usually takes about four years from the initial idea to the theatrical release.

WHAT SORTS OF CHALLENGES ARE YOU FACED WITH AS A CHARACTER ANIMATOR?

Making performances that seem real and not cliché. I try to find things that you see people doing in the real world and capture that in an animated character, so they look authentic. I think the real tricky part is trying to create the performances where the audience starts to really believe in the character and empathize with them. We are trying to make people feel for them—feel happy if things go well for the character or sad if there's disappointments—as opposed to watching it and only laughing at the jokes.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ASPECT ABOUT ANIMATION?

Seeing it when it is all cut together and when people get a reaction out of it. There is a number of animators on any film, so your

But if you **COME UP** with a way for the character to **COME** in and sit down that is **entertaining**, then it is **GOING TO** add more **VALUE.**"

So you end up working through the whole film. You usually try to stay on one character, but sometimes for whatever reasons, you may jump around and help out, doing whatever is necessary to get things done.

FOR THE FILM, HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON, WHAT SORT OF TASKS/CHARACTERS WERE YOU RESPONSIBLE FOR?

I mainly worked on two characters: Gobber and Hiccup. I did some scenes with Gobber talking to Hiccup's father about Hiccup,

acting out the shot because it is a quick way to figure out different ways to perform it. I can take that video and play with the timing of the performance or figure out which poses that I like or what expressions look good. It helps with things like body mechanics, weight, and little details that you probably wouldn't notice, like a foot shift or a certain expression change. Then you have to take that and look for ways to push it or exaggerate things in the animation that may not necessarily be capable in the

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