

The versatile shrimp is one culinary titan

Bill Daley
Chicago Tribune

America's favorite seafood? Shrimp. It's easy to see why; shrimp are available fresh or frozen, shell-on and peeled, raw and cooked. Shrimp lend themselves to countless dishes, from curries to gumbos to kebabs to stir-fry.

"Mom and I loved shrimp," celebrity chef John Besh recalls in "My New Orleans," a combination cookbook, memoir and tribute to Louisiana's food culture. "Dad enjoyed them but Mom and I loved them, just because they are so easy to cook."

Louisiana is the major source for domestic shrimp. The state's shrimp industry was socked hard by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, as Besh noted in his book (written before the oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico), and has been battered by cheaper foreign competition.

For Besh and others, shrimp is more than a food; it's a way of life.

"It's not just the critters we need to protect here but also the spirit of our shrimping community," Besh wrote.

The region's shrimpers are the equivalent of the family farm to Besh. "In our neck of the woods, that means everything," he said in a telephone interview.

Besh, whose restaurants include August, Luke, Domenica and Besh Steak, is not the only New Orleans chef gung-ho on the local product.

"I think it's important to know where the shrimp are from because I personally think the Gulf shrimp are the tastiest and the best," said Susan Spicer, who, as chef-owner of Bayona restaurant, has made a reputation for using underused and underappreciated fish species on her menus.

In terms of having environmental credibility, wild and farmed shrimp from the United States and Canada get the nod from the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program. Seafood Watch recommends avoiding shrimp from other countries.

Which shrimp is which? Consumers should ask at restaurants and retail outlets, said Sheila Bowman, outreach director for Seafood Watch, which is based in California. "The seafood supply chain has good information available that will tell you how it was caught, where it was caught," she said. "If a restaurant or a retailer can't tell you, it's because they haven't made it a priority to understand or know about the information."

"Not all shrimp are created equal," Besh insisted. "Domestic shrimp are much more scrutinized. Take the Gulf of Mexico for instance, where the shrimping season has just begun. Never have there been waters more controlled or tested on such a regular basis. They are making sure shrimp caught in these waters are not polluted." Of course, as the Gulf situation keeps unfolding new advisories or warning could be issued.

Spicer relies on a shrimper who goes farther west in the Gulf of Mexico, near Morgan City, La., to get shrimp.

"He delivers several times a week himself — which means he shrimps all night, then drives back to New Orleans and delivers to his restaura-

SEE SHRIMP, 2B



Bill Hogan/Chicago Tribune

Shrimp lend themselves to countless dishes, from curries to gumbos to kebabs to stir-fry.



Winner: Gregg Goldman, Somers

Photo: Ice fishing

"Once a year, eight of us rent a cabin in a remote part of the Catskills or Adirondacks.

"We pack up all of our gear, but the most important piece of equipment is the grill. I'd rather leave the bait home if I had to choose one or the other.

"We hike out onto the ice before sunrise. While some of the guys are drilling holes, I'm firing up the grill. By the time the tip-ups are set and the sun is rising, I'm serving Bloodies, Bacon and One-Eyed Sailors (egg over-easy inside the cut out of a slice of bread).

"Around mid-morning, if we're lucky, we'll have caught a keeper and cook him up right there . . .

We fillet him and I'll wrap him in foil with garlic powder, Italian seasoning, bread crumbs and a lot of lemon and butter.

"A few minutes later, we're passing around the plate and picking pieces off with our fingers.

It doesn't get any fresher than that.

"Lunchtime comes and we have, of course, burgers, dogs and sausage with beer-can sauerkraut. But again — if we're lucky — one of us has gotten a nice buck or doe from our annual hunting trip (yes, our wives are very supportive). If we have venison, we'll marinate the different cuts in advance — each cut in a different marinade. Man, that is a treat — and warms you up on the ice.

"Why do I love grilling? I love taking care of people. It's my job in sales, and I enjoy it. I love making sure everyone is happy and taken care of. Grilling for people is the ultimate give-away. I'm working a little while everyone is playing. I'm putting love and time into preparing food for people I care about.

"I love it at the end of the day when someone says, 'Hey, Gregg — thanks for cooking — everything was amazing.' Mission accomplished."

GREAT MOMENTS on the

GRILL

Meet the contestants — and winner — of our photo contest

Liz Johnson
ewjohnson@lohud.com

A big, juicy, three-layer burger, dripping with special sauce.

A sweet little boy wearing a chef's hat and apron, flipping burgers with a spatula.

A goofy wave from the cook at a grill, tipping his spatula, surrounded by snow.

With these photos — mouthwatering, heart-tugging, laugh-out-loud-funny — among our choices, it was a very tough call to award a winner for our Great Moments on the Grill contest.

But Gregg Goldman of Somers took the cake. Or rather, the grates.

His photo, which shows him grilling while ice fishing this February, captured dedication and humor and was taken in a crazy spot: on a frozen Lake George. And for that, he won a \$500 black Weber Spirit Gas Grill (model E310) from Appliance Sales Plus in Somers.

From June 23 through July 28, we asked readers to send in their photos. We were looking for beauty, shock value, humor or an un-

usual or unique situation. We received 34 photos from 18 contestants.

There were photos of food, such as the documentation of the Bacon Explosion recipe by Dave Nielsen of Putnam Valley (yes, it's the heart attack on a plate that it sounds like), and the beer can chicken recipe by Ralph Fleming of Philipstown.

And there were photos of people: Rosemarie Muscolo of Verplanck sent in a photo of her dad from the 1960s, and Sharon Klass of New City sent in a photo of her son from the 1990s.

And let's just say that sausages, spatulas and snow — lots of snow — all had their proverbial 15 minutes.

For the past month, I've been posting photos from all of our contestants on our Small Bites blog (why should we have all the fun?). Just in case you missed any, here are a few of our favorites along with the stories behind them, straight from the grillers' mouths.

THE OTHER CONTESTANTS, 4B AND 5B



Above: Gregg Goldman grills while ice fishing in February on a frozen Lake George. His photo was the winning entry in the Great Moments on the Grill contest. Left: Goldman grills up some meats. Below: Bacon and One-Eyed Sailors for breakfast.

Photos by Gregg Goldman



".. But the most important piece of equipment is the grill. I'd rather leave the bait home if I had to choose one or the other." **Gregg Goldman**



Coming Thursday

The new fall TV season is upon us. Heather Salerno profiles four folks with ties to the Lower Hudson Valley who have coming shows, above from left: actor Michael Imperioli (ABC's "Detroit 1-8-7"); Chappaqua's Vanessa Williams (ABC's "Desperate Housewives"); producer Greg Berlanti (ABC's "No Ordinary Family") and producer J.J. Abrams (NBC's "Undercovers.")

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DEIDRA AND LENNY SPANO



RALPH FLEMING



CESAR HINCAPIE

Contestants share photos and stories

Deidra and Lenny Spano of Yonkers

Photo: Lenny's Quintessential Flame-Broiled Big Mac

Lenny is former state Sen. Nick Spano's brother, and they were all in Mastic Beach on Long Island over Fourth of July weekend when the photo was taken.

And here's his recipe: "Just like the song ... it was two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onion on a sesame seed bun. (I think I may have forgotten the lettuce on that one.)

"The Big Mac sauce was made by mixing:

- 1 cup Miracle Whip
- 1/3 cup creamy style French dressing
- 1/4 cup sweet pickle relish
- 1 teaspoon dried minced onion
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

"The patties were 8 ounces each ... so only my 19-year-old son and 30-year-old nephew consumed the whole 1-pound burger."

"Grilling is fun."

Bill Palladino of Carmel

Photo: Steaks, Very Well Done

Bill says that his daughter and son-in-law had invited them over for a Father's Day barbecue, and purchased four nice T-bone steaks. They were getting ready for dinner and everyone was in the kitchen when Ted came running in from the back deck saying "The grill's on fire!" Sure enough, says Bill, there were flames shooting out of the grill. They doused the whole thing with the white foam from the extinguisher — and "that was so much for dinner."

After they put the fire out, they decided to take a photo for posterity.

The bottom line, says Bill? Dinner that night was fried chicken from Stew Leonard's.

Sandra Serrano of Peekskill

Photo: Grill Diva

"This is me grilling the toppings for our grilled pizza! Just call me Grill Diva! OK, so pizza isn't usually associated with barbecue, but my husband and I combine our two loves (grilling and pizza) — this is my grilled chicken and sundried tomato pizza (with fresh basil, mozzarella, grilled red onions and shallots, and other spices). Yum-O! It was delicious. First I grilled the pizza crust (so I cheated and used Boboli extra thin crust) and then added the topping once I sauteed them. Love the Weber!"

Sharon Klass of New City

Photo: A Chef in the Making

This photo is of her son, Raymond Klass, when he was about 8 years old. (He's now 27.)

"Raymond has been cooking since he was about 6 years old but I just loved how he dressed up to be the 'chef' for the barbecue on Mother's Day!"

Dave Nielsen of Putnam Valley

Photos: Bacon Explosion, Family Affair

Dave sent in photos of his day making the Bacon Explosion, the heart-attack-on-a-plate dish that's made of sausage-stuffed bacon. He added some cheese for good measure.

He says: "The Bacon Explosion is a fixture here on Lake Oscawanna in Abele Park. The Bacon Explosion is a near quarterly event here. The core team consist of Paul



SHARON KLASS



YULIYA MEKH

and I (Neighbor and Neighbor as we are known respectively).

"Paul is the master of the smoker, while I am behind the perfection of the weave of the adjunct ingredients. Lisa (Paul's wife) is the originator of the challenge and my girls Emily, 4 1/2, and Kate 2 1/2, are the cheerleaders and co-consumers of the end result. My wife, Sara, is a referee on the virtues of bacon. As a result of her dislike for bacon she is effectively excluded from the team, but nonetheless much a part of the festivities."

When Dave is not making bacon-sausage loaves smoked on a grill, he makes other dishes, such as pork chops, chicken and ribs.

The recipe, he says, was inspired by The New York Times article on the popularity of the recipe on the Internet. The article appeared on Jan. 28, 2009, and Dave and the gang made their first Bacon Explosion on Super Bowl Sunday that year.

Dave says the subsequent Oscawanna Lake editions are as follows: "Part 1 Super Bowl Sunday 2009; Part Deux Memorial Day 2009; Part 3 July 4th 2009; Part 4 Labor Day 2009; Five Alive Super Bowl 2010; Part 6 Memorial Day 2010; Part 7 July 4th 2010; Pending ... Part 8 'The Liz Edition' Labor Day 2010."

(Ha! Thanks on that one, Dave!)

"While there have been some variations, as you might expect," Dave says, "the current standard is as follows":

Dave's Bacon Explosion Ingredients

- 2 packages Niese's Maple Smoked Thick Sliced Bacon (available at Niese's Maple Farm, 136 Wiccoppes Road, Putnam Valley, 845-526-3748; niesesmaplefarm.com)
- 75 percent sweet Italian sausage (uncased)
- 25 percent hot Italian sausage (uncased)
- Crumbled cooked bacon (middle filling)
- Smoked Gouda (middle filling)
- Dinosaur Barbecue Original Sauce
- Smoked to perfection served



ROBERT RICCI

on Pillsbury Grands! Biscuits

And, says Dave, the Bacon Explosion is "not for the faint of heart — pun intended."

Just to prove his dedication, he also let me know that this July Fourth, in addition to the Explosion, he had an appetizer of beef tenderloin crusted with salt and pepper among other spices, topped with Paul's signature onions and gorgonzola cheese.

Luke Herrmann of Lake Peekskill

Photo: Huge Flare-Ups

"Every Labor Day weekend, we throw a big party with either a pig on rotisserie or a short rib. This year the short rib happened to heat up quick and the fat dripped off and flared up, searing one of the juiciest pieces of meat we have ever had the pleasure of serving. The meat (all 46 pounds of it) only lasted about 20 minutes after it was taken off the grill and it was the talk of the party from then on. This year we plan on getting 2

short ribs so everyone can get a piece."

Robert Ricci of Central Nyack

Photos: Pig Roast

The story of the pig roast, from Ross Overbury and Robert Ricci:

Robert: "It all started at the end of the summer of 2008 when my friend Ross Overbury and I were put to a challenge of roasting a whole pig for a Labor Day weekend barbecue for 2009. Ross is from Lachine, Quebec, a suburb of Montreal, and I am from Central Nyack. The pig roast took place at Trout Lake, not far from Lake George."

Ross: "When this started we had no more than the words 'pig roast' go to by. Robert and I had been musing over how it might be interesting to roast a whole pig — you know, the way you might dream about mushing a dog team or building your own hang glider or something. We were overheard and before we knew what we were doing

we were 'volunteered' to a roast pig dinner for a party of about 40 people."

Robert: "We both like to cook."

Ross: "I was raised on bland British cooking, and by the time I was in my teens I was ready — desperate! — to explore other styles. I love scouting ethnic grocery stores for ingredients I've never worked with before. Generally I find other customers and staff of those stores are happy to talk to me about how to prepare my discoveries."

Robert: "I like to cook barbecue, from tandoori chicken and Saigon beef sticks to pulled pork and beef brisket. Ross has influenced me to try more styles of cooking. So we had a whole year to put this together. We started by researching the best way to make a pit to do the actual roasting. We got a simple idea from cuban-christmas.com/pigroast.html. I welded a frame from rebar and wire mesh to hold the pig and used 48 cinder blocks for the pit.

"The pig was purchased from Jacobs and Toney in Warrensburg, N.Y. It weighed in at about 50 pounds with the head and hoofs removed. The pig was marinated overnight with mojo sauce. We did not have a cooler to hold the pig overnight so we made one from Styrofoam boards from Home Depot. We slow cooked the pig from around 9 a.m. till 1 p.m. and then turned it over and continued until around 4:30 pm.

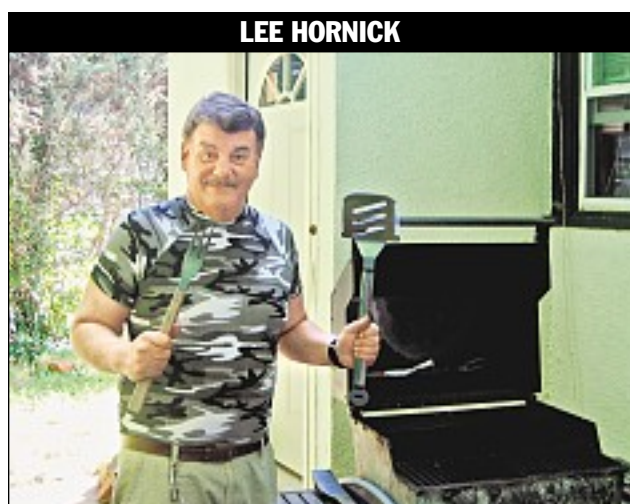
"When done, the pig was pull-apart tender. Even though you see a knife in my hand, you could have just used a fork to serve it. Sorry Liz, the leftovers are all gone."

Robert: "I like to cook barbecue, from tandoori chicken and Saigon beef sticks to pulled pork and beef brisket. Ross has influenced me to try more styles of cooking. So we had a whole year to put this together. We started by researching the best way to make a pit to do the actual roasting. We got a simple idea from cuban-christmas.com/pigroast.html. I welded a frame from rebar and wire mesh to hold the pig and used 48 cinder blocks for the pit.

Ned Smith of Yonkers

Photo: The Altar in Winter

Ned says he uses the grill about twice a week — sometimes more. "Steaks, hamburgers, chicken sate, chicken with hoisin sauce," he says, are just a few of the dishes he cooks.



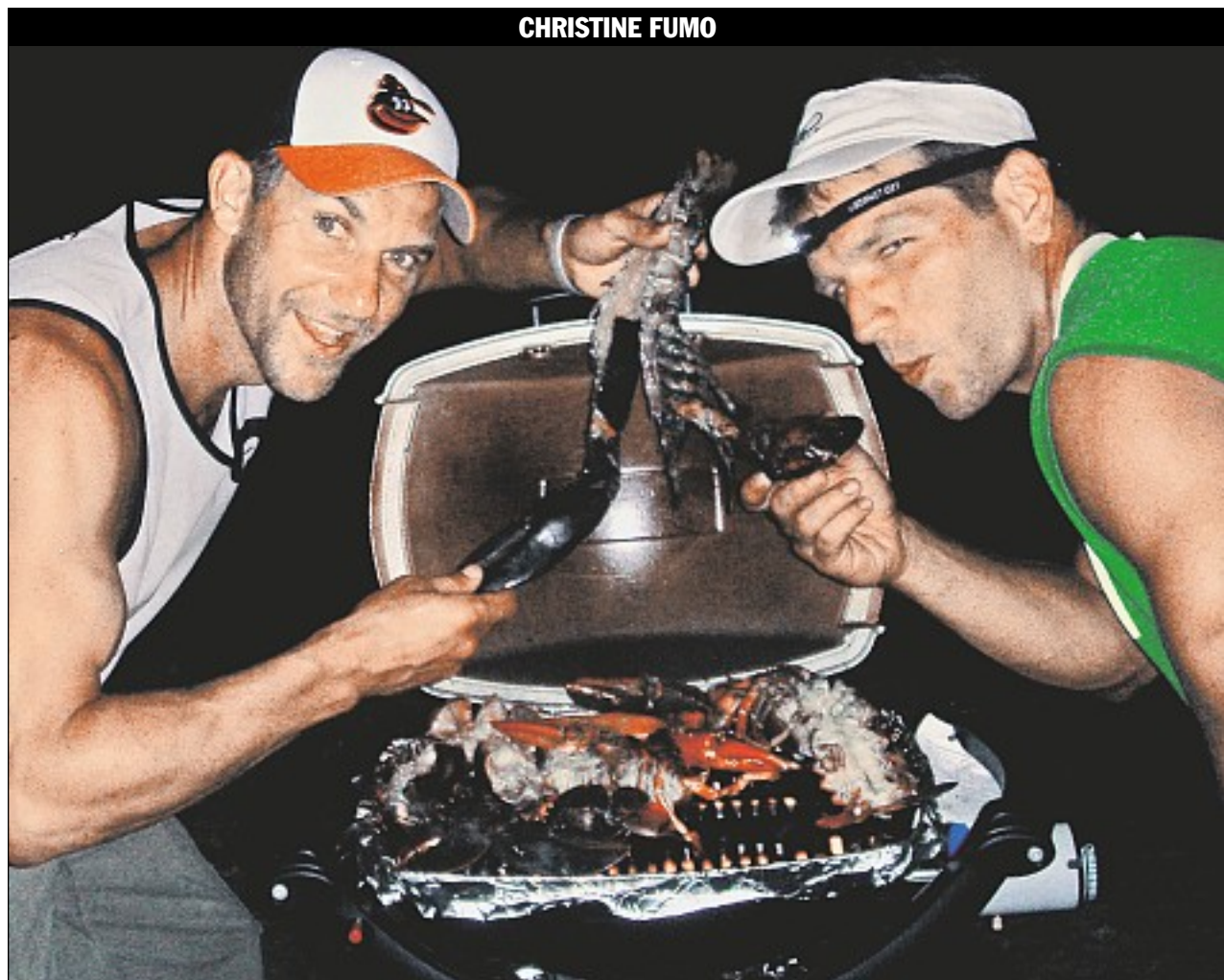
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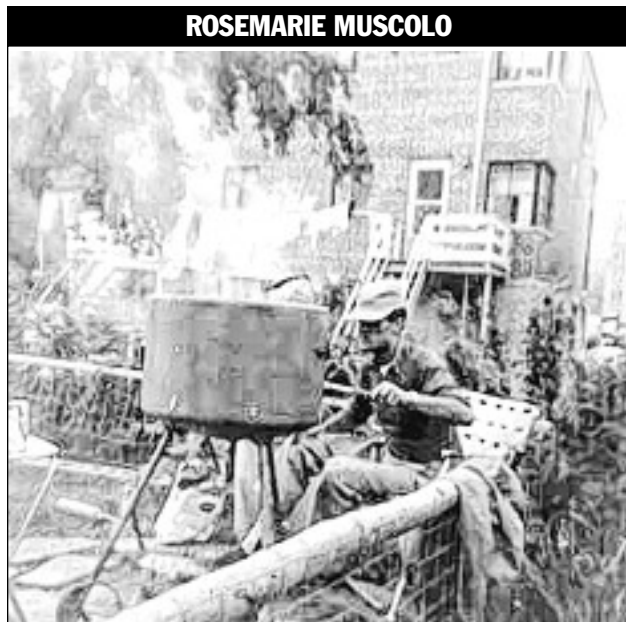


DAVE NIELSEN



CHRISTINE FUMO

ROSEMARIE MUSCOLO



NED SMITH



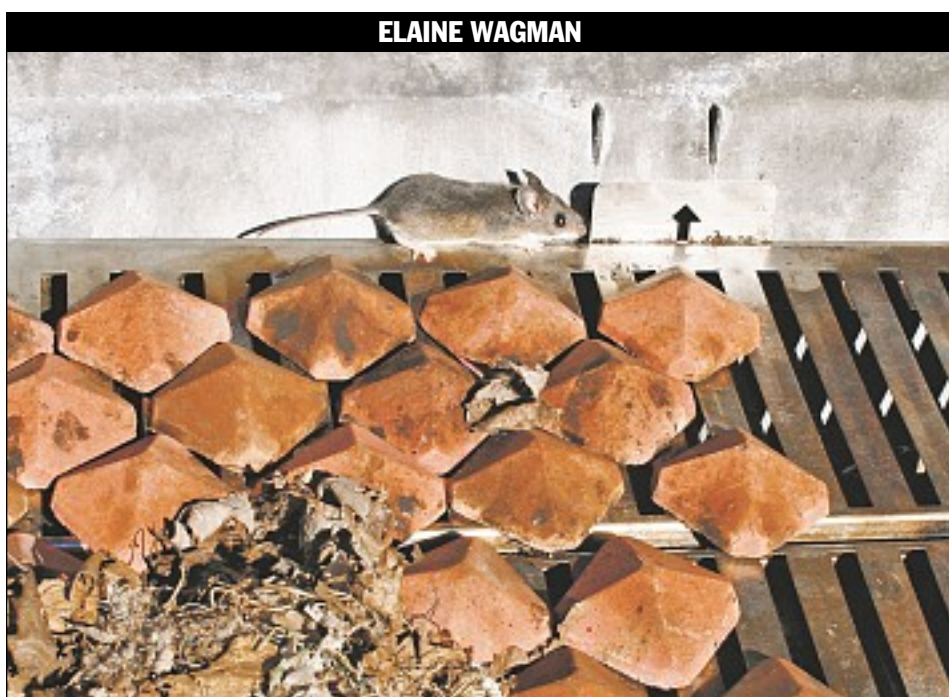
SANDRA SERRANO



JEFF CHANDLER



ED ACEVEDO



ELAINE WAGMAN

Cesar Hincapie of Croton-on-Hudson
Photo: Steaks Sizzlin' in the Park

Cesar says the photo was taken in August 2009 at Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park in Yorktown.

Elaine Wagman of Pomona
Photo: Waiter, There's a Mouse on My Grill

Elaine says: "I guess instead of hot dogs, we'll have grilled mouse!!!!"

Jeff Chandler of Mohegan Lake
Photo: Blizzard Breakfast

"As we all know, Westchester got slammed with a ma-

yor blizzard in February of this year. The storm took out a major part of my tree in the front yard, which in return, took out my power box, ripping it right off the side of our house!

"While digging out the next morning, we realized that all of our surrounding neighbors were without power as well. Having nowhere else to turn, I dug out the grill and fired it up, making breakfast sandwiches for anyone holding a shovel — and that's exactly what I'm doing in the submitted photo. (What you did NOT see in that picture though was the rather large blob of snow that plopped onto my head moments after the shot was taken!)"

"Over the next five days, (yes, we actually had NO power for five days and had to move into the basement to

keep warm via the fireplace) we relied on that grill for everything; breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Our meals were pot luck surprises as any food starting to defrost became that night's meal — ham steaks, swordfish, lasagna... you name it, it was grilled! A veritable smorgasbord from the depths of our freezer!"

"Not only did the grill keep us fed, but it became a major lifeline for a few family members as well. In a desperate attempt to save my daughter's tropical fish, we boiled snow to help keep their tanks warm! (I can proudly say that we only lost one fish when all was said and done.)"

Lee Hornick of Amawalk
Photo: King of the Grill

"I love to barbecue ribs, chicken, burgers, shish-kebab, corn. You name it, I can grill it. I love to create new dishes on our grill. For example, my peanut butter and jelly grilled sandwich. We grill three-four times a week. I always use coals on the grill. My girlfriend Roseann took

the picture of me in our backyard in Scarsdale. That evening we were celebrating her sisters' birthday and I barbecued a meal for 10 people. They loved it."

Rosemarie Muscolo of Verplanck
Photo: An Old-Time Backyard Barbecue

Rosemarie says that her father was always into barbecue, and this is one of the earliest photos they have of him grilling — from 1965 or 1966. It was originally a Polaroid.

Her dad passed away a few years ago, but for his 75th birthday party, she had put together a slide show of old photos, and there was a series of him at the grill over the years," she says. "With his little hat."

She remembers that when she was little, her father spent \$20 or \$30 on a grill, and her mother was so mad at him because they had five kids in the house and that was way too much money to spend on a grill. They still have that grill. She thinks the grill in this

photo is also a Weber, a smoker-style, and that he put a pot on top to heat something up. Maybe beans. He loved to put a steak on the grill — London Broil, usually. Or he'd do a rotisserie with a roast. And her mom always had to have hot dogs.

Christine Fumo of White Plains
Photos: Grilling in the Catskills

Carlos Tollinche of White Plains, right, and Brian Wright, left, of Stamford Conn., are grilling lobster (caught in the Hudson River by Brian) while we were camping in the Catskills."

Ed Acevedo of Peekskill
Photos: My Buddy Barry Lent

"Barry is probably my best friend and all around good guy. He lives directly across the street from me in Peekskill. I got him the hat because he is a great cook and always 'The Guy' cooking at the barbecue. So now he breaks out now and then for a good laugh. I think it goes

good on his head. Just to see him in that hat made the steaks that much better!"

Yuliya Mekh of Yorktown

Photo: A Delicious Sausage

"It was an Italian sausage made of chicken with sun dried tomatoes and basil. It was served for a small backyard gathering in Yorktown Heights."

Ralph Fleming of Philipstown

Photo: Beer Can Chicken

Ralph sent in his recipe. Here it is:

Ralph's Beer Can Chicken
Trim the fat off two 3-pound chickens from the neck and rear areas, rinse inside and outside with cold water and pat dry.

Salt and pepper the inside of the chickens, liberally coat the entire outside of the Chickens with Emeril's Original Essence and McCormick Steak Seasonings. Take a can of beer (opened!) and pour yourself a half glass. Place the can in the bottom opening of the chicken and place on the grill standing up (as shown in the photo). Use the legs and beer can to create a triangle stand, and the bird will stay upright through the cooking process.

Keep the burners on medium, close the top of the grill and cook for an hour (if you keep opening the top, you will have to cook longer). If the chicken begins to flare (burn), open the lid, reduce the flame to low, close the lid and continue cooking. Chicken is done when the skin is brown and crisp. Newbie grillers may want to use a meat thermometer and test the thickest parts of the chicken breast and thigh — temperature should be at least 165 degrees.

The beer steams the inside of the chicken, making moist and succulent meat.