

Family Secrets - Where the Social Core is Food


My brother and I co-founded La Lama Mountain Ovens in the winter of 1997 as a reunion project - we have lived most of our lives at two opposite ends of the USA.. Here we produce unique artisan breads as well as classical and traditional confections. Old world baking techniques combined with the pristine, high elevation climate of northern New Mexico yields a finished product unattainable elsewhere.

As a family project, a primary mission is to record, test, and preserve the best of the Italian-American old family recipes, and translate them into repeatable techniques sized for today's family. We have also developed an appreciation for the differences that our 8,000 foot altitude makes to the cooking, and especially the baking, process - and intend to share tips and techniques useful to anyone trying to prepare food above 2,500 feet.

Prior to moving to New Mexico in 1997, my brother Ray cheffed in various Philadelphia-area restaurants, and owned and operated two of his own. All of this at the same time he owned and operated a working farm. Though our extended family is quite large, we both started to feel the loss of many close to us, and felt it was time to reunite a scattered family. He began specializing in artesian bread making in 1996, perfecting recipes that would later be adjusted for the New Mexican altitude.

I began my commercial experience in the San Francisco area when I opened ccDove Fine Foods in 1977, a gourmet delicatessen known for its cheeses and made-on-premises sausages and pates. My husband and I also founded and operated Montclair Winery from 1975 to 1985, respected for its hearty Sonoma Valley Zinfandels and Chardonnay-like French Columbard. Later I managed one of the IL Fornaio Italian bakeries in the Bay Area. After 25 years in the Bay Area my husband and I felt it was time for something different, and purchased property in the New Mexican mountains. Serious collaboration with my brother began in anticipation of our 1996 move to New Mexico and an eventual reunion with my brother in the bakery business. Of course I brought my own natural sour dough starters from San Francisco; and contrary to popular myth, they continue to thrive in the mountains here.

Meanwhile, daughter Jennifer graduated from San Francisco's California Culinary Academy in 1997. She then worked as an assistant pastry chef at the internationally acclaimed Bay Wolf restaurant by day, and at various cooking stations by night at the highly respected Italian Colors restaurant, eventually becoming the dinner chef at their second restaurant in Oakland. In 2000 she put her cheffing on hold to study at the Italian Culinary Institute for Foreigners in Castiglione, Italy; and went on to work at DaVittorio restaurant in Bergamo as part of this professional study. She returned to the US and now lives in Taos, New Mexico, where she is the Chef at Cafe Renato ... [November 2003].


CeCe (Cecelia) Dove


Ray (Raymond) Zara



PS: This work-in-process expects to become a book some day. The working title may change many times - so don't be surprised if the next time you look here it is different. We welcome your feedback when you try these recipes, and will acknowledge useful "test kitchen" recommendations.

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Family Secrets

The best of the recipes, techniques, and methods practiced by our large extended Italian-American family, with emphasis on the legacy handed down to us by the original immigrants.

- 52. Spaghetti con Tonno (with Tuna)
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- 55. Cozze en Bianco o Rosso (Mussels In White or Red Sauce)
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(come back again, new ones are added periodically)