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ON THE COUCH



Michelle Goff

Something for everyone

Whilst considering topics for this here column, several ideas swam around in my head: How my beloved 17-year-old niece, Sierra, is fixing to start college, how I hear two-day old refrigerated coffee is just the thing to get you going in the morning, or how I (accidentally) hit a toddler in the back of the head.

But it's difficult to stay focused when the pornography known as men's Olympic diving beckons me to come hither.

Oh, yes, I've prepared another Olympic-themed column, so if you're not interested, you might want to quit reading. Not that I understand disinterest in the Olympics. However, during the London games, one of my top three pals has maintained her lifelong boycott of the Games.

We've barely communicated to these days because my life has revolved around the Olympics. I haven't watched anything else on the magic box and I've avoided the news and sports to remain spoiler-free until I can catch NBC's primetime coverage.

That leads me to another issue: Why has NBC's decision to delay coverage of the high-dollar sports until primetime caused so many people to pitch hissy fits? Do they really expect the peacock network to broadcast Michael Phelps' finals and gymnastics in the afternoon?

This proves people will complain about everything even if it's nothing.

With that in mind, allow me to say I always feel sad once swimming wraps. I love watching folks fall over hurdles in track and field as much as the next sadist, but swimming packs the power. And I'm going to miss Michael, who bid adieu to the Games as the most decorated athlete ever.

I'm also going to miss Ryan Lochte. Let's face it, the Lochtes are a reality show waiting to happen. Since the Games began, Ryan has admitted to urinating in the pool before winning gold in the 400 IM, his dapperly-dressed dad

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Corn Bread Salad — It's a garden party



By JOYCE PINSON

It is a good year for gardens in Eastern Kentucky. Under the shadow of Bent Ridge, my garden is growing just like it has for the five generations of family who came before Charlie and me. It is a special privilege to till the sandy soil at the old homeplace; living simply, following nature's rhythms.

This year we are growing Bevin's Tomatoes, a Johns Creek favorite. Our Truckers Delight field corn stands 10 feet tall, supporting the weight of Kentucky Wonder Pole Beans twining up the leafy stalks. Beneath the corn



Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson

Panzanella is a fancy Italian word for cornbread salad, a down-home celebration of seasonal garden ingredients. It is not a gourmet dish. What it is, is a satisfying side dish marrying up basic ingredients including cornbread, buttermilk dressing, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and corn.

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Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson

Former "Top Chef" competitor, 610 Magnolia's Chef Edward Lee, mixes up cornbread salad for The Bourbon Classic media event. Lee is known for his innovative use of fresh ingredients. His cornbread salad was presented with an uptown twist; it included shrimp!



Photo for the News-Express by Joyce Pinson

Traditionally panzanella, Italian Cornbread Salad, uses fresh tomatoes as the single vegetable ingredient. But we hillbillies know cornbread salad is meant to be layered with flavors! Add cucumbers, corn and peppers! Get fancy and include a protein like shrimp or bacon! It's your garden party; do what you want!

J.D. Crowe & The New South coming to Mountain Arts Center

J.D. Crowe and The New South will headline a bluegrass concert at the Mountain Arts Center, Prestonsburg, Sept. 29. Pictured from left: Matt DeSpain, dobro; Dwight McCall, mandolin; J.D. Crowe, banjo; Kyle Perkins, bass; and Rickey Wasson, guitar.

Submitted Photo



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-EXPRESS

LOUISVILLE — Presbyterian Homes & Services of Kentucky will be hosting its Fourth Annual Bluegrass Benefit Concert, "Bluegrass Through the Years," on Sept. 29, at 6 p.m. at the Mountain Arts Center, Prestonsburg.

Proceeds from the concert will benefit the non-profit communities of Cedar Creek Assisted Living, Pikeville, and Good Shepherd Community Nursing Center, Phelps.

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GARDEN

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and beans, green striped cushaw vines trail across the rows overtaking the okra and cucumbers.

Fresh produce, local produce, does it get any better than that? Chef Edward Lee of 610 Magnolia in Louisville does not think so. Sometimes he really cracks me up. At The Bourbon Classic press conference, Chef Ed prepared a cold salad appetizer of panzanella. The cified media folks swooned. They demanded the recipe. They took copious notes, hanging on the chef's every word.

Lee looked over at me and grinned. He knew I was amused that something as simple as panzanella would create such

a stir.

Panzanella is a fancy Italian word for cornbread salad, a down-home celebration of seasonal garden ingredients. It is not a gourmet dish. What it is, is a satisfying side dish marrying up basic ingredients including cornbread, buttermilk dressing, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and corn. You can call it Panzanella, but a cornbread salad by any other name still tastes the same ... delicious.

As a rule, Charlie and I use a white corn meal for making cornbread. But, rules are made to be broken. For this salad, I prefer a coarsely-ground yellow meal. Once baked, the pone has an earthy nuttiness and a bit of gritty texture that serves as a wonderful contrast to the medley of freshly-picked vegetables.

Charlie's mom always made cornbread with a ratio of 2:1; 2 cups of meal to 1 cup of flour. I use the same proportions, adding eggs, buttermilk, a pinch of baking soda and baking powder plus a little oil or bacon grease. The mixture should be thick and lumpy, not quite pourable.

The real secret to good cornbread is heating an oiled cast iron skillet at 400 degrees for about 3 minutes then adding the batter. While waiting for the skillet to heat, the leavening agents have time to give the batter some rise, and when you do add the batter to the hot skillet and return to a hot oven, you ensure a nicely browned bottom crust. The more texture the better!

While the cornbread bakes, make buttermilk ranch dressing. I use about 1 cup of sour cream;

1-1/2 cups of buttermilk; 1/4 cup of mayonnaise; 3 tablespoons of fresh dill weed, minced; 1 tablespoon of celery seed; and 1 tablespoon of freshly ground black pepper.

You can play with this mixture to suit your own tastes, but I am telling you making salad dressing from scratch creates a tangy creaminess that you will not find in a store-bought bottle. I mix the dressing in a Mason jar for easy cleanup, storing in the refrigerator until needed.

To give high style to cornbread salad you could add shrimp. That is what Chef Ed Lee did. I have seen other variations including crumbled bacon, onions, capers and cheddar cheese. Hey, that would be one fancy panzanella! Giggles.

Tune in to the August

episode of "Friends Drift Inn" on Pike TV Channel 99 to see what Herbie Deskins and I grilled up in the garden. Watch for the panzanella appetizer, it takes an unexpected trip! For behind the scenes, check out my Website. In the meantime, make corn bread salad. It's easy. It's tasty. It's a garden party in a bowl! Share the giggles!

Ingredients: 1, 9-10 inch cornbread pone, halved; 2 or 3 medium heirloom tomatoes, use Brandywines or Cherokee Purples if you can find them; about 2 cups of fresh corn kernels or 1 can of whole corn, drained; 1 medium cucumber, peeled and coarsely chopped; 1 or 2 sweet bell peppers chopped, I like California Wonders; Buttermilk Dressing, enough to lightly moisten but not soak; Fresh basil and/or dill for

garnish.

Method: In a tall, clear bowl, crumble half of the corn pone. Add a layer of chopped tomatoes, a layer of cucumbers, a layer of peppers, and top with the remaining cornbread crumbled on the top. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for about 2 hours.

Just before serving, mix the chilled buttermilk ranch dressing in, moistening all the ingredients.

I serve this as an appetizer in a fancy little punch cup with a basil and dill sprig. It is equally good plated as a side dish alongside whatever goodies are coming from your garden.

Serves 8-10.

Joyce Pinson is a Master Gardener, home cook, and a local insurance agent. She maintains a food and garden blog at www.friendsdriftinn.com.

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Tickets are \$21 in advance or \$26 the day of the show. Tickets may be purchased by calling (606) 889-9125 or online at www.macarts.com.

This year's performers include J.D. Crowe and The New South, The Boxcars,

and Coaltown Dixie.

Legendary banjo player J.D. Crowe is known for his popular tune "Old Home Place," which chronicles the life transition of someone leaving their home in the country for a new life in the city. This is one of Crowe's last tour dates before he retires.

Other members of the group are Matt

DeSpain, Dwight McCall, Kyle Perkins and Rickey Wasson.

The Boxcars, another IBMA Award-winning band, have just released their new CD, "All In." Members of this group include Adam Steffey, Ron Stewart, John R. Bowman, Keith Garrett and Harold Nixon.

Coaltown Dixie ("High-Heeled

Bluegrass") is an all-girl bluegrass band, originating from the hills of Appalachia, from Pike and Floyd counties. They enjoy playing traditional bluegrass music as well as putting a bluegrass spin on non-traditional tunes.

Members of this band are Stephanie May Rose, Melanie Lynn Turner, Kalyn Bradford and Kris Bailey Preston.

GOFF

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has cursed on TV, and his mom has told the world too much information about Ryan's love life.

I hope it's not too late for Ryan to enter the decathlon or the marathon

or another Week Two sport. His country needs him.

As for gymnastics, the U.S. men's team choked, but the women didn't disappoint us. Then, Gabby Douglas tumbled and vaulted her way to gold in the all-around.

Their success elicited at

least two magnificent melodramatic meltdowns from the Russians. That gave me a great idea for a new Olympic sport — making Russian girls cry. It doesn't look difficult, so the competition would be fierce, but you would get extra points if their sparkly makeup runs.

I'm also still watching off-brand sports including badminton and handball. Controversy rocked the badminton world when a Chinese team tried to throw a game to help another badminton team from their country. The details confuse me, but not as much as the fact that

badminton is so popular in some parts of the world that it breeds cheating.

The popularity of handball, a sport that looks like what would happen if basketball and soccer had a baby, flourishes in Scandinavian countries. It kind of makes you wonder if Scandinavians have ever

watched a basketball or soccer game.

But that's the beauty of the Olympics. It shows up for two weeks every couple years and offers something for everyone.

Michelle Goff writes a column for the News-Express and can be reached at gmgoff@setel.com.

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Leadership Award



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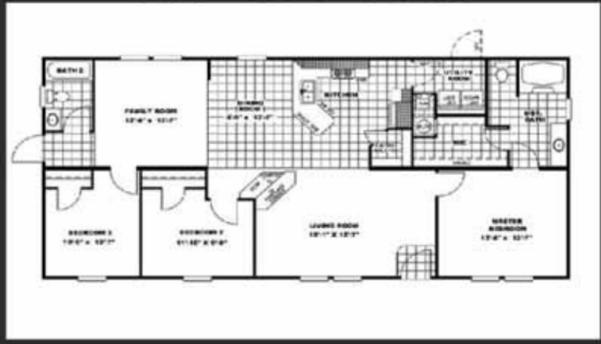
Esha Narola recently received the first Youth Leadership Award from the Pikeville Rotary Club. Narola, a student at Pikeville High School, is president of the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards Club and spearheaded an effort to help schools in Magoffin County, affected by the tornadoes, to replenish their books and school supplies.



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