

at home

july 2012 PUBLISHED BY THE BOZEMAN DAILY CHRONICLE VOL. 13 NUMBER 7

The High Alpine Project

Contemporary Yellowstone
Club home incorporates
cues from nature and
Big Sky's historic past

Fence Essentials

Creating a Backdrop
for Outdoor Lifestyles

CHEF AND CATERER FAITH PETERSEN SHARES THE SIMPLE, GOOD THINGS IN LIFE

BY REBECCA BALLOTTA



Courtesy Crazy Mountain Catering

“I’ve learned to stay true to what I do well and not try to be all things to all clients. My food is good, simple, not covered in three different sauces with names you can’t pronounce.”

FAITH PETERSEN’S ROOTS ARE WELL ESTABLISHED in the Shield’s Valley, so returning to Montana after completing degrees in culinary, food, and beverage management was an easy decision. She opened Crazy Mountain Catering on a seasonal basis in 2004 while living in Belgrade and, four years ago, she and her husband moved back to Clyde Park where she expanded to a year-round operation.

“I grew up in a big family (six kids) where hospitality was primary. It was rarely just us for meals, so there were lots of opportunities for me to help with the cooking. And, I discovered I loved to cook — a lot!” says Faith. “I definitely wanted to be a chef, but I like catering over working in a restaurant because it provides me with flexibility, diversity of clients and locations, and I’m able to customize the menu to fit each client. I don’t have A-B-C menu options and you pick one.”

Besides getting to do what she loves as a caterer, Faith also involves herself in volunteer projects that are dear to her heart. For one, she began hosting fundraisers for Children’s Relief International after discovering the Failure to Thrive Baby Clinic in Mozambique, Africa. Her trip to retrieve her adopted son from Ethiopia also opened her eyes to needs more severe than she had ever before witnessed, and she was compelled to help. Closer to home, Faith provides extensive assistance at the annual Christmas dinner served at the Civic Center in Livingston. Additionally, she and her husband have monthly date nights where they cook and serve free meals at Loaves and Fishes, also in Livingston.

“It’s our very favorite thing we love to do,” says Faith. “There are few things in life for me where, if I spend the day doing that, the world gets real simple, real quick. I don’t question what I do or how I’m doing it. We just cook for them, and just love them, and give them a hot meal because that’s what they need. It’s very fun!”

Faith believes the thing that makes for good dining is the overall experience. She does whatever it takes to serve people in the moment, meet every request, and spoil people at an event. She explains, “We all get to do this once, and if someone is entrusting me with an important experience in their life, like a wedding, then it’s my job to do absolutely anything I can, like remember the bride and groom’s parents’ names, and help the grandma with her plate

through the buffet line — the extra things. That’s what you like when you go out, right?”

Faith Petersen’s next volunteer project will be serving snacks to hungry runners at the Scramble for Ethiopia run on August 18 in Bozeman; register at www.scrambleforethiopia.com.

For more information about Petersen and Crazy Mountain Catering, visit www.crazymountaincatering.com.

ASK THE CHEF

AH: Your catchphrase is “Tastefully Simple.” What does that mean to you?

FP: I’ve learned to stay true to what I do well and not try to be all things to all clients. My food is good, simple, not covered in three different sauces with names you can’t pronounce. I use quality ingredients, like butter

and fresh herbs from my own herb garden; ingredients people are familiar with. I use a light marinade on the meat, grill it on site so it’s fresh, and then carve it on the buffet line. There are lots of caterers who do things that I don’t — I’m happy to leave that to them.”

AH: What is the most unusual event you have catered?

FP: There is a three-day race called the Headwaters Relay that ends around West Yellowstone. The distance is around 260 miles, they run in teams, camp out along the way, and a car follows them. I took my trailer and set up a BBQ in the middle of nowhere and served racers who had been in the heat and elements for three days, eating and living out of their car. They were the most gracious, grateful, hungry, tired runners, making it one of the most fulfilling events I’ve ever catered. I especially love events that create more unique challenges where I really have to think through the details.

AH: How would you describe your catering style?

FP: I’m not high-end. I like variety. I have a signature BBQ sauce and I do a lot of grilling onsite, but I’m not exclusively a western BBQ person. I really like taking what the client wants and coupling it with what I do well to create success. I don’t have a menu niche because it really varies since I customize. However, I remain cognizant of the fact we’re in land-locked Montana, so I may discourage lobster and seafood choices that strain the client’s budget; and I pay attention to what season it is. You have to respect the seasons if you’re going to do what you do well.

AH: As a chef, what three things can you not live without?

FP: The view of the Crazy Mountains from my kitchen door; my favorite knife, which is just a small chef’s knife; and the scrap bucket I keep handy for feeding my chickens — all melon rinds and various other scraps.

Granola

1/6 c. maple syrup
1/6 c. brown sugar
3 t. vanilla extract
1/2 t. salt (optional)
1/3 c. Canola oil
5 c. rolled oats (I like old-fashioned style or Wheat Montana 9-Grain Mix)
2 c. sliced almonds
1/4 c. organic non-sweetened coconut flakes
1/4 c. ground flax seed
2 T. white sesame seeds
1 1/2 T. cinnamon
1/2 t. nutmeg
(dried fruit, sunflower seeds optional)

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. I like to use my Silpat; otherwise use parchment paper to line a single baking sheet. In a large bowl, whisk maple syrup, brown sugar, vanilla, and salt. Add oil and fold in rest of ingredients until oats are completely coated. Spread onto baking sheet and press down with a spatula. Bake until light brown about 40 minutes, rotating pan once during cooking. Remove from oven and allow to cool completely before breaking into pieces and either eating out of the pan (like my family likes to) or storing in an airtight container or Ziploc for up to three weeks in the freezer. Serve with yogurt or milk and fresh berries. NOTE: Dried Fruit or sunflower seeds can be added after completely cooled.



Courtesy Crazy Mountain Catering