

VERMONT

Main Streets

& Back Roads

INSIDE THE WINTER 2009 ISSUE

INTERVIEW:

Lisa McCormick

THE PRETEND OUTDOORSMAN:

Abominable Snowboard-man

FOREST DRUMMERS:

The Woodpecker

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Winter is here and we are happy to announce that we have started a new edition to Main Streets & Back Roads.

Starting in January, we publish our first issue of Massachusetts Main Streets & Back Roads, currently geared toward the western region of the Berkshires.

It will follow much of the same format at this Vermont edition, with a Berkshire tangent (such as an interview with legendary folk artist Arlo Guthrie!).

Please, feel free to visit either of our online editions at www.vermontquarterly.com OR www.massquarterly.com

Thank you,

Marc Albano

Artist's Profile: Marie Witte

As a young child in Patras, Greece, Marie could frequently be found drawing with a stick in the sand behind the wall of her white stucco house. After her adoption at five by an American family, she carried her nascent love of art to her new country, now drawing on the sandy beaches of southern California in lieu of those of Greece. A trip to the San Diego Museum of Art with her father led to Marie's discover of the 19th century French master William Bouguereau, whose soulful and honest portrayals of young women and children continue to inspire Marie's work today.



Marie studied art and psychology at San Diego State University where, in addition to fashion design and illustration, she began taking courses in life drawing. Much of her initial training in painting came from a self-guided study of old master painters in the art museums of San Diego and San Francisco. At the University of California, Berkeley, Marie took course work in art history, with a particular interest in the painting techniques of the masters from the 16th-19th centuries.

Some of Marie's early work continues in the tradition of the 16th century Flemish painters, with a luxurious use of muted earth tones, while later works speak of 19th century French and American impressionists, containing the same elements of playful, spontaneous brush strokes in individuated, surprising colors.

The sparkling movement of the oceans, the free intensity of the spirit of a child, and the shy beauty of a rural landscape are among the frequented subjects of her work. For the past decade, Marie has developed her oil paintings so that the essential, spiritual nature of her subject is captured by a vibrancy of color and an insightful rendering of light.

She continues to paint daily from her current resident in Vermont. To view more of her work, visit www.MarieWitte.com



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Forest Drummers

Winter is here. The leaves are long gone from the trees and the woods have become starkly open and quiet.

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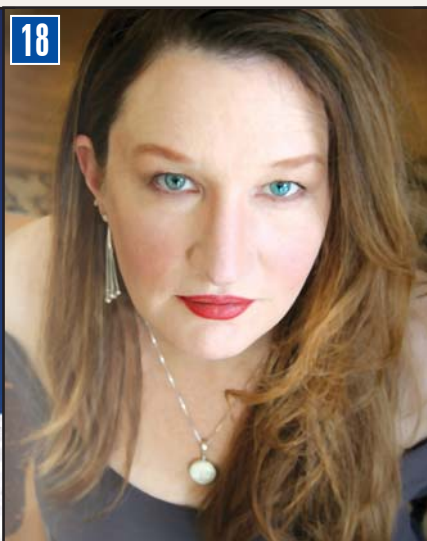
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Duo of Beef with Sage Gnocchi & Chard

The Duo of Beef is two different cuts of beef, Sirloin and Short Ribs, that are prepared in a way we consider the best method for each.

The Sirloin is first trimmed and cut in half the entire length of the strip. They are then cut from two lengths of the strip, so they are thicker and a bit rounder than a typical strip steak - they actually look more like a small filet mignon.

The steak is then pan-seared and roasted in the oven to medium rare.

The Ribs are braised for about 3-4 hours with aromatics, herbs, red wine and veal stock.

We, then, make a potato pie that is sliced potatoes, thyme, diced tomato, onion and garlic - all tossed with a touch of olive oil, salt & pepper. They are layered into a small roasting pan and cooked in the oven for about 1-2 hours. After the potato pie is room temperature, 3" diameter circles are cut from it.

These little pies are then heated up and served in a slow oven and served with swiss chard that has been braised with sliced shallots and coriander, as well as butternut squash that has been diced and roasted in oven until golden.

The sauce is a combination of some of the de-fatted braising liquid, along with a roasted shallot veal reduction.

The dish is extremely popular in the winter, as it offers a balance of roasted and braised meats while address the winter fix of a sort of elevated comfort food that is deep and rich, yet not as heavy as one might think.

Part of the challenge at Hemingway's has always been to try and translate some traditional type of dishes into a modern, cleaner, yet satisfying cuisine.

Chef Ted Fondulas
Hemingway's Restaurant, Killington
www.hemingwaysrestaurant.com
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The Winter Steak

By Marc Albano



For carnivores proud of their place on the food chain, there is nothing more filling than a good piece of meat during these cold winter months. Most of us put away the grill until after the snow melts, although this isn't necessary, of course.

Personally, I love the juxtaposition of standing in sub-zero temperatures over a grill. Cro-Magnon man could do it, so why can't I? I generally stop shaving around this time as well and grunt a lot.

Assuming you don't have your grill handy, here is a great way to get a good steak right on your stovetop. You can get a wonderfully crusty, juicy and tasty piece of meat without leaving the comforts of your own kitchen.

Let's assume that you already know how to choose the proper steak, an art form in and of itself. 1 ½ inches thick is perfect, and based upon times of direction below.

Next, you need a cast-iron pan and a lot of heat. The skillet type is imperative and you can find cast-iron varieties all over the place, new and used.

There is no need for zesty steak sauces or marinades as the meat is what is important here.

1. Take steak out of refrigerator and let it sit until it is at room temperature, but don't let it sit in its own juices. A cookie rack works perfect.
2. Place the skillet over a medium-high burner for about 5 minutes or until it

is smoking - hopefully you have a vent or fan.

3. Dry the steak out with paper towels.
4. Salt both sides by gently rubbing into meat. Add pepper to taste.
5. Place the steak in skillet and cook it for 5 minutes-ish.
6. Do not touch, do not move, do not peek!
7. Flip and cook another 5 minutes for a rare to medium-rare. Obviously, if you wish to ruin your steak and cook to well done, leave longer. Then bow head in shame.
8. Feel free to prop steak up on side to sear fat.
9. Remove from pan let rest for another 5 minutes.
10. CONSUME!

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comfort foods

Fall and winter are special times of the year, as we feel like curling up with a good book, or gazing into a fire with thoughts of yummy comfort food dancing through our heads.

Still, most comfort food can also come with a few extra pounds settled around our waists. It is for that reason that I wanted to demonstrate that some food can be beneficial to your health while also being as comforting as, say, pumpkin pie.

Here are a few recipes I thought you might enjoy over the next few months.

Sieglinde Joyce is a practicing Holistic Health counselor in West Dover, VT and can be reached at 464-2846 or healthy@sover.net. She will help you fill out your initial health history form online and do your consultation right over the phone.

Sieglinde works with you to accomplish health goals such as weight loss, fighting fatigue and depression and improving overall family or personal health.

Vegetarian Chili

1 tbsp olive oil
1 chopped onion
3 cloves garlic minced
2 tomatoes diced or 1 can tomatoes
1 carrot cut into quarter moons or shape desired
1 tbsp chili powder

1 tsp ground cumin
3 cups cooked or canned red, black, or kidney beans
1 1/2 cups water
2 tbsp tomato paste
1 tsp sea salt

- Heat oil in a large heavy pan; add onions, and garlic and sauté 5 minutes.
- Add the rest of the vegetables; this is an opportunity to add other veggies like bell peppers, zucchini, or corn also.
- Next cumin, and chili powder, sauté for 5 minutes.
- Add the remainder of the ingredients. Cook on low to med heat for 25-30 minutes.
- Try serving with a spoonful of Greek plain yogurt on top for an extra healthy decadence.

Quinoa Shepard's Pie

This recipe I created using quinoa flakes instead of mashed potatoes. Quinoa flakes are sold at the health food store and some larger grocery stores. They are also great as a breakfast cereal instead of oatmeal for those who are trying to avoid gluten. This amazing grain is the highest in protein about 9 grams per serving!

2 2/3 cups Quinoa Flakes to 7 1/3 cups water
1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 cup Soymilk/ or regular milk
Canned or fresh corn, approximately 2 cups
1 medium onion
1 teaspoon olive oil

1lb ground venison or hormone free beef, turkey, or veggie ground.
Rice syrup, you can use honey if you don't have syrup.
Sea salt and pepper to taste

This recipe is ideal for a 2 1/2 quart casserole dish.

The quinoa thickens a bit, so have your other ingredients ready to assemble pie.

For the onions and corn mixture a medium size sauté pan works well. Add onions and sauté until they start to turn golden brown then add corn and a tablespoon of flour sprinkled over the top.

Next pour in your milk. You can use soy milk if you prefer, just make sure it is plain not a flavored one. Now, stir until things thicken and bubble a bit, add the rice syrup and mix all in.

Cook Quinoa by adding it to boiling water. Return to a boil and cook for 90 seconds stirring frequently, the remove from heat and stir in desired seasonings to taste. I like to add a tablespoon of olive oil also to make it more savory.

Grease your dish then spread a good layer of cooked quinoa seasoned to taste with salt and pepper, saving enough quinoa for a nice layer for the top. Then, add your cooked corn and follow with layer of venison or a hormone-free beef or turkey. Top with the last of the Quinoa and sprinkle with a dash of paprika. Bake in oven for 20 minutes at 300 degrees. Enjoy.

No Guilt Pumpkin Pie

This pie is another one of my creations. This recipe is low in sugar but not short on taste. You can eat for breakfast lunch and dinner and not feel guilty, only like your maybe getting too many vegetables.

1 can pumpkin
1/2 cup rice syrup or honey
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

Dash of ground cloves
1/2 cup soy milk or regular milk
2 eggs or egg substitute

Take all ingredients and mix together well and pour into greased pie plate. Notice there is no crust. You can use a crust if you like, or spread out graham crackers on bottom of pie plate first for some flaky goodness.

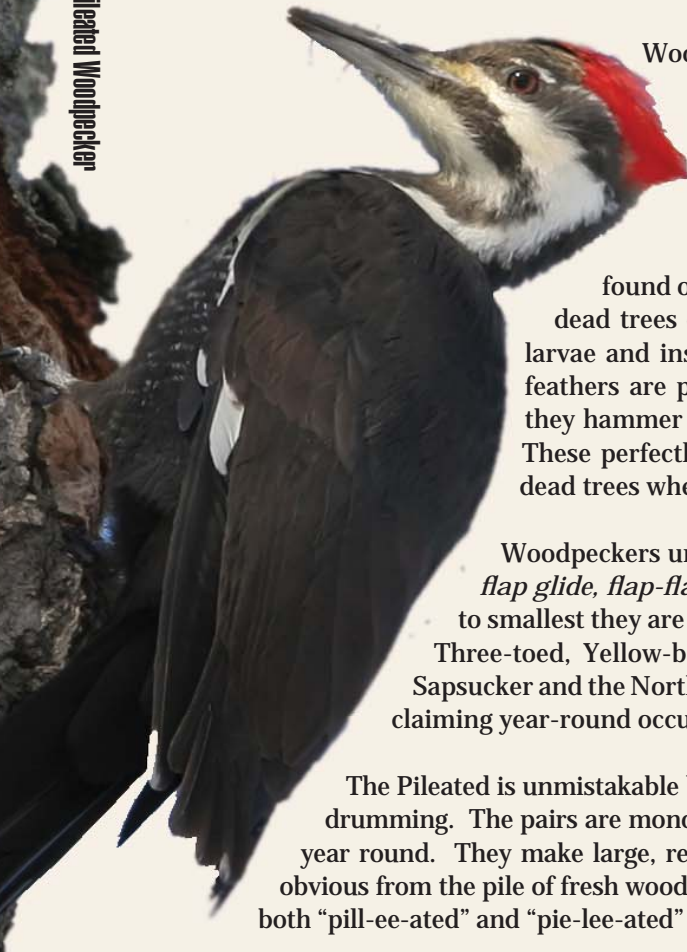
Bake this in a 350 degree oven for 1 hour, or until you see the top crack a bit.



forest drummers

Winter is here. The leaves are long gone from the trees and the woods have become starkly open and quiet. As I walk, small sounds seem to carry further in the winter woods, my snowshoes are muffled in the powder and a tap-tap-tapping resonates across the snow from a nearby tree. I see a small black and white woodpecker carefully picking his way up the trunk of a Mountain-ash; it's a Hairy Woodpecker and just like the rest of us, he's working hard to stay warm and well fed this winter. I find inspiration in the woodpeckers that stay in Vermont year round; they remind me of just how good I have it in my heated, polar fleece world.

Pileated Woodpecker



Woodpeckers belong to the Picidae family whose members have unique anatomical topography that includes thick, chisel-like bills, strong toes, stiff tails and long sticky tongues. These features allow woodpeckers to occupy a special niche in the world where survival depends not just on, but within trees. They have a common black and white color scheme with a flare of red or yellow often found on the head or nape of the neck. Woodpeckers use standing dead trees called snags, for nesting, roosting and foraging for beetle larvae and insects; as well as fruits, nuts and seeds. Their unique tail feathers are perfectly designed to be extra stiff to brace themselves as they hammer at trees, peeling bark and excavating holes called cavities. These perfectly round holes can often be spotted on the south sides of dead trees where the birds cash in on free solar energy.

Woodpeckers undulate in flight, as if drawing waves across the sky. *Flap-flap glide, flap-flap glide*. Eight species are found in Vermont; from largest to smallest they are the Pileated, Northern Flicker, Black-backed, Red-headed, Three-toed, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy and Downy. The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and the Northern Flicker are the only migrants with the other six species claiming year-round occupancy in the Green Mountain State.

The Pileated is unmistakable because of its large size, bright red crest and loud territorial drumming. The pairs are monogamous and commonly stay on the same territory together year round. They make large, rectangular feeding holes in trees and their presence can be obvious from the pile of fresh wood chips under a tree. I've heard people pronounce "Pileated" both "pill-ee-ated" and "pie-lee-ated" but I'm pretty sure it doesn't matter to the birds either way.

Flickers have white rumps and flashy yellow feathers under their wings. They can be spotted foraging on the ground for ants with a tongue that wraps completely around their skull and attaches near their nostril! I've also seen them drum on buildings as though their lives depended on it.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker Woodpecker



Downy Woodpecker



Red-headed Woodpecker

The Three-toed and Black-backed woodpeckers thrive on wood-boring beetles and larvae and are particularly associated with recently burned coniferous forests. These two residents as well as the Red-headed woodpecker are less common and are found in the northern and western parts of the state.

“Yellow-bellied Sapsucker” may sound like a sibling’s expletive but these birds actually have a yellow hue to their belly feathers. Aptly named, they lick sap from holes that they drill in seemingly precise horizontal rows called sap wells. These regularly maintained sap wells are repeatedly visited not only by sapsuckers but also by hummingbirds and small mammals. The sticky sap catches insects that I consider to be high-protein bonus snacks. While in the woods, look for these wells low on the trunks of younger trees.

The most commonly seen species are the Downy and Hairy which are both

regular visitors to backyard feeders and especially appreciate a nice morsel of suet during the winter months. These two look very similar but the Hairy can always be distinguished by its larger bill. A common rule is that if the bill is shorter than the head then it’s a Downy and if the bill is longer than the head then it’s a Hairy. I remember “small downy, big hairy” to keep it straight.

Males and female woodpeckers both seasonally participate in drumming which is quite loud and used for attracting mates and claiming territories. In comparison, the tapping sounds they make when foraging for food and excavating cavities make a softer, less urgent sound. For survival, woodpeckers require standing dead trees to communicate, breed, nest and feed. This means that habitat availability is likely the most crucial component of their success. From bill shape to body size to tail length, the different and specialized attributes of each species allow them to live in the

same areas. Different species may be spotted in the same woods and you’re likely to notice these captivating critters if you just tune your ear to tapping rhythms in the trees and look for their sign on trunks. During this holiday season bring your binoculars with you, and when you hear drumming in the forest, take a moment to look up and appreciate these small winter wonders.



Hairy Woodpecker



Northern Flicker Woodpecker



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker Woodpecker

Lauren Gilpatrick is a Wildlife Biologist who received her B.S. in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana. She has spotted over 200 avian species across the nation and encourages people to consider their role in the ecosystem and how their daily choices might affect wildlife habitat. She can be reached at: lgilpatrick@hotmail.com



the pretend outdoorsman

The Abominable Snowboard-man

As a person gets older, they tend to pass judgment in a manner that they would have condemned in their own youth.

For me, as each birthday passes, I find blowing out additional candles may require the assistance of an inhaler. I also find that I am a bit more close-minded about certain cultural issues and new ideas.

50 Cent remains, to me, the cost of a newspaper and the only “bling-bling” I wear is a Medic Alert bracelet that details my allergic reaction to any new reality television program.

I have recently celebrated my 39th birthday without the aid of a walker, and have spent every three months trying out something new and exciting in an effort to keep up this column. From climbing to kayaking, my goal has been to explore something new, regardless of the general ineptitude that tends to result from such an engagement.

I have been a skier most of my life, having spent most of my youth near the bottom of Mount Snow, in southern

Vermont. I prayed, as did all my friends, for an impromptu blizzard to give us a “snow day.”

In Vermont vernacular, I should note that a snow day is simply a last-minute day off that is better than a holiday. The child awakens in the earliest of hours with the dread of yet another school day, gets right out the door on the way to the bus and – BAM – no school! For kids, it is a free day to do whatever you want; for parents, it is a furious five minutes to figure out what to do with you, as it is unlikely that their boss offers such a “snow day.”

I remember when the snowboard first started making its mark on the mountains, and how so many resorts actually banned their use. The snowboard seemed wild and crazy and had no place with the alpiners’ lifestyle, let alone his terrain. Of course, any ski resort executive will now tell you that snowboarding saved their collective bun-warmers.

Still, as of last year, I had failed to get on this single plank. Sure, all the cool kids were doing it, but I had gotten to the point where I was unwilling to try new things. If I was going to skip paying rent one month to afford a lift ticket, I’d prefer to end the day standing up, preferably with a modicum of dignity still intact.

The key to getting any man to try something new has always been, and will always remain, one single, powerful and unifying force: an attractive woman.

This statement may not play well with some readers, but I can not deny the shallow nature of man any more than I can deny the force of gravity.

Like all Vermonters, I sometimes pick up a second job here and there and found myself working at a ski shop in the

Killington region. Having learned all the snowboard mechanics and lingo for the job, the motivation was there to try out this new fan dangled sport, but the catalyst was provided by the invite of a specific part-timer who offered to take me up for a few lessons.

This would be the afore-mentioned femme fatale of this little adventure.

Vanity overtook me and, after making sure my medical insurance was up to date, we embarked on a trip up the mountain early one morning to test the fates.

Since we didn't get to the mountain until after 9:30, a resort I will simply entitle Mt McCosts Alot for the purpose of anonymity, we had quite a hike to the lifts. Of course, as soon as we got to the ticket window, I noticed a shuttle bringing up a host of tourists that had parked right near us.

I had failed to mention to my young instructor that I wasn't in shape for pointless winter treks, as I had assumed my more rotund figure would have been a bit of a no-brainer.

Then again, with just short of eleven layers of clothing engulfing me like a Paleolithic snowboard mummy, I figured it was good camouflage for those extra layers of beer skin I accumulated in college.

After providing the local Bloodmobile with a few pints to finance the purchase of our tickets, we trudged over to the rental section to outfit me the necessary gear. On my way, I kept thinking about the coincidence of the cost of a lift ticket as being so similar to that as a round-trip ticket to a beach in Florida.

We hit the rental line and I quickly made friends with the group in front of me, who had been in the same line since 1986. After updating them to the



fall of Communism and the oddity that is Britney Spears, I approached the front of the line and started outfitting myself with what I needed for the day.

A young man from South Africa gave me my boots and a beautiful lass from Ireland took care of the board. As I was paying for everything to another woman from Brazil, I looked around for cameras, as I felt I was part of a new Benetton photo shoot.

This aside, the first thing I noticed was the comfort of a snowboard boot in comparison to the medieval torture that is a ski boot. The ski boot follows many of the same principles of the boot used in the Spanish Inquisition, I kid you not; however, they use worlds like flex and cant, rather than "repent, sinner."

The snowboard boot actually allowed me walk more like the upright mammal my species had become, rather than the painful thumping of the ski boot that was more reminiscent of Frankenstein's monster.

I was also enthused at the ease of carrying a snowboard, as well as the lack of poles. I have never been a fan of poles. Given how many reckless people on the hill continually cut me off, I see them as a potential homicide exhibit.

Luckily, I am an aficionado of long lines, as we were now to embark on an attempt to actually take a lift up the mountain. Although lacking the dedication of lines one finds throughout Orlando and The Magic Kingdom, ski lines have a character all in their own. This is where you meet the people that engage in winter sports and they emerge from all walks of life, including:

I now offer the full, unabridged content of the lesson I was given, verbatim: "While keeping your knees bent, gently edge yourself over the lip. Point yourself slightly down the hill on one side, while tilting your body backwards to control yourself."

These were the last words I was to hear on the subject, as all other sounds were soon to be deafened by the sound of a 12 year old girl's scream of terror.

That scream would be mine.

The Local:

The real locals only spend time in a line when they are "macking" on some girl or boy. Somehow, they appear to know every lift operator at every lift. If you check his/her pockets, you will find trail mix and energy bars, as they can't afford the \$12.50 for ¼ pound of beef and soggy bun served at the lodge below.

The Second Homeowner:

Often found spouting the best places to eat this or drink that, they are incredibly envious of The Local and their ability to thrive in the mountains without "real jobs." They don't recognize the large amount of Ramen noodles and free ketchup packets required to maintain the local appetites. If you check his/her pockets, you will find a bundle of permits they are still filling out in order to build the deck they have wanted since the late 1990's.

The Share House:

Even at 9:30 in the morning, there is a more than even chance this person is already drunk, whether as a remnant of the night before or the Bloody Mary required to raise them out of bed. If you check his/her pockets, you will find a flask or a little packet of nature's own blend.

The Day Skier:

This person left at 6:00 a.m. in the morning to get where you are right now, and they aren't afraid to tell you that, over and over again, as if it makes them particularly die-hard. If you check his/her pockets, you will find the green, circular VT logo sticker that now entitles them to pretend they grew up here.



The Weekender:

They are staying just down the road and wearing all the right clothes and all the right gear. They probably summer in the Hamptons or Cape Cod as well, and I am convinced ski tickets cost as much as they do because these folk are willing to pay the prices. If you check his/her pockets, you will find large nuggets of gold and onyx Amex cards.

After spending a good 20 minutes in line, we were finally on our way up the mountain. As I have ridden this lift many times before, I knew enough to bring the face mask to shield me from the winter winds. Regardless of my own warmth, I offered to snuggle a little closer to my partner, out of fears of her own potential hypothermia.

I am very giving like that.

My favorite part of the lift, I must admit, is spectator watching. Let me rephrase: my favorite part is watching a spectacular wipeout. Since I am aware that my new venture into snowboarding will provide similar entertainment to other lift-goers, I enjoy the perverse pleasure of watching some guy think he is Bodie Miller go head first into a snow bank.

As we disembark and walk over to the slope we will soon be hurtling down, my lovely companion begins to give me lessons. I quickly realize that these lessons should have been presented prior to being on top of a mountain. I also realize that, given no skill in the snowboarding arena, perhaps we should have started on something other than an intermediate slope.

As history as shown, no man will admit to fear in the face of danger, particularly in front of a woman they are trying to impress. There is a reason why the life expectancy of females is considerably higher than their counterparts, and it revolves around inane pride.

I now offer the full, unabridged content of the lesson I was given, verbatim: "While keeping your knees bent, gently edge yourself over the lip. Point yourself slightly down the hill on one side, while tilting your body backwards to control yourself."

These were the last words I was to hear on the subject, as all other sounds were soon to be deafened by the sound of a 12 year old girl's scream of terror.

That scream would be mine.

Let me now digress in order to offer a little mathematical and physics quandary for the reader. Take a 225 lb. man just short of 6' tall. At the top of the mountain of ice, attach to him a big board that has been waxed to perfection. Do not give him anything that would hinder his speed, such as a brake. Point him downhill.

Assuming that no trees or people get in his way, what is the result?

Well, we will never know from my own experience, as people did get in my way. Three of them, to be specific, and I believe they will never visit Vermont ever again. In addition to my Gidget Goes Gonzo screams of fervor, I believe I proffered a myriad of obscenities that would have made George Carlin proud.

After narrowly avoiding a mother of two, I was not as lucky to avoid the two. Unfortunately, there is no chance that two small children in pink jumper and bunny ears are going to stop a man of my size, slowly approaching Mach 1.

What I needed was an immovable force, preferably protected by a dozen pillows; however, I decided that my best bet was to simply fall down rather than gain more speed.

For anyone that has ever skied in water or in snow, or ridden a bike or something similar, there is this moment that you consider wiping out on purpose. More times than not, you forego this moment, remembering it fondly from your bed in Intensive Care.

My moment was gone in a blur, and I was heading towards the woods – Big Woods. You know how that one brainiac always uses the metaphor of seeing the forest for the trees? At 25 mph, I'd like to note that they are the same thing and they both look painful when approaching at rapid speeds.

My only remaining hope was a bright orange mesh net made of plastic. I'd seen a few races on television where this helped slow down the person and I decided to aim straight for the fencing in an effort to slow me down. This was somewhat silly, as I was now gaining even more speed.

If only some more "kid speed-bumps" would slow me down, I might have a chance.

I barreled through the orange fencing. It did manage to slow my speed a little but, at this time, it was acting more as a scarf accessory for dolphins than an impediment to my speed.

Needless to say, my ride was now over, as I slammed into a tree only slightly larger than myself, luckily shoulder first.

There are few givens when a person wipes out, regardless of whether skiing or snowboard. Yes, there is some pain and, yes, there is some embarrassment. These are expected, of course.

What is not expected, but is usually the case, is that every person that comes to help you will manage to do so by coming to a quick stop right behind you and spraying about 30 lbs of wet powder and stinging ice all over you, particularly in areas you do not want snow when lying in a near vegetative state.

My friend was no exception, although she did decide to add a cackle of laughter reminiscent of a Vincent Price movie.

After walking down the last couple hundred yards, we spent a bit more time learning some of the basics. It appears she was an ex-snowboarding instructor and wanted to see what my skill level was. This made no sense at all to me, unless she was referring to my ability to heal from a haematoma. If I say I have never snowboarded before, wouldn't my skill level be zero?

We spent a couple of hours learning how to switch edges and come to a stop, the later having proven quite important given I now had a garland of foliage hanging from my body like a camouflaged sniper.

We then returned to the slopes for a few final hours, hitting some intermediate spots as I got the hang of snowboarding fairly quickly. There is a much more natural flow to boarding than skiing, I thought, and I will probably take up the sport with more dedication this winter.

We later grabbed a few drinks down at the base lodge. At \$12 for a beer, however, St Pauli Girl herself should bring it to the guest. Since I did not have a co-signer for the loan required for nachos, we called it a day.

Most of my little written forays into the world of sport and wilderness end at the close of the day. A hint of musk, coupled with a strong odor of humiliation provide for enough material to close off my writings with a hint of pride.

This was until I awoke the next morning. After opening my eyes and realizing that Dom Deluise was not, in fact, sitting on top of me, I realized that this was pain from the day before.

I slowly, very slowly, got up and went to the bathroom and look in total disbelief in the mirror. Down both of my sides were a series of welts and bruises that would be more prevalent if I had spent the night IN an Ultimate Fighting Championship.

They started from the shoulder that hit the tree and went all the way down to my thigh, on both sides. I am tempted to make the jokes about injuries to my posterior, but this is a family publication. I think.

I waddled, yes waddled, back to bed and didn't move for hours. I finally reached over for the phone and called my friend, hoping that my injuries had not been in vain and were, in fact, somewhat endearing as to the pain I was willing to undertake for a lady.

This first date had cost me a couple hundred dollars for tickets, etc., but I

had stuck it out, pain and all, in the efforts to impress this young woman

The phone was then answered by who I would later find out was her live-in boyfriend, another snowboard instructor who heard all about my travails and was more than willing to recount them with his unique blend of condescension and ridicule. He would then go on to ask me if I wanted more lessons and how he would charge me a "local rate."

If only I had my ski pole.

Note: This is an edited version of an earlier article that spurred on the series and had not yet been published.



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Grandma's Pantry

Healing Foods

The winter holiday of Christmas was an important celebration in the old farmhouse in Vermont. This was a time for gathering with family members, reconnecting with friends with the annual Christmas card, and celebrating with the year's harvests on a well laid out table.

When we think about the foods eaten at any meal or special event, we seldom contemplate the long and complicated history of that food or its multi-faceted role in keeping the body healthy.

For Christmas, Grandma's dinner always included the fairly common elements of basted turkey with homemade bread, onion and sage stuffing, turkey and onion gravy, mashed white potatoes, boiled squash,

carrots, freshly made bread, deviled eggs, and homemade tongue, bread-n-butter, and dill pickles. This would be augmented with fresh milk, butter and cheese.

Dessert included raspberry or blackberry pie, peach pie, apple pie, popcorn balls, and pecan mini-tarts.

Of course food harvested from the garden or the woods and meadows surrounding the farm, not to mention, products from the farm animals themselves made up the bulk of the dishes.

Very specific herbs and spices were utilized for each dish. The original purpose, at times long forgotten but held in memory for simple flavor preferences, when investigated demonstrate the intent to ward off winter illness and maintain optimal health.

As always, Grandma's Pantry does not take the place of a professional doctor. Should you find yourself ill, a qualified professional should be sought out.

Looking more closely at the homemade pickles from Grandma's Pantry (the recipe being handed down from my Grandma's grandmother) their medicinal value can be easily seen. The pickles alone, when consumed with regularity or in times of need, are believed to heal the body and prevent certain illnesses.

Grandma's cucumber tongue pickles rely on cinnamon (*C. zeylanicum*), cloves (*E. caryophyllata*) and ginger (*A. zingiber*) as their flavor. These three spices are traditionally used as stimulants and as digestive aids with antiviral properties.

Bread-n-butter pickles gain their flavor from onion, turmeric, celery seed and mustard seed. According to folk wisdom and current scientific research, onions, (a member of *Allium* family) have antimicrobial properties, can decrease bronchial spasms and contain anti-clotting agents. Turmeric, (belonging to the *Ginger* family) is an anti-inflammatory and antiseptic. Celery seed (a member of the *Carrot* family) is another anti-inflammatory, and contains limonene which has mild tranquilizing effects. Mustard seed (a member of the *Brassica* family) has been shown to also be an anti-inflammatory, reduce the severity of asthma, and can decrease symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.

Of course, dill pickles are flavored mainly from the dill plant and have been found to contain antispasmodic as well as diuretic properties.

In this festival holiday season with the multitude of foods available to us, consider the flavors awaiting you and the healing properties they might hold. As Grandma used to say, "Season up that food and make it taste good".

Happy holidays to all!

Sabrina Thomas is a 6th generation native Vermonter with a passion for the natural world around her and all folklore associated with it. She is a professional educator at both the college and elementary level.

The concept of Grandma's Pantry originated from the memories of Sabrina's childhood and the countless days and nights spent with her Grandmother working with food and cure alls from the kitchen pantry. Sabrina can be reached at sabrinaatvt@hotmail.com.



interview with singer / songwriter

Lisa McCormick

Lisa, what are your musical influences?

I grew up on The Beatles, Neil Young, Cat Stevens, Joni Mitchell and the like. I came of age believing that great music consists of lyrics that really say something worth saying, along with some sweet guitar strumming. I think that a focus on lyrics and the power of song serves as a strong foundation of my “influences.”

Beyond that, I also love listening to all kinds of World Music. You’ll hear Latin, North African, Jazz and Tango flavors in my latest two albums. I like listening to music with lyrics in a foreign language! It helps me to hear the actual music and the actual emotion of the vocalist, without getting wrapped up in the meaning of the words. This might sound a bit strange coming from a songwriter who puts so much importance on her lyrics!

How has living in Vermont impacted upon your career as a singer / songwriter?

Vermont is a wonderful place to do what I do. I feel supported by the strong community spirit, and by the respect for the arts that is endemic here. Years ago, I did try to crack the New York City music scene. I made some good headway, but that whole environment is so focused on other things, like intense competition, money and numbers. It’s pretty scrappy. Those things don’t mesh well with real art-making, not for me anyway. I am very happy to base my music career out of Brattleboro.

Share with us some of your local concert experiences.

My whole career changed on a dime one night when I was playing at the now-defunct Folkway, a music club in nearby Peterborough, NH. That was the night that veteran folk/rocker Jonathan Edwards (“Sunshine, go away today . . .”) happened to be in the audience, and happened to love my music.

He “discovered” me, so to speak, went on to produce my debut CD and take me along on hundreds of tour dates



over the years. We became dear friends, but also, he gave me a tremendous leg-up as far as my music career goes.

And it happened not in some flashy NYC club, but right up the road in New Hampshire!

It has been fun to see my relationship with the Southern Vermont music scene evolve to co-producing BrattStock, a free outdoor festival celebrating the diverse musical talent in this area. We’re already busy planning the next BrattStock for the summer of 2009. Southern Vermont has a vibrant and exciting music scene and it’s a thrill to be involved in spreading the word and increasing the visibility.

Your music and lyrics are very witty and quite intelligent. Where do you find your inspiration in your songwriting?

Like I said, I like lyrics that say something worth saying. I also like to craft lyrics in such a way that listeners may find their own story in there, their own angle to relate to. I do not write “poor me” or “naval gazing” lyrics. I save that stuff for my journal.

With songwriting, I try to reach out and create two-way communication with listeners, not just report my thoughts and impressions.



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A Vermonter's How-To Guide To...

Build a Snow Shelter

Okay, the odds of having to survive in the outdoors of Vermont by building a snow-shelter are fairly slim, agreed. Still, having an arcane trivial knowledge of survival is still better than knowing the NBC television line-up of a Saturday night.

Here are a couple of ideas on how to build a snow shelter, whether a “quinzee,” an igloo or something in between.

Things You Will Need:

- ❄ Shovel
- ❄ Backpack
- ❄ Ski poles or long sticks
- ❄ Snow shovels or other digging tools

1. Clear a circular area in the snow about 6-8 feet wide
2. Use a shovel or other digging tool to mix up snow. Try to bring the snow from the bottom layers up higher and vice versa. Because they will have different temperatures, this will facilitate the hardening process, or “sintering.”

3. Create a large pile (about 6 feet high) of snow on top of the clearing and shape it into a dome. The snow should be heaped, not packed.
4. Allow the mound to sinter for 1-2 hours, depending upon weather and snow conditions.
5. Hollow the mound when it has hardened enough and then dig straight in to create opening. Dig at an upward angle in order to create an elevated sleeping area, as this will allow cold air from inside to flow down and out, helping to keep you just a bit warmer.
6. With the snow remaining from dig, create a “wall” in front of the entrance to block any cold winds. You can also use it to thicken the shelter walls so that you can create a larger interior later on.
7. Once the hollowed area is large enough, smooth out the interior of shelter.
8. Using a ski pole or long stick, poke a hole at top of dome for ventilation but make sure the hole stays clear of ice or snow.
9. Utilize the ski poles or sticks to mark the outside of the entrance, just in case it snows while you are away OR to note to those looking for you.

How To Build An Igloo

The Inuit built complex block structure that served as actual dwellings. This is more of a fun thing to do in the afternoon with the kids:

Things You Will Need:

- ❄ Snow saw, 15-20" long
- ❄ Snow shovel
- ❄ Hatchet
- ❄ Gloves or mittens

1. We start by cutting "snow blocks." It helps to try this in areas where there is good snowfall, as the more compacted the snow, the better.
2. Tramp an area down, with feet or (better) snowshoes for a good ½ hour, then let it rest an equal amount of time. This helps form a more solid block.
3. Dig a pit to stand in and use the saw to cut out uniform blocks of snow on either side of pit. Cut in sizes you know you can lift!
4. Lift blocks out of pit and leave to let snow harden while you cut more blocks.

5. Mark out a circle in the snow, placing the blocks all around the circle. Lean them to about 15 degrees or so, trimming the to right shape with hatchet.
6. Place the next row on the first, like bricks. Trim and shape each row so that they lean further towards the center.
7. With shovel, remove snow from floor of igloo before enclosing - it helps to have someone else doing this while you build and trim. It is best to have floor a few feet lower than first row of blocks.
8. The last block is the toughest as you need to trim the last block and shove it into the last open space from INSIDE the igloo.
9. Now, cut a semi-circle opening on the downwind side of structure. Remove the snow in front of entrance .
10. Build a tube-like structure at entrance to keep the snow and wind out.
11. Use snow to pack the space in between the blocks from both outside and inside. This will make structure airtight, as you don't want wind to get access.
12. Cut some small holes in the top to allow for air.
13. Smooth the inside with gloved hands as the smoother the inside, the less the igloo will drip.

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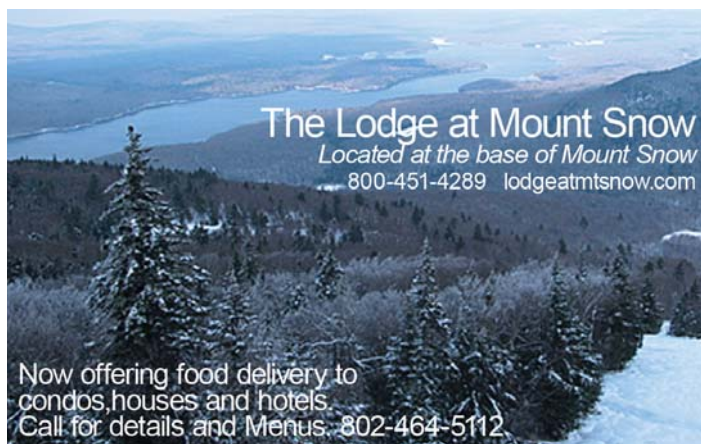
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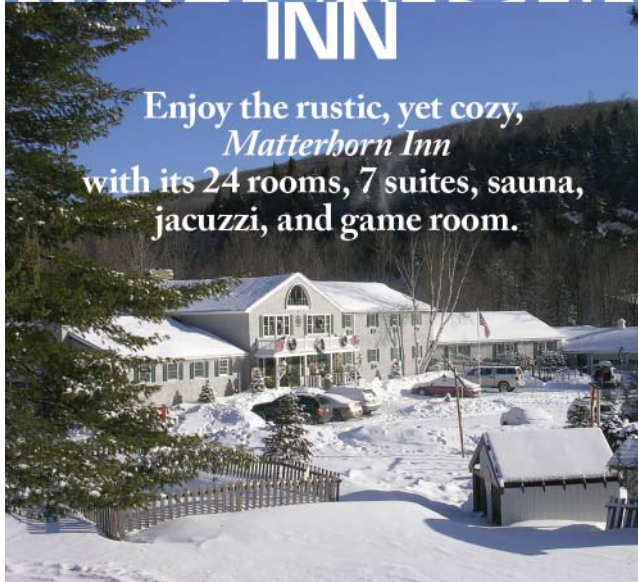


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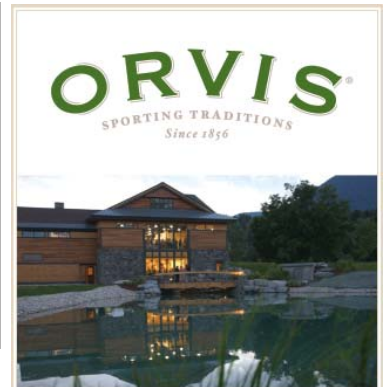
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