

# What's Cookin' in Trinidad

By CATHERINE J. MOSER



## A tale of pickled peppers...

During a trek to La Veta this past summer, Papa Joe and I, along with good friends Miss SusyQ and her husband, stopped in Charlie's Grocery Store to see what offerings we could find before driving back to Trinidad. For a tiny village market, Charlie's has some really wonderful items.

One item in particular, on the neatly lined, well-stocked shelves, caught my eye almost immediately. It was a rather interesting looking jar of bread and butter jalapeño pickles, which I scooped into my cart right away. If I'd known how great they were going to be I'd have bought a whole case.

Since childhood I've loved bread and butter pickles. My grandma was a pickle expert. She made every kind of pickle in the world, but my very favorites were always the bread and butter kind. They are so sweet and tangy. They taste great with every type of lunchmeat sandwich. But bread and butter jalapeños, how could this be? This was something new. I'd never seen or even thought about them before now, much less considered making them.

Now, Papa Joe is strictly a dill pickle man. Don't mess with his pickles. And nothing sweet, thank you very much. Fortunately for me, I have a good friend who's as crazy about bread and butter pickles as I am. Now, we all know that a special food treat is much better when shared with a good friend, so quick as a wink, I trotted down to see my bud, Lonnie, at the Purgatoire River Trading Co., to show him this new creation I'd discovered. Surprise! He'd never heard of them, either.

The suggested serving tip on the jar said to eat them with cream cheese and crackers. Man, we were already in heaven. Just to make it an "event," I fixed up some crisp little garlic toasts and the rest is a tale of superb pickle pepper feasting. I'm here to tell you

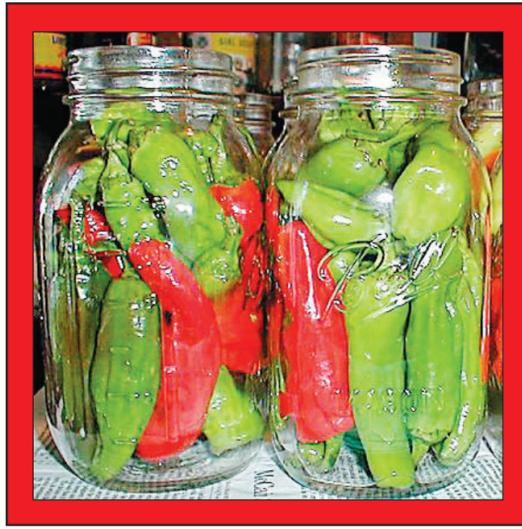
they were so terrific we nearly snarfed down the whole jar.

A couple of days later, Lonnie caught me at work and says, "Cathy, do you think if I got a few fresh jalapeños you could make some of those pickled peppers for us?" Thinking to myself, a little grocery store bag full of peppers would be a fun project, I said, "Sure, why not." With a gleam in his eyes he added, "I'll even get the jars." Tasty bread and butter pickles, "Oh goodie," was my last thought about the whole thing.

Three days later, a front-end loader FULL of beautiful, plump jalapeño peppers chugged up to my front yard. My pickled pepper partner had another friend, and traveling turquoise trader, Mike Ross, drive them up just freshly picked from the Hatch pepper farm in New Mexico. I nearly fainted.

In reality, it was more like a giant crate crammed full and over-flowing with the spicy wonders, but it seemed more like a mountain compared to what I had imagined he was going to bring. Sitting beside the inordinately huge mungous crate were several large cases of Mason jars. My eyes fell out on the floor: "Are you insane?" I asked him. "What?" he said, with a look of pure innocence in his blue eyes. "Do you think we need more jars?"

Papa Joe took mercy on me and helped me chop peppers. God bless that man! For days after I got home from work, we worked on that mountain. The whole time, we had a cauldron of sweet and spicy vinegar pickling mix brewing on the stove top. After the first day, we became immune to the fumes from the peppers and vinegar. By day two, neither of us could smell



anything. I wasn't sure we ever would again.

Every evening for a week, at any given time, we had jars of peppers waiting for pickle juice and lids, along with jars full of the finished product boiling up in the hot water bath. Freshly washed jars and lids lined the kitchen cabinet and there were pepper seeds everywhere in the kitchen. Our fingernails burned from chopping jalapeños and we laughed at not being able to scratch or touch anything, especially our eyes.

Long story short, Lonnie is now the proud owner of a lovely case of bread and butter jalapeño pickles. He will not share, so, don't even think about asking him for a sample. I've already eaten half of mine. Besides B&B jalapeños, I also made a few quarts of the most delicious garlic jalapeños pickles you ever tasted. Co-workers, Sheila and Rhonda, are wimps and think they're hotter than the hinges of Hades, but I love 'em. Somehow, during the nightly chopping effort,

I must have absorbed enough pepper juice to make me impervious to the heat. I've been transformed from a pepper wimp into PEPPER WOMAN.

Kids, if you've never had pickled bread and butter jalapeño peppers you've just got to try them. My pepper partner and I have become addicted to the spicy little guys. We eat them on everything. What they do for a turkey sandwich or a cheeseburger is beyond description. However, a little cream cheese and some crispy garlic toasts make a perfect simple meal. You might want to serve up some sweet iced tea or Dr. Pepper to complement the feast, but we don't think you really need anything else.

By the way, Lonnie, I'm pretty sure we're gonna need two crates of jalapeños and lots more jars for next year. And that's just for starters. When you can get Big Mike to stop campaigning for governor of Arkansas, he'll need to get the front-end loader ready. For questions or com-

ments about this article, please email me: <chero-keerose50@comcast.net>

### Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers...

Pickles are just one of those wonderful little things in life that make mealtime so much better. Regular bread & butter pickles are divine when served with smoked oysters & a smidge of cream cheese on a cracker. What they do for a slab of Braunschweiger is heavenly, as well. But bread & butter jalapeño pickles send this tasty treat over the top of a pickled pepper lover's chart. They add a delicious zip to nearly every savory meal you make. Easy to prepare, try a processing a few jars at a time. Soon, you'll be making them all year long. They're sure to become a staple in your pantry.

### Bread & Butter Jalapeños

- 4 lbs. Jalapeno Peppers
- 2 lbs. Onions
- 3 cups Vinegar (5%)
- 2 cups Sugar
- 2 tsp Mustard Seeds
- 2 tsp Turmeric
- 2 tsp Celery Seeds
- 1 tsp Ginger

Wash & cut jalapeños & onions into thin slices & cold pack tightly into jars. (No need to remove vanes & seeds. Red ripe jalapeños work well, too.) Place remaining ingredients in large saucepot & bring to a boil. Pour hot mixture into jars, leaving 7" headspace. Remove air bubbles. Adjust caps & process in boiling water bath for 15 minutes. Yields: about 7 pints. Let peppers sit 5-7 days before opening to enjoy. (This recipe is from recipercircus.com.)

### Pickled Garlic Jalapeños

- 7 lbs. Jalapeño peppers
- 5 cups vinegar
- 1 cup water
- 3 tbsp minced Garlic
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 4 tbsp. canning or pickling salt
- 1 tbsp. celery seed
- 1 tbsp. mustard seed

Wash & cut jalapeños into thin slices & cold pack tightly into jars. (No need to remove vanes & seeds.) Place remaining ingredients in large saucepot & bring to a boil. Pour hot mixture into jars, leaving 7" headspace. Remove air bubbles. Adjust caps & process in boiling water bath for 15 minutes. Yields: about 9 pints. Let peppers sit 5-7 days before opening to enjoy. (This recipe is from Cooks.com.)

### Quick & Delicious Jalapeno Pickles

- 8 or 9 fresh jalapeño peppers
- 5 cups distilled vinegar
- 1 cup sugar

A couple days before kickoff throw the jalapeños into a medium-hot, cast-iron skillet until the peppers start to blister. Cook them for about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, in a three-quart saucepan bring the vinegar & sugar to a boil, then place the peppers in a Pyrex bowl & pour the vinegar solution over them. Allow them to cool down & refrigerate until game time. (This recipe is Donald Link's Pickled Jalapeños from Esquire's recipes for men.)

### Green Hot Salsa

- 4-6 Jalapeños, roasted & peeled
- 1 lb. fresh Tomatillos
- 5 sprigs Cilantro
- 1 clove Garlic
- Salt

Remove stems from chilies; do not remove seeds. Set chilies aside. Remove papery husks from tomatillos. Place in medium saucepan & add cold water to cover, bring to a boil & drain. Place chilies, tomatillos, cilantro & garlic into food processor & coarse chop. Turn into medium bowl, add salt to taste & stir; makes 2 cups. (This recipe is adapted from a recipe by Peter Scheck @ Cooks.com.)

### Great pepper tips:

"When cutting & chopping hot peppers wash your hands well & then rub a little olive oil into your skin, especially around your finger nails. It will help prevent the heat from soaking into your skin. When you're finished chopping, wash hands well with warm soapy water & dry thoroughly. A little Aloe Vera gel rubbed into your skin after will effectively prevent burning nail beds & skin. Remember not to rub your eyes for several hours.

### Cordova Pass closing for the season

Special to *The Chronicle-News*  
As a safety measure for the public, many of Colorado's high mountain passes are closed on an annual basis. Beginning Wednesday Nov. 17, through Memorial Day 2011, a segment of County Road 46, from the Spanish Peaks Ranch Development to the Park/Camp site at the top, known as Cordova Pass, will be closed for the season.

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## RHS Drama Club brings comedy to Shuler this weekend

By **TIM KELLER**  
*The Chronicle-News*

Building on momentum begun last year, Raton High School's Drama Club takes to the Shuler Theater stage Friday and Saturday nights to present its short one-act comedy, "Check Please: Take 2" by Jonathan Rand. Showtime is 7:30 with general admission tickets \$5 for adults and \$3 for students and seniors.

Rand is a wildly successful New York playwright specializing in plays for high school productions: his website has a counter registering the number of productions that have been staged with his plays. Last week the counter read 4,908. This weekend it will tick up to 4,909, at least.

"Check Please: Take 2" has been, according to Educational Theatre Association, among the five

most-produced high school short plays for the past three consecutive school years.

The story involves Guy, played by James Neary, and Girl, played by Mariah Fleming, who have broken up and now find themselves pressured by friends to re-enter the dating scene. The problem is that the dating scene is filled with nut cases.

There's a foot-reading fortune-teller. There's a girl who speaks largely in text-message, saying aloud such things as LOL, OMG, and TCFW. (The program will provide a glossary of her vocabulary, but for old people who can't wait, TCFW means Too Cute For Words.) Oh, and there's a pirate.

Cian Hazen, the club's sponsor and the play's director, says, "The students are gaining experi-

ence. We'll be taking them to Drama Fest at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales again in February." He intends for his young actors to become members this year of ITS - the International Thespian Society - an honor society for theatre which he belonged to himself as a young high school actor at Piedra Vista High School in Farmington, where his drama teacher was Gail Dixon-Willden, now Raton's leading director.

The young acting troupe has been rehearsing for 2-3 hours most nights this month. In addition to Fleming and Neary, the cast includes Ila Medina, Toby Henson, Tegan Thompson, James Angeli, Haley James, Tess Neary, Etta Briscoe, Lucas Jansen, Chante Valdez and Aleena Richardson.



Photo by Tim Keller

The Raton High School Drama Club takes a break from rehearsals for this week's "Check Please: Take 2," which they'll perform at the Shuler Theater Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. Standing from left are Mariah Fleming, James Angeli, Toby Henson, sponsor and director Cian Hazen, Tegan Thompson, Haley James and James Neary. Seated clockwise from lower left are Chante Valdez, Ila Medina, Tess Neary and Aleena Richardson. Not pictured are Etta Briscoe and Lucas Jansen.

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