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JULY 2010

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grill menu

- chile-cheese yucca chips, p. 234
- chiles rellenos with succotash, p. 234
- smoky barbecued chicken, p. 235
2008 cartidge & browne chardonnay
- grilled texas rib eye, p. 234
2009 budini malbec
- charro beans, p. 235
- fingerlings with romesco, p. 235
- grilled tomato-scallion salad, p. 236
- cucumber-lime pops with gin, p. 236
- peach shortcake, p. 236



Love was born in Denton, Texas, but spent summers with his dad, a doctor and gentleman farmer, in Tennessee. He started in the restaurant business to help pay his way through the University of Tennessee, wound up cooking by accident and found he was good at it. He is largely self-taught but says he has been influenced by Wolfgang Puck and Mario Batali.

He has only one partner, his wife, Emilie. They met while working at a restaurant in Colorado, a job they did to support a skiing habit. They saved their money, returned to Texas and bet it all on the Lonesome Dove. Love tells me, "Emilie almost fainted when she first saw the place, but the rent was right."

It is hard not to like Love and pull for him. He is soft-spoken and earnest and more naturally shy than his public persona as the Cowboy Chef would suggest. As he gives me a tour of his house, talking about cooking for Emilie and his eight-year-old son and seven-year-old twin daughters, he stops to show me his Love Box, an outdoor roaster big enough to cook a whole animal. (A metal grate on top converts it into a grill.) We stop at his garden, which is really more like a small farm and orchard, with everything from 10 kinds of peppers to Meyer lemon trees. I remind him that he'd told me how much he hated working on his father's farm as a kid and ask why this is different. "That was chores," he says. "This is love."

Later, he teaches me a few things about grilling. He starts with rib eyes, searing the meat over a very hot fire for a minute or two per side. He takes it off the grill and lets it rest as he assembles the rest of the meal. Then he finishes it on the grill. "The biggest problem for amateur chefs is getting everything to the table at the same time, and this helps manage the process," he says.

Love talks me through the rest of his July Fourth menu, advising me on the best poblanos for his skillet-grilled chiles rellenos ("The ones with the deepest recess around the stem taste the best"). Then he tells me how to make his cucumber-lime ice pops spiked with gin. I observe that the pops bear a striking resemblance to the numerous margaritas I'd sampled at Lonesome Dove the night before. In order to assure myself toxic substances weren't being served to the restaurant's customers, I suggest the ice-pop recipe come with a warning. Love nods his head and says, "Well, this is one popsicle I won't be serving my kids."

Thomas O. Ryder, a longtime magazine publisher, lives in Connecticut and eats and drinks with enthusiasm.

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The Loves grab their sparklers after dessert: lightly sweet peach shortcake, plus cucumber-gin ice pops for the adults.



Plate (ice pops) by Christiane Perrochon; bowl (shortcake) and place mat by Vietri; napkin by Creative Women.

