



# MEMORIES MUSINGS

By Cheri Sims

Cheri lives, writes and gardens in Charleston.

I just picked up a brochure for the Coles County Fair and can't believe it is almost that time again. This is the 167th year and we have attended 55 of those years. I didn't get to go to the fair very much when I was little, my Mom didn't think it was safe and did not like fair food but I made sure my son attended as many times as we could afford when he was little. This year the fair dates are July 25 - August 1 so mark your calendar for a fun week! For up to date information on the daily events, visit their website at: <https://colescountyfair.com/>.

Over the years I noticed that the Coles County Fair grounds are much cleaner than most fairgrounds and I very much appreciate that aspect. I never attended any of the Coles County fairs when I did not feel safe either which says a lot for our fair board and workers. In the 70's and 80's my favorite part of the fair was the Queen contest. During that period I had a couple employees in the contests and it was so much fun to help them get ready for the events. All the men in the family especially liked the harness racing events and demolition derby; so someone in the family was at the fair almost every day.

A couple years I participated in the crafts judging by entering needlepoint works and Hubby entered art items. We were lucky and both took

home ribbons in different years. I did not succeed in any of the food events but it was so much fun to tour the exhibits and see the competitors' and winners. Over the years we viewed some amazing vegetables and of course Hubby admired the tomato entries.

The kids always wanted to eat at the fair and they ate their weight in corn dogs and fries. Local fairs were the only place I could find French fries with vinegar, which I had eaten at a fair in Maryland as a teen. I always made sure to go out to our fair a couple times to eat the vinegar fries. Somewhere along the line cheese fries and taco fries became fair food and one year in particular we three sat on a bench and I had vinegar fries, Hubby had cheese fries and our son had a double order of taco fries and we all had snow cones for dessert.

Did you know that you can make quick snow cone topping at home? All that you need is one, four ounce package of tropical punch drink mix and 3/4 cup water. Combine the drink mix and water in a squeeze bottle and shake well and squeeze over shaved ice. We would put ice cubes in a blender and have chunky show cones with this topping.

During Fair week the coffee girls would abandon the routine morning gathering and go out to the fairgrounds



for coffee and cinnamon rolls. I can't remember who ran the big stand back then but we enjoyed that break for many years. We miss that tradition. "Back in the day" when the Square was at its height the stores would all close on Wednesday afternoon to attend Merchants Day at the fair. I was lucky to have participated in the last couple years of this tradition and it was so much fun.

The Illinois State Fair runs from August 12 to Au-

gust 22 and is the largest display for agriculture in the state. Admission this year is from \$3.00 to \$10.00 and for a complete list of events you can visit the web site at <https://www2.illinois.gov/statefair/Pages/default.aspx>. There are a couple big names in entertainment at the grandstand this year; Sammy Hagar and The Circle, Toby Keith and George Thorogood, check the site for a complete list.

One year I attended the

State fair with my grandparents and it was that year that I discovered the joy of walking through the horse stables. Being a city girl I had never had contact with horses but I really liked them after having read the book "Black Beauty". A very nice owner gave us a tour of the stables and I was introduced to a two day old foal. The owners had brought the mare with them because they did not want to leave her at home since she was so close to giving birth so she and her baby were the hit of the stables.

If you can't attend any of the local fairs but would still like a taste of carnival food you might like to look at: "The Taste of Home" web site "30 CopyCat Carnival Food recipes", (<https://www.tasteofhome.com/collection/copycat-carnival-foods/>)

There are recipes for corn dogs, fried cookies, funnel cakes, frozen lemonade and many more. This site also had a 60 recipe page of State fair copycat recipes and some of them look like they would be great to try at home, (<https://www.tasteofhome.com/collection/state-fair-food/>). On this page you can wander through "No-fry" fried ice cream, burgers, doughnuts, turkey legs and corn ice cream. I have never heard of corn ice cream but it is apparently good and contains maple syrup and cream style corn so I will have to make this recipe during this hot summer and I will also share this recipe.

The Moultrie-Douglas County Fair continues through Saturday, July 17. Drew Baldrige is scheduled at the north grandstand on the 17 and "battle Creek" is at the Midway stage. The official Illinois fair page "<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agri/Fairs/CountyFairs/Pages/>

[County-Fair-Schedule.aspx-web](#)" site has a full list of all the Illinois fairs for the year.

Before I forget, I want to congratulate the Charleston Red, White and Blue Committee for a wonderful July 4 celebration. The parade was the longest I have seen in Charleston and those who lined the streets seemed pleased too. Great job, thank you!

Enjoy the fair!

### Corn Ice Cream

- \* 2 cups 2 percent milk
- \* 3/4 cup sugar
- \* 1/2 cup maple syrup
- \* 4 large egg yolks, lightly beaten
- \* 1 can (14-3/4 ounces) cream-style corn
- \* 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

### Directions

\* In a large heavy saucepan, heat the milk, sugar and syrup until bubbles form around sides of pan. Whisk a small amount of hot mixture into egg yolks. Return all to the pan, whisking constantly.

\* Cook and stir over low heat until mixture reaches 160 degrees. Quickly transfer to a bowl; place in ice water and stir for 2 minutes. Stir in corn and vanilla. Press waxed paper onto surface of custard. Refrigerate for several hours or overnight. <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/corn-ice-cream/>

\* Strain custard, discarding corn. Fill cylinder of ice cream freezer two-thirds full; freeze according to the manufacturer's directions. When ice cream is frozen, transfer to a freezer container; freeze for 2 to 4 hours before serving.

## Various ways consumers can show their support for local businesses

The road back to normalcy after the COVID-19 pandemic figures to have some twists and turns. Even after the rollout of vaccines began in late 2020, public health agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization emphasized the importance of people keeping their collective guard up, as previously

unseen variants of the virus were still being discovered.

A slow march toward recovery has begun, but the uphill nature of that march underscores how important it is that communities continue to come together to support each other as well as the locally owned businesses that make towns and cities so unique. Consumers who want to help the local

businesses in their community rebound and thrive in the months and years ahead can show their support in various ways.

Take charge of your to-go order. Convenience became the name of the game when ordering food during the pandemic. Curbside pickup service was offered as a safety measure, and many restaurants that never previously offered delivery or takeout started to do so to generate revenue at a time when in-person dining was limited if not disallowed. Some restaurants began offering delivery through apps like Grubhub or UberEats,

and though that may be convenient for diners, restaurants must pay a fee to utilize those apps. In lieu of ordering through a third party delivery service, consumers can take charge of their to-go orders and pick up the food themselves. That saves restaurants the delivery app surcharge, allowing them to increase net profits on the meals they sell.

Continue to be loyal. A recent study from researchers at the Harvard Business School found that a customer's eighth purchase was an average of 80 percent higher than his or her first purchase. That high-

lights just how valuable repeat customers are to small businesses. Consumers who have had positive experiences with small businesses in their communities in the past can continue to support those companies by looking to them first when they need new products or services. Doing so not only helps small businesses retain more customers, but it increases the likelihood that consumers will again have positive buying experiences.

Share experiences via social media. Small businesses recognize the value of social media. A 2021 survey from Visual Ob-

jects found that 74 percent of small businesses in the United States are active on their social media accounts at least once each week. Social media can become even more valuable to small businesses when their customers utilize such platforms to share positive experiences and encourage their friends and neighbors to patronize local businesses.

Consumers can take various steps to support small businesses in their communities as such establishments look to regroup and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Ingram opens Country Learning Center in Tuscola

By Kendra Hennis

Country Learning Center is a children's preschool led and owned by Elizabeth Ingram, a TCHS alumni. Ingram has a bachelors in speech pathology, a PreK-12 teaching certificate, a master in special education, as well as ten years of teaching experience in a variety of settings. She previously worked full time as an elementary special education teacher, then moved to part time education to stay home to grow her family. During her five years of being home with her three young children is

when she really fell in love with toddler and preschool ages. She enjoys all things language development and life and social skills. As a licensed Pre-K teacher, with an additional degree in speech pathology and masters in special education, she is very equipped to teach multiple skills to teach three and four-year olds. Ingram says that she "sees each of her students as an individual and strives to teach them in the way they learn best."

Ingram said that she decided to open Country Learning Center because

she "has always loved the younger children ever since student teaching. I stayed at home part time while working part time the past six years, in those long but short days with my three kids under the age of five is when I fell in love with the toddler and preschool age! I love cognitive thinking, and assisting with language development, and social skills in young children. I started putting the bug in my husband's ear of opening my own preschool, but we didn't have big enough property at the time. A couple years later

we moved across the corn field to have more space and the shed to preschool remodel began!"

Ingram said that her biggest inspiration in opening the preschool is the hope for her students to love school! She explained that, "Preschool is their first experience in a school setting. I hope they learn how to make a friend, learn friends' names, and interact appropriately in a variety of settings. We are a technology free school. I hope to provide a hands-on, country experience.

See INGRAM page 5

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