

I heard that this mother and daughter team duo made a cookbook so I tracked them down and they agreed to have an interview. It was at their house around 5 p.m. before their dinner time at 6. They are really nice, bubbly. Just love talking recipes and food.

Colleen A. Johnson: So how did you guys decide to write a cookbook?

BJ DeWitt: She conned me into it that's how. I had down several cookbooks I had done three personal one, and I had helped with the fairgrounds one. That was the last one I was going to do, was the fair grounds one. But Dana here decided to do another one and she rally did a con job on me. Then she told me that would be the last one, and now she's talking, "maybe we ought to so one more breakfast and brunch."

Sandi Johnson: Well you should see what she did with the cookbooks. We decided we were going to only have so many recipes, and she says, "well I've got like 428, that means you can have what's left." Well that meant I could have 72. I said that's not going to work because I've got about 3 or 4 hundred. So then we had to start pitching (CJ: oh that was hard). She says, "well, can I keep this?" I say, "mom you have to give up something." That's how we came up with that.

BJ: Besides there are probably 4 or 5 recipes that are similar, there will be one Dana's spare ribs and then there will be Edie's spare ribs. We each have our own way of doing it. And we wouldn't leave those out, we wanted two recipes.

SJ: I like her egg foo young sauce, but my egg foo young patties.

CAJ: How many years ago did you start writing cookbooks?

BJ: My first was when Dana talked me into it in the 70's. She was in high school and I always cooked like my grandmother and my mother. A pinch of this and a dash of that. She kind of got angry with me one day she says, "mom how am I ever going to cook if I don't have a recipe. And she asked me to write my recipes down and that's what actually started that.

CAJ: How many children do you have?

BJ: three two boys and one girl, one boy is here and one is in Klamath.

CAJ: How do you find all of your recipes?

SJ: We have a lot of family recipes that we collected when I was young or my kids were young, or just things I remember all of my life. And we really bug people for recipes. It's like, "can we have that recipe?"

BJ: We ask at restaurants.

SJ: We do everything we can to find recipes. We both love to try new things. There is hardly any meal family wise that doesn't go by that we don't try something new. Even though they could be old family bit. Even in Thanksgiving or Christmas there we always experiment.

CAJ: Do you have any absolute favorites?

SJ: Oh yeah, that's why we had trouble putting the cookbook together. We had piles like this. And I'd go through it and say, "oh this is my favorite, yum, yum, yum, yum. And it might be taco, what do I call them? (Edie: I call them little shell pastas). No, where is our cookbook? Anyway, I go this is my favorite. And then I get to the seafood and I go, this is my favorite. So it's hard not to put in everything that you like.

BJ: That was the hardest part. [They point to cookbook and point out favorites and laughs]

SJ: Mom is the queen of dessert, so she has most of the dessert recipes. I like the solid food.

CAJ: When you said you have a lot of family recipes, how were they passed down?

BJ: Some of them were hand written, but most of them were by word of mouth and by watching my grandmother cook. She was the one that got me started because she was such a great cook. My mother was just as good if not better. But most of all were word of mouth. There were a few written down. And then we had an aunt that passed recipes down and give it to them. Some of the old ones She would write them fdown, but she was the only person who would write them down. When she died, I got her little recipe box and it was so neat and you could see what she favored. And she favored anything Chinese, because she must have had 15 recipes for sweet and sour in there, fire rice, and everything Chinese. She just loved it.

CAJ: Okay, well you say Chinese but do you have any ethnic foods, what is your family history like?

SJ: I think for me, just growing up, it was how to do a million different things with hamburger.

ED: I used to consider myself queen of hamburger until she mad me queen of lists and queen of desserts.

SJ: We didn't have much money.

BJ: And I grew up during the depression. So we really stretched out part of hamburger or anything. My grandmother she could take anything and make a meal. And it would be wonderful. Her pastry was wonderful one thing I remember about her pastry was that it was made with lard. It was really flakey and it was probably the best pastry I ever ate.

SJ: Yeah we can go through almost everyone and say that's great.

BJ: I have a lemon dessert that I think is my favorite. It's not that complicated. It takes all day, but you have to make it in layers and let each on sit and cool and finish. I think it has four layers.

SJ: And it's not an old family recipe, some of our favorite old family recipes for be, are the meat loaf that she named after our brother and the Salisbury steak. I think one of the favorite recipes my kids grew up with was turkey chowder. That was good, and I know everybody loved that. So that had become a family favorite for us.

BJ: You asked a question about the traditions of our family, and my parents and my grandparents came from Minnesota and Canada. And because they lived in this place almost everything they had was heavy, hearty meals. You know the meat pies and the stews, the roast, (the game) a lot of wild game. I don't use it much anymore, because me and my husband hunt deer, but venison we use sometimes but.

CAJ: Do you get venison from other people?

BJ: No, we hunt it.

CAJ: You still hunt? Even now? (yes) Great! My dad's complaining at like 55, I'm too old to hunt anymore.

BJ: My husband is 82 and I don't think he'll ever give up. When he dies or get sick.

SJ: Well we do because we feel there is a freedom. We can say no or yes. (BJ: We work well together).

CAJ: How did you guys get your book published?

SJ: I did research on the internet and I found a company that I just liked. Well first of all I sent out for all this stuff and only one, well two companies sent things back. One we weren't that impressed with. This it said Lakeview, Ave or something and we thought this was it. (BJ: You can tell how scientific we are) but we really liked the people we dealt with, like a little publishing company and the ones mom did was ??? press? (BJ: no the fair grounds one was one of them, but I can't remember which press it was.) Anyway.

BJ: And I liked them, but if we do one again we will probably use this one. If we do the brunch one, which I really don't want to. I really want to quit there, but she wants breakfast and brunch recipes. I've been collecting them, I didn't tell you that, but...

SJ: I know you have. You said, would this be a good one for a breakfast and brunch book, Oh we're doing one.

BJ: But wait for the idea I have, I hope you have time for this. I have a bible study group that comes on Friday and there were 5 of us and now there is 8 which will even be better. But I've got all of these breakfast and brunch recipes in the folder up there and what I thought would do is let each of them pick two recipes and try them for me. And of course I'd like to sample them, they'll be so happy with them that they'll let me sample them. And I might even invite Dana too but anyway. But they don't know this yet, I haven't sprung it on them. But I'm going to pretty soon before winter time, because winter time is good time to cook you know. A lot of it's baked for breakfast you know.

CAJ: Have you always considered yourself a good cook?

BJ: I don't know, but I just love it. I can't say, I have a lot of people tell me I am, I don't know if they are just saying that because they want me to bake them something that dya or not, but... We've got recipes of the back of cans, my mother in law she's gone now but, she would send me recipes on the back of a can. She would write them on a back of a can and stick it on an envelope. We got them from all over the place. At restaurants we've asked for dressing recipes for salads or something. (CAJ: They give it to you). Sometimes, the Chinese restaurant in Bend, he told us all of the ingredients, but not the amount so I would experiment with them.

SJ: Same with the sour cream raisin pie. There was a lady who was really famous for that, and we kept asking her how she made it. We didn't want to put it into the cook-book, we just wanted to eat it, and she would not give it to us. So mom experimented and experimented until she came up with something really close. Now we have one.

CAJ: Why do you think food traditions are important?

BJ: I think they really bring family together. I have this feeling that the family that eats together stays together. I really believe that. I think our best times are holiday dinners and I think the most fun with the family involves food. Whether it's a BBQ or whether its holidays or whatever.

SJ: I know when my boys come home and I'm experimenting they go, uh could we have something that we used to have? Something that we loved when we were kids. So to me it's important just for memories.

LOG: I asked about picky eating. Dana says that her husband is a picky eater because he was from the south and maybe her son for awhile. Then I ask about how long they spend in the kitchen? They don't spend as much time as they used to. They have cooking spells. So it varies.

CAJ: Do you guys like to go out to eat.

BJ: Oh my yes.

SJ: Not so much in Lakeview anymore, it's all the same sandwiches and burgers and pizza. When the Indian Village went out of Lakeview, have you heard of it? (Yes). It was the best place to eat.

CAJ: Really because I heard it was a bar, but it was a really good restaurant?

SJ: They always had wonderful lunches. You know it wasn't like going to get a hamburger or a sub sandwich, it was always something they did a special stew, usually two soups (BJ: And a casserole) And as a matter of fact that is what mom and I we always thought about doing a soup kitchen where you do soup and maybe the special bread.

CAJ: There is one down in Corvallis a little bit of salad and bread.

BJ: Maybe you can get the address for it and we could stop there.

SJ: I even talked to somebody about taking out my retirement money and spend it on a little soup shop, but we have so many little shops like that. But that has kind of been a dream for both of us.

CAJ: I've been to the Happy Horse and I think that is kind of the closest thing you have like a soup shop. (It's a good shop) It's not open very conveniently.

LOG: Talk about the Happy Horse and the hours. They can't rely on Tourists. Edie says she thinks that Lakeview has the potential of being a tourist town. The geyser could be a draw and a bird sanctuary. People want to get out and experience the outdoors and there is so much to do with the forest, etc. Talk of sunstones in plush, hundreds going there for the sunstones. My talk about Plush and my interview. They talk about controlling the deer population and how they should ban deer hunts to let the population grow back. Also mentions the cougar problem. They say they need to quit putting out more tags then they should, but people will get angry.

CAJ: anything else you want to add about food traditions?

BJ: We have both entered contest and one year we won first in each of our divisions. A local lawyer here sent me an article out of the herald news with our pictures in it, which I thought was really nice because he wasn't our lawyer. But it was a contest put on by a local news paper, it wasn't major or anything, so that's been fun then we had a couple of local contests.

LOG: Edie talks about the county fair and judging it, baked good and things. Different judges want different things. It's Fun.

BJ: We used to have a garden, Dana still has a big garden.

SJ: Well not very big, it's the same size, but it isn't doing very well.

BJ: Most of the things we have in our freezer are from the garden, but not this year. We didn't have a garden this year.

CAJ [25:00]: What do you usually grow in your garden?

BJ: Most everything.

LOG: Dana reveals everything in her garden. Edie confesses her dog likes onions.

CAJ: It sounds like a lot of people, because Lakeview has a short growing season, that people think why bother?

SJ: I know people moving in from different areas, once again coming from the forestry and BLM side these people move in from areas they can grow a garden 9 months out of the year and think, this is horrible. But for people that grew up here you just get used to it and know what to expect it's just worth it.

BJ: And we cover our tomatoes, we watch the weather, we watch for the freezing. We cover our tomatoes and peppers.

SJ: We only get a 90 to 100 day growing season, unless we get an Indian summer.

LOG: Talks about weather. She talks about freezing tomatoes and things from last year. She talks about not being able to can on her new stove. So she tries doing it with a BBQ. Now she just sticks to water bath canning, pickles, jams. Edie complains about her spots on her newer stove. Dana talks about disasters with tomatoes and peaches and blenders.

CAJ: Where do you get your fruit?

SJ: Tomatoes we get out of our garden, but fruit, Medford I think.

EJ: Well your brother goes over and picks blackberries every year. Two years ago, he likes seedless, and he took a pistol and he took every seed out and we had 5 or six gallons and we made jams and jellies out of it. And he took all the seeds out, and it just took him forever but he's real methodical and that's what he wanted so that's what we got. It was wonderful blackberry jam.

SJ: There are a couple of places that set up in town for like peaches and apricots, and things we can't really grow here unless we have a perfect season.

BJ: Sometimes we go to bend or Medford and they'll have stands and farmers markets.

CAJ: You mentioned that you make your own Ketchup. People would say why bother. I mean I find that nowadays people are so removed from there food. (BJ: That's true) Do you have any opinions on that?

SJ: A lot of people, especially the people I work with, it's always hurry, hurry, hurry.

BJ: Some of my daughter-in-laws are like that too.

SJ: It's the satisfaction of getting to open your cupboards and go wow I've made all this. And I don't have to go to the store.

BJ: And it is cheaper, you spend a lot initially for the set up, but you buy when they go on sale and you buy it in bigger quantities and stuff. One thing that I did want to talk to you about was my husband. Sometimes he gets upset because I experiment instead of cooking the tried and true ones and I used to experiment. Years ago we had an old dog named Kia and she used to sit down here as we were eating and we had this dinner here one time and I had experimented on everything. Everything on the plate was a new recipe. And he sits there and he looks down at his dog and she looks so pitiful and he says, "Kia she's experimenting on us again!" And then I have a story in the cookbook about Kia too.

LOG: BJ Story about how her dog got sick off of cheese bread. SJ story about her first garden and how she planted too many zucchini. Somebody put zucchini in her car

too. She learned lot's of zucchini recipes. Described zucchini recipes. They look for them. They have a folder on rhubarb recipes too. They describe adventures of finding a great restaurant in Eugene. It was 100 miles out of the way. Apparently BJ always does this to seek out good restaurants. I bring up the mapping of restaurants. SJ brings up her dream of a soup shop again. SJ brings me her recipe book gatherings/ folder, I take a picture. They are trying something new tonight, a fluffy strawberry pie. They don't always follow the recipe the first time. One time a church member made her ice box cookies, and they didn't look like them. She ended up tweaking. We talk about entries for the fair, a coffeehouse fudge. We talk about the rules of the fair entries and contests. She talks about her judging the contests. SJ talks about a chili contest at work. She won even though it was a green chili. Her co-workers bring goodies to work every Thursday. People buy them and the money goes to a fund. They both subscribe to cooking magazines. And they have lots of cook books, which SJ reads like a novel.

SJ [47:35]: It took us almost a year from the time we started. From the time we started gathering the recipes together. Then going through them, and then this one can stay we can put one in even though there is one ingredient difference. And then proof reading

BJ: Oh god, that was terrible. There was one in here I had to re-type and I put it over it.

SJ: Even in Kia's story there is an error and we must have read that 20 times. They give you the option, well of course it costs more if you want to proof read it, and of course we wanted to do that to make sure the recipes were the way it should be and we still missed some you know. We had a couple of gals come and help us proof read.

LOG: They talk about proof reading and challenges along with the ladies who did it.