



Home Cooked Drive-Thru

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JENNIFER CHANDLER

It's just 8:15 in the morning and I already know it's just gonna be one of those days. I got the kids off to school, have already hit the gym and now I have several meetings and lots of writing to do before my life officially ends at 3:20 PM when school lets out. As soon as I leave the carpool line, I will spend the next three hours in my car chauffeuring my dear children to soccer, drum lessons, and tennis. So when (and how) am I to get the supper on the table that I know my children and hubbie will be expecting at 6:30 this evening?!

All I can say is thank goodness for Bradford Williams!

I try to avoid fast food drive-thrus at all costs. Being a food writer, I have read too many stories of the perils of fast food. However tempting those fries may be, it is a habit that I don't want to let myself fall into.

But the one drive-thru I am happy to hit is the one at Curb Side Casseroles.

Bradford Williams has been serving up her frozen home-cooked meals for several years now. Her "just-like-your-grandmother-would-have-made" dishes in-



clude the likes of chicken spaghetti, black bean and spinach enchiladas, tilapia Veracruz, breakfast egg & sausage casserole, and even strawberry cake.

What makes her dishes different from the frozen foods at your neighborhood grocery is that hers are lovingly made from scratch using real ingredients just like you would use in your own kitchen. No chemicals are added to preserve shelf life. It's truly a home-cooked meal...you just don't have to do the work.

"I am not a chef, just a good cook," Bradford humbly says when I ask her how she got started. It seems cooking runs in her genes. Her family has been in the food business for more than 40 years. For several decades, they owned and operated Mama Lanni's, a popular Italian restaurant in Millington. It was at her family's business that Bradford first learned the ins and outs of running a restaurant. "My Dad said that if I wanted to be in the restaurant business, I'd have to learn it from the bottom up," Bradford reminisces.

Fast forward several years, Bradford is now a mom and a pre-school teacher who has left the restaurant industry, but because of her genuine love of cooking, she often caters for friends. One of these friends asked Bradford to prepare 200 casseroles for her school's

annual teacher appreciation gifts and, without Bradford realizing it, Curb Side Casseroles was born.

"I specifically did not put my name or number on the dishes," Bradford recalls, "but people just started calling. The next thing I knew, people were lining up the street to pick up their dishes."

As her business grew, Bradford knew she had to move out of her home kitchen. She briefly used the commercial kitchen at Colonial Park Methodist Church. "It was then that I had to decide if I really wanted to do this," she explains, "The Lord totally had a hand in this. I just had to let go and let Him take over."

Lucky for us, she made the leap of faith and opened a store-front in East Memphis.

Whereas Bradford and her crew now have to cook almost every day to keep up with their sales, the store is only open on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In addition to a simple menu of about a dozen items, Bradford also offers daily specials. "I try to have at least one non-frozen item each day in case people do not want to cook that night," she adds.

So whether you need a last minute home-cooked meal, want to stock up for a trip to the lake, need a gift for someone who just had a baby or is



Left to right: Firecracker Saltines (top); Bradford shows off the supply of Strawberry Cake; Liz Rizer; Cheese Grits Over BBQ in the freezer; the Curb Side Casserole Drive-Thru.

ill, swing by the drive-thru at Curb Side Casseroles. What better way to nourish our friends and family than with a meal prepared by someone with Bradford's caring sentiment: "I love to serve and take care of people. When we make our casseroles, I pray that the food both pleases and blesses someone. That's the joy of this business for me." *eM*

Jennifer Chandler is the author of *Simply Salads* and is a freelance food writer. Thanks to the research for this story, she is now addicted to Curb Side Casseroles' Firecracker Saltines. There is no way you can eat just one!

Curb Side Casseroles

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