

cooking and entertaining



Down Home With the Neelys: Sunday Supper

WRITER JENNIFER CHANDLER

Sunday dinner is a tradition with the Neely family. So it is fitting that the premier episode of local restaurateurs Pat and Gina Neely's new Food Network show, *Down Home with the Neelys*, was entitled "Sunday Supper."

Pat and Gina Neely own and operate some of Tennessee's best barbecue restaurants with their family. Pat and his brothers Tony, Mark and Gaelin opened their first restaurant in downtown Memphis in 1988. Four years later, they opened a second location in East Memphis. With the expansion of a second location, the brothers knew they would have to rely on more family to help run both restaurants. Without hesitation, their mother, Lorine, and Pat's wife, Gina, joined the team. After winning local and national recognition for their ribs, the Neelys decided to open a third location in Nashville in 2001.

In the summer of 2006, Pat and Gina caught the eye of Follow Productions managing director Mark Schneider when he was in Nashville filming a segment of the show *Road Tasted* at Neely's. "Gina and I were there, just being ourselves," recounts Pat. "It turns out that Mark called Gordon Elliott that day and told him, 'We have the couple we were looking for.'"

What they discovered was a dynamic couple with a passion for food and family. "What you see on the show is pretty much a typical day in our lives," says Pat. "Mark and Gordon were really attracted to the dynamics of our family. It's special this day and time to see a family that

works together and also gets together for downtime."

During the day, Pat and Gina are busy running the family business, filming their new show, as well as raising two daughters. But when they are relaxing at home in Memphis, they love to create tasty dishes their whole family can enjoy.

"My grandmother lived in a small house, but every Sunday the whole family went there after church," reminisces Gina. "Glasses didn't match; chairs didn't match...but it was all family and always so much fun."

"We both come from the same type of background," adds Pat. "You drive down some of the streets in old neighborhoods around 3:45 on Sunday afternoon, and you see all the cars lined up. Sunday dinner is real rich in the South. It's the time the family gets together to socialize and catch up."

Gina is the party-planner in the relationship—a fact Pat is quick to acknowledge. "Gina will throw a party if the sun is shining," says Pat. Whereas Pat does not always get excited about the work involved in having guests over, he does admit he is always grateful that Gina has gotten the family together. "I want a party but not enough to do all the work," he jokes.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FOOD NETWORK.

STRAWBERRY SHORTCUT CAKE

Recipe courtesy of the Neelys

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

- 1 (18.25-ounce) box strawberry cake mix
- 3 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
- 2 tbsp. cognac
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 (3-oz.) package strawberry flavored gelatin (recommended: Jell-O)
- Fresh strawberries, for garnish

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Follow cake directions as written on cake mix box.

Remove from oven and cool cake

completely. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, combine strawberries, cognac and sugar. Let macerate 20 minutes. Invert and release cake onto a decorative platter.

Whip cream with confectioners' sugar and vanilla at medium-high speed until it reaches stiff peaks. Do not over-whip.

Mix gelatin as directed on box. Refrigerate gelatin mix but do not let it harden; it should cool to a liquid consistency.

Using a straw, poke holes all over the cake. Pour gelatin into holes, and spread over the top of the cake.

Spread layer of macerated strawberries on top of cake. Spread layer of whipped cream on top of the strawberries, making pretty swirls and ripples. Garnish with fresh strawberries. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

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SWEET AND SPICY COLESLAW

Recipe courtesy of the Neelys

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

2 lbs. green cabbage
4 carrots
1 medium yellow onion
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup mustard
2 tsp. apple cider vinegar
1 cup sugar
1 tsp. black pepper
1/2 tsp. cayenne
Salt and pepper

Cut cabbage in quarters and remove core. Peel carrots and onion, and cut into pieces that would fit through the feed tube

of a food processor. Fit food processor with the large-holed grater attachment and push cabbage, carrots and onions through feed tube to grate. In a large bowl, toss vegetables together.

In another medium bowl, prepare the coleslaw dressing by whisking together the mayonnaise, mustard, cider vinegar, sugar, black pepper and cayenne. Toss dressing with the cabbage mixture, and season with salt and pepper, to taste. Cover with plastic wrap, and chill for at least 2 hours before serving.

Prep Time: 25 to 30 minutes

Inactive Prep Time: 2 hours

Ease of preparation: easy

On a typical Sunday afternoon at the Neelys, the menu may be eclectic, but the offerings will definitely be delicious. Often you will find some of the dishes that have made their restaurants so popular: slow-cooked barbecue, succulent ribs and their signature barbecue spaghetti.

"I love to grill," says Pat, who is sure to be found grilling up something

good for this weekly family get-together. His contributions to the meal are not just limited to meats but also include grilled veggies such as corn and asparagus.

Dinner doesn't just fall on the shoulders of the hosts. It's a family affair. "My mom always makes the best potato salad," says Gina. Pat adds that his mother comes in with a Tupperware of her lasagna when she knows the crowd is getting big.

But Sunday supper for the Neelys is not just about the food. "The fellowship is the most important part," explains Pat. "Unfortunately, some families only get together for funerals or big events. Fortunately for us, that's not the case."

Laughing, Gina recounts a humorous, yet telling story about her daughter who is away at college. "One time our daughter Spenser called from school and was so jealous that we had our Sunday supper without her; she actually sounded angry!"

Obviously this weekly tradition is something that all members of the Neely family, no matter what their age, look forward to—a fact that Pat proudly thinks will help this treasured tradition continue happening in the next generation.

So this weekend, tune in to the Food Network to see what Pat and Gina are cooking up in the kitchen. Then invite your family and friends over, and start your own weekly "Sunday Supper" tradition.

Down Home with the Neelys airs on Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. on the Food Network. When it premiered on Feb. 2, *Down Home with the Neelys* became the highest-rated series debut in the five-year history of Food Network's popular "In the Kitchen" weekend programming. ●

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