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DITCH THE DRIVE-THRU

Local Diners Serve Up More Than Great Food

When winter temperatures in Minnesota dip below zero, my wife and I know we can always find a warm welcome and a satisfying meal at certain places in our community — small family-owned restaurants.

We have eaten at local family-owned restaurants everywhere we have lived. In an age when big national restaurant chains dominate the landscape, we enjoy the unique details of these colorful delis, diners, and bistros, including a welcoming atmosphere, personalized service, and a connection to the community.

When my New York office was in Brooklyn, I always made sure to swing by Baba's Pierogies on Third Avenue for lunch. After a long morning in court, it was always nice to see a friendly face when I walked in the door.

Last summer, our whole family stopped by Baba's during a family vacation. Bob was in the back and welcomed us warmly. We had our dog with us and assumed we couldn't bring her inside, but they let her sit under the table and enjoy the air conditioning on a hot June afternoon. We enjoyed our meal, savoring the delicious pierogies made from family recipes that had been passed down through the generations.

Most places we enjoy have small menus featuring a particular ethnic or national cuisine. We have found the best food at restaurants where the primary menu was in a foreign language. To me, that is a sign that the food is authentic.

When we were dating, my wife and I ate at least once a week at a little French place nearby. We also enjoyed a Syrian restaurant run by a personable young guy serving family recipes. Before the Syrian civil war broke out, he got his parents out of their home country and brought them to the U.S., where they helped him with the restaurant. The owner always brought us whole wheat pita for our daughter and many times, we would not even bother to order. He just brought us food from the back, saying, "Hey, I'm thinking of adding this item to the menu. Give it a try and see what you think!" We became friends, playing together on my after-work soccer team and going to MLS games together.

Here in Edina, we enjoy a family-run Latin American restaurant, Cahill Bistro. When we arrived there recently to celebrate my wife's birthday, the owner greeted us warmly and brought my wife a free glass of wine. My son, a sixth grader, tried out his beginner Spanish on the owner. His eyes widened when the owner replied in fluent Spanish, but it was great exposure for my son. When you've been to a place like that enough times, you form a deeper connection than the average customer.

My wife and I frequent another favorite place on Wednesday nights after dropping off our kids at church for classes. This family-owned restaurant serves American dishes, including classic comfort food. The same family has been running it for quite some time; now, one of the second-generation kids is in charge. We always get our favorite table in the back room, enjoy good food and service, and finish in time to pick up the kids at church.

There are many lessons for business owners in these small operations. Restaurants are hard businesses to run, but the owners tend to be passionate about pleasing customers and serving particular foods they love. Many try to make their restaurants warm, welcoming places and find different ways to show they genuinely care about their customers. That doesn't have to be free meals. For us, being greeted with warmth, a smile, and consistently delicious food has drawn us back again and again.

As the mercury sinks to single digits and below, I hope you can find some warm, welcoming family-run diners that you will enjoy, as much as we appreciate these special places of ours!



- Andrew M. Ayers

Babies Delivered Via Mail?

How America's Youngest Were Once Mailed to Grandma's

Oh, the good old days of 1913, when the U.S. Post Office decided to let just about anything — and we mean anything — go through the mail. Imagine a time when sending eggs, bricks, and even your college laundry via post was the norm. When the U.S. Post Office first began offering parcel service, one of the first packages sent was a brindle English bulldog!

But of course, it gets stranger. The initial days of the Parcel Post service saw creative shipping solutions, including more than one instance of a surprise opossum delivery in Flushing, Queens. Then, parents short on cash or time decided to do something truly questionable: shipping their own children.

In those early days, some parents took the phrase "special delivery" to a new level by mailing their kids! Just a few weeks after the service began, one Ohio couple decided their 8-month-old son, James, needed to visit Grandma and figured the mail was the best way to get him there. Weighing in just under the 11-pound limit, baby James cost a mere 15 cents to mail. Talk about a budget-friendly travel option!



If it's any consolation, parents didn't hand off these pint-sized parcels to strangers. In most cases, the local mail carriers in these rural communities were well-known to the families

and trusted with these precious deliveries. Take 5-year-old May Pierstorff, who was mailed about 75 miles to her grandparents. Or 3-year-old Maude Smith, who traveled from Caney to Jackson, Kentucky, with snacks in hand and a shipping label sewn to her dress.

It wasn't until after several instances and a good deal of head-scratching by the postal authorities that regulations tightened up. Parents could no longer avoid train ticket costs by handing their kids to the local postal carrier.

Today, thankfully, we have more sensible travel options for our kids. The days of slapping stamps on their clothing and waving as they disappear with the mail are long gone. But the stories we have from those early days of mail mischief are sure to remind us that thrifty parents will go to any lengths to save a few dimes!

Unpack America's Quirkiest State Laws

From Forbidden Fortune Telling to Sandwich Shop Silence

Every state has its own bizarre laws, and while they make for a fun read, the fact is that these rules were once created to address some specific "problem!" From unusual dress codes for hot dog vendors in Florida to bizarre regulations about fighting birds in Indiana, every state has its share of head-scratchers. Let's take a stroll through six of the wackiest laws — you can't make this stuff up!

Quiet Hours for Sandwich Lovers

In Arkansas, think twice before honking your horn at a sandwich shop after 9 p.m. This law might have stemmed from one too many late-night sandwich cravings disturbing the peace. So, keep your sandwich enthusiasm to a respectable volume!

Dress Code for Hot Dog Vendors

In Florida, hot dog vendors must think twice about skimpy wardrobes as a marketing tactic. Dressing provocatively is

a no-go, as it's considered a serious traffic hazard. So, those planning to sell hot dogs should keep their attire conservative to avoid stirring up more than just appetites.

Fight Back Birds in Indiana

In Indiana, you can only throw a rock at a bird if you're defending yourself. Hopefully, you'll never find yourself in such a peculiar predicament (or Hitchcockian nightmare), but it's good to know the law's got your back — just in case.

No Clairvoyance in Cedar Rapids

Fancy yourself a fortune teller in Cedar Rapids, Iowa? Think again. Practices like palm reading or phrenology are off limits, preserving the town's focus on the tangible here and now rather than the mystical future.

Grease Is the Word in North Carolina

In North Carolina, stealing over \$1,000 of used restaurant grease is a felony.



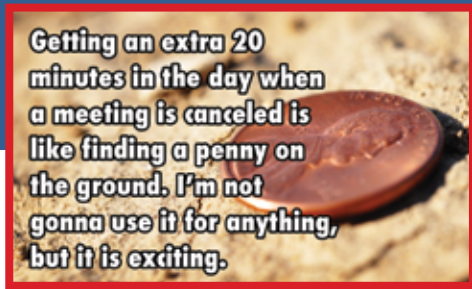
Yes, **used** grease! As biodiesel's popularity rises, so does the value of this slippery commodity — so keep your hands away from the grimy fryer vats.

Oklahoma's Animal Antics

And finally, in Oklahoma, you'd better not find yourself tripping a horse or wrestling a bear. Engaging in or even promoting these dangerous and unusual animal antics is illegal. It's all fun and games until someone gets a bear hug they didn't ask for!

So, next time you think you've heard it all, remember: The law books might have a few more surprises waiting for you.

TAKE A *BREAK*



CITRUS OLIVE OIL CAKE

Inspired by GimmeSomeOven.com



Ingredients

- 1 cup almond flour
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2/3 cup medium-grind cornmeal
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 3 eggs
- 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp almond extract
- Zest of 1 lemon, plus 2 tbsp juice
- Zest of 1 orange, plus 2 tbsp juice
- Powdered sugar, optional

Directions

1. Heat oven to 350 F. Line the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan with parchment and lightly grease the sides with cooking spray.
2. In a large mixing bowl, whisk almond flour, sugar, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt until combined.
3. In another bowl, whisk eggs, olive oil, vanilla, almond extract, and lemon and orange zest and juice. Combine the wet ingredients with the dry ingredients.
4. Pour batter into the springform pan. Bake for 35–40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool for 15 minutes.
5. Run a knife gently around the edges of the cake, then remove the sides of the pan. If desired, dust cake with powdered sugar using a fine-mesh strainer.

SHINING THE LIGHT ON LIGHTHOUSE PARENTING

A Balanced Approach to Raising Independent Children

Among the countless parenting styles out there, an approach called “lighthouse parenting” is a beacon for guiding children through life’s turbulent waters while giving them the space to navigate on their own. While it may sound ideal, is it the right parenting style for your kids?

What is lighthouse parenting?

Coined by Dr. Ken Ginsburg, a professor of pediatrics at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, lighthouse parenting is a philosophy detailed in his book “Raising Kids to Thrive.” This approach emphasizes a balance of nurturing and communicating with children while allowing them the freedom to grow independently. Just as a lighthouse guides without steering the ship itself, lighthouse parents offer direction and ensure safety without overly controlling their children’s lives.

It advocates for a balanced approach.

Lighthouse parenting positions itself in the sweet spot on the parenting spectrum — not as overbearing as helicopter parenting nor as detached as free-range parenting. It focuses on being emotionally present and available, providing a safe space for children to bring up issues and learn from their experiences. This method involves:

- **Checking in Regularly:** Ensuring open lines of communication.
- **Encouraging Autonomy:** Allowing kids the freedom to make decisions and learn from the outcomes.
- **Promoting Resilience:** Supporting children as they navigate challenges, helping them to develop coping skills and independence.

Parents set boundaries and offer support.

Unlike authoritarian parenting, which might stifle a child’s sense of independence, lighthouse parenting encourages self-reliance through trust and minimal but firm boundaries. Parents provide the framework, trusting the kids to make good decisions. This method helps to build a robust support system where children know they have the safety net of their parents’ guidance when needed.



Keep the Light On

Adopting the lighthouse method involves unconditional love paired with expectations and boundaries. It’s about guiding children through the complexities of growing up without removing the essential experiences that teach them about life. Of course, no single parenting style is perfect for every child. How you reinforce lighthouse parenting depends entirely on your child’s needs and developmental trajectory. Ultimately, lighthouse parenting aims to prepare children to thrive independently, ensuring they know the way back to shore, no matter how far away they sail.

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From Aggravated Assault to Dental Drama

Runaway 'Dentist' Dodges Detection

While TikTok may be a go-to app for funny videos, it's probably not the best way to find a new dentist.

Last year, Texas-based "dentist" Nikki Calloway used TikTok to generate buzz for her business, ISmilez Cosmetic Designz. The campaign attracted new patients, including one who scheduled an appointment after receiving a \$1,350 quote from Calloway to have 16 teeth removed, replaced, and a bridge added. There was only one problem: "Nikki Calloway" wasn't a licensed dentist. In reality, she was Juanetta Solomon, a notorious local felon with a long history of crime. The botched dental surgery left the patient dizzy, bleeding, and with a tooth that fell out shortly afterward — and prompted Solomon to go on the run from the law.

According to authorities, Solomon had operated her "dentistry" office while out on bond for a weapons charge. Her past

offenses include assault with a deadly weapon, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, and unlawful carrying of a weapon by a felon — and that was just in 2023 and 2024! In one infamous case, she was accused of shooting at her boyfriend's former girlfriend. Her record also includes a December 2016 conviction for the delivery of a controlled substance.

"Juanetta Solomon is the definition of a career habitual offender," commented Andy Kahan, director of victim services and advocacy at Crime Stoppers of Houston, in a story on Katy Magazine Online. "She's been in prison multiple times in different counties, so it's no surprise she is once again wanted. Her latest offense is extremely brutal, pretending to be a dentist [and] causing undue pain and stress on individuals, so the quicker we get her back in custody, the less anyone has to suffer as a result of her criminal conduct."



Law enforcement was still attempting to capture Solomon at the time of this writing. Her bizarre turn as a "dentist" serves as a chilling reminder that Google and a little research — not social media — are the best tools to determine whether your chosen provider is a professional or someone destined for prison.