

# *edible* COLUMBUS

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Celebrating Local Foods, Season by Season

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**CHEF HUBERT** *of* **SPAGIO**  
*and HIS MEMOIR* *Such Sensations*

**EDIBLE LANDSCAPES** *with* **VAL JORGENSEN**

**BLACK CREEK BISTRO** | *Slow FOOD*

**LOUIS BROMFIELD'S MALABAR FARM**



# In Love with Lindey's:

After 30 years, Lindey's still flourishes  
under Sue Doody's gracious rule

By Nancy McKibben, Photography by Catherine Murray

Today Lindey's gleams and bustles, secure in its reputation as one of Columbus's finest restaurants, a place to see and be seen while enjoying the best in elegant American bistro cuisine. As owner Sue Doody moves from table to table to greet her guests, her face lit by a smile of genuine welcome for each patron, a passer-by might mistake Lindey's for the scene of a private celebration with very good party food.

**B**ut 30 years ago, only Sue, her son Rick and a small band of supporters saw the potential of the German Village property at the corner of Beck and Mohawk Streets. With the scarlet carpet and flocked wallpaper of a bordello and the charm of a fading madame, the building seemed saddled with a curse: The previous five restaurants on the premises had died untimely deaths.

Even *The Dispatch* wondered in print how an "Upper Arlington den mother" could "make a go of this white elephant in German Village."

## A Woman Who Knows What She Wants

Sparked by memories of the European restaurants her family had enjoyed, Sue imagined a new and very different sort of neighborhood restaurant for 1970s Columbus. "I wanted a brasserie, a café with bentwood chairs—casual fine dining with good, fresh food. All there was in Columbus at the time was fast food or Max and Erma's, and then the expensive, fancy restaurants."

Everyone who knew Sue knew that she loved to cook. The four Doody kids ate leftovers like chicken crepes with béchamel sauce. "Their friends loved eating at my house," Sue recalls. When *The French Chef* came to PBS, Sue and her husband bought a special TV for the kitchen so that

she could cook along with Julia Child. After she and Alton divorced, she taught cooking classes and catered.

For years, Sue and oldest son Rick entertained a running joke about the restaurant they would someday open. In

1981, in a cosmic convergence of events: 1) Rick proposed to Sue that they actually open a restaurant, 2) the building that he had envisioned for the restaurant came up for sale, and 3) Alton agreed to help with financing. After years of dreaming, the adventure was underway.

Friends and family pitched in to help, and Rick hired day laborers from the unemployment line to pull up carpet and break down walls, while Sue catered lunch for the workers on a hot plate.

"The bank laughed at me when I tried to borrow money, so I started on a shoestring, buying from liquidation sales at 10 cents on the dollar." Lindey's dishes and famous copper-topped bar ("I added the copper top") came from the Neil House, and the carpeting from the defunct Top of the Center Restaurant. "I accounted for every penny, and it

was two and a half years before we started making money."

"I think," Sue adds, "that's the reason so many restaurants fail: They sink so much money into opening that they can never recoup it."



Lindey's founder and owner Sue Doody.

"Simple  
food is better  
food..."



## Learning by Doing

Sue had never worked in a restaurant. “I didn’t understand kitchen terminology. I didn’t realize how fickle the public was, or that they would try to reorganize the menu and ask for different dishes. Because I was a novice and a woman, the purveyors sent me bad produce. I learned that my kitchen manager was stealing food. I had to get tough. It was a real learning experience.”

She also learned by sending Rick to Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration for his master’s degree. “I would have him send me copies of his textbooks,” Sue remembers. “Sometimes I’d come and sit in on the classes with him.” From Cornell they learned about point of sale systems, about calculating percentages for food costs and about figuring out what their margins should be if they wanted to turn a profit.

Initially Sue cooked, using recipes she had developed herself, but quickly discovered that restaurant cooking was not simply a matter of multiplying home cooking ingredients by six or 10. Sue hired Chef Tom Johnson as her consultant, then as chef, until 1983 when he left to open L’Armagnac Restaurant. Next came Chef Kent Rigsby, who left to open Rigsby’s Cuisine Volatile (now Rigsby’s Kitchen) in 1986. Lindey’s remains a veritable launch pad for new chefs and restaurants, starting with the Doody sons themselves, Rick and Chris Doody.

## Going Strong

In restaurant parlance, Lindey’s turns over 500 dinners on an average night, many of its tables occupied by regulars who ask for

the same table and the same waiter every time they come in. That is fine with Sue. “I wanted Lindey’s to be more like someone’s house, a place where people would feel welcome, not someplace where people could be intimidated by their waiters.”

For example, tournedos béarnaise, developed by Chef Tom Johnson, is a signature dish that patrons sometimes mispronounce as tornados. “You won’t

hear a waiter at Lindey’s correcting their pronunciation,” Sue says firmly. (It’s tour-nah-DOZE.)

Natives confidently bring their most cosmopolitan out-of-town guests to Lindey’s, and the restaurant has earned accolades in *Gourmet Magazine* and *The Washington Post*. But Sue takes nothing for granted, always ploughing money back into the restaurant, as the recently remodeled bathrooms testify. Lindey’s offers space upstairs for private parties and meetings, complete with computer access, drop-down screen and projector and flat screen televisions. “I keep up with trends. I have food tastings with the chefs, and I have a good feel for what people like.”



## Lindey’s Angel Hair Pasta with Shrimp, from *As the Tables Turn: A Biography of a Bistro* (2006)

This is a recipe that’s easy to pull together, but it does require some initial preparation—what chefs call the *mise en place*, which comes from the French for “misplaced,” if we remember our high school French correctly, which we might not. In this case, all it means is that you should read through the directions completely, do the little bits of chopping and cleaning and blend the Cajun Seasoning ahead of time. You’ll have plenty of seasoning left over, so you can make the recipe even faster next time. You can also use it to rub grilled fish or meats, to season stews or rice dishes or dips or to sprinkle on steamed vegetables or anything else that needs “a swift kick in the pants.”

### 4 Servings

- 1¾ pounds dried angel hair pasta
- 4 ounces olive oil, half used in each of two steps
- 28 raw shrimp (21–25 count, about 1½ pounds before peeling), shells removed, deveined
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh garlic (about 3 cloves)
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 3 cups heavy cream
- ¼ pound (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 4 tablespoons Cajun Seasoning (see recipe below)
- 1 cup diced, seeded Roma tomatoes (2 to 3 tomatoes)
- 1 small bunch of fresh parsley, stems removed, half chopped finely, half chopped coarsely and reserved for garnish
- 4 large fresh basil leaves, sliced into thin strips (chiffonade)
- 2 teaspoons capers, drained
- 2 tablespoons diced pimentos (roasted red pepper strips)
- ¾ teaspoons salt, or to taste
- ¼ teaspoon pepper, or to taste
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan



A view from outside of Lindey’s



Set a large pot of salted water over high heat. While it is coming to a boil, prepare the other individual ingredients: Clean the shrimp, chop the garlic, dice the tomatoes, clean and chop the parsley and basil, dice the pimentos, grate the cheese. Also prepare a bowl of ice water large enough to hold the colander in which the pasta will be drained.

Once the water is boiling, add the pasta and cook according to package instructions until the angel hair is not quite al dente (about 4 to 6 minutes). Immediately drain the pasta in a large colander, then return it to the stock pot—off the heat—and toss it with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Set the pasta aside, covered, where it will keep warm.

Add the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil to a very large heavy-bottom skillet or casserole pan (large enough to accommodate all the pasta as well as the shrimp sauce), and set it over medium heat. When the oil just begins smoking, add the shrimp and garlic, stirring for 1 minute to quickly sear the shrimp. Deglaze the pan with the white wine, and continue stirring for another minute, scraping the bottom of the pan and turning the shrimp.

Add the cream, butter, mustard, Cajun Seasoning, diced tomatoes, the finely chopped parsley, basil leaves, capers, pimentos, salt and pepper. Stir well for 1 minute to combine and heat through.

Add the angel hair pasta, tossing it to coat each strand, and evenly heat the entire dish. Taste, correcting the seasonings if needed.

Serve immediately, dividing up the finished pasta among four large warmed bowls, twirling the pasta to create a swirl of angel hair in each bowl. Check to see that the shrimp have been distributed evenly. Garnish each dish with the grated cheese and the roughly chopped parsley.

### CAJUN SEASONING

Makes ½ cup (enough for 2 recipes)

- ¼ cup Hungarian paprika
- 1 tablespoon dried cayenne pepper
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1¼ teaspoons ground bay leaves (about 20 bay leaves, ground)
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1¼ teaspoon onion powder

Combine all the ingredients in an airtight jar. At the restaurant, we make up a fresh batch of Cajun seasoning each week; in your kitchen, the blend should last for several months in an airtight container, although its pungency will begin to fade.



And Sue perseveres. She petitioned the German Village Commission for almost 20 years before obtaining a zoning variance permitting al fresco dining in the restaurant's courtyard. Sue's book about Lindey's, *As the Tables Turn* (2006), was another long term project completed with Michael J. Rosen. The book is a celebration of Lindey's people over the years: staff, guests and family—a focus that embodies Sue's sincere interest in others.

After 30 years the restaurant does not exactly run itself, but the longevity of the staff makes life easier. "I can leave them and they know exactly what I want." In addition to spending hours every day at the restaurant, Sue is active on many boards and charitable endeavors. "The city has been good to me, and I feel a sense of responsibility to give back with time and money." Ever the practical business woman, she adds: "and seeing me at a meeting might remind someone to eat at Lindey's."

Since remodeling the Upper Arlington house where she has lived for 45 years, Sue plans to travel in Europe with her brother "to see what's happening in the food business." A question about retirement prompts a look of incredulity, and then she laughs. "No, I don't have any plans to retire," she says. "It's too enjoyable and too much fun down here!"

**Lindey's:** 169 E. Beck St., Columbus, Ohio 43226;  
614-428-4343; [lindeys.com](http://lindeys.com).



*Nancy McKibben has been writing and eating for years, and is happy to combine those loves with the opportunity to advocate for local food in the pages of Edible Columbus. Her novel The Chaos Protocol was a finalist for the Ohioana Book Award for Fiction in 2000, and she was the winner of the Thurber House Essay Contest in 2003. She is also a lyricist and journalist, the mother of six, and the wife of one. View her work at*



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