

unity



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Coaching climbers to the top of their field

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Unity is published in February (Black History Month), March (Women's History Month), May (Asian Pacific American Heritage Month), June (Pride Month), September (Hispanic Heritage Month) and November (Native American Heritage Month).

Coaching climbers to the top of their field



Modus Athletica founder Mercedes Pollmeier provides personalized coaching with extensive feedback and check-ins for clients. Photo by Greg Orlov

Climbing coach and [Modus Athletica](#) founder Mercedes Pollmeier learned about bouldering (rock climbing) in 2006 while she was preparing to represent her birth country Mauritius, an island east of Madagascar, in tennis for the 2008 Summer Olympics.

"I had to do strength training because I was getting older," she says. "The guy who I hired was based out of a climbing gym. He helped me get strong for tennis and introduced me to climbing."

Pollmeier grew up in Australia and moved to Iowa to attend college and play tennis at the University of Northern Iowa. She left Iowa and finished her degree in modern languages at Denver, Colorado's Metropolitan State University in 2005. She earned a second bachelor's degree in exercise science from MSU and a master's degree in human movement and sports conditioning from A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Mesa, Arizona.

Although a shoulder injury prevented Pollmeier from joining the Olympic team for tennis, she competed in the 2009, 2010 and 2011 USA Climbing Nationals in the bouldering division.

"I gave my best shot at pro tennis, but I ended up loving climbing so much more," Pollmeier says. "I decided to quit tennis (and) get into climbing. I mostly do outdoor bouldering. I started out as a sport climber in the gym and outside with ropes. But I quickly turned to bouldering because I enjoyed it a lot more."

By 2012, Pollmeier was coaching climbing clients in the Denver area through Modus Athletica. When she moved to Seattle to manage a climbing gym's fitness program, she continued to train Denver clients through online programs. She further developed her reputation as an expert by writing "[Simple Strength: The Outdoor Athletes Guide to Better Movement](#)," a book about body weight training for outdoor athletes. In 2019, Pollmeier quit her management position and went full time with her online company.

Seattle-based Modus Athletica operates through membership levels. Online forums, training programs, climbing drills, videos and feedback are available through an app. Pollmeier provides personalized coaching with extensive feedback and check-ins for clients. She works on the climbers' mindset, helping them gain more confidence.

"We talk a lot about what it is that they are going through when they're at the top of the climb: fear or self-belief and confidence," she says. "What are you saying to yourself when you're coming up to a climb that is at your limit, or what are you saying to yourself when other people (other climbers) are around? People might feel embarrassed or hesitate a lot earlier and not try things even if they are capable of it."

Pollmeier and Katja Dove, a coach with Modus Athletica, have hosted "Modus Cafe: Conversations Beyond Climbing," a weekly podcast since November 2023. For 15 to 20 minutes, they discuss one topic related to what Pollmeier calls the "human side" of climbing, such as confidence, fear, longevity in the sport and recovery.

In 2020, Pollmeier released her second book, "[Peak Nutrition: Smart Fuel for Outdoor Adventure](#)" with James Beard award-winning chef and climber Maria Hines. It received the 2020 National Outdoor Book Award. Hines provides the recipes and Pollmeier discusses nutritional science - the how behind digestion, food, recovery and more.

Mouthwatering baked goods, with a helping of history



Patrick Evans, left, and Jason Becton named their Virginia establishment, MarieBette Café and Bakery, after their daughters. Photo by Courtney Coker

When Jason Becton and his husband, Patrick Evans, opened MarieBette Café and Bakery in the Rose Hill neighborhood of Charlottesville, Virginia, in December 2014, they decided to combine their cooking skills and business talents into one restaurant. Evans runs the bakery production and wholesale operation while Becton serves as the chef in the kitchen and coordinates the front of the house and marketing.

While growing up in Jersey City, New Jersey, Becton showed interest in cooking with his grandmother. When he went to college, he pursued premedicine while working at local restaurants. He eventually changed his major to advertising and worked in the industry for nine years before heading to culinary school.

Becton and Evans met in New York City at the French Culinary Institute in 2006, married in 2009 and moved to Charlottesville in 2014 from Jersey City to be near Evans' family. MarieBette, named for their daughters, Marian and Betty, is open for breakfast and lunch, which allows the family to eat dinner together every night.

MarieBette's menu features European-inspired breads and pastries such as baguettes, croissants, chocolate chip cookies, cupcakes and more. The seasonal menus offer Becton a chance to highlight ingredients – arugula, eggs, flour, ham, peppers, tomatoes – from local purveyors.

In February and June, MarieBette celebrates Black History Month and Pride Month, by adding the image of someone who contributed to the community,

Lemon Ricotta Pancakes

Servings: 8

Ingredients

- 10 eggs, separated
- 2 cups of ricotta
- 1 cup of all-purpose flour
- 1 cup of sugar
- 1 stick of melted butter and an additional 2 tablespoons for the griddle pan
- 1 1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- Powdered sugar and maple syrup for garnish

Directions

Preheat an oven to 200 F to keep the finished pancakes warm during the process. In a large mixing bowl combine the egg yolks, ricotta, flour, sugar, 1 stick of melted butter, lemon zest and salt. Whisk together until smooth.

With a whisk or stand mixer fitted with a whisk, whip the egg whites on high-speed until they form stiff peaks. With the whisk, gently stir in 1/4 of the egg whites into the ricotta mixture until combined. Then pour the rest of the egg whites in and gently fold until combined.

Heat a large skillet, nonstick or cast-iron, or griddle over medium heat. Fold a sheet of paper towel in half and moisten with the rest of the melted butter. Carefully rub the skillet with the buttered paper towel. Ladle the batter onto the griddle using the back of the ladle to spread and form the pancakes.

Cook until the surface of the pancakes has bubbles, about 2 minutes. Flip carefully with a thin spatula, and cook until browned on the underside, about 1 to 2 minutes more. Be careful not to overcook and dry out the pancakes.

Transfer the pancakes to a baking sheet or platter; cover loosely with aluminum foil and keep warm in the oven until all the pancakes are finished.

Dust with powdered sugar and serve with real maple syrup.

region or world, on the tops of the breads and cakes. Evans creates the stencils, after he and Becton make their selections.

Their efforts have made it across the country. After actor and director Lulu Wang saw filmmaker Barry Jenkins' face on bread, she called MarieBette to ask about it. Becton overnighted a loaf to Los Angeles, California. "She sent us a picture of him holding the loaf," Becton says. "It's become this fun thing that people look forward to, and we never know where it's going to take us."

Trove of stirring aesthetics

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Awareness of identity permeates the works of the artists featured in this Pride Month edition of *Unity*.

SWAY JONES

In “Hustle and Motivate,” the artist utilizes bold colors and written words and phrases such as “Hustle,” “Talent” and “Transform Reality” as an homage to the young entrepreneurs found on many American street corners. In this way, Jones highlights the beauty and resilience of Black people and their experiences through her artwork.

Since her early childhood, Jones drew pencil models of the objects around her. The young artist sold these first drawings to relatives and neighbors which encouraged her to continue refining her craft. She first encountered paint as an artistic medium in high school.

“The vibrant colors and instant boldness of paint captivated me, unleashing a potential I never knew I had,” recalls Jones. She went on to graduate from the University of Southern Mississippi with a Bachelor of Arts. While in college, she further developed her understanding of art history and enhanced her formal skills.

While Jones mostly creates work with some elements of figuration, the artist occasionally uses pure abstraction to explore color and shape, as in “Abstract 1.”

Jones renders the lovely embrace of two abstracted women in “I Want You to Want Me Here.” In reference to her identity as a Black gay woman, the artist said, “I believe that it’s important to emphasize all the facets that shape my identity as an artist. Black Female LGBTQ+ Artist/ Muralist is a title that I embrace proudly and hope to inspire other artists to embrace the unique and beautiful parts of themselves.”

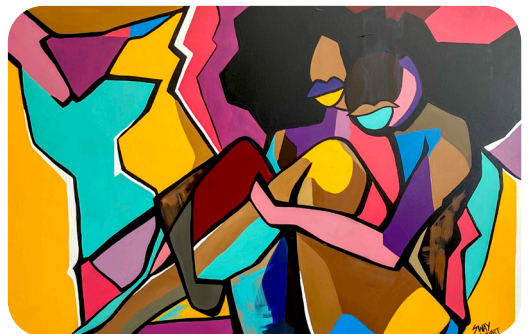
Today, Jones continues her early enterprising spirit with her business, Sway Art. The Atlanta-based artist sells her work, of course, but she also hosts painting classes, paints community murals and offers graphic-design services to local businesses.



Sway Jones, “Hustle and Motivate,” acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in.



Sway Jones, “Abstract 1,” acrylic on canvas, 30 x 40 in.



Sway Jones, “I Want You To Want To Be Here,” acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in.

JONATHAN BROOKS

An award-winning visual artist, Jonathan Brooks' practice includes photography, graphic design and, most recently, holiday wreaths. Under the pseudonym "Johnny Holiday," the multi-hyphenate creative has translated his aesthetic detail required for his photography into festive wreaths to celebrate any occasion.

Brooks earned a Bachelor of Science, with a double major in advertising and fine art photography, and a minor in marketing from the University of Miami.

For Valentine's Day, Brooks produced "Love Wreath," a textured arrangement of red tinsel and plastic cutouts of hearts to decorate any doorway.

The "Rainbow Wreaths" are much smaller and designed to add warmth and cheer indoors in anticipation of Pride month.

As a gay man, the artist feels "It is somewhat important to be identified as gay because it is part of who I am, how I see the world and I'm sure it influences my perspective to a certain extent." The Florida-based artist began making these wreaths as an extension of his creative practice aligning with fine art just as much as craft.

In the "Star Wreath," this dedication to refining one's aesthetics shines through. The placement of metallic bulbs of silver and gold line the bottom ring of the wreath with beautiful ornaments attached beneath them. Brooks places a lone star in the middle to light the way home.



"Rainbow Wreaths" by Jonathan Brooks



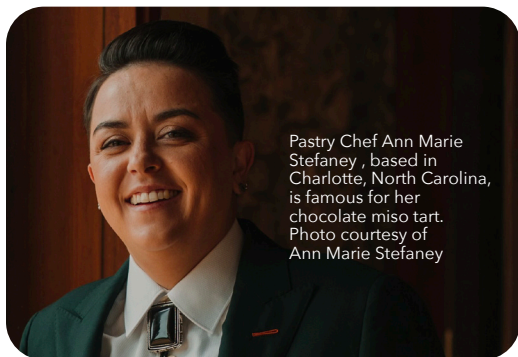
"Love Wreath" by Jonathan Brooks



"Star Wreath" by Jonathan Brooks

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Industrious chef concocts signature confection



Pastry Chef Ann Marie Stefany, based in Charlotte, North Carolina, is famous for her chocolate miso tart. Photo courtesy of Ann Marie Stefany

Ann Marie Stefany makes at least 144 chocolate miso tarts a week for Restaurant Constance, a 10-table establishment within the Your Farms Your Table brand, in Charlotte, North Carolina. The tart, developed by Stefany, features black sesame shortbread, dark chocolate ganache, and red miso caramel served with mirin, crème fraîche and chocolate sauce, garnished with sea salt.

"It's a day-and-a-half process," says the pastry chef. "It's this luscious chocolate caramel tart. If I took it off the menu, we'd probably have a riot on our hands."

Stefany, born in Germany into a military family, spent most of her childhood in Kansas and Virginia. At 10, she took over preparing the Thanksgiving meal, which led to an interest in the food industry.

"I've worked pretty much every position in a restaurant," Stefany says, "from dishwasher to server, to general manager to front of the house, back of the house. I try to be as well-rounded as possible."

At Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, Stefany played on the women's ice hockey team for one semester before contracting a MRSA staph infection. Although she didn't return to RIT, she continued her studies, earning four associate degrees in the culinary and hospitality industries at community colleges in Virginia.

In 2013, Stefany landed at Johnson & Wales University Charlotte Campus for the food-and-beverage management industry program, graduating with a bachelor's degree in 2015. She's appeared on two food competition television shows and one reality show. Since February 2023, Stefany has worked for Your Farms Your Table.

Her best advice for home cooks? "Read the entire recipe before you start. Gather all of your ingredients and then get going."

Root Beer Marshmallows

Yields: Fifty 1-inch marshmallows

Ingredients

- 42 grams powdered gelatin, about 6 packets
- 1 cup cold water
- 1 cup water
- 3 cups granulated white sugar
- 1 cup golden syrup or light corn syrup
- Pinch of salt
- 3 cups powdered sugar; use what's needed and toss the excess
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- 4 tablespoons root beer extract, available at specialty baking stores or Amazon
- 3 cups powdered sugar

Directions

In a standup mixer, fitted with the whisk attachment, combine the gelatin and cold water in the mixing bowl. Set aside and let bloom (gelatin absorbs the liquid) while you continue.

In a heavy-bottom pot, fitted with a candy thermometer, combine 1 cup of water, sugar, golden syrup and salt. Mix thoroughly and bring the syrup mixture to 238 F. While the syrup is heating, heavily grease a 9-inch-by-13-inch casserole dish with pan spray. Cover it with a thick coating of powdered sugar.

Remove the syrup from the heat, stir in both extracts and return to the heat. Bring the syrup to 240 F. Once the syrup reaches this temperature, turn the mixer on low speed and slowly stream in the hot syrup.

Once all the syrup is incorporated, slowly increase the mixer speed to high until the mixture cools. As the mixture cools it will expand and become fluffy. Transfer your marshmallow to your prepared pan and spread it to an even layer.

Cover the top of the marshmallow with powdered sugar and let it sit at room temperature for 6 hours or overnight. Once the marshmallow is set, you can cut them with a pizza cutter or knife. Be sure to coat each marshmallow with powdered sugar (be generous) on all sides to keep them from sticking together. Enjoy as is or toasted. They may be stored in an airtight container for up to a month.

Lifelong pursuits culminate in TV appearances, culinary business

As a young girl, Chef Britt Rescigno dreamed of being on the Food Network. In 2019, Rescigno realized that dream by appearing on and winning “Chopped,” a reality TV cooking show.

“It was definitely a pinch-me moment,” Rescigno says. “How the heck did I get here?” I’m just a girl from a small town who idolized everyone on the Food Network. These opportunities don’t come around a lot.”

Growing up in New Gretna, New Jersey, Rescigno’s world revolved around food and restaurants. By 5 years old, Rescigno knew she wanted to be a chef. Her grandparents owned a seafood restaurant next door to her house, and she worked there before and after school. Observing her father, a chef in a different restaurant, had a great impact on her. “I remember thinking, ‘I want to do that,’” she explains. “That memory won’t ever fade.”

Rescigno graduated in 2009 from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. For more than 10 years, she worked at restaurants on the East and West coasts.

After appearing on “Chopped,” Rescigno was invited to compete on other Food Network shows: “Chopped Champions,” “Beat Bobby Flay” and



By the age of 5, Britt Rescigno knew she wanted to be a chef.
Photo by Crystal Hoffman

“Guy’s Grocery Games.” Rescigno cooked on stage with 32 celebrity chefs such as Tiffani Faison, Jose Garces and Stephanie Izard in seasons four and five of “Tournament of Champions.”

In June 2023, Rescigno and her fiancée and business partner, Kinsey Leodler, launched [Communion Bay Supper Club](#), offering pop-up dinners and private chef services all over the country. They operate the business from Silverdale, Washington, and Tuckerton, New Jersey.

For private parties, Leodler and Rescigno write the menu together. They shop for local ingredients to complement the meal. Their clients give them free reign of the kitchen, but Rescigno invites them into the kitchen to watch her cook. She encourages the clients to ask questions and poke their heads in the pots. “That’s the fun part about what we do,” she says.

Chef Britt’s Meatballs Recipe

Yields: 14 meatballs

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1/4 pound Italian sausage, mild or hot
- 3 eggs
- 2 sprigs oregano, chopped
- 1/4 cup basil, chopped
- 1 teaspoon chili flakes
- 3/4 cup pecorino cheese, grated
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 3/4 cup panko
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Preheat the oven to 425 F. In a food processor, add the onion and garlic. Pulse until they are finely chopped. In a large bowl, add all of the ingredients except the panko. Mix well. Add in the panko and mix until everything is well combined. Refrigerate to let all the flavors become one for at least 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat a small skillet over medium high heat and add a small amount of oil. Make a small patty with the meat mixture and cook in the skillet until cooked through. This is the tester to make sure you added enough seasoning; adjust with salt and pepper if needed.

Line a baking pan with parchment paper. Use your hands or a cookie scoop to form balls. Once all the meatballs are made, cook in the oven for 20 minutes or until fully cooked.

Add the meatballs to subs, spaghetti or pizza or serve over polenta.

Trove of stirring aesthetics

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NANCY GROSSMAN

Born in New York City, Nancy Grossman was raised on a farm in Oneonta, New York. Her parents worked in the garment industry, and their influence deeply shaped Grossman's artistic vision. The artist studied under Richard Lindner at Pratt Institute and graduated in 1962.

She quickly garnered recognition in the art world for her sculpture of heads created with found objects such as telephone poles, leather and spikes. An example is "Cob I," which depicts a masculine face with devilish horns wrapped in leather that exudes a crude masculinity.

As a lesbian artist, she often distorted the idea of gender identity and expression in her work. In "Twisting Column Figure," Grossman experiments

with coated paper, masking tapes, and various dyes and inks to create an abstracted figure defying strict classification as masculine or feminine. Grossman's work intrigues the audience to question their perceptions. Her interest in a form of narrative collage led to more explorations of material with less concerns about human representation.

Her "Mare Imbrium" takes on the subject of the sea through a mixture of dyed papers that reflects lights and shadow in washes of blue.

Grossman, who lives in Brooklyn, New York, has won such prizes as the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. Her work is displayed in esteemed museums around the world including the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.



Nancy Grossman, *Twisting Column Figure*, 1976, coated paper, masking tape, aniline dyes, waterproof inks and polymer glue on board, sheet: 60 3/8 x 36 1/4 in. (153.2 x 92.1 cm.) irregular, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the Sara Roby Foundation, 1986.6.39, © 1976, Nancy Grossman



Nancy Grossman, *Mare Imbrium*, 1981-1982, paper, aniline dyes, ink, and graphite on board, sheet: 47 1/2 x 60 1/8 in. (120.5 x 152.6 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the Sara Roby Foundation, 1985.30.20, © 1982, Nancy Grossman



Nancy Grossman, *Cob I*, 1980, carved wood, leather, nails, paint, lacquered paint, horn, and lead, 17 3/4 x 9 1/4 x 10 1/2 in. (45.0 x 23.5 x 26.8 cm.), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of the Sara Roby Foundation, 1986.6.38, © 1980, Nancy Grossman