



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

BY ROB CLINE

A WOMAN IN CHARGE

Inside the fridge of Iowa City Mayor Regenia Bailey

LOVING THE LOCAL AND ORGANIC

The hard boiled eggs are, of course, packed with protein. They're also a great choice for a woman constantly on the go.

"I never sit for a meal," Regenia said. "I always eat breakfast, but I never sit for it."

You can bet those aren't just any eggs. They're lovely brown, organic, free-range eggs.

"My grandma was a chicken farmer and you know what? You can tell the difference."

And therein lies a core tenet of Regenia's food consumption: Local and organic foods are simply more enjoyable to eat. "The taste difference is astonishing," Regenia said.

Regenia and her husband, Jay Berry, are fully committed to the local food scene. Regenia is a member of the Women's Food and Agriculture Network, and Jay recently joined the board of the Johnson County Local Food Alliance. The couple also has a passion for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), acquiring much of their food, including lamb, pork, and a summer's worth of vegetables, from Solon's ZJ Farms.

Making a commitment to a CSA, of course, means that you need both time and skill in the kitchen.

"When you buy directly from farmers, you get raw food," said Regenia. "You have to be able to prepare it or eat it raw, and you get whatever's in season."

The Mayor's fridge also hosts a couple of organic yogurts, including Fage (pronounced "Fa-Yeh!" explains the packaging) and Cultural Revolution from nearby Kalona Organics ("Organic yogurt that will transform your taste buds!").

And that's not the end of the local food. There's a tempting trio of homemade salsa, sauce, and syrup in there too.

A TASTY CHRISTMAS EXCHANGE

Salsa for applesauce seems like a pretty good swap—and one that seems to work especially well given that Regenia's fridge boasts jars of both. The former is made by her brother in Wellman and earns high praise.

Iowa City Mayor Regenia Bailey is a woman committed to her community. Certainly that's reflected in her efforts on Iowa City's City Council, but it's also evident in her work as a consultant and coach. In that role, she helps organizations—primarily non-profits—and individuals develop core competencies so that they are able to do business more effectively.

Regenia herself is effective because she's a straight shooting, quick thinking, passionate person who relishes important tasks and knows how to help folks accomplish them.

Periodically, the Mayor finds time in her busy schedule to have lunch with me, and people who know us probably assume that she's exercising her coaching skills tilting at windmills in an effort to find a competency—any competency—for me. Eager to demonstrate my skill as an icebox investigator, I recently requested a peek inside her refrigerator.

After all, I know what Regenia eats at various downtown Iowa City restaurants, but I was curious to see what might be in her fridge fueling her daily exploits on behalf of her community.

The secret to all that energy? Easy. Coke Zero and hard boiled eggs.

“It’s disappointing to eat the commercial stuff when we run out of this,” Regenia said.

Meanwhile, her husband Jay cans applesauce using fruit he receives from Wilson’s Orchard in Iowa City in exchange for picking. He is, says his wife, a master at mixing his varieties.

“I think he’s a supertaster,” she said. “He can combine apples in a way [so that] it doesn’t need sugar.”

The salsa and applesauce are staples of the Christmas exchange. The current jars share a bit of refrigerator real estate with some homemade maple syrup the Mayor’s neighbor cooks up in his backyard using sap from his trees on a piece of land north of town.

THE DIET COKE LOVER AND HER ‘WINE GEEK’

“The most unusual thing [in my fridge today] is that there’s no wine,” Regenia said. Jay (“I call him a wine geek”, she quips), teaches wine tasting at Kirkwood Community College and at New Pioneer Co-op. He also has a wine cellar in the basement.

As for Regenia herself, she claims gin and (diet) tonic as her “alcoholic drink of choice when I drink,” but it’s Coke Zero that holds a prominent place in the refrigerator.

“I love Diet Coke,” she said. “I just do. It keeps me going.”

“HE SELLS WHAT I EAT”

Regenia is a big fan of the new Bread Garden Market in downtown Iowa City. Owner Jim Mondanaro has hit upon a mix of products that works especially well for the Mayor.

“He sells what I eat,” she explained simply.

The market’s balance of organic, prepared, and, for lack of a better word, mainstream food and products (like Coke), gives shoppers like Regenia a wide array of options.

Okay, so her source of potassium isn’t local.

“I’m a banana freak,” said the Mayor, “and you can’t get those locally.”


The potassium in those bananas is key to her running regimen, an exercise she enjoys.

“I am a woman who needs to be in motion.”


And there’s an added bonus: “It enables me to eat a little bit more if I run.”

Given what’s in the fridge, that’s a good trade.

Rob Cline is the marketing director for The University of Iowa’s Hancher Auditorium. He is also the founding president of the Iowa Cultural Corridor Alliance and an active freelance writer. He lives in Cedar Rapids with his wife Jenny and his children, Bryan, Jessica and Emily.



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