

Now We're Cooking With Chef Audrey

Her lively personality rivals her culinary skills.

Audrey George could have been serving subpoenas instead of delicacies. As a political science major, she considered attending law school. It would have been a shame, though, maybe even a crime, if the owner of Chef Audrey's Bistro & Bakery in Warner Robins hadn't followed her true passion. Loyal fans of her restaurant and catering business—and her local TV and radio food programs—agree.

Her First Teacher

At age 8 Audrey begged her mother, a frugal preacher's wife with six children, to teach her to cook. Leafing through glossy food magazines and colorful cookbooks, the little girl longed to replicate culinary masterpieces.

"So my mother took me to the library to learn how to cook. We got a book on budgeting, plus I had to learn how to spell the ingredients and learn how they worked together," Audrey says, her eyebrows rising, feigning disbelief at her mother's action. "That was math, spelling, and science. I didn't want that! I would go to the cooking section and say, 'This is what we can do.' She would say, 'Okay, we have to figure out how much this costs.' We priced everything to see how much it would cost to feed our family."

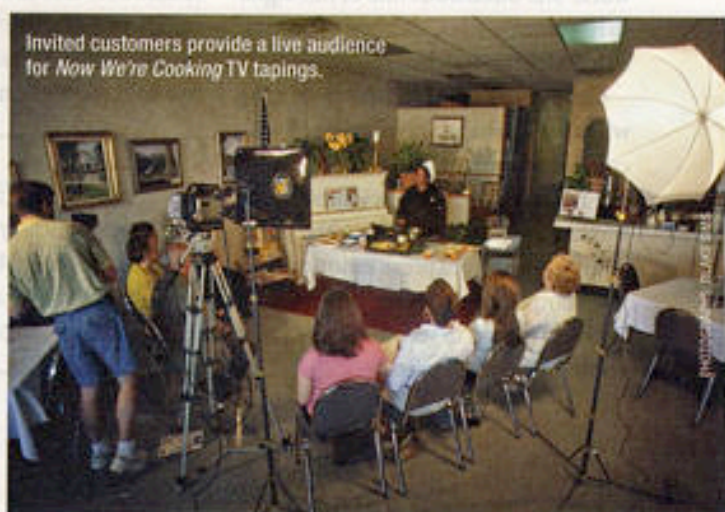
Headstrong Audrey coveted hazelnut-crusted lamb. Instead, she recalls with a snort, "I ended up doing peanut-crusted pig's tails. Think about it. Would you eat peanut-crusted pig's tails?" She adds dryly, "My family didn't either. We couldn't afford to throw it away, so I made it into a soup." She laughs heartily at the memory, appreciating now what valuable lessons her mother taught her.



While taping her TV show, *Now We're Cooking*, chef Audrey whips up a story as well as some delicious food.



Audrey gets miked for a taping of her show.



Invited customers provide a live audience for *Now We're Cooking* TV tapings.

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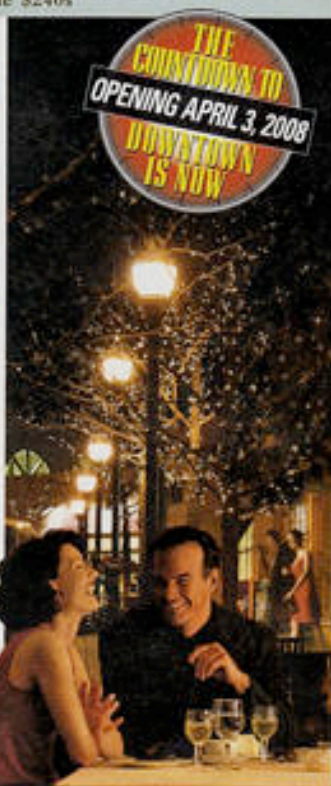
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That Reminds Her of the Time...

Telling stories comes as naturally as cooking to this personality-rich lady, so having a televised food program seemed a natural fit. "I sponsored it at first and put myself on TV," says the irrepressible chef, eyes twinkling. Called *Now We're Cooking*, the TV show—touted as the only 30-minute cooking show in Middle Georgia—airs Fridays at 6:30 a.m. on WGXA Macon Fox 24. It now enjoys sponsorship from other local businesses too.

"I also have a radio show," Audrey adds, referring to her food talk show that broad casts Saturdays at 9 a.m. on 103.9 FM. A local station owner liked her TV show and suggested Audrey try the airwaves. "I said, 'Honey, how can they see me on the radio?' and she said, 'Well, I just figured you could talk about it.'"

Talk Audrey does, ninety to nothing, swooping from subject to subject as she cooks, chats about food, and occasionally breaks into song. "I play it up for the people," she says. "The audience can laugh and talk with me. Let me put it this way: If I am going into a room, you are going to know it. Once I open my mouth, all the attention comes my way." Once again, she breaks into her glorious laugh.

Her Softer Side

There is a quieter side to this highly animated woman. It shows when a man jiggles the restaurant door on a day she's closed. Audrey urges

him to come back another time. "Can I get you a menu?" she asks. The man explains that his wife, sitting in the car, is already quite familiar with the place.

Looking in the car and recognizing a loyal customer, Audrey says, "Oh, I haven't seen her for a while. How is she?" and steps outside to greet the woman in person. Soon Audrey returns with the man to her store's door. "I will be praying for y'all," she says solemnly. There's been an illness of some sort, a turn of events that bears her attention and a kind response. That's when she mentions the prayer request box available to customers and friends who come to the restaurant after hours one

night a week to pray for those who've asked for it.

"I don't have hours posted on the door, because my policy is when people come to the door, and I'm here, I answer," Audrey says, slipping into a pair of fuzzy bunny slippers and settling onto a cozy sofa in a corner of her bistro. "I want you to talk to me, and I want you to remember you talked to me."

Rest assured, you won't soon forget a chat with the effervescent chef Audrey George. **NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON**

Chef Audrey's Bistro & Bakery: www.chefaudrey.com.



You may not know chef Audrey when you first enter her restaurant, but you will before you leave.

Tasty Offerings

Tempting items on lunch and dinner menus include the following.

- Goat Cheese Salad
- Black Peppered Turkey Sandwich
- Pecan Chicken Salad on Croissant
- Roasted Vegetable Sandwich
- Wild Mushroom Tart
- Lobster Ravioli
- Salmon Wellington
- Shrimp & Grits

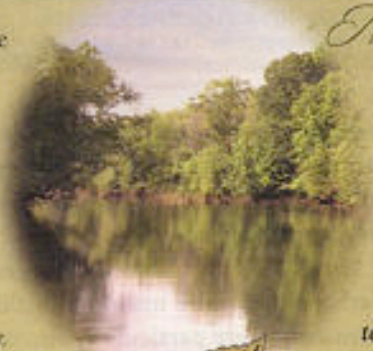
**"If I am going into a room,
you are going to know it."**

Audrey George

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