

CONNECTION

Retro Beans

Prohibition Coffee



Prohibition Coffee
Est. 2022

BAM TRAVEL
TOURS

ROLLER
COASTERS



By Shirley Bloomfield, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Broadband Built to Last


How the Universal Service Fund Helps Keep Americans Connected

When we're connected, America thrives, and for rural communities, the federal Universal Service Fund (USF) helps community-based providers deliver broadband built to last for generations. This fund is critical for ensuring high-quality, affordable broadband services are available for families, schools, libraries, health care facilities and so much more.

The idea behind the USF is that all Americans should have reliable access to communications services at a reasonable cost—it's been a national objective for over a century and was codified into law in the 1996 Telecommunications Act. Today, the USF enables providers to make a business case to invest in many rural areas, sustain networks once they are built and keep service rates affordable.

Unfortunately, the USF is at risk of disruption. Last summer, a federal circuit court declared that the way the USF is funded is unconstitutional, and the case is now before the Supreme Court for review.

According to an August 2024 survey of more than 200 NTCA members across 35 states, the loss of USF support could be catastrophic for rural consumers. Respondents reported that rural consumers could see their monthly bills increase by \$72. And 68% of respondents said they may need to cancel over \$1 billion in deployment projects.

These survey results highlight the importance of the USF in both getting and keeping rural consumers connected to high-quality, affordable services. You can learn more at ntca.org/universalservice. 



Adobe Stock Illustration by Julien Eichinger

The Buzz

An internet roadmap

The online world moves fast, and it's a rich, helpful place. In fact, there are so many opportunities and so many resources that keeping up with the latest can prove daunting. Here are a few hot topics:

VIDEO SHORTS

These bite-sized videos usually last a few seconds. They're often lighter in tone. Many are great for showing fun or helpful ideas quickly, such as cooking tips, telling a joke or sharing engaging facts. Others are simply silly fun. Most social media services offer some version of these videos.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE OR AI

AI is appearing in more and more places. It may help complete a text message, edit and sort photos on a smartphone or even create an image from scratch. And that's only the beginning. Think of AI as a smart, learning system capable of processing tremendous amounts of information—and it's changing and growing daily.

CRYPTOCURRENCY

This digital currency is stored and managed on secure systems. Bitcoin is a famous example, but there are many others. Some people use cryptocurrency to buy goods or services, and others consider it an investment. It's another growing, diversifying part of the digital world.

VIRTUAL REALITY OR VR

With the right hardware, such as VR goggles, virtual reality can be like stepping into a video game or movie. It's also a rapidly growing technology, expected to become more affordable and accessible over time.

Wading Into the Stream

Catch the current to entertainment

The arrival of streaming entertainment services brought the promise of simple, affordable access to deep, rich libraries of content.

So, how are these increasingly popular

services, ranging from Netflix to YouTube TV, doing? Seemingly endless content? Check. Simple and affordable? Well, that gets a little complicated.

With care, though, you can find the

services that not only meet your needs but also your budget. Live sports, ad-free options, high-definition streams and so much more are a few clicks away. 📺

DEFINE YOUR PRIORITIES

With so many possibilities, first consider what you generally want to watch. Do you love original dramas? Perhaps classic sitcoms and movies are your favorites? Are live sports or kids' programming your go-to shows? Or maybe it's a mix of all of the above. Here are a few options:

For exclusive originals: Netflix, Hulu and Max—formerly HBO Max—are standouts. They mix fresh shows and movies with a wealth of older favorites. And Hulu gives access to TV episodes the day after they air on traditional TV.

For family and classics:

Disney+ shines. And Peacock and Paramount+ serve up plenty of long-time favorites, as well as new shows.

AD TIERS

When it comes to pricing, streaming services increasingly offer a range of options—along with some tradeoffs.

Many services have lower-cost plans, but they come with ads. If you don't want interruptions, be prepared to pay extra. Similarly, Netflix offers a more expensive choice for high-definition content. Meanwhile Disney+ emphasizes the ability to bundle added services like Hulu.

Netflix: A lower-priced ad tier was introduced in 2023 to go along with the more expensive ad-free option.

Disney+ and Hulu: The price difference between ad-supported and ad-free versions is significant, so be aware when considering such services.

Amazon: Members of Amazon Prime must now pay an extra fee to remove ads from streaming content.

So, the price considerations of comparing streaming services to traditional cable television is more complex. But the system offers consumers greater choice—after all, many people don't mind ads. Pricing and offers can change quickly, so check each service for the current rates and offers.

LIVE SPORTS

Traditional TV networks are still the biggest player in the live sports world, but services like YouTube TV and Sling allow you to tap into many of those channels. However, the streamers are catching up.

Services like ESPN+, Peacock and Paramount+ have exclusive sports content. Amazon Prime hosts NFL games on Thursday nights. Even Netflix recently showcased a live night of boxing.

Then, there are also the direct-to-consumer options, like the NFL's Sunday Ticket or MLS Season Pass on Apple TV. Fans can binge-watch their favorite leagues.

Spring Into Connectivity

How broadband enhances life this season

Spring is here, bringing longer days, warmer weather and a sense of renewal. Whether you're tackling home projects, exploring hobbies or simply looking to enjoy the great outdoors, broadband internet plays a vital role in making this season more productive, fun and connected.



RUTH CONLEY
Chief Executive Officer

TRANSFORM OUTDOOR SPACES WITH ONLINE INSPIRATION

Spring is the perfect time to refresh your outdoor spaces. Broadband gives you access to countless resources to help you turn ideas into reality. From finding landscaping designs that complement your yard to watching step-by-step tutorials for building raised garden beds, the internet makes DIY projects accessible and enjoyable.

STAY ACTIVE AND HEALTHY

With spring's warmer weather, it's easier to stay active. Broadband opens the door to fitness apps, online workout videos and virtual outdoor fitness challenges. Whether you're training for a local 5K or simply trying to hit your daily step goals, there's a

digital tool to keep you motivated.

PLAN YOUR SPRING GETAWAY

For many, spring means hitting the road for a much-needed getaway. Use high-speed internet to research destinations, book accommodations and map out your perfect road trip. Broadband also ensures you can stay connected with loved ones while you're away, sharing photos and updates in real time.

CELEBRATE THE SEASON TOGETHER

Spring is all about new beginnings and connections, and broadband helps bring people together. Host virtual gatherings for those who can't join in person, explore online recipe collections for seasonal favorites or livestream community events to enjoy local celebrations from the comfort of your home.

LEARN AND GROW

Spring is a great time to pick up a new hobby or skill. Whether it's gardening, bird-watching or even learning to build a patio, online classes and communities provide endless opportunities to expand your knowledge.

MAKE SAFETY A PRIORITY

As you dive into outdoor projects, remember to call 811 before you dig to ensure your work doesn't interfere with underground utilities. High-speed internet makes it easy to find local resources and schedule services to keep your projects safe and seamless.

At Foothills, we're proud to provide the reliable broadband you need to make the most of this vibrant season. Whether you're planting, exploring or celebrating, we're here to keep you connected to what matters most.

Happy spring—let's make it a season to remember! 📶



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Foothills is a member-owned cooperative that has been serving residents and businesses in Eastern Kentucky since 1951. In the early days, we only offered telephone service over copper wires. Over the years, we have expanded our network and now provide broadband internet and cable TV services over fiber optic facilities to much of our service area, which includes Magoffin, Johnson and Lawrence counties, as well as parts of Boyd and Carter counties and Prichard, West Virginia. We love being part of the communities we serve. Our customers are our families, friends and neighbors.

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Foothills Mission Statement

"To provide the latest in communications at affordable prices with exceptional service."

Produced for Foothills Communications by:



On the Cover:



Prohibition Coffee brings a new vibe to Salyersville. See story Page 8.

Photo courtesy of John Michael Laney

CONGRATULATIONS PRIZE WINNERS!

Foothills Communications is excited to announce the recipients of its annual prize giveaway. Each winner received a \$200 gift card. The winners are Benny Cantrell, of Flat Gap, Elizabeth Butcher, of Louisa, and April Bradley, of Salyersville, who is not pictured.



Benny Cantrell, with his wife, Patsy, and their daughter, Payton



Elizabeth Butcher

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HAPPY
Easter!

Foothills Communications wishes you and your family a joyful Easter weekend. In observance of Good Friday, our office will be closed on April 18.

ALONG FOR THE RIDE

Roller coasters take thrill-seekers to the limit

Story by KATHY DENES

It's a rite of passage—a child in the roller coaster line steps up to the mark, stands up straight and finally hits that magical measurement, tall enough to be welcomed aboard for a lifetime of adventure.

The thrill of roller coasters never grows old, whether they're modern rockets of cold, sleek steel or creaky, wooden rides that are a nostalgic nod to yesteryear. Around 1,000 coasters in the United States and thousands worldwide offer limitless options for destination vacations.

"At this point, I've been on just under 1,200 unique coasters at over 300 different amusement parks," says James Nocito, a CoasterNerds contributing writer whose hobby of "chasing down rides" has taken him to 38 countries on four continents.

"Sometimes, I do actually think the hobby is ridiculous, but it's also given me a chance to visit all sorts of places I probably wouldn't have otherwise, like all 50 U.S. states. I guess I've always compared it to people who try to see a baseball game at every Major League Baseball stadium or such."

Roller coaster fans seeking out the fastest ride, wildest twists and turns or just a new experience have created a community. Numerous websites, like coaster101.com, and social media pages, like Facebook's CoasterNerds, are dedicated to informing and connecting enthusiasts.

"There's this whole community within the parks and coasters fandom, and some of the best people I met from internet chatrooms or online message boards when I was a teenager are people I know 20-plus years later, now hanging out in person," James says.

He hesitates to cite one roller coaster as his favorite, "but if I were going to suggest to someone some of the biggest, baddest or craziest rides in the U.S., I'd probably start with Fury 325." That ride at Carowinds in Charlotte, North Carolina, is North America's tallest, fastest and longest giga coaster—one with a height or drop of at least 300 feet. 📺

IF YOU'RE GOING

- For a selection of the country's top 100 coasters, consult coasterbuzz.com/rollercoasters/top100.
- If taking younger travelers along, be sure to check height requirements for the coasters you hope to experience.
- To check real-time waits before you go, visit queue-times.com.
- Concerned about motion sickness? Snack on something fairly bland 30 minutes to an hour before jumping in line.





PLANNING A COASTER VACATION?

Consider visiting these thrill rides:

The Beast broke all records when it opened at Kings Island in Mason, Ohio, in 1979, and it still reigns as Guinness World Records' longest wooden roller coaster.

The Voyage at Holiday World in Santa Claus, Indiana, is the world's second-longest wooden coaster, running for 1.2 miles and featuring a world-record five underground tunnels.

It's always coaster weather at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, where the 7-acre center court offers five unique options.

Two record-breaking coasters—the nation's first tilt coaster, the Circuit Breaker, and Palindrome, a one-of-a-kind infinity coaster—are set to open in Texas this year at Austin's COTALand.

Also opening this year at Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio, is the Siren's Curse, expected to break records for height, speed and longest tilt.



Photo courtesy of Lake Winnepesaukah



Adobe Stock photo by Panosk18

TOP: The Cannon Ball at Lake Winnepesaukah is the oldest wooden roller coaster in Georgia.

ABOVE: The Six Flags family of parks is known for exciting roller coasters, like the Joker at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson Township, N.J.

LEFT: Southern California's mild weather means rides like the roller coaster and Ferris wheel at Pacific Amusement Park on the Santa Monica Pier can be enjoyed throughout the year.

FIND YOUR THRILL

Look for CoasterNerds on Facebook and visit these websites for more information: coasterforce.com, aceonline.org, coaster101.com and coasterbuzz.com.



Adobe Stock illustration by Wasum

ALL THAT JAZZ

Prohibition Coffee dazzles Salyersville

Story by JEN CALHOUN

When Justin Darnell decided to open a coffee shop, he knew he wanted something different. It had to be more than a simple cup of joe—although that’s certainly available. It had to be a place that could make anyone feel welcome, whether they needed a quiet moment alone or craved a place to get together with friends.

“We wanted something that transcended time and really transported people to something special,” says Courtney Fazely, marketing director and the designer behind Prohibition Coffee, a Roaring ’20s-themed coffee shop on Mountain Parkway in Salyersville.

With a big nod to underground speakeasies from the days of bootleggers and flappers, the shop’s interior blends rustic charm with touches of elegance. Exposed brick, classic wood finishes and art deco touches combine with moody lighting. As a result, guests feel like they’ve been taken back in time in a fun way, while also feeling cozy and relaxed.

“We wanted it to be a place where you can escape the modern

hustle and settle into a cozy environment that sparks conversation and connection, just as speakeasies once did,” she adds. “Whether you’re here for a quiet moment or a lively chat, the atmosphere captures the spirit of togetherness that defined the Prohibition era and Appalachian culture—when people gathered, shared stories and celebrated life, even during challenging times.”

SOMETHING SPECIAL

The shop serves more than the traditional espresso-based drinks, like coffee, frappes, lattes, frappuccinos and cappuccinos. It also offer Kickers, drinks mixed with energy boosters, as well as drinks to celebrate the different seasons, special events and pop culture moments, like last fall’s release of the movies “Wicked” and “Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice.”

Prohibition also partners with local businesses like The Cheesecake Lady and Sweet Oaks Bakery. “The Cheesecake Lady makes these decadent and artful cheesecakes, and Sweet Oaks Bakery makes beautiful desserts,” Courtney says. “We love to work with and support local artisans. They’re phenomenal, and it’s another way to share the love in the community and foster a sense of belonging.”

GIVING BACK

When the shop opened in 2022, Justin wanted to invest in his hometown and bring people together. It worked, too.

“The community has come out to support us in droves,” Courtney says. “I think young people are increasingly drawn to businesses that support their community.”

Justin and his crew also make sure to give back in various ways. They hold food drives, make donations and help with animal rescues, the last of which is a passion for Justin. “We try to have food drives as often as possible,” Courtney says. “For every donation, we offer a free drink of their choice.”

The coffee shop is one of a few Salyersville-based businesses the former paramedic owns, including a medical taxi service and a commercial property development.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Since opening, the coffee shop has used social media, including Facebook and Instagram, to interact with its customers. “Those two social media sites seem to be the best places for us to advertise right now,” Courtney says.

In December, the shop’s Facebook page boasted nearly 5,000 followers—no small feat in a town with a population of about 1,600, according



Photos courtesy of John Michael Laney



The shop also serves a variety of cheesecakes baked by local business The Cheesecake Lady.



Owner Justin Darnell wanted a place for the community to get together.

Prohibition Coffee gives guests a place to relax and enjoy coffees, cappuccinos, frappuccinos, energy drinks, pastries and more.

THE CAT'S MEOW

Prohibition Coffee is at 1048 Mountain Parkway, Unit 4, in Salyersville. The 1920s-styled coffee shop offers espresso-based drinks, as well as energy drinks, locally made pastries and cakes and more. Drink menus are updated seasonally and for special events. The shop also offers a drive-thru. For the latest updates and more information, follow the Prohibition Coffee Facebook and Instagram pages.

to the last census records. Many of the posts feature photos of Prohibition's staff holding the latest specialty drinks and treats. It's a personal touch to a business based on getting and keeping people connected.

"People in Salyersville have really come out to support us, and so much of that is because of Justin and the baristas," Courtney says. "The staff is so incredible. They're the ones that make all of this work. But we couldn't do it without the community, and they've been so good to us." 📱

WATCH JUSTIN AND COURTNEY ON 'THE BLOX'

Recently, Prohibition Coffee owner Justin Darnell and the store's marketing manager, Courtney Fazely, were chosen to compete on the reality show "The Blox," streaming on Amazon's Prime Video.

The reality-competition show puts entrepreneurs in a weeklong intensive boot camp, which is designed to help improve their businesses and their ownership skills. The scores from each competition accumulate daily leading up to the final tally. The winner is named "The Best Startup on the Blox."

Empowerment Through Sports

Adaptive competitions and

Story by DREW WOOLLEY and JEN CALHOUN



ADAPTIVE CLIMBERS FESTIVAL

After Shane Farver's lower-level spinal cord injury, the rock-climbing enthusiast realized he needed to learn new ways of moving through the world, whether scrambling up rocks or making his way through shopping malls and office buildings.

"Early on in my recovery, a friend of mine said, 'A cool thing about climbing is the problem-solving aspect of it. You have to figure out how to get from this hold to that hold as efficiently as possible using your body as it is and kind of figuring those things out,'" Shane says.

It's the same for people with disabilities, he says. "We have to be problem-solvers, because—very often—the world is not made for us."

Today, Shane is communications director and a member of the organizing committee for the Adaptive Climbers Festival. The three-day event offers people with disabilities a chance to learn rock climbing and other outdoor skills while camping and communing in Eastern Kentucky's Red River Gorge.

"We really emphasize the notion that we do not take people with disabilities rock climbing," Shane says. "We teach people with disabilities how to rock climb. The nuance there is we're not here to take you on a ride. We're here to empower you and help you see what's possible in rock climbing and hopefully provide some confidence elsewhere in your life."

SWEET SETUP

The idea for the Adaptive Climbers Festival came about during a hot tub hang with a few adaptive climbers and their allies. "They were talking about the fact that outside of the competitive environment, there aren't a lot of opportunities for people with disabilities to rock climb," Shane says.

The first Adaptive Climbers Festival was in 2018 at a climbing area in northwest Alabama, but by 2022 the event found its home at Lago Linda Hideaway, a 410-acre wonderland that offers cabins, RV sites and campgrounds surrounding a 5-acre lake.

"We have our run of the place," Shane says. "Once we figured out that setup, we didn't want to hold it anywhere else. We also have other partners who help us out, including the local search and rescue folks. It's a huge coordinated effort."

MOVING MOUNTAINS

The event offers about 30 clinics, including courses on rappelling and anchor-building, which shows attendees how to set up their ropes for climbing. Most of the courses are led by people with disabilities.

"That's kind of our ethos—the idea that we're here to empower people and to give people opportunities to grow and lead," Shane says.

The Adaptive Climbers Festival has grown from about 30 participants to about 150 in 2024, including attendees from across the country, as well as some from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Spain. 📍

events shatter barriers



Photos courtesy of Beth King



ABOVE: Training to succeed in new sports, like javelin, cycling, powerlifting and rowing, gives Beth King the confidence to overcome life's other challenges.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Participants in the Adaptive Climbers Festival come from all over the world to enjoy a weekend of rock climbing, fellowship and fun in Eastern Kentucky's Red River Gorge area.

RESTORING FREEDOM

The first time Beth King saw a recumbent tricycle, she thought it was a joke. She rarely left the house for anything other than doctors' appointments after retiring from the military in 2014 due to injuries she sustained three years earlier when a rocket-propelled grenade brought down her Chinook helicopter in Afghanistan.

Then, after battling a traumatic brain injury, rehabbing for permanent damage to her spine and back and undergoing a bilateral joint replacement for severe pain in her jaw, Beth's occupational therapist wanted her to hop on what to her looked like a child's toy.

"When she showed me a picture, it looked like a Big Wheel from when I was a kid," says Beth, who was not happy about the idea. "But halfway through my first ride, I realized I'm out here by myself, no one's running after me to catch me. And I really found that

liberating. I felt a sense of independence I hadn't felt in years."

She then took part in the Wounded Warrior Project's Soldier Ride, introducing her to the world of adaptive sports. Now based in Missouri, Beth has trained in javelin, rowing, discus and powerlifting, even competing at the 2022 Invictus Games in the Netherlands. She hopes to qualify for the Paralympics in 2028.

"It's what saved me. I was really struggling with depression, suicidal thoughts and isolation. I just couldn't deal with anything. And it gave me something to train for, to get out of bed for," Beth says. "Sports made me realize that I could still do all the things that I thought I lost."

FINDING INSPIRATION

Realizing she was losing almost all function in her feet, in 2023 Beth decided to have her right foot amputated, allowing her to begin learning to walk with an artificial one. Last year, she completed her first year of welding school, a goal she set after retiring from the military.

"I think sports really gave me the confidence to advocate for myself. To believe that I didn't really lose as much as I thought I had," she says. "If you had asked me a year ago if I'd be welding right now, I would have said, 'No way.' I couldn't see a life bigger than the box I had put myself in with my injuries."

Once she finishes school, Beth hopes to be able to make adaptive equipment for more people. "I don't think people always understand that it's not just sports equipment. It's freedom," she says. "It's a regular life and feeling like you're a part of things. To have a place where people can go and just have fun and play a sport, even if it might look different. I think people are starting to realize that it really does matter." 🗨️



Holiday Road

Louisa-based company makes travel affordable and fun

Story by JEN CALHOUN

Brenda Curry can't think of a single state she and her sister, Michelle Hamilton, haven't visited with BAM Travel Tours, the company they founded in 2010.

"We go to New York at Christmas, New Orleans at Mardi Gras, Chicago on St. Patrick's Day, Salem on Halloween and we added cruises this year," Brenda says.

BAM, named for their initials, also offers destinations to Mackinac Island in Michigan, Niagara Falls, Memphis, tours of New England coastal towns and a multiday trip through Canada, among others.



Illustration by Adobe Stock/Tartila



ABOVE: The sisters started the business a few years ago after realizing they had a talent for organizing affordable trips and keeping customers happy.

OPPOSITE PAGE: BAM Travel Tours Owners Brenda Curry, left, and Michelle Hamilton get ready to take off on another trip.

“It’s remarkable to see people make memories,” Brenda says. “Some are there for a trip with friends, and some are there for family vacations, even honeymoons. We’ve had many people get engaged on our trips.”

HOW IT WORKS

While the internet offers seemingly limitless travel opportunities, BAM is different in that it’s locally owned, affordable and offers a sense of safety and security, Brenda says.

Through BAM, Brenda and Michelle design travel packages that often include coach bus transportation to and from the destinations and hotel accommodations for longer trips. Some trips include excursions, but many give the customers a chance to explore everything the city has to offer on their own.

Depending on the trip, customers can hop on the bus at various boarding locations in Kentucky, West Virginia, Ohio and Tennessee. From there, they’ll travel to the destination and usually sightsee or explore before meeting back at the bus for the ride home.

They’re free to do their own thing, but help is just a phone call away. Michelle or Brenda goes with the travelers on every single trip. “We let travelers know that if they’re feeling anxious or just need a little extra reassurance, we’re right there with them,” Brenda says. “We also show them how to pin and share locations, so no one gets lost.”

In addition, BAM tours can be booked months in advance and financed over time. “That’s another thing I love about these tours,” Brenda says. “When we get back from a trip, there’s almost always someone who calls, texts or gives us a hug, and says, ‘If it weren’t for you, we wouldn’t have been able to go on vacation or visit these places.’”

MAKING CONNECTIONS

BAM got its start when Brenda’s teenage son expressed an interest in travel, and the sisters realized their own love for exploring new places. “I just started planning these trips and coming up with packages for fun,” she says. “Then I realized that not only did we want to do it, but other people did, too.”

After less than a decade in the business, the tours saw a huge surge in interest right before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the travel lull that ensued, the sisters decided to expand the business. “We knew we needed to adapt and expand the business to keep up with the demand and prepare for future growth,” Brenda says.

Now, customers can browse the website, pick out an excursion and reserve a space with a minimal deposit. They can also pay for the trip in full, if they want. “We had 12 buses to Salem, Massachusetts, throughout the month of October, and 15 to New York through December,” Brenda says. “We could have more, but it’s just more personal to us when we limit ourselves to no more than four buses at a time to the same destination.”

Brenda’s Foothills high-speed fiber internet connection is an integral part of the business, especially when it comes to interacting with customers on social media. “I do 75% of my business through Facebook,” she says. “It’s so important.”

The heart of the business is important, too. Some customers will drive anywhere from three to six hours to meet up at a coach location. One Georgia church group drives about eight hours one way, then stays in a hotel in Louisa the night before the bus leaves.

“They do that two times a year,” Brenda says. “They said they don’t have anything like this in their area, and they love the family feeling we offer.”

Many of their customers found out about BAM through friends and family. Once they’ve done one trip, they often come back for more. Customers enjoy the personalized experience, the price and the ease of going places without the hassle of finding their own transportation, hotel rooms and more.

“We have travelers who have done six to 10 trips with us,” Brenda says. “It tells us we’re doing a good job, when you have repeat travelers like that.” 📞



ALL OF THE FUN, NONE OF THE STRESS

To find out more about BAM Travel Tours, see a list of 2025 destinations or to schedule a trip, visit BAMtrips.com, or follow the BAM Travel Tours Facebook page.

Pasta Supremo

Italian translates to a great meal

Italian cuisine, with its fresh ingredients and age-old techniques, has woven itself into the fabric of American culture.

Pizza, spaghetti and Alfredo are all favorites, but lasagna may top the list. It's simply hard to resist. Keep the Italian theme going with an Italian chopped salad and a cannoli poke cake. Loosen your belt and get ready to embark on your Italian culinary experience without leaving home.



**Food Editor
Anne P. Braly
is a native of
Chattanooga,
Tennessee.**

Photography by *Mark Gilliland*
Food Styling by *Rhonda Gilliland*

ITALIAN LASAGNA

- 1 pound sweet Italian sausage
- 3/4 pound lean ground beef
- 1/2 cup minced onion
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 2 (6.5-ounce) cans tomato sauce
- 2 (6-ounce) cans tomato paste
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, divided
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil leaves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt, divided, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 12 lasagna noodles
- 16 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1 egg
- 3/4 pound mozzarella cheese, sliced
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Heat the oven to 375 F.

Cook sausage, ground beef, onion and garlic in a Dutch oven over medium heat until well browned.

Stir in crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato paste and water. Season with sugar, 2 tablespoons parsley, basil,

1 teaspoon salt, Italian seasoning, fennel seeds and pepper. Simmer, covered, for about 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook lasagna noodles in boiling water for 8 to 10 minutes. Drain noodles, and rinse with cold water.

In a mixing bowl, combine ricotta cheese with egg, remaining 2 tablespoons parsley and 1/2 teaspoon salt.

To assemble, spread 1 1/2 cups of meat sauce in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Arrange 3 to 4 noodles lengthwise over meat sauce to cover. Spread with 1/2 of the ricotta cheese mixture. Top with 1/3 of the mozzarella cheese slices. Spoon 1 1/2 cups meat sauce over mozzarella, and sprinkle with 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese.

Repeat layers, and top with remaining mozzarella and Parmesan cheese. Cover with foil. To prevent sticking, either spray foil with cooking spray or make sure the foil does not touch the cheese. Bake for 25 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for an additional 25 minutes. Remove lasagna from oven, and let it rest for 15 minutes before slicing and serving.



CANNOLI POKE CAKE

1 (15.25 ounce) yellow cake mix, plus ingredients on box to make the cake as directed

Topping:

- 1 1/2 cups ricotta cheese, well drained
- 2 cups mascarpone cheese
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1 (3.4-ounce box) instant vanilla pudding mix
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon fresh orange zest
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 10 ounces mini chocolate chips

Make sure ricotta cheese is well drained—overnight is best, if possible, because it needs to be thick.

Prepare and bake cake according to directions on the package for a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Remove cake from oven

and poke holes all over it using the handle of a wooden spoon, large wood skewer or a straw. Set cake aside to cool.

In a large bowl, beat the ricotta and mascarpone cheese with an electric mixer on medium speed until well combined. Beat in the powdered sugar and dry pudding mix. Then beat in the vanilla, orange zest, cinnamon and salt. Once well combined, slowly beat in the milk a little at a time.

Spread about 1/3 of the topping over the cake, making sure it gets into holes. Then continue spreading the remaining topping, and sprinkle on the mini chocolate chips. Cover the cake and refrigerate for a few hours or overnight. Cut and serve well chilled.

Note: This cake is especially good with a little chocolate syrup drizzled over the top.

ITALIAN CHOPPED SALAD

Make the dressing in advance to allow flavors to marry.

Lemon Vinaigrette:

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 shallot, finely chopped

- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Salad:

- 1 head iceberg lettuce
- 1 head radicchio
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced

- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered
- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 4 ounces fresh pearl mozzarella, drained
- 4 ounces provolone cheese, diced
- 5 pepperoncini peppers, stemmed and sliced
- Kosher salt and pepper, as needed
- 1 teaspoon fresh oregano, for garnish

Make the dressing. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, vinegar, shallot, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper. Set aside.

Cut the iceberg lettuce in half, then cut out the core. Slice the lettuce lengthwise into 1/4-inch strips. Repeat with the radicchio.

In a large bowl, combine the lettuce, radicchio, onion, tomatoes, chickpeas, mozzarella, provolone and pepperoncini. Drizzle with the dressing and toss gently to coat. You may not need all of the dressing, so serve any leftover vinaigrette on the side. Season salad with salt and pepper and toss again. Garnish with oregano, if desired, and serve. 📖





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