

La Capilla de Todos los Santos, or the Chapel of All Saints, sits at the top of the mesa overlooking San Luis at the Shrine of the Stations of the Cross. People from across the globe come to visit the shrine's bronze sculptures depicting the events leading to Jesus Christ's crucifixion.

# San Luis

What's *new* in Colorado's  
*oldest* town

story by MATT MASICH

photographs by JOSHUA HARDIN

The buildings are adobe, the language is Spanglish and the culture is ancient in this small town founded 25 years before Colorado became a state.

# GET CREATIVE

## Rocky Ford Watermelons

story by MATT MASICH    photographs by JOSHUA HARDIN

**T**HE BIGGEST DAY of the year in Rocky Ford is Watermelon Day. Celebrated on Aug. 22 this year, the event is the highlight of the Arkansas Valley Fair. In a tradition uninterrupted since 1878, anyone who wants a free watermelon can take one from the big melon pile.

Because Rocky Ford cantaloupes are so well known throughout Colorado, people who aren't from town might not realize that locals prize their watermelons just as much. Some people even wear watermelon-themed fashion and accessories, such as a jacket with a red watermelon lapel or a watermelon parasol.

The most popular way to consume watermelon is to simply slice it up and eat it, but some folks in Rocky Ford have been known to get creative. Here are some of our favorite recipes that take the melon into new and unexpected territory.



### Fire and Ice Salsa

*Watermelon takes the place of tomatoes in this surprising recipe, which goes great with tortilla chips, just like more traditional salsas. When Arkansas Valley Fair director Sally Cope served it for the first time, people were reluctant to try it, but they found they loved it once they gave it a shot. Cope serves the salsa each year at the fair's special VIP dinner, where it is always a big hit.*

Combine all ingredients except watermelon. Gently fold in watermelon. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Serve with tortilla chips. Recipe can be doubled to serve large groups.

- 3 cups seedless watermelon, chopped
- 3/4 cup green bell pepper, diced
- 2 fresh limes, juiced
- 1/2 cup green onion (white and green parts), diced
- 3/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 3 jalapeño peppers, seeded, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- salt and pepper to taste

Serves 6-8

### Grilled Spicy Watermelon

*Grilled spicy watermelon? That's crazy. Yep – crazy delicious. Through the magic of the grill, the sweet watermelon is transformed into a savory, caramelized delight that pairs well with chicken, shrimp or barbecue ribs. The garlic chili sauce in the recipe is often found alongside other Asian condiments in grocery stores, but the more common sriracha sauce can be used as a substitute.*

In bowl, whisk together lime zest, juice, 3 Tbsp of the honey, garlic chili sauce and salt. Cut watermelon into 1-inch thick wedges. Lightly drizzle each side with remaining honey and place on grill. Grill until just browned, about 2 minutes per side. Place watermelon slices on a plate and drizzle with honey-lime dressing. Garnish with cilantro.

- |                           |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 watermelon, medium size | 2 tsp garlic chili sauce      |
| 1 Tbsp lime zest          | 1 pinch salt                  |
| 1/4 cup lime juice        | 1 Tbsp fresh chopped cilantro |
| 1/4 cup honey             |                               |

Serves 8-10



story by HEIDI KERR-SCHLAEFER

photographs by JOSHUA HARDIN

IT WAS FRIDAY night in Denver, and my husband, Ryan, and I had big plans: We were going to spend the entire weekend inside an old train station.

Under normal circumstances, spending the weekend at a train station means your travel plans have gone seriously awry. But this wasn't any train station – it was Union Station. The 120-year-old Denver landmark just got a \$58-million renovation, complete with new shops, restaurants and a fancy hotel. We wanted to know if the revamped Union Station offered enough to keep us content and entertained for two days without leaving the premises. We'd soon find out.

We arrived by rail, the same way millions of travelers have arrived at Union Station since 1894, except we took the light rail rather than a steam locomotive. We stepped off the train, and after

a quick underground walk, an escalator deposited us at the station's back door. Above Union Station's big double doors, a sign caught my eye: The Crawford Hotel. This new hotel was to be our home for the next two nights.

We had been to this station a handful of times before, and I happily noted as we crossed the threshold that it looked the same – only better and busier. The station was filled with people, some pulling luggage and others clutching fancy handbags or pushing baby strollers.

Our fourth-floor hotel room combined Victorian charm – complete with claw-foot tub – with modern décor. After oohing and aahing over our room for a while, Ryan and I set out to explore the “new” Union Station. Just outside our room we stopped at the balcony to gaze down on the Great Hall. I fought



Denver's old train station took on a new life when the Crawford Hotel opened last year. Using the hotel as a base camp, people can explore Denver, or simply explore Union Station's shops and restaurants – and perhaps enjoy a cocktail from bartender Hunter Byrne at the Cooper Lounge.

the urge to start singing “Don't Cry for Me Argentina.”

We decided to investigate all the nooks and crannies of the station to plan out our weekend. Our first official stop was the Cooper Lounge. Like the view from outside our room, it is located above the fray of the Great Hall and is a mid-century haven where pearly patrons sip fancy drinks. Since this is Denver, there also were a few folks in jeans.

We settled into high wingback chairs and perused the menu. While the scene had a glamorous, 1960s feel, like something out of *Mad Men*, the electronic tablet on which I read the drink specialties felt more like a *Jetsons* cartoon. This was my first digital menu experience, and I was in a trance, flipping through the options on the brightly colored screen.

We ordered expensive drinks, and they arrived on a silver platter with a side of nuts in a small, silver cup. For some reason the price of our drinks wasn't as vexing now that they had been served in this manner. A couple of days of this treatment and I'd be loath to go back to a perspiring pint glass on a cardboard coaster.

To top off an already fancy cocktail hour, we ordered oysters from the raw bar on wheels provided by Stoic & Genuine, the

seafood restaurant downstairs. Biting into a sweet and salty oyster from the Pacific Northwest, my childhood home, I was transported to a rocky beach where the cries of seagulls perforate the gray misty air. Who says you can't taste the ocean in Colorado?

We continued our opulent evening of seafood at Stoic & Genuine, where a giant, pink octopus artistically climbed along the outer wall. We dined on crab and bacon-wrapped halibut followed by a peanut butter dessert.

Back inside the Great Hall, heels clicked on stone floors as gangs of young ladies in stylish short skirts held on to each other, giggling from a fun-filled Friday night and one-too-many cocktails. We wanted to grab a drink at Terminal Bar, where patrons can order from a pass-through window or elbow their way inside the dark, wood-paneled pub, but it was too crowded. We saved it for another day and retired to our room.

DAY TWO, and we were up early watching the sun illuminate the city. Brick and steel turned a lovely shade of pink before the scene became blindingly crisp, as if someone had turned the “sharpen colors” knob to the highest setting.

The elevator doors opened to a quiet Great Hall, but as we

We set out to explore the new Union Station. Just outside our room we stopped at the balcony to gaze down on the Great Hall. I fought the urge to start singing ‘Don't Cry for me Argentina.’



# PEAK PIXELS

TIPS FROM OUR PHOTO EDITOR

## Photos and s'mores aplenty in Loveland

story and photograph by JOSHUA HARDIN

SOMETIMES PHOTOGRAPHERS' fear of working with large groups are justified. Photo shoots rarely end up being as easy as you expect, and for all your careful planning, your success often hinges on your ability to adapt and improvise. That was the case when the staff of *Colorado Life Magazine* partnered with Colorado's Sweetheart City to help produce the 2015 *Loveland Visitors Guide*.

Loveland's Visitor Service Coordinator Cindy Mackin proposed we do a photo shoot at Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch for the guide's cover. Many photographers would be skittish about having to direct a large group of models that included children wearing cowboy hats shading their faces on a sunny afternoon while riding horseback over winding mountainous trails.

Sylvan Dale, which I knew well from growing up in Loveland, is a nearly 70-year-old landmark that we almost lost in the September 2013 floods. Owners and staff have had the monumental task of rebuilding the grounds and business. All I needed to do was show up and take some pretty pictures with a post-shoot payoff of campfire hot dogs and s'mores. "No problem," I thought – sounded like fun.

After persuading family and friends to be our models, we scheduled the shoot for a mid-week evening. In true Colorado fashion, the weather intervened with a mix of rain and snow showers. We scrambled to reschedule another time when all of our models could attend while still meeting our deadline.

The next Sunday, I arrived at the ranch ahead of the models to meet Cindy, graphic designer John Metcalf and Susan Jessup, who co-owns Sylvan Dale with her brother, David, to survey the perfect locations for the photographs. We chose spots with curving gravel roads and wooden fences stretching



Lindsey Bradbury

toward a horizon of rolling sandstone buttes.

Precious daylight was burning as our models arrived, and we excitedly saddled them up in a carefully coordinated arrangement of ages, attire and horse colors. By the time we hit the trail, the sun had moved behind a cloud, and we discovered our pre-selected spots had distracting sagebrush we hadn't noticed previously. The horses grew stubborn when taken in a direction they weren't used to plodding. The riders had uncomfortable expressions because they were still getting used to their mounts. The photos I took just weren't right. It was time to throw our plan out the window again.

Susan, who knows the terrain better than anyone, offered to lead the group back toward the barn over a narrow trail along a mountain ridge. The catch was that I would need to hoof it ahead of the group with only minutes to visualize my shots before the riders appeared.

John volunteered to run alongside to look for clearings where we could set up and alert me when the models approached. Just then, the sun emerged from behind the clouds, casting golden light on the background rock walls. The horses perked their ears as they traveled familiar trails. The riders were having fun

and smiled from ear to ear. At the opposite side of the ridge, Cindy cracked up with laughter at the sight of John and me running to stay ahead of the horse string. Our cover photo resulted from this flurry of impromptu activity.

Photographers want to be in control. In our camera bags we pack flashes to manipulate lighting conditions, lenses to give us a range of possible compositions and all sorts of other technological tools that are supposed to help get us out of any jam we find ourselves in. When working with natural light that is at the mercy of the weather, animals that have minds of their own and wide open spaces where it's difficult to shout directions to models, you realize quickly that no matter how hard you hold the reins you're still just along for the ride. You might as well embrace unpredictability.

That's how the people at Sylvan Dale have survived a natural disaster that would have disheartened less hardy folk. I'd like to think this is just one example of the resiliency of Coloradans, and Lovelanders in particular.

If you ride into Loveland during your summer travels, be sure to stop at the Visitors Center at 5400 Stone Creek Circle. Pick up your copy of the guide and extra copies of *Colorado Life Magazine* to share with the friendly residents you're guaranteed to meet in my hometown.

You never know, you just might be invited for campfire s'mores at a ranch cookout. 🍪

### EMBRACING UNPREDICTABILITY

When weather and unforeseen snags dashed his original plans for the photo shoot, photographer Joshua Hardin improvised to capture this image of horses and riders on a trail at Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch.



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