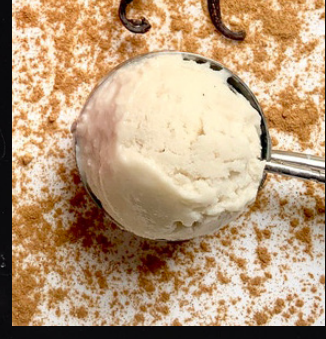


PASTRY | BAKING | CHOCOLATE | BREAD | FROZEN

# Pastry Arts

SUMMER 2020 · ISSUE 8



## SURVIVING COVID-19

Pivots, Lessons & Advice for Enduring the Global Pandemic



# A

According to the American Hotel and Lodging Association, the hospitality and leisure industry has lost as many jobs as construction, government, manufacturing, retail, education & health services – combined. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 7.7 million hospitality and leisure jobs were lost in April. Furthermore, McKinsey & Company predicts that recovery to pre-COVID-19 levels could take until 2023 or later. As scary of a thought as that might be, some have found a way to thrive – a foreign idea given the current state of the world, but a reality nonetheless. In our cover story this month, we connected with a diverse set of dessert professionals. From pastry chefs to chocolatiers, frozen dessert professionals, and professional bakers, it was our mission to uncover ways they've pivoted their operation or business to not only stay afloat, but thrive in the rapidly-shifting world. Along the way, we had them share both difficult lessons learned and advice for others to find success during the global pandemic.



**DAVID  
GUAS**

## OWNER

Bayou Bakery,  
Coffee Bar & Eatery,  
Arlington, VA

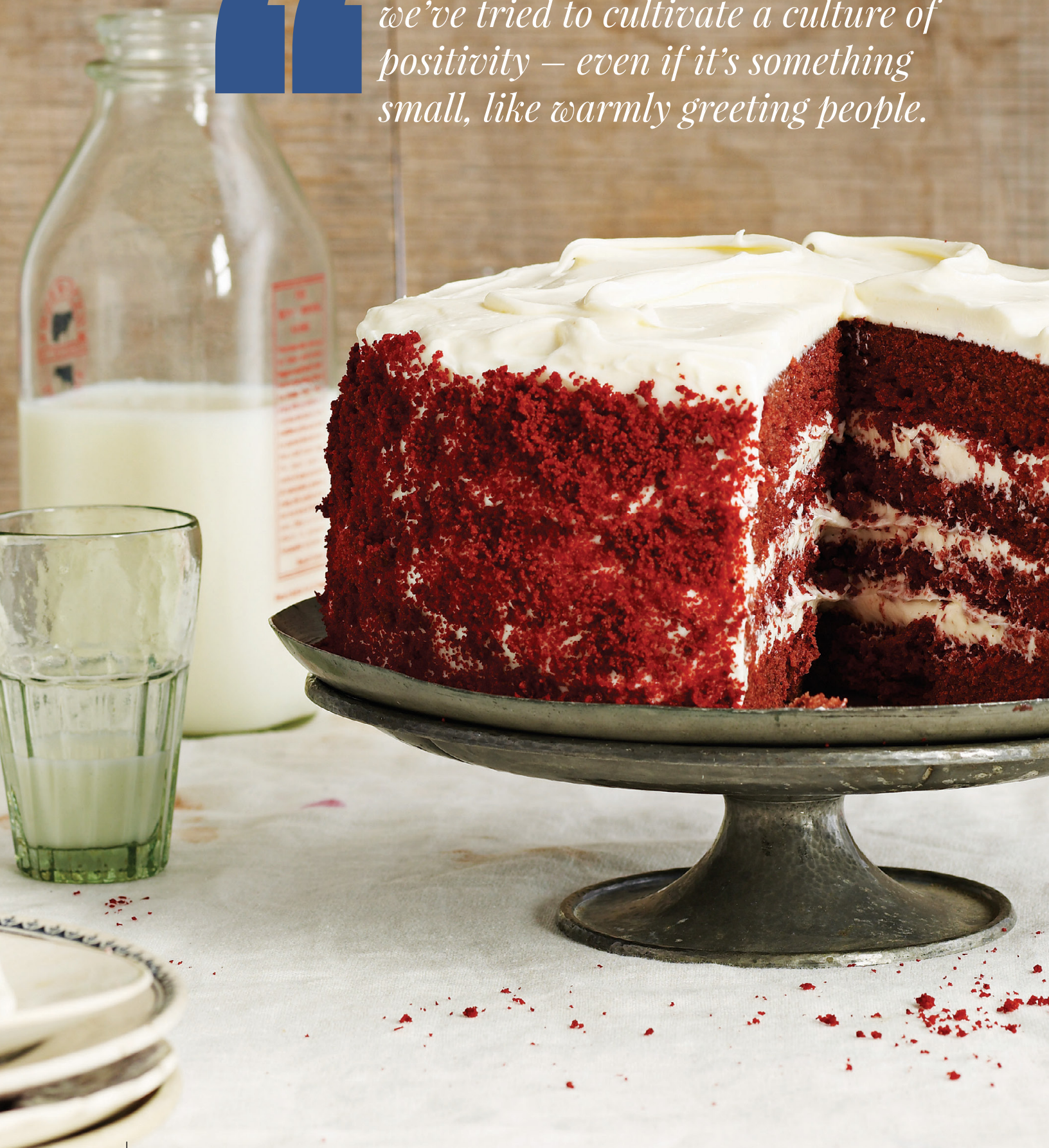
### THE COVID-19 PIVOT

As a New Orleans native, I am familiar with the importance of fast-acting relief, which is why I immediately launched a rapid response effort to feed students and their families affected by school closures. Over 8,000 children are reliant on the public school meal program in Arlington county. The initiative evolved into a long-term and wider-reaching effort, Chefs Feeding Families, in partnership with the non-profit organization Real Food For Kids. Due to increasing demand and need, we grew the project to additional distribution sites in the region. Chefs Feeding Families provides funding for food, supplies, and restaurant staff to feed as many families as possible, and creates employment opportunities within the restaurant community.





*Throughout this entire pandemic, we've tried to cultivate a culture of positivity – even if it's something small, like warmly greeting people.*



I temporarily closed the doors to ‘call-in, carryout’ service at my establishment, Bayou Bakery, Coffee Bar & Eatery, to focus on this initiative. I felt it was important to take every precaution and protect the safety of my staff and our patrons. The support for our carryout service was tremendous and heartwarming, but remaining open was also no longer sustainable. As a small business that values local sourcing, our longevity affects the ‘survival’ of our vendors, as well as our staff. But we also knew when to say ‘enough,’ for now. Currently, we are renovating for an updated and improved work environment for our team.

## PANDEMIC LESSON

Throughout this entire pandemic, we’ve tried to cultivate a culture of positivity – even if it’s something small, like warmly greeting people. I like to think people can tell when you’re smiling – even with a mask on! Beyond health and safety practices – operationally, when we reopen, we’ll be debuting a new website that will also offer online ordering of our menu.

I also felt it was important to stay connected to guests during this time. In that spirit, I launched a weekly virtual cooking demo featuring a different recipe every Friday at 12 PM across Bayou Bakery’s social media handles. Additionally, I launched the self-made web docu-series “Forbidden Feasts.” The eight-episode travelogue follows as I visit Cuba and retrace the footsteps of my father, grandfather, and great-uncle, Dr. Rafael Guas Inclan. Sharing personal footage from my trips to Cuba with my Cuban-born father has fostered such a meaningful connection with my guests. At Bayou Bakery, I pay tribute to my heritage with Havana-style specials – like our flaky Pastelitos with Guava Cream Cheese – sharing the backstory of these ancestral dishes and desserts has been a really rewarding experience that gives the menu new meaning.

## ADVICE FOR OTHERS

I really threw my energy into launching Chefs Feeding Families – it was important to find a

way to continue to serve our community and keep on as much staff as possible, even if the Bayou Bakery itself was temporarily closing. Every restaurant, baker, and chef is facing a unique set of challenges, but I’ve found the path forward begins by being community conscious.

*Photo credit: Scott Suchman & Ellen Silverman*

