

tenderloin moments

With the aid of a DCS grill and oven, a close-knit Texas foursome enjoys great food and even greater friendship

Orange peel and black pepper-crusted pork tenderloins: The name alone is enough to get your mouth watering, but wait until you get a whiff of it sizzling on Robert Rhoads' backyard grill. Robert, a plainspoken 63-year-old Texan who builds homes for a living, is all too humble when discussing his cooking talent or that special homegrown recipe of his. Still, you get the feeling he's really onto something with this dish.



by John Janowiak | photos by Dean Groover

W

While going out of his way not to boast, he mentions that many folks ask him to grill his signature tenderloins for them—for instance, the dish is the entrée of choice at the annual Christmas party thrown at Robert’s church. “I have a good recipe,” Robert concedes only after a fair amount of arm-twisting, “and I have a good following for this particular recipe.”

On a bright, sunny afternoon in September, the beneficiaries of this delectable dish are three of the closest people in the world to Robert: his wife, Susan, boyhood friend Shelton Stogner, and Shelton’s wife, Bybeth. The location could be loosely called Dallas, though technically it’s University Park, a small municipality sliced out of the center of the city to accommodate Southern Methodist University. The day is beautiful, one of those vibrant, clear early fall days perfect for entertaining guests in the yard. It’s a typical get-together for this tight-knit foursome, whose activities nearly always involve a helping of delicious eats.

Robert dove headlong into his cooking hobby about 20 years ago, learning all he could at classes and demonstrations. The more involved he got, the more he valued quality equipment, and that led him to DCS by Fisher & Paykel. “In my research I found that DCS was the best product available if you’re a serious cook,” he says. He became such a believer in the brand that he recommends it to his clients in the home-building business. As a home builder who decorates his properties and furnishes them with appliances before he sells them, he equips his homes with DCS by Fisher & Paykel ranges before he puts them on the market.

He first bought his own DCS product, a 48-inch Professional Dual Fuel Range with integral griddle, largely because of the simmer feature that allows him to cook



Robert Rhoads cooks up a good time for his friends on his DCS by Fisher & Paykel 30-inch Professional Grill and 36-inch Professional Gas Range.



at very low temperatures. “On a DCS, the intense heat flame goes completely out, and the simmer flame stays on, which simmers at about 140 degrees. It prevents your food from burning your pots and pans.”

He now owns a grill and an oven from DCS by Fisher & Paykel, both of which work overtime to keep up with Robert’s passion for cooking. In his current kitchen, he has a 36-inch Professional Gas Range with six burners, allowing him to cook at least four different items at a time, all at different temperatures. He tends to cook a variety of vegetables; today, it’s a couple of his special side dishes: cream cheese corn casserole and horseradish mashed potatoes. Another Robert Rhoads original, the mash recipe is a zesty mix of potatoes, creamed horseradish, sour cream, sharp cheddar cheese and butter. Generally speaking, Robert isn’t one to follow written recipes. “I’ve always cooked just by taste, and just what I thought would taste good.”

Out back, that good taste is eagerly awaited as the main course sizzles on Robert’s 30-inch Professional Grill. “It’s very easy to regulate the amount of heat,” he says, “and it’s an even heat covering the entire grill, without the hot spots some other grills have.” Because it’s such an even heat, Robert can utilize the entire grill surface, not just the center. He takes advantage of that feature by grilling red, orange, yellow and green bell peppers alongside the pork tenderloins.

Soon the meat cooks to a tender, succulent medium, and it’s time to dig in. They’ve all had this dish before, but they’ll never stop loving it, and there’s hardly a need to say how good it is—especially between Robert and Shelton, who have known each other so long they seem to communicate telepathically. Sometimes they’ll just shrug and start laughing at some unspoken inside joke that only they

can understand. “We’re accused on occasion by our wives of having a rather warped sense of humor,” Robert says.

It’s a hallmark of a friendship that runs long and deep, stemming back to their shared childhood in the small town of Bogota, Texas. “Our school was so small that not only did we play basketball together, we played in the band together at halftime and then finished the second half of the game,” Robert says. Both men have birthdays around Thanksgiving, and have shared many birthday celebrations, often over turkey and gravy. After their high school graduation, they attended Paris Junior College together along with Bybeth.

Susan, a high-school librarian with a high-energy personality, completed the foursome later, when Robert met and married her. She also brought her son, Brian, with her. “We cook on holidays for Brian and his wife, Amberly, the two grandkids, Susan’s sister and her family,” Robert says. “Most of the holidays are at our house because of the cooking.”

Though Bogota is a hundred miles from their current home, the group often travels there to do volunteer work for children. Besides their love of good food, helping young people is a common thread uniting this crew. Shelton runs Dallas Challenge, a nonprofit organization that helps juvenile offenders improve their life skills. Bybeth, a retired schoolteacher, helps him in that endeavor.

The foursome’s other great love is traveling, and they usually tie a vacation into the Thanksgiving birthday festivities. In recent years, they’ve traveled to

Pork Tenderloins with Orange Peel and Black Pepper Crust

2 regular sized pork tenderloins
Ground orange peel
Coarse-ground black pepper
Olive oil

Trim pork tenderloins of all fat and blue skin. Coat tenderloins with a very small amount of olive oil and pat dry with paper towels, leaving only a thin coat of oil. Mix two parts orange peel and one part coarse-ground pepper in a bowl and then coat pork tenders with mixture to form a crust over entire loin. Be sure pork tender is at room temperature and cook on grill until center temperature is between 135°F and 140°F. Remove from grill and let rest approximately 10 minutes, covered, before serving.

San Francisco and New York City. Robert enjoyed seeing the Golden Gate Bridge from Sausalito and all the wonders of The Big Apple, from Times Square to the Christmas Spectacular at Radio City Music Hall. “When you grow up in the country like Shelton and I did, seeing those places, even at our age, is still pretty awesome.”

For all they’ve seen and done, there’s nothing quite like enjoying home cooking with the best of friends. As if Robert’s main dish and sides weren’t enough, Bybeth unveils a special dessert called Mountain Mama (see recipe, page 40). It’s a layered, chocolatey delight with cream cheese, powdered sugar and pecans that has everyone raving. It doesn’t get much better than this.