



# News from Peef & Lo

## The Twangled Web of Home Ownership

Our Last Issue  
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You know, it really WAS a romantic notion that led us around to buying our house. In our minds, the idea of spending countless weekends and endless hours scraping and painting and fixing was a grande old thing. It was the utter VISION of perfection — to take something old and restore it to former beauty — and what gratifying work it would be!

Well, I can't say that the work isn't gratifying. But why didn't someone bother to tell us about the FEAR?

What fear, you ask? Well, the paralyzing kind. The kind that hits you in the middle of fixing your sink — when you realize that there's a remote possibility that if you tighten one of the pipes ever-so-slightly TOO much that you might find gallons of water somewhere in your basement the next morning. It's the fear that you're going to caulk your windows SHUT, rather than simply sealing out the wind and rain. It's the fear that somehow, you're going to do just as bad of a job on one of these home improvement projects as the crazy people who lived in the house BEFORE you — you know, the ones who thought it was a great idea to wallpaper OVER the old wallpaper... and then paint on top of that!

The FEAR is real. And it has no mercy.

It struck again as we were slaving away at the oh-so-appealing job of recaulking four windows on the front of the house this past October. Initially, the fear disguised itself as annoyance. Chipping out layers

of 30-year-old caulk is about as much fun as ... well, it's not fun at all. It actually resembles WORK — and actually probably something far more evil. When we finished THAT job, cleaned off our surface and started to RE-caulk, the FEAR hit. What if we goop up the windows? What if the caulk doesn't adhere? What if we are doing things ALL wrong? What if the warranty on the caulk isn't really good for as long as they say it should be? Will we be cursing ourselves in five years as we rip out that massive bead of caulk we are laying?? Are the neighbors secretly snickering and laughing at us?

Lo can testify that being a perfectionist in any way, shape, or form does NOT help the fear to go away. It actually serves to intensify it. And ultimately, what starts off being a simple (and maybe even FUN) home improvement task starts to seem like something huge and unsurpassable.

These days the fear rears its ugly head most around the topic of our new roof and gutters. FINALLY, we have secured the money to attempt this huge project. FINALLY, we're making some progress. And now we're paralyzed by the sheer magnitude of it.

We have a finished attic. How will we KNOW if there is a leak in the roof after we have the new one put on? Will we have to inspect every inch of the ceiling EVERY morning for the next two years until we are satisfied that there is no HINT of dampness up there? What if the gutters they put on don't

work properly? What if we were better off keeping the beautiful old, original ones?

And what about that home equity loan? Are the terms fair? Will we ever pay it off? Will our house be worth enough when we sell it for us to recoup our losses? Are we being good stewards of our money?? UGH.

Our brains fill with nothing but questions. Not small questions. Not insignificant questions. BIG, unanswerable "what-ifs."

This FEAR is the worst form of buyer's remorse EVER. It strikes without warning and destroys an otherwise perfectly good home-improvement experience.

On the up-side, there is satisfaction in a job well done. There's that warm, fuzzy feeling when you stand back from the job and take a good hard look at it at the end. And there's a really good feeling when you finally have a chance to pull your weary body back into the house and sit DOWN to rest after working yourself to the bone all day long.

It's just too bad that one can never REALLY be sure if the job IS well done. Sure, it looks nice. And yeah, it seems to function. You might even be able to fool someone into thinking a professional did it. But how do we KNOW it's really fixed? What if it's all a big conspiracy? What's going to fall apart next? And how are we going to fix it all? Will we ever see the end of the tunnel?

WHY ARE YOU LAUGHING??

### GREAT QUOTE:

*"To us, our house was not unsentient matter - it had a heart and a soul and eyes to see us with and approvals and solitudes and deep sympathies; it was of us and we were in its confidence and lived in its grace and in the peace of its benediction. We never came home from an absence that its face did not light up and speak out its eloquent welcome and we could not enter unmoved."*

-Mark Twain, 1896



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# SEEMINGLY INANE PLANS CONTINUE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF IMAGINARY RESTAURANT



You might remember where it all started — with the demise of the ever-famous JAKE's restaurant on North Avenue. You would've read about it in the March 2003 edition of *NEWS FROM PEEF & LO* — ***"It would be SO cool. We could have a restaurant SLASH coffee and jazz bar. During the week we would just serve appetizers and drinks and coffee. And we'd feature little live quartets and ensembles for entertainment. And on weekends, we would have a full-blown gourmet menu..."***

***"BURP!... The name evoked a sense of dietary satisfaction. It was a bit rough — but definitely not too derogatory. And it definitely didn't make the place sound stuffy... We could establish it as a place for GOOD food, GOOD times, and free thinking"***

I'm sure that there are those who secretly hoped that the dream would pass along into oblivion without another word (namely Steph, who has to hear about all of our corny plans when she comes over to our house for dinner). But Peef and Lo couldn't let that happen. It was just too fascinating. Too overpowering.

The truth of the matter is that since last March, we've spent many fond evenings chatting about dishes that should be

featured on the BURP! menu... color schemes for the dining area... and names for drink specials that might be served during our happy hour (we even tried out a really BAD recipe for the "kiwi-tini" which we thought would make a stunning addition to the drink menu).

We've actually started to develop a little repertoire for our imaginary menus. Criteria for judging any recipes we make lately has been: "So, do you think we could serve this at BURP!?" If the recipe passes that litmus test, we file it away in our brains to repeat later. If not, the recipe goes straight into the trash.

And some semblance of neurosis has begun to filter down into our daily lives. One plan that was actually verbalized during the waning moments of summer was to test out a variety of corn chowders to be featured on the "soups and starters" portion of the menu... but alas, somehow fresh sweet corn season passed and we didn't get a chance to perfect our corn stock. Pretty frustrating, but we're coping.

More recently, we've been experimenting with gnocchi recipes (see the article on the following page if you're interested) that we figure might be candidates for the menu. We're actually meeting with some success, and we hope to have 2-3 recipes

ready to go by the end of the winter gnocchi season.

Many times it has crossed our minds that we really ought to be writing all of our ideas down in some sort of notebook — recording it, if for no other reason than because it might be amusing for us to peruse again during our Golden Years. Thus far, we haven't gotten started on such a thing. But it seems to be the inevitable "next step."

After all, the idea of BURP! really came up as kind of a joke — a random musing on a dull night. But somehow, the dream has stuck. And it won't go away. So, I guess we're somewhat obligated to cultivate it. The way we have it figured, staying home and thinking about menu items will keep us from any number of other self-deprecating activities. It's kind of like our anti-drug, so to speak. So, I think there could be a real future in this pastime.

I mean, come on — an imaginary restaurant. There are weirder things.... Right?

# BOY FREED AFTER LONG LAST: GIRL IMPRISONED

Stuff has happened recently. And Peef and Lo want you to know about it!

So... the good news is that, as of November 15th, Paul is free and clear of his obligations to the second shift lifestyle. No more eternal leftovers. No more eating lunch for dinner and dinner for lunch. No more leaving for work at noon and coming home just in time to go to bed at night.

He is thrilled and twitter-pated. And Lo, the very supportive wife in this equation, is equally excited. After all, this means that she will finally have a husband again after months of doing without. What this means, of course, is that Peef and Lo can now have dinner TOGETHER at night. They can even spend time washing the pots and pans after dinner — and having long, meaningful conversations like they



used to — instead of racing to fit every important discussion into the hour between 9:30-10:30 each evening.

The other news is that Lo has decided it's time to pursue yet another round of higher learning... so she's signed up for another turn at the whole graduate school fandango. She'll be trading copious amounts of free time for loads of reading. Nice evenings of cooking and washing pots and pans for three hour evening lectures. She'll be soon sacrificing her weekends to the idea of writing a thesis.

Even more remarkable than her willingness to subject herself to the wiles of the ivory tower is that the academy (namely the College of Communications at Marquette) actually agreed to let her join them. Yup, yup. She got a letter on Saturday confirming just that. They even welcomed her to apply for a variety of

financial aid — which Lo wishes could be used to pay for the roof on the house, rather than tuition :)

So, there it is. Do with it as you must.

With the holidays coming up, there's also a bit of hustle and bustle going on in the Fredrich household. Our goal for this year is to keep Christmas from becoming a commercialized fiasco. So, we're keeping things simple this year. But with Martha Stewart in the slammer, we do feel some obligation to be at least remotely creative with our time between now and Christmas. So, we're getting our brains in gear and trying to come up with some nice little projects — you know, to fill up all of that free time that Lori has until she starts school in January!

Speaking of the holidays — we want to wish you all a blessed, blessed season. We'll see many of you... but to those who are far away, we wish you all the very best. Hugs, kisses, and plenty of sugar to you... from us.

## What is Gnu? Gnocchi.

So, what's it like during the weekends at Peef and Lo's house? Well, I'm glad that you asked. Because it's a really darned good time.

First, we start off by cleaning stuff. Usually the floors and the furniture. We wipe down the bathrooms. We make sure our living space doesn't look like it's been inhabited by wild dingoes. And then we collapse.

When we wake up, we take a nice long trip to the grocery store — recreational shopping, we call it. The project generally takes between 2-3 hours and covers anywhere between 1-4 stores.

Once all the goodies are gathered, then the REAL weekend event begins. Peef and Lo sit down and plan out a couple of menus. And then they begin cooking.

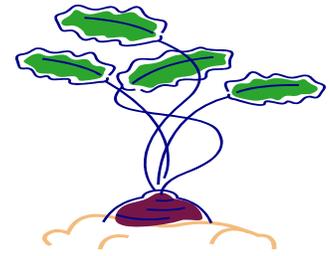
Sometimes the festivities begin with Peef gallivanting over to the stereo to pick out some tunes. Most of the time, it's bound to be jazz. But every so often, he goes crazy and puts in a little bit of electronica. That really gets the party started... and it usually means that Lo is going to do something as exciting as cutting her finger while chopping or burning herself while retrieving a pan from the oven. But you didn't hear that from us. :)

Recently, the dish of the moment is gnocchi — lovely little Italian dumplings, usually swathed in boatloads of butter (though we have learned that half a boatload of butter works just magnificently).

The first weekend, it was a batch of beet gnocchi. Some of you are gagging right now; I can feel it. But these aren't your grandmother's stewed beets. Instead, imagine a batch of beautiful, deeply fuchsia-colored gnocchi, slightly sweet, bathed in something as nutty and wonderful as rosemary browned butter. Positively fabulous stuff. Honest. And I'll bet kids wouldn't bat their eyelashes at these, since they're so fabulously pretty.

For those of you who cannot, in any universe, be tempted to eat beets, we have another option. How about butternut squash gnocchi caressed by a round of sage browned butter with a hint of garlic? They're the most friendly shade of autumn orange — and they'd be quite pleasant with a nice side of pork (if you are carnivorously inclined). We ate them with a bit of salmon, which was also quite nice.

Now, now. I see you're coming around. Maybe you're actually contemplating



setting aside a bit of time to make your OWN gnocchi. And that's absolutely lovely. Keep on with that thought.

In the meantime, I'd like to finish off our little weekend scenario. So, there's cleaning and shopping and fantastic music and delectable gnocchi... and trust us, not much else. By the time we've finished our gnocchi and eaten it, it's quite close to bedtime.

Sure, we get up in time for church the next morning. And yes, sometimes we even enjoy a leisurely brunch. We read the Sunday edition of the newspaper, clip coupons, and peruse a few cookbooks in anticipation of another week of cooking. But the real POINT of it all has passed. It's that extraordinary Saturday meal that sticks in our minds all week long. And it's the meal on the following Saturday that has our hearts pumping as we approach Wednesday.

Cool, huh?

*Yeah, well. Who asked you anyhow?*

## Purses for Cats and Cat Shaped Purses

You think you've seen it all, and then somebody sends you a link to PetSmart. You link to the page, hoping to find something cute and clever. And instead you find an entire line of Barbie accessories. But these weren't just ANY Barbie accessories — they were made specifically FOR CATS.

There is the ever-popular powder pink Barbie crinkle sack, the Barbie cat carrier, the little pink Barbie mice, a Barbie argyle pet bed, and even a very special Barbie purse filled with catnip! And all of these cute little toys are all available in the low price range of \$2.99 to \$39.99.

Now, I understand perfectly well why there are Barbie accessories. Little kids get a real kick out of this stuff. They dress up their Barbie dolls — and (of course!) they need high heels and purses to go with the crazy polka dotted evening gowns and feather boas. But cats?? Why?

We have some pretty intelligent cats at our house, but even so I'm not sure that they can actually tell the difference between a pink, feathery, Barbie-styled mouse and a regular old ratty grey one from Wal-Mart.

Now, Paul figures Zoë would be ALL over the idea of a pink feathery purse with silver accents... and I agree that she'd probably be intrigued. But we also both know that Elmo would be all over the same pink feathery purse — simply because it's filled with catnip. Now, that brings up an interesting dilemma. Does that mean that Elmo is a bit confused about his male/female orientation? NO. It simply means that older male cats have addictive personalities and will do anything for a bit of catnip.

Anyhow, we're not yet convinced that cats really care about pink purses. And hereby, the jury is still out on Barbie cat toys.

There are some interesting PEOPLE toys out there too, though. Take for instance the fuzzy pink and purple Barbie CAT purse that I found online (Picture in top right corner). What's up with THAT?? It's pretty ugly for one thing. And for another... it's a bit scary, don't you think?

**MOM:** "Come-on Betsy. Just unzip the cute little kitty's back and put your Kleenexes in there, sweetie."

**BETSY:** "OK, mom! ... Hey MOM, why is the kitty SCOWLING like that?"

I'm just not sure that a stuffed cat who is dyed pink and looks like she's in pain is really sending the right message to our kids, ya know?



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AMOR SITIS UNITI!

