



Donkey DREAMS

Story & Photography by Katherine Dunn

When you think of fresh baked pie, don't you just think of ...
a donkey? I do.

Early Pie Baker

I must have been about 8 years old when I made my first pie and I remember it was banana cream. I vaguely remember my mother warning me that this was not the easiest pie for a novice to try and bake, but I forged ahead. The runny interior and the chewy crust were a great disappointment, and I remember coming out to check on it throughout the day, hoping the refrigerator had somehow improved it over time. I went on to become an avid baker, and to this day, baked items are my bliss.



To me, the pie is an elegant pastry ... it conjures up memories of relatives, times gone by ... and best of all, when consumed, the pie coats the stomach with early delights. While I am grounded enough to understand that baked items do not replace love, they certainly bring great joy — the smells, the tastes, the process of mixing ingredients of the earth together to make something so delicious.

A Gift of Love

Fast forward to the year 2002, when I was 44 years old. I had left my homeland of Minneapolis for a fresh new life in the town of Portland. I moved into a charming little bungalow, and that very day, met my charming next door neighbor. He was a landscaper, and had come over to introduce himself while the moving van was still unloading. We shared a passion for gardens, and friendship grew into dating.

One hot summer day, as I sat on my patio trying to stay cool, I heard a rustling in the neighboring cherry trees. It sounded much too big to be a cat, or squirrel. I finally realized that it was my beloved, shaking out cherries from his tree. It was over 95 degrees, and the fact he was up in a tree exerting any kind of energy had me boggled. Soon, he arrived at my patio and presented a large bowl of cherries to me, like a proud hunter. “I thought these cherries would make you feel better in the heat,” he said. It was at that moment I knew I would marry him.

The man climbed a tree in a heat wave for 30 minutes and gathered me food. This was surely an act of love.

The next day the heat subsided, and I still had many of my cherries left. I would return the act of love by taking my fresh cherry harvest and baking a pie — with lattice top of course. Pitting the cherries, taking time to nurture and roll the dough ... it all added up to doing something for another, knowing they would eat it, and experience the taste, the full stomach, the aftermath of contentment. As he walked in the door that night and saw the pie, his eyes registered joy. “I love cherry pie more than most any other pie,” he said.

One month later, he said he was going to marry me. I am quite convinced the unselfish act of both harvesting cherries in a heat wave, and taking the time to make a pie in return, defined our relationship.

Apifera Farm

With my new pie-loving husband, I moved to Apifera Farm in 2004. We intended to grow lavender, raise food for ourselves and be surrounded by animals and land. My studio looks out now on pastures and paddocks, with sheep, lambs, a horse, and some goats wandering and grazing. Living on a farm had been a dream for me since I was 5 years old. As an artist, I soaked up the smells, sounds and sights each day, and let them flow out on paper or canvas. The animals and land were my constant muses. My life was good.

But one day it got even better. That was the day I brought home a donkey.



Have Donkey, Will Deliver

I became enamored by mini donkeys after meeting one at a nearby farm. From the day I touched that donkey, I just had to bring him home. His name was Pino Blangiforti and he had energy that drew people to stop and stand still with him. Certain animals have “the pull,” a gravitational force that seeks you out, somehow emitting a calmness that soaks into you and makes you feel lifted after you leave. I knew I was in the presence of a life journeyer with Pino. He oozed wisdom, even though he spoke no words.

I know, it’s an odd leap to go from having a little donkey to delivering pie with him. To be honest, I can’t explain it that well.

When we moved to the farm in 2004, I had years of pent up dreams — like having a horse, or gathering eggs, or wearing aprons on any occasion. Somewhere in there, I remember thinking, “I want to bake a pie and deliver it to someone, in a vintage basket, with a checkered red cloth covering it.” And as I visualized the joy of surprising my neighbors with my home baked pie, I just saw Pino being at my side. Not the sheep, not my horse, not my dog, not my husband, but Pino — my donkey.

I’ve learned not to question these inspirational video clips too much, and as I’ve aged, wisdom has taught me not to disrespect them. Something bigger than me and Pino was urging me to bake pies and share them.

Anticipation

If you have ever walked with a donkey, you know they do everything very S-L-O-W-L-Y. I had underestimated the weight of the pie in my egg basket. While I am not a weak person, guiding Pino with one hand and carrying the pie so it didn’t shake too much proved to be a mild workout. But the anticipation of delivering the first pie, the surprise of it, the fact my donkey would be there too, with his little hooves painted with daisies, it was just plain thrilling. It was like I had a giant secret, and no one knew but me and my loyal donkey. I once delivered a pie to the same neighbor mentioned above, without Pino.

“Where’s Pino?” they asked. I learned quickly, once you deliver a pie with the donkey, they want the next pie with the donkey.

Pino’s Got Mail

After just a couple of pie deliveries, after seeing how happy it made people, I realized I had to share this simple idea with as many people as I could. Soon, I realized Pino and I needed a separate blog. So I began Donkey Dreams (www.donkey-dreams.blogspot.com), a blog to chronicle Pino’s pie-related efforts.

I wondered: If Pino and I could spread love one pie at a time, why couldn’t others? If our small effort could inspire one person to take a pie to a lonely elderly person, how wonderful





it would be. I have not given up on finding a way to take Pino to the people, but right now we have no trailer, and it is not feasible. I do have this dream of having a fixed-up wagon with Dutch doors that will transport me and Pino, and our pies. This dream is bound to get somewhere because there are letters that continue to arrive addressed to “Pino Blangiforti.”

One Bite at a Time

I think the world is a wonderful connection of living beings and creatures. Many people live their lives in the fast lane by choice, some do so to make ends meet. But we all have the ability to take one hour to make a pie, even if it's once a year. It slows the baker down, it slows the eater down. It fills the baker with excitement of delivering the treat, and it makes the recipient feel so special. Not everyone can have a donkey at their side when they deliver a pie, but they can have the same intention in their heart. Pie makes the world feel safer, in a tiny bit of time. One bite at a time. 🍪

To learn more about Pino, visit his blog at www.donkey-dreams.blogspot.com. To learn more about Katherine Dunn, visit her Web site www.katherinedunn.us or her blog at www.apiferafarm.blogspot.com.



