

Up Close: Andrea Meyers



By [Charity Corkey](#)
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Andrea Meyers has sampled cuisine across the globe: fresh seafood in Saipan, shawarmas in Saudi Arabia and her favorite, a chicken and potato soup called Ajiaco Bogatano, in Colombia.

Originally from Southwestern Virginia, Meyers moved to Loudoun with her husband Michael and their three sons in March 2007.

Her passion for food and creating recipes led the 42-year-old Loudoun mom to create a blog. Today, that blog, [Andrea's Recipes](#), receives more than 40,000 page views a month.

In this e-mail interview, Meyers shared with us her worst kitchen disaster, her childhood memories of Southern cooking and how she recreates foreign recipes at home.

Q: When did you start blogging about food, and why?

A: My cooking blog started as a hobby six years ago, a way for me to keep track of our favorite recipes online. I never intended to start a blog. I decided to use WordPress as a content management system and never thought anyone would visit the site. In fact I was so new to the blogging software that I didn't realize the site had visitors until someone left a comment on one of my early posts. I felt mortified because the site was very bare, with no photos or anything to make it look inviting, so I started working on the design and began shooting photos of the dishes I cooked. My husband had encouraged me to write a cookbook for our children, and in a way the site became our family's online cookbook.

Q: How often do you blog and what kind of response from readers do you get? Are your readers mostly Loudouners and other Northern Virginians?

A: I try to write two recipes and one edible gardening post per week, though I would like to post more often. My readers seem very supportive of the site and reach out via their comments and e-mails. The site has readers from all over the world, some as far away as Singapore and Australia, but about 60 percent are from the United States. Most readers seem to originate from major metropolitan areas such as Chicago, New York, San Francisco, London, Toronto and Seattle.

Q: We've noticed that you have ads on your blog. Tell us a little bit about how your blog generates revenue.

A: Like many blogs, I have affiliations with ad networks, and for the most

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though some networks have an auction-style format where advertisers bid on ad space. I also work with a few online retail affiliate programs that offer commissions, including Amazon.com and Tienda.com.

Q: What are the best/worst things about blogging?

A: Blogging has provided a creative outlet for my writing and photography, and managing the site myself allows me to keep one hand in the technology world while staying home with my boys. By far the best thing is all the wonderful people I've met virtually and in real life through blogging. One of the hardest parts of blogging is managing my expectations. I find myself with many ideas and craving more time to work on the site.

Q: How old were you when you made your first dish? Was it a success?

A: I had no interest in cooking when I was young, and I can't even remember the first dish I made, though I'm quite sure it was not a success.

Q: What is the worst kitchen disaster you've had?

A: I've had my share, and I actually wrote about my Top 10 Culinary Flops during my first year blogging. I think dropping my husband's birthday cake a few years ago qualifies as the worst thing that has ever happened in our kitchen.

Q: On your blog, you write that you are from the South. What Southern meals inspired you to pursue cooking?

A: Even though I grew up in the Midwest, my parents brought the South with them and their Southern upbringing was consistently reflected in our home. There are farmers on both sides of our family tree, so that had an impact as well. My mother and grandmothers made many things that I wanted to learn, but Southern country-style breakfasts were a big inspiration. For them, it was the big meal of the day, and my paternal grandmother filled the breakfast table with two or three kinds of meat, biscuits, gravy, sliced tomatoes and homemade jellies and jams, and apple butter. I still can't quite imitate my grandmother's fried chicken, but I can come pretty close to her biscuits and gravy. I wish I had spent more time in the kitchen with my mother and grandmothers when I was young.



Photo: Charity Corkey

Andrea Meyers works in her kitchen in Aldie. Meyers writes a blog where she shares her favorite recipes from the South and around the world.

Q: What professional chef do you admire most?

A: It's difficult to choose just one. I admire Rick Bayless (Frontera Grill, Chicago) and his approach to authentic Mexican foods and Todd Gray (Equinox, D.C.) for his focus on seasonal and local foods. I also have a great deal of admiration for Tony Geraci, the chef who runs the meals program in Baltimore schools. He has worked hard to raise the bar on the quality of the food served to children.

Q: In your blog, you refer to your three sons with nicknames - Bob the Builder, Top Gun and Monkey Boy. Why is that?

A: We wanted some way to protect our children's privacy, especially as they grow older, so we chose to use nicknames and not post photos of

them. Some photos show their hands as they roll dough or help in other ways, but that's all we show.

Q: Of the dishes that you make, what are your sons' favorites?

A: Our boys enjoy homemade artisan breads and chicken noodle soup, and they always get excited when I break out the ice cream freezer. They also like to help make pizza and have had lots of practice rolling dough.

Q: And your husband's?

A: He says it's a tie between my chicken tortilla soup and the inside-out German chocolate cake I made for his birthday last year.

Q: Tell us about the best foods you have sampled in other countries. Have you attempted to recreate these recipes at home?

A: Working overseas for eight years gave me many opportunities to enjoy the foods in the Pacific, South America, the Middle East and Asia. Saipan offered a wonderful introduction to really fresh seafood, something I was not accustomed to growing up in the Midwest. I fell in love with the beef in Colombia, and flat breads and shawarmas in Saudi Arabia. My favorite dish from my years overseas is Ajjaco Bogotáno, a chicken and potato soup from Colombia. I spent quite a bit of time trying to recreate the recipe, which calls for a potato not grown in the U.S. as well as a weed not commonly used in cooking here, and I think the outcome was pretty successful. Making my favorite international foods is usually easy because of the many international markets and availability of ingredients here in the D.C. metro area.

Q: What is your favorite restaurant in Loudoun?

A: With three young boys we rarely eat out, but I enjoy Grand Thai & Sushi in South Riding.

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Q: Tell us something about yourself that would surprise your friends and neighbors.

A: I haven't always had a green thumb. I've inadvertently killed hundreds of plants in my quest to grow our own herbs, vegetables and fruits.

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