



### Beaufort's Best Caterer Celebrates Two Decades

By Mark Shaffer

In my nine-plus years as part of the *Lowcountry Weekly* family I've shared more than a few culinary adventures with

**Debbi**

**Covington**

Beaufort's best caterer has lent her exceptional palate, eye for detail and considerable wit to many a Moveable Feast and Burger Beat. And she's always game for another, which makes my job easier.

Over the years I've come to know some things about my colleague and friend. She is fiercely loyal and naturally driven. She probably would not call herself an artist, but look at her last cookbook and tell me otherwise. She loves her cats, husband Vince, a good party and a fine bourbon. Not necessarily in that order.

And when she's not catering big weddings and grand soirees, composing her column or hammering away at another cookbook, she can occasionally be coaxed out for a cocktail and some shop talk. On the occasion of her 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the catering business we met in the lounge at Breakwater Restaurant & Bar to look back on a storied career that almost didn't happen . . .

## Catered to Perfection

Written by Mark Shaffer  
Tuesday, 27 June 2017 12:53

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Mark Shaffer: looking back on twenty years in catering, what springs to mind?

Debbi Covington: How fast time has gone by. 20 years has flown by and I have the notebooks



full of menus to prove it. I don't know how many weddings I've done. I have no idea how many parties I've done. None at all.

MS: Care to "guesstimate" how many weddings?

DC: Oh, gosh. No idea. It varies per year. I figure roughly 200 maybe?

MS: I'm calling that a lowball figure.

(Laughter)

DC: Well, yeah.

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MS: This isn't initially what you started out to do.

DC: Oh, no! Although I always loved to cook. My mother was a home economics teacher and she was a church hostess when she was pregnant with me and after that she quit work to be a stay at home mom. There was always cooking going on.

But no, my degree's in Business Administration. My background is marketing and advertising design. In North Carolina, I worked in personnel management, hiring and firing people for a temp agency and I worked for newspapers and magazines selling advertising. But when I got to Beaufort there weren't any opportunities like that.

MS: And what brought you to Beaufort?

DC: When Vince and I got married. Vince's dad owned Broad River Seafood. That's what brought Vince to Beaufort. He didn't grow up here either. He got a job working on Morgan Island with the monkeys and was making pretty good money. So, I went to Budget Print to run off my resume and David hired me on the spot. I worked there for 5 or 6 months and met everybody in the whole town. Back then not everyone had their own copiers and that place was hopping all the time. I got to know everybody. Beaufort was a lot smaller 20 years ago.



MS: So, where's the catering connection?

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DC: I started working at First Presbyterian Church and IÃ¢â¬ÅÃ¢â¬ÅÃ¢â¬Å d been there about 5 years, which was a good job for me because I was doing the accounting, the bulletins, and laying out the newsletter. I got a chance to try everything as a kind of jack of all trades, and I learned a lot.

And Betty Waskiewicz, who's the queen mother of First Presbyterian -Ã¢â¬Å no one would dispute me on that - was turning 70. She and her husband were also celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. My minister wanted to plan a reception for them and I offered to do the food. He gave me this little tiny amount of money and I did the food and [another couple] asked if I would cater something for a financial group that met at their home. And that was it. I'Ã¢â¬Å ve been busy ever since.

MS: And you celebrated your 20<sup>th</sup> year in the business by revisiting your first client.

DC: I just catered Betty's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party. I actually cooked in her kitchen this time which she never would've allowed back then. It was fun and a real honor because it all kind of came full circle. I love her.

MS: Did that come with a surreal sense of deja vu?

DC: Not so much because she doesn't look any different. I'Ã¢â¬Å m the one who got older.

(Laughs) It was fun. Every time I've been to Betty's house, she's cooked and I've been a guest

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