



VIC CLEVENGER

Chimney Cartel
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A great year with some fantastic experiences is how I will remember 2019 as I look back at yet another year passing by. Flying with an alligator in checked baggage to a couple states who don't often get to enjoy this cooked delicacy is a fun story to tell. Seeing the Chimney Cartel begin to really catch fire has been (and continues to be) exciting to experience. Watching my grandson continue to grow and keep his parents on their toes with his daily adventures while I just sit back laughing.

As each of us look back over this expired year, many of us will do it with laughter, wonder and maybe a few tears but that is what makes this brand-new year so exciting. I remember watching the Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer's New Years show, Rudolph's Shiny New Year, where the New Year is depicted as a baby. Perhaps using an innocent baby is the best way to describe a new year. Everything is brand new and they're fearless in discovering the adventures awaiting them. They see no limits in front of them, just new goals in which to conquer. But how does this translate for us as cooks? I suggest we look at 2020 with the adventurous eye of a baby as we discover new heights in in our culinary journey.

New Adventures Means Climbing Over Obstacles

Raising kids means putting up barriers to keep them safe and sometimes to keep them contained. Our experience, as adults, tells us if we don't have a gate at the top of the stairs the baby could fall down them. These same gates are also used to keep them in a certain area because, well, let's face it, they're energy wears us out. The constant up and down chasing them is worse than going to a gym, so up the gates go. However, if you've been around toddlers then you know their main job is to climb over any obstacle in their way. Their baby language mantra is, "I will not be contained!"

Sometimes I feel the same way with my cooking. I will cook the same thing in the same way because it's what I know, it's what is 'right' and it works. Cooking with the adage, "If it's not broke, don't fix it." Placing my own barriers preventing me from growing as an outdoor cook. But what fun is that? When I watch my grandson as he faces barriers, I realize, he doesn't play it safe. Great

New Year= New Adventures



cooks are just like a toddler, not content to be in a box, nor play it safe. They are out for the growth which comes from the freedom of climbing over the obstacles.

New Adventures Mean Discovery

When Christopher Columbus set sail, his goal was to get to India by going West which most thought would end by being eaten by the Sea Monster who lived at the Horizon. Well, we all know how that turned out. Galileo found himself in jail because he had the nerve to publish his discovery that the earth orbited the Sun and not the other way around. The list is limitless of people who sought the adventure of discovery, Lindbergh, Fleming, Edison, Aldrin are just a few names who changed the course of life because of their discoveries.

Sous vide has been around since the 60s but more and more cooks, even BBQ folk, are discovering this way of infusing flavors while cooking. Black garlic has also been around for centuries, but recently it has gained popularity in the culinary world. Can't argue with the popularity of pellet cookers which are a result of adventurers trying to discover how to make low and slow easier while keeping the smoke. One of the biggest examples is the Weber Kettle (read the whole story) which began as a idea of George Stephen as he worked for Weber Brothers Metal Works as he discovered the buoy would make a great grill.

New Adventures Means Rewards, Not Just Awards

You've witnessed a baby who keeps trying to get somewhere and once they've accomplished it someone says, "Ahhh, look how proud he is of himself. It's so cute." Perhaps you've even said it of your child. There's no award for their accomplishment but there is a great reward in it for them. There's a huge difference in the two; one sits on a shelf and the other gives satisfaction. There may be a fine line in the two which depends greatly on your goals and motivation, but for a toddler, just getting what they've set their mind on is enough. When my grandson strums the guitar in the corner or bangs a few keys on the piano he'll applaud for himself because he knows he accomplished something, he played a "song".

Many reading this are competition cooks who have enjoyed many walks across the stage and it really feels great. But why? Is it the trophy, the applause from peers or the thrill of hearing your team name called? Sure, that's part of it, but I contend, it's more for the reward of setting and accomplishing the goal which means more. I've seen many a champion become a teacher and then when their student holds a trophy high, the teacher is just as excited as if they were doing it themselves.

As we sit here, just a few days into 2020, our brand-new year is chalk full of brand new adventures and I hope you get to have every adventure in this new year that you can.