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# THE RUBBER BAND DOOR KNOB

June 3, 2015



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ACF Windy City Professional Culinaricians, founded in Chicago in 2003, is one of the fastest-growing chapters of the American Culinary Federation (ACF). Click [here](#) for more information.

## A Confession

I wanted to write about the retirement of Frank E. Lee from WXRT in Chicago and the influence of music and food. One part of my life is listening to music and cooking together; it is an amazing thing. When I moved back to Chicago after living in Florida for many years, WXRT played a big part of making me feel that I was home again. The day I drove into Chicago more than 15 years ago, Frank was on the radio and he made it a memorable drive up the Dan Ryan. God bless the "Leettes." The music he played was the story of our lives. It wasn't just the latest pop chart sensation; it was music with passion made by really artistic musicians. It created memories of that time and place in your life. Music is just like aromas of food, which have a way of bringing you back to a place and time, like a memorable meal in your mom's kitchen. Songs can make you feel happy as well as stir a lot of emotions. When I cook, I must confess I love putting on headphones or turning up the surround sound. My music selection varies from a whole range of choices from '80s Hip Hop, Punk, Ska, and Frank Sinatra to the ever-present Johnny Cash. If you have Pandora, you know what I'm talking about. Just like Kevin Bacon, it all comes back around somehow. Listening to great songs makes me focus on my inner creativity to get going in the kitchen. I must admit, most of the time I am also barefoot. However, admitting that I am a shoeless chef who listens to Chuck Berry crank out "Brown Eyed Handsome Man" while I roll out homemade ricotta gnocchi isn't my confession.

My confession is that I occasionally still eat at McDonald's! How does that relate to music? What?! First of all, I was "shamed" into this confession by a good friend. (You know who you are, I really don't need to hide that fact.) If you travel, sometimes McDonald's is the only choice. Do I choose to put it in on the top 10 lists of good dining decisions, no! Those of you who are my age may remember the great days of early AM radio, listening to Skynard, Zeppelin and ELO on the 8-track stereo. I bet many of you ate a Big Mac and fries in the back seat of a woody station wagon.

In our youth, we probably had our share of our Happy Meals, very hot apple pies and even the McDLT. We ate, enjoyed and listened to the world go by. We are still here



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Check out this great magazine, [Four](#).



Eater is the source for people who care about dining and drinking in the nation's most important food cities, like Chicago. A favorite of industry pros and amateurs alike, Eater has an uncanny knack for finding out what's opening where, who's serving what, and how it's all going down. Find out [what's new](#) in Chicago.

and hopefully none the worse for doing so. The question now becomes why was McDonald's okay then and not now. They became the largest restaurant in business for a reason. As we have become educated about the food we eat, McDonald's has become the poster child of what not to serve in a restaurant. The serving of massed produced burgers with the same half-life of most low-grade radioactive materials is not a good perception. I try to be an optimist and have to believe that they have made some culinary decisions always trying to keep these particular dining moments good ones for a majority of Americans. If you think about our troops who we just celebrated this past Memorial Day, there is a McDonald's somewhere close to them. Is it good marketing or is it a place that makes them feel close to home and safe? That's what I like the most about McDonald's. It is a known entity and something consistent in our lives whether we like it or not. I am not asking you to convert or even admit that you might even enjoy a Quarter Pounder on occasions, but to accept for whatever reason it is a part of who we are. It is just like another song stuck in our head that you happen to know all the words to.

Whether I am cooking barefoot for my family, friends or wearing a uniform and shoes in a professional kitchen, I try to find a playlist of music and ingredients that both become an inspiration in my cooking. I am always trying to make a meal memorable. I want guests around the table I set to remember a dish, the good or bad conversations or the people sitting next to them. Next time you set the table, pick a playlist, cook some great food and cherish the people at the table because you want them to come "home" again.

As for McDonald's, their menu is their playlist. It covers classic vinyl, some "one-hit wonders," a bit of country and now cool sipping jazz. If they want to break the top 20 again, I think they need to remaster the classics and make sure that the next album is a little fresher with the feel of the neighbors' kid's garage band. Make great food with simple ingredients and lay down a great track for the next generation.

- Chef John Reed, CEC, CCA

## GREAT BURGERS

**If You Are Not In The "Indie" Scene,  
Check Out These Burgers:**

## BEER

### Sublime Ginger American Wheat



For the next BBQ, put on a  
Jimmy Buffet playlist and pop  
open a few **Sublime**  
**Gingers**.



Cheeseburger, Au Cheval (Chicago)

**The 40 Best Burgers In America** according to the Daily  
Meal. I highly recommend the one from **Au Cheval**!

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