

# Buttered Toast, Coffee and the Sunday paper

**Chef Kelli L. Daniels**

*Executive Chef, The Drop  
Kansas City, Mo.*

*Executive Chef Kelli Daniels is the sister of Roving Reporter Elijah Daniels of The Baker County Standard. Chef Daniels has served as Sous Chef and Executive Sous Chef in four renowned restaurants including Sous Chef and Chef de Cuisine at the Skies Restaurant over the Hyatt Regency Crown Center in Kansas City, Mo. She has also served as Executive Chef at Lucky Brewgrille of Mission Kan. Daniels currently showcases her culinary expertise at The Drop in Kansas City, Mo.*

*The Baker County Standard is honored to have Chef Daniels write her views on the transitioning menus of seasonal cooking.*

When my kid brother called me at work in the middle of lunch and asked me to do this, I hastily agreed. Now, after staring at a blank word document for the better part of an hour, I realize how daunting a task is looming for me in the coming paragraphs.

For me, The Four Seasons is not just a swank hotel chain, the back-up vocals for Frankie Valli or another menial over-used meteorological term. For me, it is an amazing process, a circular transition that literally takes place from the ground up.

Jerry Garcia sang it best in “Shady Grove” when he softly crooned the words “peaches in the summertime, apples in the fall....” Unfortunately, both are available in their opposing prime seasons due to our devising efforts to turn a harvest of any kind into a business of sorts. However, I don’t believe you get the same peach in December as you would in July. There is something that happens between the hot Georgia sun and the ribs of my palate that defines summer... peach.

When September turns October and the leaves are not yet brown; I crave squash, raisins, apples, quail and of course the usual suspects-bacon and butter.

In the fall, I want rich, rustic, caramelized food. Food that warms your soul and still leaves you wanting for what bounty the remainder of the season may hold.

We are creatures of habit, and when winter takes its hold on us, we succumb. We yield to the powers of the pantry and all of our pickled, canned, stewed and sun-dried efforts take center stage. Our noble attempts to reflect on this produce, when it was in its freshest state, are quickly dashed when we begin to enjoy the art of its preservation. A sun-dried tomato is a totally different animal, and through the progressions of seasonal cooking it develops its own level of integrity. It is now a tomato that will never be weighed the same against a shaved truffle or spring pea.

Spring makes me crazy in general.

There’s a time change in there somewhere and it takes me a few solid weeks to resurrect from my winter starch coma. The word “spring” actually translates into the word “brunch” in my language. Fresh crab cake, poached egg, citrus and tarragon salad, buttered toast, coffee and the Sunday paper. Spring cuisine is fresh, crisp and acidic. We tend to choose food that lifts off of our palates when the weather is churning undecidedly above 50 degrees. We seek things like lemon and basil to brighten our senses, and somehow intuitively prepare us for the veracious flavors waiting for us just around the corner.

Seasonal cooking is an imperative part of our culture. One that we all too often trade for convenience and comfortability. I am humbled daily by the power of food. My passion for its perfect execution and adoration is my fuel to take it from its purest, raw state and place it on the pedestal it undoubtedly deserves.