



BOB'S THOUGHTS
BOB BAUM

Why I'm so glad to be back home

The story begins in June of 1969 with a call from The Observer offering a one-month internship.

I was 17, pushing a broom and bagging groceries in Union. Of course I said yes. It was the beginning of a half-century in journalism — mostly in sports — a journey that would take this small-town kid around the world — to 10 Olympics, four world track championships, three Super Bowls, one great World Series, a handful of Final Fours and college football championships.

And a front-row seat one summer for the odd saga of Tonya Harding.

I was born at St. Joseph's Hospital — now the Union County Courthouse — and grew up in Union.

Most of my youth my dad drove a truck, winding up gravel roads to pick up cream from farmers, always with a stick of gum for the kids, then returning to the old brick creamery in Union, where the cargo was transformed to smooth Darigold butter.

My mother was a secretary for my uncle David (Sr.) at Baum Insurance Agency. Her maiden name was Gekeler, a pioneer family in these parts.

The Observer gave me a scholarship and I stayed and attended then-Eastern Oregon College for two years, abandoning my original plan to pursue a law degree (thereby depriving the world of yet another lawyer named Baum). I did a little bit of everything for the paper, which then published six afternoons a week, and learned so much. I became sports editor at 18.

Since I was young and dumb in so many ways, I would get into rodeo arenas to shoot photos of bull riding. Then there was that day during bull riding at the old Blue Mountain Rodeo.

The clown asked me to shake my knees like I'm nervous, then he would goose me with a broom handle and everyone would laugh. I did, he did and they certainly did.

What followed was ominous advice. He told me I could get even closer to the bulls, that they never faked one way and went the other. They just go whatever direction they're going out of the chute.

So I crept closer. The chute opened. The cowboy was bucked off immediately.

And — I swear on a Bible — the bull faked one way and took aim at me. So I ran. The arena was encircled with billboards so there was no easy place to climb. I finally just leaped to the top and slid head-first down the other side, my legs slowly disappearing from view. The crowd roared.

Then there was my first aircraft ride. Interstate 84 was bypassing La Grande and The Observer rented a helicopter to take a photo. It was one of those "Whirlybirds" type helicopters, small with no doors. As we hovered above the freeway, the pilot asked if I wanted a better angle, then tilted the thing sideways. Facing the abyss, so thankful for the security of my seat belt, I managed to get the good photo of that momentous day in La Grande's history.

I transferred to the University of Oregon, working part-time at The Register-Guard and covered track and field for the school paper. Dan Fouts and Steve Prefontaine were classmates.

After graduation came two years at The Bulletin in Bend, covering first county government, then the U.S. Forest Service. I was with Forest Service honchos on an overnight hike through a new section of the Pacific Crest Trail and, when I returned, I learned I'd been offered a job with The Associated Press in Portland.

Less than two years later, I covered the Trail Blazers' 1977 run to the NBA title.

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Lower-Salt Recipes



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch/TNS

Pork chops with gastrique

CUT THE SALT, DON'T SACRIFICE THE FLAVOR

By **Daniel Neman**
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

This is actually true: If you go to the Food Network website and look for low-sodium recipes, you will find one for Instant Pot Corned Beef and Cabbage.

Corned beef? Low sodium? The word "corn" in corned beef actually refers to the salt that is used to cure it.

The dish that Food Network promotes as being low in sodium contains 2,172 mg of sodium. That's almost as much as the recommended amount of sodium for an adult in an entire day (2,300 mg). Someone on a low-sodium diet should aim for more like 1,500 mg for a whole day.

There are plenty of reasons to adopt a low-sodium diet if you need it: It's better for your heart, it's better for your blood pressure and it lessens the chance of a stroke.

There is only one reason to not adopt it: Food just doesn't taste as good.

In my mind, those two considerations are of equal importance. So I set out to cook a few dishes that are low in sodium but still taste great. Corned beef did not play a part in any of them.

The trick to cooking with little sodium is to use strong flavors that aren't salt to excite and stimulate your taste buds. Acids work particularly well, such as lemon juice or vinegar, and so

do hearty herbs and the sharper-tasting spices.

I used these ideas to create three entrees without using any salt at all, and each was better than the last.

OK, the salmon actually could use a little salt on it, and that's fine. Everyone needs sodium to survive, even people on low-sodium diets. The sauce on the salmon is flavorful enough that it only needs a minimal amount of added salt. You'll be fine.

It occurred to me that the best way to perk up a pork chop without using salt would be to serve it with a gastrique. In all modesty, I'd have to say that was brilliant.

A gastrique is a reduction of vinegar and sugar or honey that turns into a sweet-and-sour syrup. You can pump it up with fruit if you want, but I made an exquisitely simple version: nothing more than honey and cider vinegar that, when reduced, brings out the apple flavor of the cider vinegar.

I also cooked the pork chops simply, with butter, slices of apple (to play off the tart apple taste of the gastrique) and onion. I used bone-in pork chops because they taste better and cooked them for only a few minutes on each side in the mixture of apples and onion. I wanted the gastrique to be the star in this dish, and it was.

It absolutely was. Next up was lemon chicken, a dish I often make using salt. Typically, I marinate the chick-

en for an hour or so in a lemon-based marinade and then I grill it. Less frequently, I bake it.

But I wanted to make my salt-free chicken on the stove top, so I decided to braise it. It's one of my favorite ways to cook chicken.

All you have to do is sear the chicken on both sides in olive oil or butter infused with garlic and thyme or rosemary. I usually pour off the fat, which can be considerable, and then add enough liquid to come up about 1 inch in the pan.

Usually, I use chicken stock, but that has salt in it. So I added water, along with the juice of two lemons. Then I covered the pan, simmered it until it was done and used a cornstarch slurry to turn the braising liquid into a zippy, salt-free gravy.

That brought me to the salmon. I decided to poach it as a way of imbuing it with plenty of low-sodium flavor. My poaching liquid was full of goodness: carrot, onion, celery, the juice of a lemon and that lemon's peel. The fish only took a few minutes to cook.

What made the salmon such a low-sodium treat was the sauce I served it with, a kind of simplified tzatziki. I started with plain Greek yogurt (less sodium than regular yogurt) and stirred in some lemon juice, chopped cucumber and salmon's favorite herb, dill.

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