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**Fascinations**

I am fascinated by The Pioneer Woman - Ree Drummond. How does she have time to maintain one of the most popular blogs, cook, take photos of each step of each recipe before posting it, and take care of 4 children at the same time? And I'm certainly fascinated by the fact that she could even write and publish a cookbook with all this happening. Check it out for yourself if you haven't already. [The Pioneer Woman](#) and [The Pioneer Woman Cooks](#).

**Amazing Useless Information**

W. C. Fields's real name was William Claude Dukenfield.

Elton John's real name is Reginald Dwight. "Elton" came from Elton Dean, a Bluesology sax player and "John" came from Long John Baldry, founder of Blues Inc.

**Brain Teaser**

Rearrange the following letters to give the name of a famous singer.

WESTERN VIDEO

See page 3 for the answer.

**Looking Forward**

Happy New Year to all of you. I hope this year is a healthy, happy, and prosperous one for you as we begin a new decade. It will take some adjustment to write the year without placing two zeros in the middle of it!

This year brings some changes to the Glen's Place Newsletter. Some redundancies have been eliminated and some old topics have been replaced with new. Probably the most notable change is that the Wine Corner has a new focus. I hope you enjoy the facts about wine and the quotes that appear there. Three years of columns about wine have exhausted my knowledge of the subject! That doesn't mean that I will no longer enjoy trips to the California Wine Country. In fact, there is one planned for the first week of January!

A new section called Spice It Up has been added. Many of us only know that if the recipe calls for a certain spice, we just get it and add it in the prescribed proportion. There is really more than that, as I am discovering. Remember, this newsletter is a learning experience for me too! These herbs and spices have a long, interesting history and add unique flavors to food. I hope to share what I learn so that when you add a certain spice or herb, you'll have a better understanding and appreciation for why it is included in the recipe.

Another significant change is the addition of the Fascinations column. I, as well as you, am fascinated by many things and my interests are probably different from yours. I will share some of my fascinations here each month.

Thanks again for your interest in the newsletter. As always, I appreciate your comments and will happily entertain your questions. I hope this fourth year of the newsletter is even better than the first three.

## Tech Tip: Your News, Your Way

Are you one of those who has no interest in subscribing to a newspaper but would like to see your online news in a newspaper format? This free service from iCurrent could be right for you. It essentially allows you to personalize the site with your own interests. As you read or discard stories, iCurrent fine tunes the type of stories it displays. In other words, you get a newspaper with the stuff you are interested in reading.

I found that it takes some time and work to set up, but it is a good way to track a wide variety of stories daily.

The site is still in private beta but you can get an invitation to be part of it at [www.icurrent.com](http://www.icurrent.com). It was only a short time after I signed up that I received an invitation. Check it out.

## The Wine Corner



Thomas Jefferson helped stock the wine cellars of the first five U.S. presidents and was very partial to fine Bordeaux and Madeira.

When Mount Vesuvius buried Pompeii in volcanic lava in A.D. 79, it also buried more than 200 wine bars.

The average age of a French oak tree harvested for use in wine barrels is 170 years!

The lip of a red wine glass is sloped inward to capture the aromas of the wine and deliver them to your nose.

## Remembering Space Shuttle Challenger

January 28, 1986 is one of those “where were you and what were you doing” days. It was only 73 seconds into the flight that the Space Shuttle Challenger broke apart, leading to the deaths of its 7 crew members. The spacecraft disintegrated over the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Central Florida at 11:39 A.M. EST as people all over the world watched.



This mission was the twenty-fifth flight of the American Space Shuttle Program and the tenth for Challenger. Among the crew members was Christa McAuliffe, a teacher from Concord, New Hampshire, the first member of the NASA Teacher in Space Project. In 1985, McAuliffe was selected from more than 11,000 applicants. She was planning to conduct experiments and teach two lessons from Space Shuttle Challenger.

Besides McAuliffe, the Challenger crew consisted of mission commander Francis R. Scobee, pilot Michael J. Smith, mission specialists Ronald E. McNair and Ellison S. Onizuka. Judith A Resnik, along with Christa, were listed as payload specialists.

I know where I was that day. I was a fifth grade teacher eagerly anticipating the launch, along with the class at the beginning of the day. It was 8:39 A.M. in California and the school day had just begun. And what a long day it would turn out to be!



Christa McAuliffe  
photo from [www.jsc.nasa.gov](http://www.jsc.nasa.gov)

January 23 is the twenty-fourth anniversary of this unfortunate and tragic accident.

## Spice It Up!

### Tarragon



Tarragon is a perennial herb cultivated for the culinary use of its aromatic leaves in seasoning, salads, etc. It grows to a height of about 2 feet and has long, narrow, undivided leaves. In August it has small yellow flowers mingled with black which are rarely fully opened. The roots are long and fibrous, spreading by runners.

French Tarragon is the most common kind of tarragon cultivated in kitchen gardens. It has very smooth, dark green leaves and the true tarragon flavor. It loves warmth and sunshine and succeeds best in warm, rather dry situations.

Tarragon is referred to by the French as the "King of Herbs" since it is the main flavoring in many of the sauces that form the foundation of classic French cuisine.

When using tarragon in cooked dishes, it is best to add it at the end, as heat tends to decrease its flavor. Unlike most of the other herbs, tarragon loses the potency of its flavor when dried. This may be one reason it is so frequently preserved in vinegar, which captures tarragon's essence and creates a tasty condiment that can be used in dressings, mayonnaise and as a zesty deglazing alternative to wine.

Tarragon vinegar can be made by putting fresh tarragon sprigs into a sterilized bottle of distilled white vinegar. Taste after a few days. Continue steeping until it suits your taste. Once the desired strength is achieved, remove the sprigs.

## Featured Recipe:

### Red Bean Soup With Andouille Sausage

2 tablespoons butter  
1 large onion, diced  
3 stalks celery, diced  
1 small green pepper, diced  
2 large garlic cloves, minced  
8 cups chicken broth, or water, or a combination of the two  
1 cup cubed ham  
12 ounces Aidells® Cajun Style Andouille sausage, cut into to 1/2 inch pieces  
2 cups (1 pound) dried red kidney beans, soaked overnight, rinsed and drained  
1 bay leaf  
1 tablespoon Cajun seasoning  
1/2 teaspoon cumin  
1/2 teaspoon Tabasco® sauce  
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
1 medium potato, diced  
Salt and pepper

Melt butter in large saucepan. Add onion, garlic, celery and green pepper. Cook and stir for five minutes.

Add broth, ham, sausage, beans, bay leaf and other seasonings. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally. Add potatoes and parsley. Cover and cook for an additional 30 minutes. Discard bay leaf. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with rice. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

### A Final Word

Thanks again for reading the newsletter. Send questions or comments to [Glen@Glen's Place](mailto:Glen@Glen's Place). Until next time remember: *Ignoring the facts doesn't change them.*

**Answer to brain teaser:** Stevie Wonder  
(That was too easy. Just wait until next month!)

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