

RED VELVET CAKE

hits the red carpet

By Nicki Huggins

Red Velvet cake has hit the big time in LA within the last two years, and not many Los Angelenos know that it's a longstanding Southern tradition.

You can get it everywhere from McDonalds and California Pizza Kitchen to small cupcake houses and Neiman Marcus. Last week at the café counter in Neiman Marcus /Beverly Hills, the waiter imperiously insisted that they had the best Red Velvet Cake in the city. “Really? Well, then, I have to have a piece.” So, during a spirited critique about their cake (which incidentally was a rich dark red indicating it had enough chocolate, however the frosting definitely needed a touch more cream cheese), Joan Rivers slid onto a nearby stool accompanied by an assistant carrying an armful of gowns for a red carpet event.

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Illustration by Tope Luwoye



Perspectives—continued

My husband and I had just seen Joan onstage in her one woman show “Joan Rivers: A Work in Progress by a Life in Progress.” In the play, she appears without makeup during the entire two-hour performance, and in classic River’s frankness she runs a video clip with all her best red carpet blunders. Priceless. Knowing that she’s very approachable, I told her that seeing her show made me realize how much I missed her humor. When Joan’s husband Edgar committed suicide, no one wanted to hire her as a comedienne, so she had to go out into America and rebuild her career by participating in ribbon cuttings at K-Mart’s and appearances on small town TV stations. All of which eventually led her back to her Oscar night red carpet show on “E” TV, “Who are you wearing?”

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But, the best thing I took away from the show was her boundless energy. She’s on stage for the entire evening, with no commercial interruptions, proclaiming at the end that she’s got a lot more to give creatively. Now, I’m up close and personal with Joan Rivers and I can honestly say, despite all those wags who say she’s “pulled” to the max—she looks good. Perhaps in makeup and on camera she is just one Red Velvet Cake with too much cream cheese in her frosting, but in person, she is lovely and funny—perfectly layered like only the best of Red Velvet cakes. She is also the top performer on QVC and wouldn’t that be the icing on anyone’s cake?

Back on my own stool, the waiter boxes up the remainder of the RV cake and immediately proceeds to flip the box upside down so that the frosting sticks to the container top, separating from the cake. I frown, but I am still thinking about lessons from Joan’s life, and how sometimes life’s events, tragically, can separate us from our healthiest parts. How vital it is, at any age, to never settle, but continue to believe that the best is yet to come, and keep using all our skills and abilities to move forward with that belief in place. In her show, Joan instructs the audience, “Keep your fork for dessert.” When I get home, I’ll take a knife and refrost my slice of Red Velvet cake. And when I eat it, I’ll remember my grandmother’s glorious Red Velvet cakes back home in Alabama...the real kind that needed no cream cheese in their frostings. That’s a memory to rival any red carpet, anywhere, anytime. **C&LM**



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