

FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD

TIFFANY GREER & FORK AND SPOON

"WE USED TO DRIVE BY THIS BUILDING ALL THE TIME and think how cool it would be to have a restaurant," Tiffany Greer says of the tiny building at 3768 Main Street in Cottonwood that she and her family recently converted into Fork and Spoon, headquarters for the inspired culinary creations she dubs comfort food with a twist. "One day I was looking on Craigslist and there it was."

Call it a dream, all those drive-bys of a building which has housed a salon and, for years, a doll shop. While it was quite the endeavor to convert the building, Greer is no stranger to acting on her visions. At only 26, she's taken some remarkable steps to realize her goals of experiencing life through the comforts of well-prepared, fresh food.

"I feel like a lot of memories are made around the table, around food. I want to share that with people," she says. The Fork and Spoon story started with a piece of art. After ditching her plans to major in accounting at CSU, Northridge—"I think I was just too scared to follow what I loved," she says of the two-month stint that was her first venture away from home after graduating Red Bluff High School—she enrolled at Le Cordon Bleu in Pasadena. Not long after, she came across a painting of an entwined fork and spoon at a restaurant in Diamond Bar. ▶

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"It's just the love affair of the fork and spoon," she says as she rolls up her sleeve to show the image that wound its way into her dreams and eventually onto her forearm in permanent ink. When she ran across the painting again while living in Portland, she knew it was speaking to her. The doors of Fork and Spoon just recently opened in Cottonwood, but Greer has been building her business with catering jobs and grab-and-go salads she's been supplying Cook in Red Bluff for months now. Though young, she's already developed an impressive resume, having cooked at famed chef Andy Ricker's Pok Pok in Portland, and for Wolfgang Puck in Los Angeles.

Though the fork and spoon may be the icons of her business, the knife has a part in her story, as well. As she busily prepped service for the Academy Awards in Puck's kitchen one year, the famed chef strode over to her station and showed her a better way to chop onions. "He taught me to cut onions the right way," she says. "It was way easier. No waste." She now uses her great grandmother's knife set, carrying on the legacy of a woman who once ran a popular restaurant in Dunsmuir.

The lure of working under famous chefs, and even cooking for celebs like Cher and Steven Tyler, however, were no match to home in the North State. "I was up there in Portland and living at an RV park with my little dog working at Pok Pok," says Greer. "I missed my family a lot."

Her family is rewarding her for the return home by gathering around her to support her dreams through investment of time, talent and money. "It's weird because when I'm at my other job I'm the boss," laughs Greer's mom, Theresa Blanco, who has lent elbow grease to the building's renovation and will don an apron to serve at catering events. "When I'm here, she's the boss."

Greer's dad, Dave Greer, has also helped bring the building together by creating the front counter from reclaimed wood and offering an old church pew he had in storage for customer seating. "I want people to

walk in and feel at home," she says of her space. "I know people will come in for grab-and-go, but I want them to feel good when they're here."

It's safe to say people may spend a little extra time just figuring out how to choose from a menu that includes house recipe chile verde pork, Sambal Chicken, white macaroni and cheese with Pedrosa Northern Gold cheese, pear and blue cheese salad, bacon brownies and lavender cupcakes.

"Recipes are just a point of inspiration," Greer says of her culinary philosophy. "I can't remember the last time I used a recipe. I just refuse to. It's all about flavor combinations." It's also about sourcing her food locally, and offering fresh, organic options. "I've noticed that since we've started working with local people, we're all supporting each other," she says. That includes younger brother, Nathan, who is her web designer and helps with large catering jobs.

There's the comfort of home at Fork and Spoon, where a local girl who grew up at her grandma's kitchen and then set off to explore the wider world of culinary arts is bringing her talents back to the local table. Of that "twist" she puts in her comfort food: "Sometimes we make that twist healthy," she says. "Except for the bacon in the brownies." •

Fork and Spoon
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Melissa Mendonca is passionate about adding stamps to her passport and just as enthusiastic about her hometown of Red Bluff. A graduate of San Francisco State and Tulane universities, she believes in mentoring and service to create communities everyone can enjoy. Her favorite words are *rebut*, *wanderlust* and *change*.

