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**“I love breakfast for dinner.”**

—Chef Carrie Baird of Fox and the Hen



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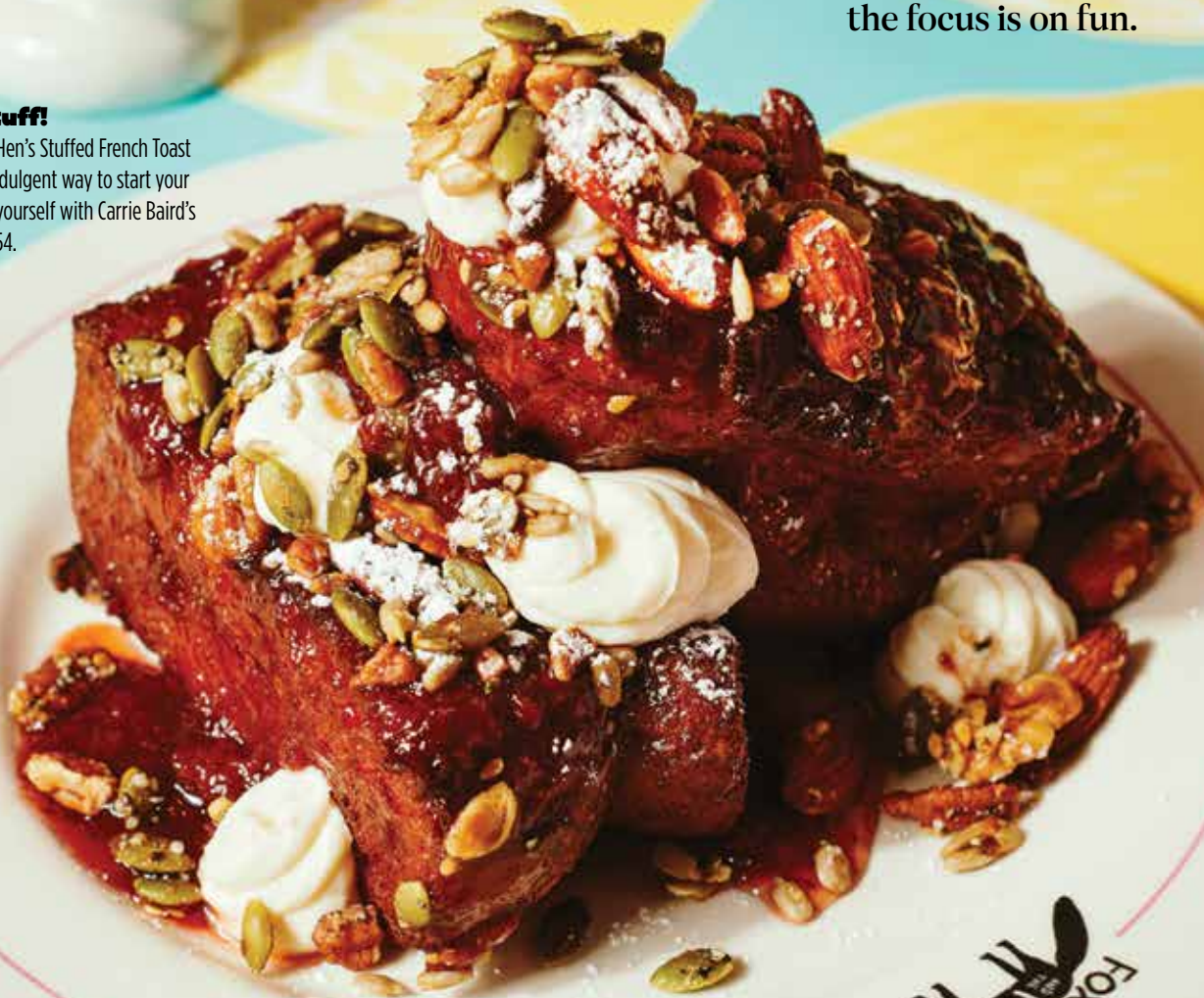
ENGINEER, EXECUTIVE  
AND MASTER DESIGNER  
—The man, the hat, the...

# happy place

At Fox and the Hen, the new all-day breakfast spot from Carrie Baird and Michael Fox, the focus is on fun.

## Good Stuff!

Fox and the Hen's Stuffed French Toast is the best indulgent way to start your day. See for yourself with Carrie Baird's recipe on p. 54.



By **Stephanie Wilson** | Photography by **Paul Miller** | Illustrations by **Karen Boyhen**

# Carrie Baird is having fun.

She's just opened her new all-day breakfast joint, Fox and the Hen, in LoHi, in partnership with Michael Fox of Dis Burrito fame. Fox lives up to his namesake; Baird plays the role of the hen. But don't imagine a predator-prey scenario. Picture instead a camaraderie so robust, you'd think they've been thick as thieves since time immemorial. I'd have guessed a lifetime if I didn't know better. They've got inside jokes, they've got stories, one of them has the ending to a sentence the other one started. They've got barrels and bottles of laughter, and they've even got some tears that bubble to the surface during our photo shoot just 11 days after they first opened the doors to the public.

Those tears appear when the happy partners are listening to one of Baird's favorite songs, "Look at Miss Ohio," by Gillian Welch, while they're sitting under a neon sign with the song's lyrics: "I wanna do right but not right now."

"I anticipated a lot of tears," Baird says, reflecting on Fox and the Hen's first day of business. "Fox and I kind of held each other a couple of times, like, 'Look at all these people here! Holy cow, it's happening!' It's exciting, you're talking constantly, and the next thing you know, it's the next day, and you do it all again. It's fun."

## Crispy and Fun, Just Like You

The Fox and the Hen is for fun. It's for indulgence. It's for delicious food and creative boozy drinks. It's for breakfast and for brunch and it's for having a party on the patio, if Fox has the aux and control of the volume. It's for Saturdays and Tuesdays and all the other days, too. That patio is also for puppies. "A hundred percent," Baird says, "all puppies welcome." Fox concurs: "Who doesn't love puppies?"

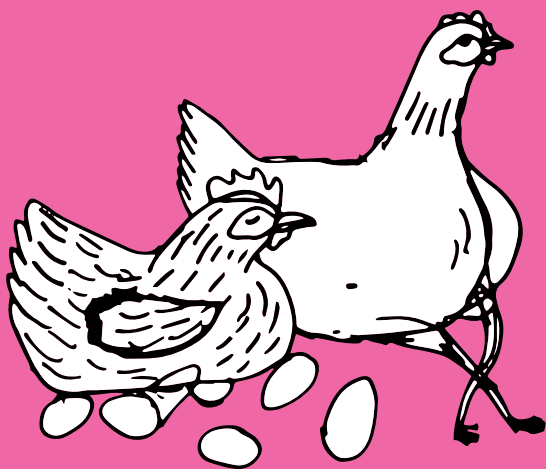
As if the place needed any more appeal. Every time I swing by the breakfast spot—open seven days a week, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.—it is hands

down the most popular place on the block. Which is saying a lot, given the block. In one direction, you'll find the original Tap & Burger location (of which there are now four) and Bar Dough; in the other direction will soon be Kumoya, a new Japanese and sushi concept taking over the former Tony P's space. Around the corner and a few blocks east are Ash'Kara and Señor Bear.

What do all these restaurants have in common? They're part of Culinary Creative, a leading Denver-based restaurant group helmed by seasoned restaurateur Juan Padro. Baird, a partner in Culinary Creative, serves as the culinary director of its Americana division, encompassing all the Tap & Burger locations and the newborn Fox and the Hen. "I feel like a neglectful mother," Baird says. "But Fox and the Hen is my favorite."

That comes as no surprise. It's got a few things going for it: the food, the decor, the witty menu, all of which we'll get to in due time. But first, and perhaps most significantly, it embodies Baird's childhood aspiration. "I've always wanted to open a breakfast spot, ever since I was a little girl," she says. "When I was in culinary school and had to design a restaurant for a class, I did a breakfast place."

Fitting, then, that it was her takes on a breakfast staple—toast—that paved her way to the final four during season 15 of *Top Chef*. But not just any old toast, of course; Baird is known for her *fancy* toasts, which she explains in episode 9 are just "larger slices of toast with fun toppings." On *Top Chef*, those toppings included goat cheese, arugula, lavender-scented olive oil, honey, and candied pecans in one episode; a soft-poached egg, Nutella, strawberry-habañero jelly, and classic hollandaise in another. The season was filmed in Colorado, which meant Baird had the added pressure of being an unwitting ambassador for the state's culinary scene—a scene on the rise, trying to earn a place at the table with the coastal cities that are always in the spotlight. In doing so, Baird became an





**“Everybody tries to be good-80/20, you know? But not right now, not right here. Here, you don’t have to be good. Here is for brunch.” -Carrie Baird**

**More Pico, Please!**

People just can't get enough of Fox and the Hen's Tacos con Huevos—the most popular dish on the menu. Recipe on p. 54.



unofficial tour guide for her fellow aspiring Top Chefs and cemented herself as one of the city's most recognizable culinary personalities.

Pretty damn good for a small-town girl from Idaho. Definitely didn't hurt that Baird got her culinary training in Colorado under the tutelage of *Top Chef Masters* alum Jen Jasinski of Rioja.

Following her stint on *Top Chef*, Baird returned to the kitchen at Bar Dough, where variations on her signature dishes made appearances on the menu. In 2019, Baird made an appearance of her own as a contestant on *Beat Bobby Flay*, where she did just that with her take on huevos rancheros. In February 2020, word got out that Baird was leaving Bar Dough to open a breakfast concept at Boulder's Rosetta Hall with her friend and mentee, Natasha Hess of Ginger Pig. Rose's Classic Americana debuted March 4, 2020. And then Covid did as Covid does and Baird returned to Culinary Creative Group as the culinary director of Tap & Burger, whose flagship location shares a wall with Bar Dough. Little did she know that just across the street, Michael Fox was cooking up breakfast for dinner.

## Fox Dressed as a Rooster in a Hen House

Fox is a big personality. Lots of energy, lots to say. His persona, it seems, was predestined, evidenced by a peculiar painting hanging near the bar. "That painting—that's the gestation of our name," Fox says. "That hung over my crib when I was zero years old. It's a fox dressed as a rooster in the hen house. And if you know my personality, I am the fox dressed as a rooster."

The painting is just one of the personal decor touches that Fox's family brings to the literal table—a set of fox-shaped salt and pepper shakers come courtesy of Mom and Pop Fox. And shed out front where you'll soon

be able to pick up some grab-and-go Dis Burritos and drip coffee is Fox's doing as well.

"I really enjoy my role here," Fox says. "I don't even work for the company. I'm the hype man, essentially."

Fox is also a partner, so he's a constant figure at the restaurant. He lives just down the block; his place is where the genesis of Dis Burrito—which ultimately led to the spawn of Fox and the Hen—occurred. It was early pandemic, and a friend of Fox's requested breakfast for dinner, and the chef obliged with some breakfast burritos. Long story short, Dis Burrito is soon operating out of the kitchen at one of Juan Pedro's restaurants and looking for a more permanent kitchen. Fox tours the former Cebiche space and comments to Pedro that it'd make a great breakfast joint. Pedro connects Fox with Baird, the two hit it off, and just like that, a new restaurant was born. Or almost just like that. It took a while to get the hens in order—two years plus—which gave them plenty of time to work out the details.

The resulting place was worth the wait. Fox and the Hen is adorable without being cutesy—a fine line that designer Caitlin Smith, Baird's "best friend since we were seven," walked as if she were Johnny Cash. Whimsical, personal, and playful touches enliven the space, which is feminine without being girly. It's a whole vibe. Cool, colorful—contagious, even. From the hot sauce wall to the subtle pink ceiling, Fox and the Hen is packed with design details. Baird's favorite part? A prairie dog-themed gallery wall by the bathrooms. "I hung this all by myself," she says, laughing at the inside joke behind the theme. "Prairie dogging!" She giggles. "Ah, I just love it."

## It Ain't No Fun If You Eat Grandpa

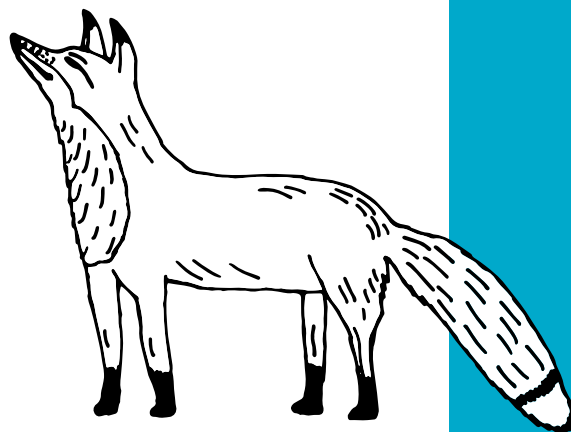
"We're brunch heavy," says Baird. "Everything is playful like brunch."

That playfulness is apparent everywhere, from the fish bowls by the door to the language on the menus. There's the Pump the Blakes cocktail, so named for Baird's boyfriend Blake Edmunds, who's also a chef with Culinary Creative. (Edmunds is the "Bear" in Señor Bear.) There's the Do You Like Pork & Tequila, clearly meant to be sung in the style of "The Piña Colada Song." But the cocktail that speaks to my editor's heart is a joke about punctuation. "Let's Eat Grandpa / Let's Eat, Grandpa," a concoction of summer gin, blueberries, lavender, and lemon, is a reminder that proper punctuation is a life and death matter.

As Baird is The Queen of Toast (so dubbed by the Food Network), it's no wonder that Fox and the Hen's menu centers on her signature "Fancy-ish" ones. There's one with avocado, another with tuna, as well as takes on the Croque Monsieur ("make it a lady" for a Croque Madame).

There are little jokes and witty turns of phrase throughout it, from top to bottom. Speaking of the top, the sharable dishes fall under the category, "Ain't No Fun If the Homies Can't Have None." There, you'll find dishes like a blueberry muffin "grilled in so much good butter" and hash browns that are "crispy and fun, just like you." You can opt to "make 'em Animal Style" "cuz you're dope and order good."

For mains, you have the option of the Beat Bobby Flay-vos—"yes, these are the huevos rancheros that beat Bobby Flay," the description ensures. There's the "I Got Smashed Burger," and the "Le Big Mac Omelette," which is served with precisely 13 fries. "Adding the fries was my idea," says Baird. "My chef was like, 'Damn Chef, I hate





## Give the People What They Want

"I want to talk to Carrie about opening up at night and doing breakfast for dinner," Fox says, and turns to Baird. "Carrie, we should do a special and open up for dinner every once in a while. Breakfast for dinner."

Baird: "We already talked about that..."

Fox: "I know."

Baird: "I love breakfast for dinner."

This is an idea we can all get behind: More Fox and the Hen, all the time! I'm not alone in this thinking. Take a scroll through the glowing Google reviews and hear what the people have to say:

"WOW!!!!" "THE FOOD IS INCREDIBLE." "Absolutely stellar all around. Definitely taking the crown for top breakfast spot in Denver." "Finally a breakfast place in Denver that actually rocks my socks." "I've had a lot, and I mean a lot, of hash browns in my life, but the Animal Style hash browns absolutely blew my face off." Fox and the Hen is "everything you want in a breakfast place."

The people of Denver have spoken, and they just can't get enough.

"I always thought breakfast was underserved—especially here in Colorado. It's the most important meal of the day," says Fox. "But where do you go? We're open seven days a week. Everybody else is just blah or tries to hard. I think we have the perfect meld."

For Baird, it's all about balance, and the writing is on the wall. "I want to do right but not right now," she says, quoting the lyrics glowing in neon on the dining room wall that's covered in the same illustrations as the menu. "It fits in here. The way I look at it, everybody tries to be good—80/20, you know? But not right now. Not right here. This place is not for being good. This place is for brunch." **OLM**

that you came up with that."

The stuffed French toast is both savory and sweet, a brioche filled with ricotta and topped with strawberry jam and granola—just awesome. The Lox & Cakes? Fricken delicious. And the cocktails? Absolutely next level. Even Brian Cranston concurs, and not just 'cause Fox and the Hen's cocktail menu is topped with Brian Cranston's Mary. It's made with Dos Hombres, a mezcal brand Cranston and his *Breaking Bad* costar Aaron Paul were in town to promote this spring. (Fun fact: Paul is from Baird's neck of the woods in Idaho, and they share

mutual friends.) The duo stopped by Culinary Creative's Mister Oso, where Baird and the actor got to talking. "He's like, what do you do? And I tell him I am opening a breakfast restaurant. He goes, 'Wait, have you ever tried our mezcal with a good, good bloody mary?' So Keegan Labrador, the beverage director for Blake's restaurants, made us one with Dos Hombres. We were both like, 'Holy, this is so good!' So I asked him, 'Can we put this on the menu and say it's yours?' He goes, 'Approved! Yes, you can.' So that's how Brian Cranston's Mary made the menu."



**The Fox is Watching**

**You** These super cute, on-brand coffee mugs that reveal a fox as you drain your caffeine fix can be purchased for \$15 or stolen for \$30.



**All the Herbs!**

Why top your pancakes with maple syrup when you could go with lox, sauerkraut, and cream cheese instead? Recipe on p. 54.

# Play with Your Food

## Stuffed French Toast

### YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 loaf good brioche
- butter
- non-stick sauté pan
- yummy granola
- berry jam
- pipng bag
- frosting tip

### FRENCH TOAST BATTER

- 4 eggs
- 4 oz. whole milk
- ½ oz. vanilla
- 2 Tbsp. + 2 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. nutmeg
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 tsp. salt
- ¾ stick melted butter

### DIRECTIONS

1. Melt the butter.
2. Crack the eggs into the vita mix. and pulse to break up the curd. Strain through a strainer.
3. Everybody in the boat.

### WHIPPED RICOTTA

- 1 lb. ricotta
- 2 Tbsp. honey
- salt to taste

### DIRECTIONS

1. Whip the ingredients together in a bowl with a whisk until smooth and shiny.
2. Place in a piping bag with a tip.

### TO BUILD:

1. Slice brioche into 1" slices.
2. Warm a non-stick pan medium hot, toss in a pat of butter and melt.
3. Dip sliced brioche into egg batter and coat well.
4. Cook French toast on all sides until golden brown.
5. Remove from the pan and repeat with the remaining bread.
6. When cool enough to handle, use the piping bag with the tip and insert into bottom of toast and push in the whipped ricotta.
7. Be sure to fill as much as you can—this is the good stuff!
8. To plate, place the warm toast on a

plate, top with berry jam and garnish with granola of your choice.  
9. Serve with maple syrup.

## Lox and Cakes

### YOU'LL NEED:

- butter
- cream cheese
- sauerkraut
- good cured salmon, or LOX
- everything bagel spice
- herbs, such as: dill, basil, parsley, chervil

### SALMON CURE

- 1 salmon side, skin on, deboned
- 1 lb. salt
- 1 lb. sugar
- Juice and pulp of 1 large beet

### DIRECTIONS

1. Toss the salt, sugar, and beet pulp together in a large bowl and mix very well. It'll be a pretty purple color.
2. In a 6" hotel pan sprinkle a 1" layer of the purple mixture.
3. Lay the first filet of salmon down and cover with the mixture, no flesh showing.
4. Using a "69" method, place the second filet and cover again with a good layer of the purple mixture.
5. Repeat this process until the fish is all buried and all the salt mixture is used up.
6. Drizzle beet juice over the whole thing.
7. Place in fridge uncovered for a minimum of 48 hours, up to 72 tops!
8. When ready to slice, rinse the filet with cold water and pat dry.
9. Slice very, very thin and portion to 3 oz.

### BUTTERMILK PANCAKES

#### INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups + 2 Tbsp. AP flour
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1 Tbsp. + 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3½ oz. buttermilk
- 12¼ oz. whole milk
- 1 large egg
- ½ oz. EVOO

### DIRECTIONS

1. Whisk dry ingredients together.
2. Whisk wet ingredients together.
3. Mix all together until combined.
4. Add lots of butter to a griddle, about 300-350 degrees.

### PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

1. Spread each small pancake with a good schmear or cream cheese. Top this with a pile of sauerkraut.
2. Stack the cured salmon slices over this and try to make them stand up tall.
3. Sprinkle with everything bagel spice
4. Top with all the green herbs—use way more than you think.

## Tacos con Huevos

### YOU'LL NEED:

- flour tortillas
- whole eggs
- chorizo
- shredded sharp cheddar
- sour cream or Mexican crema

### PICO DE GALLO

- 1 lb. Roma tomatoes, guts out and reserved. Small dice
- 1 jalapeño, small dice
- 1 bunch cilantro, chiffonade stems and all
- 1 red onion, small dice
- salt
- lime juice

### DIRECTIONS

Do all your knife work and taste for seasoning and salt.

### TO BUILD:

1. Ball the chorizo into 3 oz. balls Crack and whip your eggs. Scramble them.
2. Using the flour tortilla as a smashing tool smash the chorizo into a thin patty up against the tortilla.
3. Let cook meat side down for 2 minutes. Flip.
4. Top with scrambled egg, cheddar cheese, sour cream, and pico. Yum.

## Fox & the Hen

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