



Fresh peaches have been part of the barbecue's ice cream dessert since the first Cutchogue barbecue, held in 1957.



The segment was such a success that the year following the episode, a family from out of state showed up without tickets to the sold-out barbecue only to be turned away.

"I did her sister's wedding," says Glover, who didn't even know who Stewart was when he made chicken at Plimpton's wedding. "I'm doing chicken, I'm doing kielbasa, and this lady was standing there watching us. It was Martha Stewart. We had a good time!"

The next year, Stewart's secretary called Glover and asked if they could host a barbecue for her — coincidentally on the same day as the annual event.

"I says, 'I'll tell you right now, I cannot do it!'" he recalls with a laugh. "[Her secretary] says, 'Nobody tells Martha no!'"

FLAMES KEEP BURNING

The Cutchogue Fire Department Chicken Barbecue is certainly the most high-profile of its kind on the East End, but the Greenport Fire Department hosts a smaller one in August as well. David Nyce, the former mayor of Greenport and now a member of the Greenport Fire Department, is part of the department's Standard Hose Company 4, which plans the annual barbecue.

"Ours is better. I'll put that on the record," Nyce says with a laugh before acknowledging that "we don't do nearly the volume as [Cutchogue]. We do 1,200 tickets, 600 chickens split in half. It started, initially, as a few companies in the Greenport Fire Department but

they gave it up. With Cutchogue it's the entire department. This is our 48th consecutive year."

Like Cutchogue, the company sources ingredients locally, including the chicken, which comes from IGA. The dinner comes with a half-chicken, corn on the cob, baked potato, watermelon and a drink, and can also be ordered to go. There's also, of course, a secret sauce that only four members of the company know how to make.

While the tradition continues to smolder on the North Fork, folks who live a ferry ride away mourn the loss of the Shelter Island Fire Department's annual chicken barbecue, which hasn't been held since 2019. In a 2019 Shelter Island Reporter article, "Countdown to annual Chicken Barbecue," reporter Julie Lane wrote that "it takes 2,000 chicken halves, 70 bushels of corn and 450 pounds of potatoes to feed the hungry Island masses. And for those unable to stay to eat, meals can be prepared to go. The aim is to have enough food for 2,000 people to accommodate some who haven't pre-purchased tickets."

Shelter Island's barbecue hasn't returned since the pandemic, and it's a real shame — prior to 2020, it had run for 56 years and was considered a massive tradition on the island.

Cutchogue, though, and others across the East End carry on the flame. Glover, whose grandchildren now help out, looks forward to the tradition every year.

"You see people you haven't seen in a while," he says smiling. "It's just a fun time." 🍷

