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COLUMNS

'Hungry Fan' Falk takes tailgating to new heights

By John Molori

As the daughter of noted sports agent David Falk, Daina Falk grew up in the world of high level sports business. While the elder Falk's most renowned client was NBA icon Michael Jordan, he also represented NFL stars such as Boomer Esiason, James Lofton, Willie Gault, Chris Doleman and Desmond Howard.

Daina became a huge football fan. She attended Duke University and competed on the women's club tennis team while becoming a devoted "Cameron Crazy." While studying abroad in France and Italy, she also pursued her other passions - food and cooking.

Falk has parlayed her loves of football and food into a successful career as a celebrity cook and author. "Food isn't just a hobby. It's an important cultural component of the sports spectator's experience," she said.

"I love the whole concept of tailgating so much - eating, drinking and hanging with friends. My thought was that this does not have to happen just in a parking lot, sports bar or stadium. The same enjoyment can be felt at home. The location really doesn't matter."

Falk established the "Hungry Fan" and "Fangating" brands. Her concepts merge sports, food and entertainment, all amidst the backdrop of the game day experience. Falk's Hungry Fan brand has a social media following already nearing 100,000.

In August, she released "The Hungry Fan's Game Day Cookbook," chock full of traditional and unique recipes for game day revelry.

"We've sold 20,000 copies initially," says the 33-year old Falk, who has appeared on "The Today Show," "Late Night with Seth Meyers" and other media outlets. "I've always been a bit of a foodie and into all things culinary."

"I can remember as a kid, my mom always loved Parmesan cheese. I recall reading the Kraft Grated Cheese bottle and seeing a recipe for Caesar salad. That's where it all started. The idea of the Hungry Fan is to curate game day for sports fans.

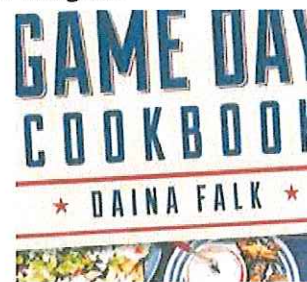
"Fangating is a lifestyle. Now, when you use the word lifestyle, most dudes pull away. What I mean is that millions of people think about football and the next game all week. Eighty percent of the U.S. population, 240 million people, engages in tailgating. My Fangating approach encompasses game day gatherings, food, beverages, gear, locations, travel and advice."

Football and healthy food are not often compatible partners, but Falk's cookbook includes some lighter fare to go along with more filling favorites.

"After college, I lost 60 pounds by changing my diet," says Falk. "But I still loved watching football and eating while doing it. Football is now on four or five days a week so if game day is your cheat day, you are in trouble."

"On the other hand, I am not going to eat kale salad during a football game. Some of my favorite recipes in the book are the brisket sandwich on Texas toast and the Buffalo wings. I worked a long time on perfecting the sauce for the wings."

The cookbook is broken up into chapters on starters, soups and salads, sandwiches, barbecue, sides and desserts. Among the more than 150 recipes are Shepherd's pie, quesadilla bites, Mama Falk's meatloaf and tachos - nachos made with tater tots.



OTHER COLUMNS STORIES

- Broncos can't shake dirty label
- Knee-jerk reactions from Week 1



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Falk launched her media career in 2011, covering the 2012 summer Olympic Games for NBC and multiple Super Bowls for a variety of networks. Along the way, she recognized that there were no game day experts, no Martha Stewart of Football if you will.

"When it comes to preparing for game day, I am creating a platform to address and cater to sports fans in a new and innovative way," she said. "I want to show fans how to prepare recipes for Fangating and direct them to the best products and menus for stadiums, arenas and ballparks.

"This includes fashion and gear. I hate those pink women's football jerseys. They make me want to vomit! My goal is to start a line of tailgating gear that includes all weather items and real sports fan apparel."

Clearly, Daina Falk has the same entrepreneurial spirit of her father, and the influence started early. "My dad had two daughters and, being in sports, I'm sure there were times he wished he had sons.

"We grew up in Washington, D.C., and used to go to all kinds of sporting events. My sister would fall asleep, but I loved going to games with my dad. Then, I started going to games on my own. I thought about being a sports agent, but he discouraged me. I think he felt like the integrity of his business had been shot."

Despite not following in her dad's career footsteps, she has taken his style and applied it to her own business. Says Falk, "Dad always blazed his own trail, and I am the same way. If everyone goes right, I feel compelled to go left.

"I've seen game day from an athlete's perspective, but I'm more interested in the sports fans' experience. I want to cater to a niche that hasn't been catered to. There's been no innovation in the field of game day and tailgating. With my background in sports, if I can speak to one thing genuinely, it's this. It has always been a part of my life."

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