



## ROCKETS RED BLARE

*Keep your pup calm during summer celebrations.* | BY RACHEL LINDSLEY

**Y**ou may love the sights and sounds of fireworks.

Your pet? Not so much.

For dogs, especially, the loud sounds, bright lights and strange smells may overwhelm their sensitive nature, creating a traumatic experience—especially when left alone.

Help prepare your pooch for the neighborhood excitement with tips from dog-training experts across the capital region.

“It is important that owners read their dog and understand how they react to vibrations and sounds before making plans to leave town,” said Chris Darhower, owner and lead trainer at Off Leash K9 Training. “During vacations—when owners are gone—is when dogs tend to run away as they don’t have a strong bond with their pet sitter.”

Owners should be prepared for the worst-case scenario—Fido runs away. Start by following these simple steps to help your pup stay safe this summer.

### Identification

Is your dog microchipped? Make sure your canine’s tracking information is accurate with a current address, contact information and a description of their size and coloring.

“Please have your pets microchipped, if you haven’t done so already,” said Amanda Brunish, director of marketing and outreach for the Humane Society of Harrisburg Area. “More dogs run away during the Fourth of July weekend than any other time of the year.”

Take a current picture of your furry friend wearing their collar and readable tags. If you’re planning on updating their wardrobe, add their new collar to the photo, too. This will be essential for social media pet-tracking if something does go astray.

### Acclimation to Fears

In the time leading up to a holiday, owners can acclimate their four-legged friend by slowly exposing them to loud noises.

Want to start with a professional? Keystone K-9 offers a “desensitizing workshop,” which includes three, hour-long training sessions during which dogs get familiarized with abrupt sounds, socialize with other pups and are leash-trained by professionals.

“We give personalized care to each and every dog as if they were our own pets,” said Ali Reed, professional dog trainer at Keystone K-9. “We work with them on their fears and prepare your family for the unexpected.”

Or start from home using free, noise-phobic training videos online. Visit the American Kennel Club’s YouTube channel for a plethora of resources for dogs of all ages and sizes.

### Tire Out & Leash Up

On nights when you expect fireworks, go for a long walk or play fetch to exhaust your hound before sundown. Feed them earlier for digestion and top off their water bowl as anxious dogs tend to pant and drink more.

Off Leash K9 Training “double leashes” their clients before storms or fireworks by attaching the leash to the collar and a harness with an attachment. Darhower said that it’s important to check the fit of both pieces before going outside in dangerous settings.

“Do not rely on what feels comfortable to protect your dog,” Darhower said. “Some people believe that a fenced-in backyard or a leash will protect them from danger, but when an animal is scared, they can overcome many obstacles to survive.”

### Create a Safe Space

It’s showtime. Make your canine comfortable by closing windows, turning on indoor lights and using a TV or white noise to drown out vibrations. Create safe hiding spaces around your home with their favorite treats, toys and blankets so they can take cover in an instant.

“Turning on music and making sure windows and doors are shut can help mask the sensations of fireworks,” Brunish said. “If you have pets who suffer from extreme anxiety, talk to their vet about taking anti-anxiety medication or consider purchasing a ‘thundershirt,’ which acts as a wearable weighted blanket for storms and fireworks.”

### Stop, Drop and Think

If your pet runs off, Find Toby in PA recommends “stop, drop and think”.

“Running after your dog is the worst thing an owner can do,” Darhower said. “As a volunteer with Find Toby in PA, we know that when dogs are scared, they will tap into their animalistic instincts and might not recognize their owner. Stay calm and seek professional help as soon as possible.”

Immediately write down the nearest street and town where your pet was last seen. Notify your neighbors and contact local pet-finding agencies such as Find Toby in PA, the Humane Society of Harrisburg Area and PawBoost local Facebook pages.

### Upcoming Fireworks

Stay informed and be prepared for when the next fireworks show will be. Know a neighbor who loves celebrations? Ask them when they are planning on setting off fireworks throughout the summer and warn them about your pet’s fears and sensitivities.

To be mindful of local dog owners, the Harrisburg Senators have announced their 2021 baseball schedule including fireworks after Friday night home games. Additionally, the city of Harrisburg will host their annual Fourth of July fireworks show from City Island at 9:15 p.m. and, to accommodate those staying home, the show will be available online.

Whether your family is celebrating Independence Day downtown in the city or safely at home, preparation is key for dog owners to keep their furry friends protected as the community commemorates the holiday with outdoor fun. **B**

*Interested in learning obedience tips from Off Leash K9 Training? Visit their Facebook Page during the holiday weekend for safety tips and training exercises before the fireworks start.*

*Find Toby in PA is a community-based group of trained volunteers who reunite lost pets with their owners. Learn more at [www.findtobyinpa.org](http://www.findtobyinpa.org).*

*Learn more about Humane Society of Harrisburg Area at [www.humanesocietyhbg.org](http://www.humanesocietyhbg.org).*

*Learn more about Keystone K9 at [www.keystone-k9.com](http://www.keystone-k9.com).*



# GOLD-PLATED SPACES

*Who thought that \$4-an-hour parking was a good idea?*

BY LAWRENCE BINDA

Years ago, “Saturday Night Live” aired a commercial parody for a fictional product it called “Bad Idea” designer jeans.

In the commercial, SNL actors traded a series of terrible ideas, meant to illustrate the brand name of the jeans.

Actor 1: “We ripped up the pipes, wiring, having everything completely redone.”

Actor 2: “You’re renting, right?”

Actor 1: “Yeah.”

Cut to a shot of the jeans logo: “Bad Idea.”

The Harrisburg version would go something like this:

Actor 1: “Let’s raise the city’s already outrageous street parking rates by one-third.”

Actor 2: Are you serious?”

Actor 1: “Yeah.”

Cut to a shot of the jeans logo: “Bad Idea.”

Terrible, horrible, truly awful idea.

Harrisburg’s parking system is underperforming financially—that’s no secret. It’s struggled to meet projections ever since the insolvent city government, back in 2013, agreed to lease it out for 40 years as part of its financial rescue plan.

I won’t drag you through the tortured details of that deal again, except to say that the parking system now is under the control of an Atlanta-based asset manager, which runs it on behalf of the actual bond issuers—the commonwealth and Dauphin County.

I’m not here to re-litigate that complicated agreement, which did help the city pay off some of its crippling debt load, giving it a chance to regain its financial footing following the reckless Reed-era spending spree.

However, I am going to criticize the ludicrous decision to take an already wildly expensive system

and make it even more wildly expensive, so that street parking downtown now clocks in at \$4 per hour (\$2 in Midtown). Parking in downtown Harrisburg is now much more expensive than in far larger cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

Bad, bad idea.

In part, the asset manager justified the huge price hike by stating that an increase was necessary to “provide sufficient cash flow to maintain expenses associated with the parking system.”

But will that indeed be the result? If you have slack demand at \$3 per hour, will charging even more fix your problem? Park Harrisburg may have a monopoly on downtown parking, but customers have a second choice—to not come at all.

Let’s say, for instance, that you own an ice cream shop and have few customers willing to pay \$5 a scoop. To stimulate demand, do you charge 33% more? No. You lower your price until customers perceive fair value and return.

This analogy is imperfect. Parking isn’t ice cream, even though the general principle still applies. In fact, I would say that parking is unique in a very special way.

If you own a scoop shop and stubbornly charge too much for your product, scaring off customers, you only hurt yourself. But, if you run a parking system and charge too much for your product, you hurt many other people—perhaps profoundly so.

Back in 2013, when the price of street parking downtown quadrupled under the new regimen, people were outraged. Pay \$3 per hour? No way, they said.

And, in fact, people did stay away. Restaurateurs, shop owners and salons screamed loudly, as downtown streets, once bumper-to-bumper with parked cars, became barren virtually overnight. A few businesses even moved or closed, placing blame squarely on the high cost of parking.

And now the problem has been made yet worse, with

the added insult that businesses were just beginning to regain their footing after the devastation wrought by the coronavirus pandemic.

Harrisburg’s parking masters need to understand that parking doesn’t exist for parking’s sake. People don’t consume parking as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. It’s part of an ecosystem, a web of hyper-local economic interdependence.

The parking vendor is a middleman between the consumer and the business, offering a temporary service so that one can access the other. In a perfect world, this system is in balance, with the parking operator, the businesses and the consumer all mutually benefitting.

Instead, with parking at \$4 per hour, we have an out-of-whack system with the middleman recklessly steering the ship. His objective is to maximize revenue, which is fine except when the price becomes so prohibitive that it destroys demand. That is the situation here.

In my opinion, if Park Harrisburg wanted to stimulate demand, it should have lowered its street-parking rate, not raised it. I understand that the system has expenses, as well as bonds to pay off, but choking off demand—and killing the businesses around it—isn’t going to help anyone.

Our parking system does not exist in a vacuum. It exists within an integrated economic community, in a center of commerce already struggling. Many businesses rely on the parking system for their very survival, and the downtown relies on it to remain viable as a destination.

That future is now in peril, as a key player in the system has become unmoored from the economic realities of downtown Harrisburg. **B**

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*Illustration by Rich Hauck.*

# THE SLICE IS RIGHT

*Impress your guests with this summery tomato bread appetizer.*

BY ROSEMARY RUGGIERI BAER

In the last year or so, I have become intrigued by the cooking of Bobby Flay.

Bobby is well known for his Food Network cooking shows like “Beat Bobby Flay,” as well as his acclaimed restaurants such as Mesa Grill and Shark in Las Vegas, Gato in New York, and Bobby’s Burger Palace in several locations in the United States.

While Bobby’s cooking relies heavily on the bold flavors of Spain, Mexico and the American southwest, he grew up in Manhattan in the 1970s. So, with many Italian friends and frequent trips to “Little Italy” for spaghetti and meatballs, Bobby expresses a love of Italian cooking, as well.

I have been studying Bobby’s cooking technique, the ingredients he uses, and most importantly,

how to make a good margarita! When looking for an appetizer to serve with drinks, I stumbled across something that was a hit with our guests. It is a Spanish take on the traditional Italian tomato bread, a popular item at Italian bistros in South Philly.

I was so tired of hummus and pita chips, salsa and nachos, and plain old cheese and crackers (even good cheese). This appetizer relies on a unique combination of flavors. But, as Bobby noted in his introduction to the recipe, because there are so few ingredients, all of them need to be very good. I had to search for Serrano ham (found it at Wegman’s) and substituted store-bought basil pesto in lieu of making homemade parsley pesto. Prosciutto ham could be substituted, but the Serrano ham is worth looking for.



## TOMATO BREAD WITH SERRANO HAM AND PESTO

### INGREDIENTS

- A container of store-bought pesto sauce (or homemade if you have it)
- 3 very ripe beefsteak tomatoes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 loaf of crusty Italian bread (ciabatta is good but any good country loaf will work)
- 2 large garlic cloves, sliced in half
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ pound thinly sliced serrano ham

### DIRECTIONS

- Cut the tomatoes in half horizontally.
- Place a box grater in a large bowl. Rub the cut side of the tomato halves over the large holes of the grater, using your palm to move them back and forth.
- The flesh should be grated off, leaving the skin intact in your hand. Discard the skin and season the tomato pulp with salt, black pepper and red pepper flakes. Let sit at room temperature while you prepare the bread.
- Heat a grill or grill pan to high.
- Cut the bread into ¼ inch thick slices and grill until lightly charred. Flip the bread slices and toast a little longer until heated through and lightly browned.
- Rub the grilled bread slices with the halved garlic cloves and then brush them with olive oil.
- Spoon liberal amounts of tomato pulp onto the grilled bread slices and drizzle with some of the pesto.
- Top with the ham slices and serve at room temperature.

The colors of the dish are beautiful, and the combination of flavors is just delicious. I served the bread with drinks and no other “nibbley” was needed. Flay recommends making tomato bread in late summer when tomatoes are at their best, but as long as they are red and ripe, this recipe will work. You could try making it for a light weekend lunch, as well. If you have tomato pulp left over, you can use it to whip up a quick marinara sauce for pasta.

Flay is said to be opening an Italian restaurant in Vegas called Amalfi. I am eager to see how he puts his own signature style on Italian classics. Maybe another cookbook is in the works, too.

A little side note: On the Food Network show, “Beat Bobby Flay,” Bobby usually wins the cooking competition! But you will find tomato bread is a winner and easy to make, too. **B**