

A DC Restaurateur Flew In Families Separated by the Pandemic for a Mother's Day Brunch. The Photos Are Heartwarming.



During the pandemic, Medium Rare owner Mark Bucher has provided thousands of free delivery meals to seniors and healthcare workers on various holidays. Now that dining restrictions are beginning to lift, he decided to focus on making people happy in a different way. Yesterday, he reunited three sets of friends and family—all kept apart during the pandemic—with a Mother's Day brunch at the Bethesda location of his steakhouse.

Bucher held a contest, accepting entries from more than a couple dozen people. He narrowed the number down to three sets of winners—many of whom he'd fly in—to attend the brunch.



Corey Garlick, who lives in DC, was reunited with his mother Laura Cator, plus his grandparents and father. Cator has spent much of the past year working in the Covid unit of a senior living facility in Los Angeles. Maryland resident Gayle Regalia was united for the first time in person with Beverly Koch, her biological mother, who she'd learned about during the pandemic. Bucher also brought together two best friends who hadn't seen each other in over a year: Virginian Amy Troutmiller and Chicago resident Susan Boyle.

Bucher took notice of how the loved ones greeted each other after so many months apart. "Some of these people forget how to act. Do you hug a family member? Do you elbow bump them? These families just went right in for the hug," he says. "Facetime and Zoom [are] great but it doesn't really replace that embrace for mom, and that was pretty awesome."



The event wasn't just important for the families who attended. "The restaurant business is just code for 'we're in the happiness business.' People celebrate anniversaries, graduations, birthdays, divorces with us, and magical times with us, and we haven't had much of that over the past year," Bucher says. "This was an opportunity for everyone, our entire staff, to feel like we're back part of people's lives again."



Bucher reflected on his own relationship to Mother's Day: "I lost my mother very young at 17, so I never really had an adult Mother's Day," he says. "The lesson for me is that if your mom is alive, and she's near you or she's close by or you can get with her, you should. You don't know how many Mother's Days you have with her."



"Everyone had hope, and people are getting vaccinated now. Maybe, it's a new opportunity or lease on life," says Bucher. "But it was really good for everyone. It was more than just a Mother's Day."