



FRUIT OF THE VINE

Singer Joe Cocker cultivates “Joematoes” at his Crawford estate

By Amiee White Beazley • Photographs by Gary Hubbell

Dotted along singer Joe Cocker’s 325-acre Mad Dog Ranch in Crawford, Colorado, there are many things he relishes: towering aspen trees, English-style perennial gardens, large terraces and a pond where his miniature Goldendoodle, Fern, can swim. He’s been living just outside of this quiet town, about 20 minutes south of Paonia, since he and his wife, Pam, built the estate in 1994, and not too long after they discovered the solitude and community of Western Colorado.

“It just felt so right,” says Cocker, who retains his British accent

and trademark gritty voice. “I don’t miss city life at all. I have no regrets. There are not many places where you’ve got space like this left. And I’ve got a lot of space—and a lot of time.”

While he spends some of that time touring (mostly abroad), visiting his grandchildren in California, recording new music and working with his North Fork Valley nonprofit Cocker Kids’ Foundation, this Grammy Award–winning musician prefers the simplicity of Crawford. It’s a long haul from the infamous days of his youth—when the iconic 1960s artist was better known for his



Near the town of Crawford, Needle Rock (center), a 700-foot volcanic monolith, towers over the Cocker estate.

“Mad Dog” ways. But today, at age 67, he just might take a hike into the mountains or pull a chair to the edge of his Crawford property near Needle Rock and watch the snow melt.

Yes, Cocker sits and watches the snow melt, because when you’ve already done it all—fame, fortune and years of literally partying like a rock star—what Cocker desires most now is peace and quiet. “It’s a luxury most people don’t get,” he says. In Crawford, Cocker has found that peace, and the time to do as he pleases—which also means tending to the vine.



Joe and his adoring miniature Goldendoodle, Fern, with Needle Rock in the background.

“[The tomato] is my passion. I grow other things, but [tomatoes] are what I love.”

—Joe Cocker







When Joe and Pam moved to Crawford, one of the first things he did was plant tomatoes.

As a child growing up in Sheffield, England, Cocker's tough-as-nails father also grew tomatoes. Memories of watering the plants on Sunday in England hold a strong emotional connection for Cocker. His father's tomatoes were a local legend in his hometown. "People were always saying to me, 'Psst, Joe, can you get me some of your dad's tomatoes.' [My father] was proud of those tomatoes." And now he is proud of his own. His "Joematoes" have a reputation all their own, even winning a few first-place ribbons at the Delta County Fair.

Once Joe set out growing tomatoes, the hobby soon became an obsession. He outgrew his first greenhouse and needed room for more varieties. Then during one of his touring breaks two years ago Pam purchased a Rimol Greenhouse for him as a birthday present. The state-of-the-art greenhouse was built to help Cocker grow tomatoes throughout the year.

"It is my passion. I grow other things, but [tomatoes] are what I love," he says, as he shows off his two greenhouses and one large outdoor garden consisting mostly of 30 different types of tomatoes.

His passion for tomatoes, he admits, has less to do with eating them than with the memories of his father, growing up with good tomatoes and the process of bringing them from seed to fruit. However, Pam, an accomplished home chef and once proprietor of their Crawford eatery, Mad Dog Café, cooks, jars and prepares the tomatoes once Cocker has picked them from their vines, serving them with lunch and dinner daily in many different ways.

We slowly walk back to the 17,000-square foot Tudor-European-style residence in Crawford that Joe and Pam call home, built entirely by local craftsman and artisans. We meander past the snooker table thought to have been once owned by Prince Edward VII, and past the couple's eclectic collection of pig figurines and sea stars, to the large kitchen where his vine-ripened tomatoes rest on the counter.

The couple talks of an upcoming tour and improvements on their land. But Joe is focused on the tomatoes. It's always about the tomatoes. 🍅

Clockwise: Joe Cocker relishes his English-style perennial gardens; prizes from the Delta County Fair; Joe's original greenhouse; Pam preparing tomatoes in the couple's kitchen; a newly installed garden just outside of the Rimol Greenhouse.



Photograph: Sae Green