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## Meating of the minds

By Judith McGinnis

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As more than a half dozen burly guys relax in Ron “Polar Bear” Simpson’s backyard, enjoying cold beers, telling jokes and taking in the heady aroma of steak, chicken and smoked turkey, the last thing that might come to somebody’s mind is Tupperware.

“Party sales,” the kind that made Tupperware, Mary Kay and Pampered Chef household words, have finally crossed the gender barrier. Simpson is one of 30 “advisers” for ManCave World Wide, a startup company from Minnesota that’s marketing barbecue gear, seasonings and high-class steaks at “MEATings” just like this.

“I saw a story about it on TV and checked out their Web site,” said Simpson, turning an inch-and-a-half thick buffalo steak. “I thought, ‘I can do that.’ I signed up as an adviser and Nick got me set up.”

Nick is Nick Beste (pronounced best-E), an energetic entrepreneur who parlayed his own love of grilling and experience in food brokerage into ManCave.

“We were on the deck with some buddies, watching a football game and one of the guys is showing us how to make the best rack of ribs I’ve ever had. It was like watching a cooking show at home,” said Beste in a telephone interview. “We figured you could go around, sell products to a receptive audience — guys who really enjoy outdoor cooking.”

Starting with seven advisers in April, the company is off to a solid start. Male bonding over hot fires and cold beverages appears to be the start of something big. Beste sees a future with Man Caves specialized for fishing, hunting and racing enthusiasts.

The ManCave product line includes premium beef and buffalo steaks, pork, poultry, brats and ribs, seasonings, grilling equipment, poker supplies and, for the women in a Cave-Man’s life, girl-friendly gifts.

Back at the Simpson fireside friends Smokey, Honda and Coors (these are definitely motorcycle guys) are enjoying jalapeños stuffed with crab meat, cheese and cream cheese. Ron is demonstrating how easy it is to cut up a perfectly can-cooked chicken. Simpson’s guests watch the technique but the five family dogs are riveted to his every move. In the absence of opposable thumbs, they’s settle for what hits the ground.

“This is pretty tasty,” said Smokey, sampling a bird that arrives frozen, pre-marinated, pre-seasoned and delivered by UPS. “But when are the steaks gonna be done? I’m ready for the main course.”



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