

TEXAS LIVE

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All Things Texan

4 Destinations
for
Memorial Day
Weekend

My Mother's Table

A Collection of Recipes and Memories Inspired by Mom

The Beer Can House

One Man's Trash Is Transformed to Treasure

Lone Star State of...Swine?

Part I

17 Pages of Inspiration
for Your Home & Garden





TX M.I.L.K. is a growing collection of conversations with the Lone Star State's most fascinating moms. Some are running million dollar companies. Others are courageously building modern families. Some are even taking the "stay at home" challenge. But all have one thing in common: they're doing inspiring things while raising tiny humans along the way. >>

 **TX MILK** ★★ ★★ ★★
Texas Moms I'd Like to Know

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Texas Rollergirls

On the track they're ruthless, take-no-mercy athletes with names like Bad Influence, Sinner, Voodoo, and Desi Cration. But when the skates come off, these Texas Rollergirls go by a very different name: Mom. They tell us how roller derby actually complements motherhood—bruises, scrapes, and all.

What was your childhood like growing up?

SINNER: I grew up in California and played a lot of sports. I was a tomboy. I had a sister and she was not a tomboy. I always wanted to play with the boys and she did not. I got to Austin and heard about this roller derby thing.

BAD INFLUENCE: I was somewhat of a tomboy and somewhat of a girly girl. I went between being a swimmer and being a cheerleader in high school. But I was always very competitive. A friend of mine saw some of the women skating around at her child's kindergarten and told me about it. I thought, "Roller derby? I have to do this." I knew nothing about it. I had never seen it. But I thought I had to go try it out. I spent a year just learning how to skate.

DESI CRATION: I played soccer. I started girls' ice hockey in my hometown. I was a swimmer and played rugby. I found out about roller derby in Minnesota and started

playing in 2005. A friend took me to see the newly formed Minnesota Rollergirls and I fell in love with it. I thought, "That's rugby plus ice hockey. Let's go."

VOODOO: I was a total tomboy—climbing trees and skinned knees. I grew up on a horse. I was a competitive barrel racer until I was ten. I started roller derby in 2003. I skated for years before having my son. I took three years off and then I came back, which is not the easiest thing in the world.

Is there such thing as, "I want to be a Rollergirl when I grow up?" Or do you have to have a full time job?

DESI CRATION: All of us have jobs outside of roller derby. None of this is paid. Not one single bit. This is a hobby taken to a new level.

Roller derby may not be your job, but it's way more than a hobby, right?

SINNER: When I first started I'd say it was an obsessive hobby. I really loved it and really looked forward to doing it. It was two nights a week. Now practices are at least three, sometimes four and even five times a week. And those practices are two hours or more. My job in the league is "Chief Communications Officer" and for the last four months that has probably been a 20 hours a week job. That's not paid. It's a volunteer position to help run the Texas Rollergirls, which is a nonprofit.

DESI CRATION: It starts out as a sport, an interest, a hobby. It becomes a lifestyle. It starts as a hobby and becomes your life.

How does one get started in roller derby?

DESI CRATION: We have what we call our recreation league. Some call it "Diet Derby." It started off as moms who wanted to play roller derby. It is a less competitive version of the main league. It's really grown and now there are almost 200 women ranging in age from 18 to nearly 60.

What do your husbands think of roller derby?

BAD INFLUENCE: My husband was an integral part in supporting me in this. I'm Bad Influence and my husband is known as "Under the Influence." We've been married almost 11 years. Roller Derby came along after we were married and I became a mother. My kids come to all of the bouts. They're my biggest fans.

DESI CRATION: My husband is a roller derby announcer. I met him at the very first Dust Devil tournament when I was living in Minnesota. It was the first time skaters came from around the country to have a tournament together. We met, fell in love, and then I moved down here to get married. He proposed in front of 3,000 people at a roller derby event. We have a roller derby baby.

VOODOO: I think my husband had a harder time dealing with it at first. It was like, "What is this cult?" But now he's a huge supporter. He's definitely my biggest fan

and supports everything I want to do in derby. He's slowly getting sucked into the derby world as well.

SINNER: It's really challenging. This definitely takes me away from the family and it's really, really hard. But I think he sees a lot of benefit. He's made a lot of great friends because of it. And as far as he's concerned, it's not forever. We'll see how long my body can hold up.

Do you have to schedule date night with your husband?

DESI CRATION: Funny you should say that. We've gone out twice in nine months.

SINNER: My husband and I have a graphic design and web company called Blaze Design. We've worked together full time from home for the last ten and a half years. Lately, we've taken to Friday mid-day movie dates. We sneak out when we can and go to Alamo Drafthouse and then go back to work.

What year did roller derby get so popular?

SINNER: The resurgence flat track roller derby happened in Austin in 2003, and now there are over a thousand leagues in the world and over 20,000 skaters. When the founders created Texas Rollergirls, their vision was that it could be done by anybody. If you had enough wide-open space of asphalt you could draw a track on there and play roller derby. But I don't think they ever thought it would be this big. Roller Derby is now the world's fastest growing sport for women. In Austin, we have four home teams that play each other. There's also an All Star team that plays teams from all over the world. Our All Star team won regionals last year and went to the International Championships and finished third.

Growing up did you ever think about being a mom?

SINNER: I think I always knew I wanted to



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- Bad Influence





be a mom but I never really thought about it much. It was not always the top priority. My mom owned her own business and really supported us for most of my life. If anything, I followed in her footsteps by being an entrepreneur and starting my own business.

BAD INFLUENCE: I always thought I was going to be a stay-at-home mom. That was going to be my dream job. Oh my word, was I wrong. I love my kids dearly but I'm really glad I work. The time I can devote to them makes me a better mom.

DESI CRATION: I was always very career driven and then it turned out that I'm not going down the path I thought I would. I planned to get my PhD but I left Minnesota with my master's when I met my husband and moved down here to start a family. I never thought I would say that, but this is the best thing that could have possibly happened.

VOODOO: I was one of those very proud non-parents for many years. I was never the baby person. I never thought I would be a mom. We always say roller derby is the best form of birth control because there are all of these women in their prime childbearing years and they're not getting pregnant.



How common is motherhood among the Texas Rollergirls?

VOODOO: I was the first that I knew of who got pregnant. There are more now, but it was rare at the time.

SINNER: There is now what is known as the "9-month injury."

Anybody have a good labor and delivery story?

VOODOO: I went in with this very macho attitude about "no drugs." But I had a 10-lb baby. I had him at the Austin Birthing Center. I had everything planned out. I had the bag. I had the perfect motherhood outfit. My hair would be done and I would be smiling for pictures. When the first contraction happened I turned into a feral cat. My husband talks about walking me up to the door of the birthing center wearing a shirt, no pants, and one shoe. And furthermore, I didn't care.

What physical benefit do you get from derby?

SINNER: When I started derby my son was 18 months old and I think the most exercise I had done since getting pregnant was walking around the neighborhood. I

still had all the baby fat and decided I just needed to start this. It's a great workout that I loved every minute of, so it was the best way to get the baby weight off.

BAD INFLUENCE: I had really bad post partum depression with my first son and managed it through exercise and eating better versus medication. I just know I have to have some sort of hard exercise pretty much every day and roller derby fits that to a T.

What kind of community have you found through roller derby?

DESI CRATION: It's a very eclectic group. It's a lot of people with a sports background and a lot of people with no sports background. It's a lot of women with families and others who have no desire to have children. There are a lot of people I realize I never would have met them if it hadn't been for roller derby.

SINNER: A lot of us had a hard time finding that big group, that community. I didn't have a lot of girlfriends. I had a lot of guy friends. This is by far the largest group of women that I've ever wanted to be around.

DESI CRATION: It helps when you can hit them.

BAD INFLUENCE: There are a lot of very powerful, strong-willed women, and it makes it challenging at times. But it's also really a blessing because we need that kind of leadership in every aspect—from being on the track to running the business. We really need every person that we've got. And it's really fun to meet all of these women from all different walks of life.

Any advice for the next generation of Rollergirls/Rollermoms?

SINNER: I often wish I had more time for my kid. At the same time, I would not be the mom that I am without my job and without derby. Without having passions like that in my life, I don't think I would be as good of a role model for him. I guess my advice is to do what makes you love life.

BAD INFLUENCE: I think roller derby is one of the most amazing, empowering sports I've ever played

—especially for women. It makes you learn to stand up for yourself on the track and off the track. You can't be a mom without that.

DESI CRATION: You don't know what you can do until you try it. If something isn't there and you want to do it, then make it be that way. When I was younger we didn't have girls' hockey so we started it. And this group right here in Austin decided to start this sport. They made it a full sport and a full business from the ground up.

VOODOO: I wish roller derby could have been around when I was a little girl because I think a lot of girls from my generation fell into the trap of living through their significant others instead of finding a sense of self inside themselves. If I had a little girl I would want to say: "Don't date the drummer, be the drummer."

What do you like most about being a mom?

BAD INFLUENCE: I just love my boys. The other morning I was up early answering e-mails and Tyler came into the office and said, "Mommy, I just want to sit with you."

DESI CRATION: I just have to say it's possible to play roller derby, work full time, and still breastfeed your kid. After practice I'm stinky and smelly, and my son is the only guy who doesn't care.

SINNER: One thing I love about being a mom is that it changed my perspective on everything. Before, I was always looking to the next thing, but having my son makes me enjoy the moment in a way I was never physically able to do until I had him.

What's harder being a mom or being a Roller girl?

BAD INFLUENCE: I think motherhood is by far the hardest thing I've ever done. I have to work harder every day to be a good mom and take good care of my kids. Everything else just falls into place. Roller derby helps me to be strong enough to do that.

Is it ever too much? Do you ever consider sacrificing something?

VOODOO: I think we probably all think that several times a day. But we love motherhood and we love derby so we keep going. I think derby is a piece of cake compared to motherhood. But being a mom has made me more resilient and more patient. I think derby really compliments being a mom because it's a great stress relief. *

• • Learn more about Texas Roller girls at TexasRollerGirls.org.

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