



Linda Lay
Artist Information Sheet
All Ages

Artist Biography:

Linda Clayman Lay is one of the most respected voices in bluegrass music, a style of music developed in the American South in the middle of the 20th Century. She grew up in Clayman Valley, a tiny community outside of Bristol, Tennessee. She grew up surrounded by music in a family that treasured the musical sounds of the Appalachian Mountains. Her father, mandolinist Jack Clayman, formed a family band with Linda and her brothers and sisters, taking them to the places where the local musicians gathered, jammed, and performed. She hung around the Star Barbershop in Bristol, a place where you could get a haircut or jam with local musicians and learned to play the upright bass under the watchful eye of the barber/ musician who owned the shop.

Linda possesses a memorably beautiful voice. For over 30 years, she has sung professionally, leading numerous bands and taking bluegrass music into new directions. Today, she performs regularly with her husband David. In addition to performing together, Linda and David are professional farmers. Linda draws from their homegrown produce to cook up incredible pickled vegetables, jams and jellies and sauces as well as baked goods, using recipes and techniques learned from her family. Like music, food and food preparation is an important aspect of the cultural way of life within her community. On nearly any day, you can swing past Linda and David's farm outside of Bristol and eat some of the finest and freshest food around. And as the sun sets and the farming ends, the instruments come out and music fills the night air.

Tradition:

Appalachian Music & Food

Linda Lay grew up singing, playing guitar, bass, and autoharp in her family band. The group played music styles such as old-time (songs popular in the 1800s) and gospel, but also bluegrass and traditional country; these styles are so associated with the mountains of Appalachia that they are often called mountain music. Bluegrass is a more modern form of mountain music, created in the late 1930s' and 1940s when traditional mountain music was combined with a driving banjo sound that was perfect for taking solos and showing off musical chops on stage and on the radio.

In addition to their own distinct musical traditions, the early settlers of Southern Appalachia developed their own unique culinary traditions. Drawing upon their characteristic mountain resourcefulness, Appalachians fed themselves and their families by any means available to them - growing their own food, raising their own livestock, and foraging for whatever indigenous food sources from which they lived. Appalachians learned to make hearty, delicious dishes often from the simplest ingredients - wild



greens and beans, corn flour, and wild and raised meats. They also developed ways of preserving fresh foods without refrigeration in glass jars, a process known as “canning,” to last them through the often-harsh winters. Over time the residents of Appalachia gained access to the wide range of natural and processed foods available in supermarkets throughout the country, but they have proudly maintained many of their favorite distinctly Appalachian-style staples- pinto beans and cornbread, chicken and dumplings, country ham and biscuits, as well as a host of culinary traditions brought to the region by recent immigrants.

Place:

Southern Appalachia

The Southern Appalachians encompass the mountainous regions of North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Since the 1600s, the area’s culture was formed by a multicultural environment including Scots-Irish and German immigrants from Europe, free and enslaved Africans and the Cherokee, Iroquois, Powhatan and Shawnee peoples who inhabited the area before the arrival of Europeans. Over the centuries, Appalachia has created and maintained a distinct and influential culture that includes rich culinary, storytelling, dancing and especially music traditions. Linda grew up in a small Appalachian community called Clayman Valley, an area near Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia (Bristol straddles the state line) that was named after Linda’s family, the Clayman’s. Bristol is known as the central place for the development of Country Music where the first major recording of country artists took place in 1927, often referred to as the “Big Bang of Country Music.”