

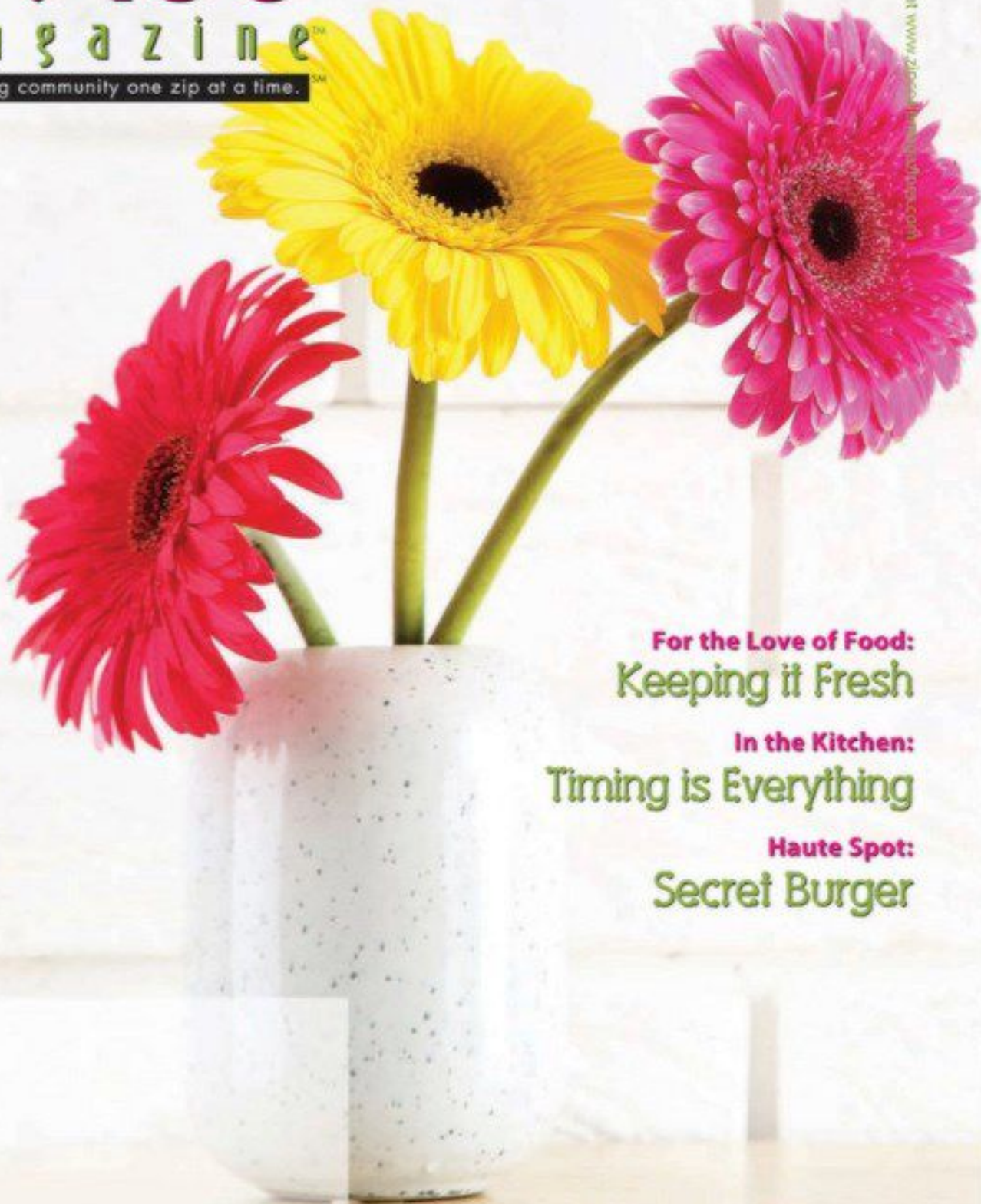


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Back to Nature Safe and Sound

By Stephanie Forté

When Rob Jensen, 42, took his first trip to Las Vegas to celebrate his 18th birthday rock climbing with friends in Red Rock, he couldn't have imagined that decades later he would be the driving force behind keeping rock climbers in Las Vegas safe from potential life-altering or ending accidents. A few years ago, when a friend took a fall, and a piece of old gear broke, Jensen decided to take action.

A Summerlin resident since 1999, and a climber of 25 years, Jensen's accomplishments in climbing are on-par with some of the sport's elite athletes. The skills that make him a great athlete—focus, planning, and training—have brought him success in business.

Jensen is the founder and president of Rob Jensen Company, a firm specializing in luxury real estate properties in guard gated communities like The Ridges and Red Rock Country Club. A few years ago, when climbing in Red Rock and a few local limestone cliffs, he noticed that fixed gear like aluminum carabiners was worn through. Quickdraws with old webbing left on routes were becoming faded. Then came his friend's fall, and Jensen decided to make change happen. "Climbing gear technology was improving, and it seemed like it was long overdue to replace outdated gear," he says.

There's no governing body or agency managing climbing gear in Red Rock. Local climbers place it, and though volunteer organizations try to address issues like this, Las Vegas has more climbing than most areas in the United States. It is a lot to manage. And expensive.

"It is better to address this issue of old fix gear before it gets more people hurt or killed," explains Jensen, who is a sponsor of Save Red Rock, and a member of the Southern Nevada Climbers Coalition and The Access Fund. "This will also lead to the closure of climbing areas. Something needed to be done."

Jensen worked with industry organizations to get input on the best technology. He identified and hired a team of experienced climbers to tackle the job and began with an initial investment of \$10,000 for gear and labor.

Today, the effort Rob funds to make Red Rock and nearby limestone areas safe continues. More than 1,000 bolts have been replaced, and as the Las Vegas climbing population explodes with newcomers, this is good news. "There are more routes and locations on the list that are absolutely in need of new hardware. Hopefully, we can begin some of those projects later this summer," says Jensen.

"The outdoors comes with a fair amount of risk," he says. "You need to be a good steward of the land—treading lightly and staying on a trail, keeping your dog on a leash and picking up after it, and being respectful to others. Everyone needs to play their part to ensure that we continue to have a good time out there."

And in Rob's case, that means taking action to keep people safe. ♦