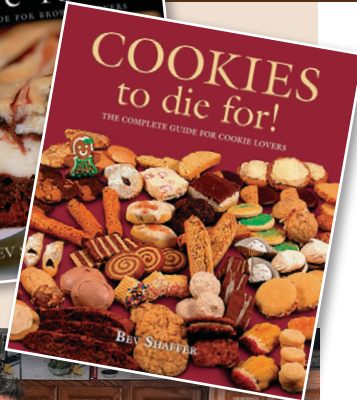
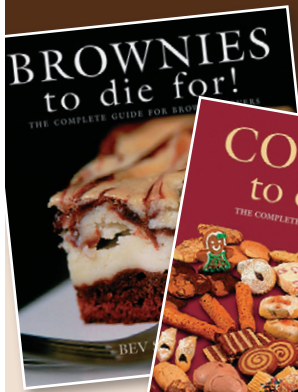


A class where eating is allowed.



Whether you are a dedicated cook, a novice, or you love to eat, attending a cooking class is a great form of entertainment and an educational opportunity.

"I consider this to be the purest form of dinner theater," says Larry Oates, owner of KitchenArt in West Lafayette, which offers a wide variety of cooking classes year-round. "We are making dinner, and it's theater." Theater because the instructor/chef demonstrates her culinary skill, working precisely with a touch of drama behind a long counter at the front of the classroom. This particular class, "A Celebration of Strawberries," is taught by Chef Bev Shaffer, who has traveled from Ohio to instruct the course. Shaffer is the author of numerous cookbooks including *Cookies to Die For* (Pelican, 2009) and *Brownies to Die For* (Pelican, 2006) and is known by Cleveland audiences for her segments on television.

Even for a master chef like Shaffer, she says keeping track of things while she's cooking and instructing is still the biggest challenge.

"Although I have used the recipes frequently, I still like to reread the recipe as I am going so that people can see what they are going to be doing at home."

For timid cooks or bench-warmer cooks, the benefit of taking a cooking class at KitchenArt is that the classes are generally more demonstration oriented as opposed to all hands-on. Students sit behind long tables in a classroom style, and they watch the instructor do the recipe. The students get a copy of the recipes to follow along as it's happening, and they visually process what is being made, as Shaffer pointed out.

Perhaps the main attraction of a cooking class is the samples, but these are not ordinary-sized grocery samples. Rather, they are hearty portions, providing the robust flavor of the demonstration. Students say they are so full after sampling that they skip dinner on the day of the class. Shaffer's menu or recipe list for this class: Strawberry Green Tea Cooler, Chilled Strawberry Soup, Double Strawberry White Chocolate Mousse, Smooth and Silky Fudge Sauce, Strawberry Praline Mascarpone Spread, Screamin' Strawberry Vinaigrette with a Spinach and Strawberry Salad, and Sugar and Spiced Nuts. There is so much focus on the eating that sounds of cutlery dominate the room during the sampling.

Students take the class not only for the good eats, but to get ideas for serving clients at a business, for example, or they find they finally have time to indulge in gourmet cooking as empty nesters.

Rather than hire a caterer, Mary Ann Childress does a lot of the cooking for her family businesses: Childress Farm Service and Midwest Distributing in Linden.

"I have never made a strawberry soup, so I will probably try that and the strawberry vinaigrette salad," she says after watching the instruction.

The chef's presentation, however, is not a one-man show. She is assisted by the staff at KitchenArt, who help with the prep, serve the students and then clean up. Some are aspiring

chefs, such as Darcy Smink, whose goal is to be an executive chef. She has worked on and off at KitchenArt for eight years.

"The opportunity to meet and work with these folks has been tremendous, not only from the pursuit of a new career, but it's also a lot of fun," says Smink, a retail sales and cooking class assistant at KitchenArt. "It's a great learning curve."

Chefs come from long distances to teach the classes at KitchenArt, such as George Geary who comes from California to teach classes, including a "Go Bananas" class. Geary travels all over the United States and internationally to instruct courses. He's the author of numerous books and articles including *Get Dressed and Sauced* (Robert Rose Publishers, 2009) and *The Cheesecake Bible* (Robert Rose Publishers, 2008).

Geary brings his experience as former executive pastry chef for Disneyland to his instruction.

"I want people to get in the kitchen and bake," Geary says. "We had to find the best, fastest and easiest way to produce 70,000 pieces of pastry per day. So I think I can show you how to do it faster!"

Geary says his all-time favorite banana recipe is Banana Cake with Cream Cheese Icing.

For people who don't want to make things from scratch but want the good taste, Dream Dinners in Lafayette prepares gourmet-like frozen dinners for sale. Located at 210 Meijer Drive, Dream Dinners offers customers the opportunity to mix and match from its menus, which include dishes like Almond Chicken with Sweet and Sour Sauce, Shepherd's Pie, Steak with Garlic and Herb Butter, and Maple Glazed Pork Chops and Firehouse Pasta with Meatballs.

"When new customers register for a session, we take them on a tour of our kitchen and show them how to assemble their meals," says Amy Maxwell, co-owner. "Each customer is also provided with cooking instruction cards to go with each assembled meal so they will know how to cook their meal when they are ready to make it."

Looking forward to the warmer weather, barbecue cooking classes are the most popular classes at Clark Appliance in Indianapolis, which offers a variety of gourmet classes all year long. Chef Benjamin Lierman teaches classes, which are categorized around method or cuisine. For example, Clark Appliance offers a free class on using a convection oven. Lierman has taught barbecue classes centered around different cuisines including Cuban and Korean barbecue, and notes that while the equipment may have changed, barbecuing is not new.

"We've been cooking over fires for 140,000 years," he says.

Food always brings people together, as do the cooking classes, Oates says

"The best part is really the people," he says. "Not only the instructors, who are delightful, but also the students. We really become friends over time. I see a number of them over and over again, and it's a nice camaraderie." ❖

Chef George Geary

Amy Booher tastes a sample during class.

Screamin' Strawberry Vinaigrette with a Spinach and Strawberry Salad

– Chef Bev Shaffer

- 1 lb. strawberries, hulled and halved
- 2½ Tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2½ Tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 small clove garlic, pressed
- 1½ Tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 1½ Tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1½ Tablespoons chopped fresh Italian flat leaf parsley
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground white pepper
- Additional strawberries, hulled, quartered or sliced
- Spinach, cleaned, stemmed, and torn into bite-sized pieces

Puree the 1 pound of strawberries in a blender or food processor. Add the vinegar, lemon juice, garlic, chives, basil, parsley, salt and white pepper to the mixture. Combine the mixture in the blender. Makes 2 cups. Serve with salad of strawberries and spinach.



Mary Ann Childress prepares a Spinach and Strawberry Salad she learned in a recent cooking class.

Banana Cake – Chef George Geary

- 2 9-inch round cake pans, sprayed with non-stick spray
- 3 cups cake flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1½ cups ripe bananas, smashed
- 6 Tablespoons buttermilk
- ½ cup chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Combine flour, baking soda, salt and baking powder. Set the contents aside. In a mixer bowl, beat the butter and sugar for about 2 minutes, until creamy. Add the eggs at one time. Add in vanilla, bananas and buttermilk. Using the mixer on a low speed combine the dry ingredients for about 3 minutes. Fold in or gently stir in pecans. Pour the batter in prepared baking pans. Bake in the oven about 40 to 50 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool in the pans for 10 minutes on a cooling rack. Remove cake from the pans and leave on the rack until completely cool. Spread cream cheese icing on the banana cake.

Smooth and Silky Fudge Sauce

– Chef Bev Shaffer

- 4 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped into pieces
- 1/3 cup unsalted butter
- 1 1/3 cups confectioner's sugar, sifted
- 5 oz. evaporated milk or ¾ cup half-and-half
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine the chocolate, butter, sugar and milk or half-and-half in a 3-quart saucepan, and mix the ingredients well. Stir the mixture constantly over

medium heat until it boils. Reduce the heat to low. Cook for 5 minutes, and keep stirring the mixture. Remove from the heat, add the vanilla, and stir. Makes 2 cups.

Roast Crown Rack of Lamb with Jeweled Shallots, Parsnips and Chestnuts – Chef Ben Lierman

- 1 rack of lamb – crown roast
- ½ Tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 8 shallots peeled and whole
- 4 parsnips, peeled and cut into 8ths
- 10 chestnuts, roasted and peeled
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ cup red wine
- ½ Tablespoon butter

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees, and put your heaviest roasting pan inside. Rub the rack of lamb with olive oil, salt and pepper.

For the vegetables, toss the shallots and parsnips with vegetable oil, and put on a baking sheet. Remove the roasting pan from the oven, and then put the lamb roast in the pan. Place the roast and the baking sheet with the vegetables in the oven. Roast the veggies until they are a golden color, which should take about 30 minutes. Cook the lamb until it reaches an internal temperature of 135 degrees, also for about 30 minutes.

Remove the lamb from the pan, and set it aside underneath a foil tent. Place the roasting pan over a medium heat. Add the roasted vegetables and sauté with the chestnuts, thyme, salt and pepper. Toss the vegetable mixture frequently so that they are coated with the lamb drippings. Add the red wine, and then reduce the heat to medium-low. Toss in the butter.

Fill in the crown roast lamb with the vegetables for presentation. Serve the vegetables, and carve the meat.

Your Eyes Are the Window to Your Soul

Your eyes reflect a wide range of emotions. Unfortunately, they are the first to show signs of aging. From development of fine wrinkles and puffiness around the eyes, to bags under the eyes, sagging eyelids and brows; the appearance of being tired and aging around the eyes is inescapable. Fortunately, a variety of non-invasive and surgical treatments for the eyelids, eyebrows and forehead are available to correct these age related changes.

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