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## Cooking is for Everyone

By Susie Iventosch



Dianna-Davis Condon teaches Del Rey students Kathryn Silveira (middle) and Riley Hummell (left) how to make apple galettes with puff pastry and creme Chantilly in her after-school cooking class  
Photo Susie Iventosch

Cooking isn't just for moms and dads, anymore. I am continually impressed by the number of school-aged children who are big fans of The Food Network. Every day I hear about a young foodie, who spends more time watching Iron Chef, Alton Brown and Big Daddy's House than cartoons ... and I love it! They're writing school reports about famous chefs and tagging along with mom and dad on excursions to the farmers' market. It follows that youth cooking classes are very popular offerings for after school enrichment programs these days.

Dianna Condon of Orinda is a partner in Savory Affairs, a local business that specializes in catering and personal gourmet meal services, as well as cooking classes for adults and kids alike. She says her cooking classes at Del Rey Elementary School fill up quickly.

"The kids are really interested in learning," she said. "I think the Food Network has had a huge impact on them. I love seeing the ear-to-ear grins on the faces of my clients while they are learning to cook or are eating really good food."

Orinda parent Jen Weiszmann saw the cooking class in the enrichment program last year, and since her son Kieran, 8, has always been interested in cooking, she tried to sign him up only to discover the class was full.

"Kieran was really disappointed," she said. "So, this year, I watched for it and signed him up early. Now, he's in his second eight-week session and loving it!"

Weiszmann says both of her boys are really into cooking. Cayden who is 6, is still too young for the series, but he was able to do a special kindergarten class last

year around Thanksgiving. They love watching the Food Network and cooking and also enjoy raising vegetables in the family garden. They like to try to find recipes that include the produce they grow at home, too.

"Two years ago, the boys got a KitchenAid from Santa Claus and I have to ask them to use it," Weizsmann pointed out. "And for Christmas this year, they insisted we buy a deep fryer for my husband!"

Kieran's favorite Food Network shows are the Iron Chef and Alton Brown.

"They're funny and they make cooking seem like fun," he said. "My teacher, Dianna, also makes it fun. I like rolling out dough and chopping vegetables, but my favorite was the coconut macaroons ... dipped in chocolate!"

Kieran didn't even like coconut before he made macaroons in cooking class.

He really likes Tyler Florence's mashed potatoes, because "you cook the potatoes in milk and it makes them taste richer."

For his school project, he is writing a speech about Mario Batali.

"You're supposed to write a biography about someone," he explained. "It has to be three to five minutes. Someday I'd like to go to Mario's restaurant."

When asked what piece of equipment was missing from his family's kitchen, Kieran said they don't have a food processor, which he'd like, but also he thought it would be nice if Alton Brown would come to his house and give him an outdoor kitchen, like he did for someone on television one time. That way he and his mom could hang out with guests rather than retreat to the kitchen when they're cooking for parties!

Hmmm ... maybe Alton Brown could stop by my house on the way!

Condon who changed careers midlife, began her professional culinary training seven years ago, when she signed up for a cooking externship program jointly conducted by Viking Home Chef and the California Culinary Academy. That's where she met her business partner, Carl Drosky, but it wasn't until recently that they teamed up with Savory Affairs.

"For about 18 years I was in sales of robotic machines for the medical industry," Drosky said. "I was looking to make a career change, and since I've always enjoyed working with food, I signed up for the 12-week essential series. Every week we learned a different cooking technique."

After completing the program, Drosky began teaching at Viking Home Chef and later opened his catering business and gourmet meal service, while Condon taught at Viking in addition to offering local classes for adults and children in the Orinda area and "cooking" birthday parties.

"Ironically, we both followed our passions to the same spot, and last year decided to collaborate in all aspects of the business," Drosky noted.

The gourmet meal service, designed for people who want a tasty, healthy, high-quality meal ready to eat when they are, offers three entrees each week in addition to several side dishes, and a weekly soup. Savory Affairs caters events from a dinner party of 12 to large events for 100. Cooking classes are conducted for youth and adults, and birthday parties for each category.

"What I enjoy about working with clients in the Lamorinda community is that they allow me to share my passion for food with them," Drosky mentioned. "When I'm teaching them cooking tips in a class or catering an event, it's always fun to see their excitement with what's being prepared. Whether it's children or adults, they usually become friends as well."

Dianna feels the same way about her work.

"When I have given someone a positive glimpse into cooking and sharing food it feels wonderful. I can't think of a better way to bring family and friends together. People love food!"

For more information about Savory Affairs, please visit: <http://www.savoryaffairs.com/>



Tomato Tart in progress Photo courtesy Savory Affairs

### Savory Affairs Tomato Tart

- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1 tablespoons thinly sliced chives
- 1 pound firm, ripe tomatoes of even size and shape
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoons kosher salt
- ½ teaspoons ground pepper
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoon unsalted butter
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup sherry vinegar
- 2 medium shallots, finely minced
- 1 sheet puff pastry

- Preheat oven to 400.
- Whisk together sour cream and chives in a small bowl. Chill until needed.
- Core the tomatoes and slice lengthwise into quarters. Remove seeds.
- Gently and thoroughly mix together tomatoes, salt, pepper, thyme, garlic and olive oil in a medium bowl.
- In a 7 inch, ovenproof sauté pan, combine butter, brown sugar, vinegar and shallots. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to simmer and reduce by half. Mixture will be dark and syrupy. Set aside to cool.
- Arrange tomato wedges, cut side down, in a circle in the sauté pan. Fill in the center with 2 – 3 wedges. Pour remaining sauce on top.
- Return sauté pan to medium heat and cook until liquid from tomatoes has evaporated (6 – 8 minutes). Remove from heat and set aside for 5 minutes.
- Cut a 9 inch circle from the puff pastry. Place over the tomatoes and tuck the edges into the pan. The syrup and pan are hot. Be careful.
- Place pan in the oven and bake for 25 minutes or until pastry is golden brown.
- Remove from oven and let rest for 5 minutes.
- To unmold, place top side of a plate over the pan and quickly invert

the pan and plate.

- Lift the pan off the tart and reposition any tomatoes that may moved out of position.
- Cut tart into wedges and top with the sour cream mixture.
- Serve immediately. Serves 4

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