

# Shallot-Mushroom Steak Topper Packs perfect for barbecuing

By Susie Iventosch



Shallot-Mushroom Steak Topper Packs

Photo Susie Iventosch

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When we go camping, we like to make veggie packs to cook right in the coals of the campfire. These are nifty foil packages containing sliced potatoes, carrots, squash, mushrooms, onions and a little bit of olive oil along with some salt and pepper. They are really tasty, and perhaps my son had that in the back of his mind when he decided to grill shallots the same way to put on top of his barbecued steak at home. That and the fact he finds it very difficult to keep sliced onions or shallots from slipping through the grill on the barbecue. He made these grilled shallot packs for dinner one night, which my other son enhanced by adding mushrooms when he made them. When I heard about this wonderful concoction some weeks later, I decided to make them that very day for our grilled steak and they are fantastic! This recipe is per person, so multiply by the number of people you are serving.

### Recipe per person

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium shallot, chopped
- 3-4 medium to large crimini mushrooms, thickly sliced and then slices cut in half
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon each salt and black pepper (and/or white pepper)
- 2 tablespoons crumbled blue cheese

#### DIRECTIONS

Cut a piece of aluminum foil, approximately 10 inches square. Place foil on counter top and spray generously with cooking spray. Place chopped shallots and mushrooms in the center of the foil and drizzle olive oil and Worcestershire sauce over the top. Season with oregano, salt and pepper. Toss all together with spoon or fingers. Wrap up foil so packet is sealed and cook over medium-hot grill for approximately 5 minutes per side. Remove from heat and open foil. Sprinkle cheese over the top and close foil back up. Set aside until you are ready to grill the steaks. When you put the steaks on, put the foil pack back on the top rack of the barbecue away from direct heat. This allows the cheese to melt, but not get too well done. Remove pack when you take the steaks off the grill. Serve the shallot-mushroom pack on top of the steak.

If multiplying, make individual packs for each person!

# Finding ones self through art and helping others along the way

By Lou Fancher



Julee Herrmann at Reclaiming Studios.

Photo Brandilyn Davidson Photography

There is human hunger no cuisine can feed. Nor can drink slake the thirst of a person whose inner voice is parched and seeks refuge, relief and rejuvenation that comes primarily from rest, retreat and reflection.

It is a hunger-thirst Julee Herrmann knows all too well. Probably, the 48-year-old Lafayette resident and owner/founder of Canvas & Cabernet on Locust Street in downtown Walnut Creek achieved exhaustion through success.

Launching the innovative-for-its-time paint and sip studio in 2013, Herrmann hit her high goals right off the bat. People arrived in droves, eager to join the judgment-free classes and breezy atmosphere that prevails under the Pleasanton native's sunny, upbeat temperament. Guided brushstroke-by-brushstroke as they create individual interpretations of select paintings or images—Van Gogh's "Starry Night," a rustic American flag, just two examples—budding artists sip

wine, mimosas or beer (Kids Korner private parties offer cocoa). Lively music and well-trained staff who ping-pong through the studio to boost an ego of a person whose creativity is blocked or to offer technical tips add energy to the environment.

"Canvas and Cabernet is made from my blood, flesh and bones," says Herrmann. "It's not a franchise and people sense that. I have a lot of personality so people are entertained by my goofiness and irreverence." There's no irreverence when it comes to the alcohol served during the classes and workshops, however. "We don't ever over-pour. These people are going to drive after they leave. I don't want them intoxicated. I really care about my community."

But a few years into running the hands-on operation, Herrmann was less tuned in to her self. Raising a 15-year-old daughter, making daily business decisions, leading classes and workshops, maintaining a bricks-and-mortar location and robust online presence while training the staff to know every aspect of the business so as to empower them left her bone tired. Eventually, she hit a wall.

"It was not being able to pick myself up, make sharp decisions, deal with my child that clued me in," she says.

Taking time away to write in her journal, create art from her heart and not out of desire to please others and especially, rediscovering sisterhood while practicing yoga, Herrmann emerged from fatigue. "Being supported in that 'me too' place showed me I wanted to shift a part of the business from C&C's 'woo-hoo' party girl atmosphere

to a sacred place of nourishment."

Which is why the former "woo-hoo" woman has embarked on a new adventure that will extend and compliment the original art studio. Reclaimed Studio, located in a separate location in Walnut Creek at 1444 S. Main Street, offers six-week intuitive painting workshops and one-day retreats aimed at self-discovery.

"Intuitive painting is almost the opposite (of what happens at C&C). I'm the guide, a half-step ahead of them, and we're all on the expedition together," says Herrmann. Participants converse, led by Herrmann, then journal. "At the end of that, I give them space to share anything that's an 'ah-ha' for them. Then, silently, we get up and paint. We paint and draw whatever comes up." Invited to "go at it," materials range from glitter glue to metallic to acrylic paints and every imaginable brush, palette knife or bamboo stick with which to craft a masterpiece – or not – on a 6-foot-by-4-foot-wide easel mounted with thick bristol paper.

Herrmann facilitates, once people get started. If someone is standing and staring, she'll suggest thinking about color, shape or image. "Off they go, following the energy," she says is the result.

It's not only energy that is output. Herrmann's ultimate ambition is to turn the business into a nonprofit that connects local people and philanthropists in projects that support marginalized kids in the community, foster children or youth who have been in juvenile homes in the greater Bay Area, and children in need worldwide. A birthday celebration held June 22 anticipated Herrmann's turning 49 on Aug. 21 and benefited art workshops in Mozambique

for the #IStandWithGirls Campaign, run by Kurandza. "My good friend, Elisabetta Colabianchi, created Kurandza to support girls who need it most."

When asked why the \$500 raised will be sent overseas when there are obvious children in need in America, Herrmann said, "I already work with kids in the Bay Area, Napa, and more. I want our reach to be broad. We're trying to build a preschool for these girls (in Mozambique). We've learned schooling breaks the cycle of girls getting married young and not being able to care for their families. One girl will educate an entire village. We create a more empowered place. Even 10 dollars from each person who donates makes a difference."

Herrmann senses the cultural climate is ripe for women empowering others to give back. "We're linking arms and without getting into the politics, we're looking around and saying it's our turn. We can't wait for other people to rescue us. It reminds me of historic days when women would cook dinner for each other, be able to say 'I'm having a hard time,' and not feel judgment."

In time, Reclaiming Studio will offer regional retreats in places like Lake Tahoe; and international retreats when the business grows large enough to include long-distance travel. Essential to any future plan is Herrmann's intention to hang on to lessons learned. Yes, she will continue to satisfy customers' inner yearnings with soft, warm, hazy or bold, vibrant, contrasting paint pigments and judgment-free fun, but meanwhile, she'll listen closely to her heart and remain open to its many colors.

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