



PHOTO: GIRMANTAS URBONAS

KATHY HARRISON is a Barrington Hills resident who teaches the fine art of cooking. For more information, call 847-381-4828.

Sharing Our Heritage

THE JOY AND BEAUTY OF PREPARING A SHARED MEAL

I NEVER GET OVER THE FEELING of gratitude when I'm watching the women (and occasionally men) cooking in my kitchen. There's chaos, to be sure, and the decibels can reach alarming heights. But a certain alchemy takes place as the simple ingredients I've set out get turned into something special. This magic occurs almost every month, as 12 women from vastly different backgrounds, neighborhoods, even countries, come together as a whole. The joy that emanates from a shared meal, regardless of the participants' culinary heritage, is a beautiful thing to behold. Invariably, something we're preparing jogs our memories of forgotten tastes or times.

Last month, we were especially fortunate to be sitting outside enjoying the fruits of the combined effort it took to get a beautiful five-course meal on the table in little over an hour's time. I had paid attention to colors and texture when planning the menu, but overlooked just how much chopping of vegetables and bashing of garlic was involved. Our heads were bent over cutting boards and our fingers were busy ... but we ladies multi-task.

Throughout it all, we were talking, of course, and laughing.

What seemed to be a common theme was the difference between what we were making and what we had grown up with. One woman mentioned that she never liked green vegetables as a kid. She never knew they were green. Oh, we all could identify with that. We were slicing crisp beans, blanching English peas, and chopping fresh parsley and mint as we all reminisced about the soggy gray and tasteless vegetables we were served. They came out of cans until the frozen revolution hit the markets. Even then, crisp was not a word we associated with vegetables, nor was very rare associated with beef or pink with pork. If not our moms, then certainly our grandmothers, who often lived with us, made sure everything was cooked well, if not well-cooked.

Two young girls who were visiting from out of town attended this class. Both were recently out of college and had just gotten apartments. They were nervous about taking a class with women they didn't know; I wasn't. I knew what happened

when disparate people got together in a kitchen. It didn't take long. Shelley, one of the girls who was staying with me, mentioned that her mom gave her family recipes when she first left home. They were handwritten on file cards, the ones that stated "From the kitchen of". Shelley found it so touching and so important to have that she photographed the recipes to save on her cell phone (of course!). She mentioned her Polish grandmother's Kolaches. Marietta, also of Polish descent, stopped chopping and struck up a conversation with Shelley. Soon they were chatting like magpies. It turns out Kolaches brought back so many fond memories to both of them. The recipe was texted. Generations merged.

In record time, the rest of us joined in. Every one of us had a story to tell. We talked lovingly about our families, holidays, the foods we cooked and ate with friends. Our stories were sometimes funny, often poignant. We were women from vastly different surroundings who bonded over our willingness to share our memories. I remembered my mom making pudding for my brother and me when we were kids, and had an almost palpable longing to dig my spoon into that heavenly creaminess. Although my mom opened a box of flavored powder and stirred in some milk to make this magic happen, I figured I could up the ante and get this same feeling of nirvana with less chemicals and a little more time. ☺

Butterscotch Pudding with Sea Salt and Caramel

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 10

1 cup, plus 2 tablespoons packed dark brown sugar

½ cup cold water

1 ½ teaspoons coarse kosher salt

3 cups heavy cream

1 ½ cups whole milk

1 large egg

3 large egg yolks

5 tablespoons cornstarch

5 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 ½ tablespoons dark rum, bourbon, or Scotch

CARAMEL SAUCE:

½ cup sugar

2 tablespoons light corn syrup

2 tablespoons water

½ cup heavy cream

½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

TOPPING:

½ cup whipping cream

½ cup crème fraîche

Fleur de sel



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make the pudding: Combine the brown sugar, water, and salt in a heavy bottomed pot over moderately low heat. Stir until sugar dissolves, then increase heat to medium-high and cook without stirring until mixture turns a deep dark amber color and smells nutty, about 7-10 minutes.
2. Off the heat, immediately whisk in the cream and whole milk. The caramel will seize up and steam. Return the pot to the heat and stir until the mixture is smooth and comes to a boil.
3. In a heatproof bowl, whisk together the egg, egg yolks, and cornstarch. Add a cup of the hot caramel to the egg mixture, whisking constantly to temper the eggs. Slowly add half the caramel to the egg mixture, whisking, then pour the egg mixture back into the pot with the remaining caramel. Bring to a boil and stir until it is very thick and creamy, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in butter and rum, bourbon, or Scotch.
4. Divide the custard among 10 (6-ounce) glasses or ramekins. Cover with plastic and chill for at least four hours or up to three days.
5. Make the caramel sauce: In a heavy bottomed pot, combine the sugar, corn syrup, and water. Cook over medium-high heat, swirling the pot until the sugar is liquefied and turns an amber color. Slowly add the cream and heat for one minute. Remove from heat and add the vanilla. The sauce will keep, covered and refrigerated, for up to two weeks. If refrigerated, warm gently before use.
6. Make the whipped cream topping: Whip the cream in a chilled bowl until it thickens. Add the crème fraîche and continue to beat until the mixture is thick and fluffy, not until it is too stiff.
7. To serve: Spoon one tablespoon warm caramel sauce over the top of each pudding. Sprinkle with fleur de sel, and top with a dollop of the whipped cream mixture.



Life is better
with friends.
And fun.

Residents of The Solana Deer Park don't worry about cooking, cleaning or home maintenance. We take care of all that, so they have more time to do what makes them happy.

Whether they're enjoying upscale amenities like the movie theater and indoor saltwater pool or simply gathering for happy hour at the bar, those who choose to live here choose to live well – in good company – every day.

Call 224.214.0008 to schedule a visit today.



THE SOLANA® | DEER PARK
An Atria Senior Living Residence

Independent Living | Assisted Living | Memory Care

21840 West Lake Cook Road | Deer Park
SolanaDeerPark.com

