



PAT BRYANT

# Cooking with Pat

IF YOU ENJOY READING “DOWN CELLAR,” you know that Quintessential Barrington’s wine expert, Jim Bryant, mentions his wife Pat on several occasions – whether to share a recipe or tell tales of their travel adventures. Pat is a self-taught gourmet cook who offers her family and friends elegant cuisine ranging from simple to complex. What good fortune for Jim, who has endless opportunity to go down cellar in search of a complement to Pat’s creations. We thought it was time to introduce the other half of this accomplished wine and food pair.


While Pat shares her talents at home, she has maintained a professional life that reflects her recipes for success in a challenging environment. Pat is a speech pathologist who has worked for the Special Education District of Lake County for many years. Awarded a teacher of the year honor in years past, Pat earns that title over and over every day. She works with children whose disabilities range from severe and profoundly disabled to

those with low spectrum disorders. When asked how she stays strong on the job, she said, “I try to improve a child’s quality of the life he or she has, and teach them basic needs, like helping them manage to eat.”

Pat grew up in Jamestown, Ind., just 30 miles west of Indianapolis. Life on the family farm provided Pat with a basic training few cooks will know. Almost all of their food came from the farm. “We grew wheat, oats, soy beans, corn, and raised dairy cattle, pigs and chickens,” she said. Fruit trees, grapes and a trip to some nearby strawberry fields provided fresh fruits and material for home canning. She also spent 10 years with the local 4-H club where she was able to judge baked goods in contests at which she had to explain her choice and why it was the best.

While too young to drive the tractors, Pat would check with those who sat atop the large machines, asking what they wanted to eat. She would prepare sandwiches and treats and deliver

her goods to them for lunch. Pat’s mom taught her much about cooking, and her grandfather was a source of encouragement. While her mom was busy in the fields during planting season, Pat would follow instructions left behind for preparing dinner. She also learned how to bake, sew, cut up a chicken, and determine what foods could withstand freezing.

Pat had no shortage of universities to choose from near her hometown when the time came for college. She attended Indiana University in Bloomington where she met Jim. Today, Pat stays creative in the kitchen by using what she has available at home, or with a quick trip to Caputo’s. Impromptu recipes are easy for Pat, who goes online and searches for a recipe that will use what she has on hand. Here, Pat shares her seafood stuffed eggplant recipe. Jim recommended pairing this dish with a fruity white wine such as Creco di Tufo, Albarino, or his favorite, Arneis, produced by Bruno Giacosa. 



## Seafood Stuffed Eggplant

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 medium eggplants
- 1 T. olive oil
- 1/2 c. chopped onion
- 1/4 c. chopped red bell pepper
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 c. beer
- 1/4 lb. medium shrimp, peeled, deveined, and coarsely chopped
- 1/4 lb. bay scallops
- 2 1/2 oz. Italian bread crumbs
- 6 T. grated fresh Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 c. finely chopped green onions
- 1 T. chopped fresh basil
- 1 1/2 t. chopped fresh tarragon
- 1 tsp. grated lemon rind
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. freshly ground black pepper



### PREPARATION

PREHEAT OVEN TO 425°

**Slice eggplants in half lengthwise**, score cut side of each in a crisscross pattern; lightly coat cut sides of eggplant halves with cooking spray. Place eggplant halves, cut sides down, on a baking sheet. Bake at 425° for 10 minutes. Turn eggplant halves over; bake an additional 10 minutes or until tender. Remove from oven; cool 10 minutes. Remove pulp from eggplant, leaving a (1/4-inch-thick) shell. Place eggplant shells on baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Chop pulp; set aside. Reduce oven temperature to 350°.

**Heat olive oil in a large nonstick skillet** over medium-high heat. Add ham, onion, bell pepper, and garlic; sauté 5 minutes. Add reserved eggplant pulp and beer; cook 10 minutes or until most of liquid evaporates, stirring occasionally. Stir in shrimp and bay scallops. Cook 1 minute. Remove from heat.

**Add breadcrumbs, 3 t. of cheese**, green onions, basil, tarragon, lemon rind, salt, and black pepper to eggplant mixture; stir gently to combine. Mound about 1/2 c. of seafood mixture into each eggplant shell. Sprinkle each with 1 1/2 t. cheese. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes or until thoroughly heated and shrimp are cooked.

**Note: Use small eggplants for appetizer.** Yield: 6 entree servings or 12 appetizer servings when using small eggplants.