

# WHAT'S COOKING



www.gourmetcouples.com

November 2007

## NEWS LETTER

#86

### GOURMET COUPLES SCHEDULE FOR 2007

November 10, 2007- Dinner Party  
November 17, 2007- Alternate Dinner Party  
December 2, 2007 - Restaurant Visit - Brunch - Place-TBA  
January 5, 2008 - 12th Night Party

### November 3, 2007 an e-mail from Cheryl

I'm not sure if you all have the website that was put together for Phillip. It is www.PhillipSherwood.com. They estimate his stay at Shepherd to be 4-8 weeks. We need to have a place for him when he is released, probably an apartment while a home is constructed.

Phillip is at Shepherd Center in Atlanta. It specializes in spinal cord injuries and is one of the very best rehabilitation centers in the United States. He was transferred by ambulance on Thursday. I am in Huntsville getting his ready to put on the market.

The support we have here is incredible. If I didn't have 3 precious grandchildren in Maryland I would seriously consider moving here.

Please check the web site and keep Phillip in your prayers for a speedy recovery.

A Planning Party was Hosted by Joan and Bob on October 21. There were three diner sets scheduled. One dinner on November 10th and two dinners on November 27th.

The Halloween Party was held at Bob and Mitzi's home and it was a great success, as always.

### DECEMBER BRUNCH

Join us for a champagne brunch at the Market Inn (200 E Street, SW – or 2nd and E - Washington DC) on Sunday, December 2 at noon. We will be entertained by Mike Flaherty's Dixieland band as we sip champagne and enjoy some of the items named below.

**The cost is \$35 per person (\$70 per couple)** – which includes gratuity and sales tax.

**If you plan to attend, please send your response and check made to to Joan no later than November 15, 2007.** Use the form found on the last page of this newsletter.

There is free parking beside the restaurant. The restaurant is also convenient to the blue & Orange line metro stop, Federal Center, SW (less than 2 blocks). The restaurant phone number is 202-554-2100.

#### Salads and Raw Bar:

Caesar Salad, Potato Salad, Cole Slaw, assorted Raw Veggies with Ranch Dip, Medley of Fresh Fruit, Large Spiced Shrimp & Alaskan Snow Crab Legs

#### Hot Buffet:

She Crab Soup, Eggs Benedict & Lobster Benedict, Sausage, Bacon, fresh Garden Vegetables, Au Gratin Potatoes, New Orleans Style Red Beans & Herb Rice, Cajun Buffalo Wings, Baked Salmon & Seafood Newburg.

#### Made to Order Station:

Spiral Sliced Honey Cured Ham, Belgian Waffles made to order with Hot Syrup, Hot Chocolate, Fresh Strawberries, Ice Cream & Whipped Cream

#### New Items Every Sunday:

Omelets with Assorted Veggies, Cheese, Bacon, Tomato, Spring Onion, Shrimp, Ham, Creole Sauce, etc.

#### Breads & Desserts:

Assorted Fresh Baked Rolls, Cinnamon Buns, Assorted Pound Cake Slices, Danish and Muffins, Croissants, Apple Pie, Key Lime Pie, Assorted Cheesecakes, Bread Pudding with Whiskey Sauce

### GOURMET COUPLES DOSE SICILY

By Joan

The following couples made the trek to Sicily: Sandy and Chuck, Linda and Shelly, Joan and Bob, Cheryl and Dick, Pat and Jack and Barbara and Jerry

A staff member from our villa met us at the Cantania Airport on October 6, 2007 and led us to our villa, La Massaria Cucco, which is located about 20 miles from Cantania. This proved to be a good idea since it was a bit complex getting out of the environs of the airport – particularly in our sleep deprived state.

The villa which was to be our home for the next 7 days was behind a locked gate and sits on a verdant landscape of blooming bushes and palm and other tropical trees. Surrounding the villa are acres of orange trees. The land has been owned by the Ruffo della Scaletta family since the 17th century. At that time, it was pasture land infested with malaria. However, a century ago, the family started growing citrus trees. The exceptional weather conditions and the unusual volcanic soil mixture from nearby Mt. Etna make it a unique place to grow the Sicilian red orange. The property remains in the Ruffo della Scaletta family today.

The main house is a lush, golden yellow in color with walls that are 2 feet thick. There are two apartments in the villa – each with 3 double bedrooms and a separate living room and kitchen. (We had no need for the kitchen as you will see below.)

Each day we took off for sightseeing and usually got back to the villa by about 5:00 pm at which time we had happy hour of wine and cheese under the trees outside of our villa. It helped to unwind inasmuch as driving proved to be challenging at times given that the roads were often narrow, steep, full of curves, and the maps were not always accurate.

After happy hour, we trekked off to a separate building on the property for dinner which was served at 7:30 p.m. by our personable chief - Sergio - and his wife, Josephina. Sergio spoke very limited English but we were helped by Jerry, who knows some Italian .

Dinner started with three delicious appetizers each night such as: bruschetta, slattered with olive oil and garlic and topped with fresh tomatoes; small pizzas; caponata (eggplant, capers, bell peppers in a sweet and sour sauce of vinegar and sugar); calamari; anchovies on toast; many varieties of olives; artichokes; proscutti and cheese with basil; and various tortes,

This was followed by an excellent pasta offering. The toppings were different each evening. They included pesto, mussels, tuna with capers, and sardines.

Entrees included chicken stuffed with spinach, beef rolled with vegetables, swordfish, veal, and tuna. We had Osso Bucco one evening – at our request – which was the only disappointment to some of us, but we think this was because it was done in an unfamiliar Sicilian style.

Desserts were also excellent. A favorite served by Sergio was cannoli - the famous Sicilian dessert which is a tubular pastry filled with ricotta and studied with bits of chocolate and pistachios.

On our arrival on Saturday, we were tired and went to bed early. We got up bright and early on Sunday morning, anxious to venture out. Twelve of us went to a pistachio festival in Bronte.

After the pistachio festival, six of us traveled to Randazzo, which is at the base of Mt. Etna. Throughout the years, Randazzo has miraculously always been spared when Etna has erupted. It is sometimes called the “black town” because many of its buildings – including the cathedral - were built from black lava stones.

We ended our long day on Sunday by going to a gastronomical festival in Zafferana Etna and got back to the Villa at 7:25 pm – just in time for dinner.

The festivals were held in picturesque, small towns

with streets so narrow that it sometimes appeared that there were only inches to spare on each side as we maneuvered through them. It also proved to be challenging to find a place to park and we had to do considerable walking to get to the festivals once we parked.

Sicily has almost as many Greek temples and theaters as there are in Greece, and we managed to see quite a few of them. This included a visit to Syracuse where in addition to the two thousand year old temple, we saw a magnificent Greek theater cut from bedrock in the third century BC.

Sicily is also known for its fine earthenware pottery. We visited Caltagirone, an important pottery center, where some of us made purchases. It was also in Caltagirone that we saw the Scala di Santa Maria del Onite, which is a stunning set of 142 ceramic steps leading from the old town to the new town.

An amusing sidebar concerning Caltagirone: Chuck Gerber was playing traffic cop - standing in the middle of an intersection holding up traffic while Shelly Gersten backed up a car for one-half of a city block in order to get a parking space. This was all with an Italian policeman watching Chuck – laughing and not offering to assist.

A highlight was the Villa Rubino del Casale. This is a 40-room Roman villa which was built somewhere around the end of the 3rd century BC. Its floors are covered with magnificent mosaics mostly with a hunting motif since this was a hunting lodge.

Another interesting trip was a visit to Taormina, which is built on a cliff overlooking the Ionian Sea. This was the playground of such celebrities as Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams, Joan Crawford, Greta Gabor, Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Cary Grant and Sophia Loren.

Jerry’s cousin, Michelle, who lives in Sicily, spent a couple days with us in the villa. On Thursday, she led us on a tour of two lovely cities - Noto, a heavily Baroque city, and Ragusa.

On Friday, several of us toured Mount Etna, which is still an active volcano.

We said good bye to the Villa on Saturday morning October 13, 2007. Pat and Jack, Jerry and Barbara and Cheryl and Dick flew back to the USA while the rest of our group stayed for a second week – driving around the rest of Sicily.

## **Gulf Coast Shrimp Spread**

(Prepared by Barbara and Jim )  
Planning Party, October 21, 2007

- 2 Quarts of water
- 1-1/4 Pounds unpeeled medium size fresh shrimp
- 1 Large shallot, peeled and quartered
- 1-1/4 Cups sour cream
- 1 Tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 Teaspoon salt
- 1/2 Teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 Teaspoon grated lemon rind
- 1/4 Teaspoon hot sauce

Bring water to a boil in a large saucepan; add shrimp, and cook 3 to 5 minutes. Drain well, rinse with cold water, and let cool. Peel and devein shrimp, set aside. Position knife blade in food processor bowl. Process/chop shallot 3 seconds or until shallot is finely chopped. Add shrimp to processor and pulse until shrimp is finely chopped. Combine shrimp mixture, sour cream, and remaining ingredients in a bowl; stir well. Cover and chill. Serve with bread or crackers. Yield: 3 cups (serving size tablespoon).

### **Pudding with Lemon Sauce**

(Prepared by Pat and Jack)

Planning Party, October 21, 2007

- 2 Cups milk
- 1/4 Cup margarine
- 2 Eggs, slightly beaten
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 Teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 Teaspoon salt
- 6 Cups dry bread cubes (8 to 10 slices)
- 1/2 Cup raisins

Heat milk and margarine in saucepan until hot. Mix eggs, sugar, cinnamon and salt in 1 1/2 quart casserole. Stir in bread cubes and raisins. Stir in milk. Place casserole in pan surrounded by 1 inch of hot water. Bake in 350 degree oven for 40 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean.

#### Lemon sauce

- 1/2 Cup sugar
- 2 Tablespoons cornstarch
- 3/4 Cup water
- 1 Tablespoon grated lemon peel
- 1/4 Cup lemon juice
- 2 Tablespoons margarine

Mix sugar and cornstarch in 1 quart saucepan. Gradually stir in water. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens and boils. Continue to boil and stir for 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in remaining ingredients. Serve warm or cool.

### **Hanover Chipped Beef Dip**

(Prepared by Paula and Joe)

Planning Party, October 21, 2007

- 8 Ounce cream cheese, softened
- 2 Tablespoons cream or milk
- 1/2 Cup sour cream
- 2-1/2 Ounce jar dried beef
- 1/4 Cup finely diced green pepper (optional)
- 2 Tablespoons onion flakes
- 1/4 Teaspoon pepper
- 1-1/2 Cup coarsely chopped pecans
- 2 Tablespoons butter

Cream and beat cream cheese softened with the cream or milk. Add sour cream, dried beef, green pepper,

onion flakes and pepper. Crisp pecans in the butter. Stir in 1 cup nuts. Put in small casserole. Sprinkle 1/2 cup nuts on top. Bake 20 minutes (or longer) at 350 degrees F. Let cool slightly, as it is better warm than hot. Serve with crackers.

### **Crescent Mummy Dogs**

(Prepared by no name on recipe sheet)

Halloween Party, October 27, 2007

- 1 Can (8 ounce) Pillsbury refrigerated crescent dinner rolls (8 count)
- 2 -1/2 Slices (2.5 oz) American cheese slices, quartered
- 10 Large hot dogs
- Cooking spray
- Mustard or ketchup, if desired

Heat oven to 375 degrees F. Unroll dough; separate at perforations creating 4 rectangles; press perforations to seal. With knife or kitchen scissors, cut each rectangle lengthwise into 10 pieces, making a total of 40 pieces of dough. Slice cheese slices into quarters (1/2 slice cheese, cut in half).

Wrap 4 pieces of dough around each hot dog and 1/4 slice of cheese to look like "bandages," stretching dough slightly to completely cover hot dog. About 1/2 inch from one end of each hot dog, separate "bandages" so hot dog shows through for "face." On ungreased large cookie sheet, place wrapped hot dogs (cheese side down); spray dough lightly with cooking spray.

Bake 13 to 17 minutes or until dough is light golden brown and hot dogs are hot. With mustard, draw features on "face."

Hot dogs are all wrapped up in a classic recipe for Halloween ... or anytime a chuckle is in order. Makes: 10 sandwiches

### **Onion Brie Halloween Bats**

(Prepared by Joan and Bob)

Halloween Party, October 27, 2007

- 2 Medium onions, thinly sliced
- 3 Tablespoon butter
- 2 Tablespoon brown sugar
- 1/2 Teaspoon white wine vinegar
- 1 Sheet frozen puff pastry - thawed
- 4 Ounces Brie or Camembert, rind removed, softened
- 1 to 2 Teaspoons. caraway seeds
- 1 Egg white
- 2 Teaspoon water

In skillet, cook onions, butter, brown sugar and vinegar over heat until onions are golden brown. Cool.

Roll puff pastry into an 11" x 8" rectangle. Spread Brie over pastry. Cover with onions. Sprinkle with caraway seeds Roll up 1 long side to the middle of the dough. Roll up the other side so the 2 rolls meet in the center. Using a serrated knife, cut into 1/2 inch slices. Flatten to 1/4 inch. Put on parchment paper lined baking sheet. Refrigerate 15 minutes.

Brush egg white - Bake at 375 for 12 - 14 minutes.

## Hot Crabmeat Spread

(Prepared by Paula and Joe)

Halloween Party, October 27, 2007

- 1 Cup half and half cream
- 2 Packages (3 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- 1 Small onion, chopped
- 1 Tablespoon mayonnaise
- 2 Teaspoons prepared horseradish
- 1/2 Teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 Teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 Teaspoon minced fresh parsley
- 1/2 Teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/2 Teaspoon onion salt
- 1/4 Teaspoon pepper
- 8 to 10 drops hot pepper sauce
- 2 Cans (6 ounces each) crabmeat, drained and cartilage removed
- Assorted crackers

In a saucepan, combine the first 12 ingredients. Cook and stir over low heat until the mixture is smooth. Add the crab and heat through. Serve with crackers. Makes 2-1/2 cups.

## Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Cookies I

(Prepared by Lindsay and David)

Halloween Party, October 27, 2007

"You will be glad you tried this unique combination of nuts, chocolate, spices, and pumpkin."

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 Cup shortening
- 1-1/2 Cups white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 Cup canned pumpkin
- 1 Teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2-1/2 Cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Teaspoon baking powder
- 1 Teaspoon baking soda
- 1 Teaspoon salt
- 1 Teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 Teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 Cup chopped walnuts
- (optional)
- 1 Cup semisweet chocolate chips

### DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Grease cookie sheets.

In a large bowl, cream together the shortening and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg, then stir in the pumpkin and vanilla. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, nutmeg, and cinnamon; gradually mix into the creamed mixture. Stir in the walnuts and chocolate chips. Drop dough by teaspoonfuls onto the prepared cookie sheets.

Bake for 15 minutes in the preheated oven, or until

light brown. Cool on wire racks.

## Snickers Cookies

(Prepared by Katie and Stan)

Halloween Party, October 27, 2007

- 1 Cup sugar
- 1 Cup packed brown sugar
- 1 Cup butter, softened
- 1 Cup extra crunchy peanut butter
- 1 Teaspoon. soda
- 2 Eggs
- 2 Teaspoons vanilla
- 1 Baking powder
- 1 Teaspoon baking soda
- 3 Cups flour
- 1/2 Teaspoon salt
- 1 19.5 ounce bag Snickers

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

In large bowl, cream butter until light and fluffy. Add sugars and mix thoroughly. Add peanut butter, eggs, vanilla, baking powder, baking soda, salt and flour. Shape dough around each bite-size Snickers bar, making sure candy is completely covered. It won't take a large amount of dough to do this. Bake 13 to 16 minutes. Makes 60 cookies.



Our villa - La Massaria Cucco

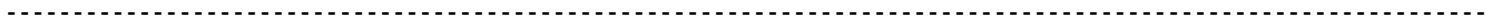


Dinner at the villa



11713 FARMLAND Drive,  
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FIRST CLASS MAIL





**Josifina and the anti-pasta table**



**Dinner at the villa**



**Ragusa**



**Shelly and Sergio, our chef**