



TWENTY FIFTH YEAR

JUNE 2008

NEWS LETTER

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#93

#### GOURMET COUPLES SCHEDULE FOR 2008

July 13, 2008 – Planning Party – 6:00 – 8:00 PM

July 27, 2008 – Restaurant - Location TBA

August 9, 2008 – Dinner Party

August 16, 2008 – Alternative Dinner Party

September 21, 2008 – Ghost & Graveyard Tour, and dinner in Alexandria

October 4, 2008 – Crab Feast – Paula & Joe

October 19, 2008 – Planning Party – 4:00 – 6:00 PM (year end planning 6:00 PM)

November 1, 2008 – Halloween Party – Mitzi and Bob

November 15, 2008 – Dinner Party

November 22, 2008 – Alternate Dinner Party

December 7, 2008 – Restaurant Brunch – Location TBA

January 3, 2009 – 12th Night Party

#### Sicily Remembered

Coincidentally, five of the six couples who went to Sicily last October signed up for the May 17 dinner party. They were Barbara and Jerry, Pat and Jack, Cheryl and Dick, Sandy and Chuck and Joan and Bob. Only Linda and Shelley were not there because they were in China. The obvious dinner theme was to duplicate one of the delightful dinners that our chef, Sergio, served us at the Villa LaMassaria Cucco

#### Our menu was:

Fresh Tomato Bruschetta  
Hot and Spicy Artichoke Dip  
Pasta with Sicilian – Style Pesto  
Sicilian-Style Potato Gratin  
Sicilian Spinach Sauté  
Selected Sicilian Olives  
Aubergine Caponata  
Ossobuco  
Cannoli

#### Fresh Tomato Bruschetta

(Prepared by Sandy and Chuck)

Sicilian dinner, May 17, 2008

It's low in fat and high in lycopene (a potential cancer fighter). Dig in!

- 8 Ripe plum tomatoes, seeded and diced
- 2 Tablespoons finely minced garlic
- 1/2 Cup coarsely chopped fresh basil
- 1/4 Cup finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 Tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 Tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Teaspoon finely minced fresh tarragon
- 1/4 Teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 Baguettes, cut in 1/2-inch-thick slices

In a bowl, mix all ingredients except bread and garlic cloves. Add salt and pepper to taste. Set aside, unrefrigerated, 3 hours. Heat oven to 350 degree F. Toast bread on a baking sheet. Makes 50 pieces (for 10 guests).

#### Hot and Spicy Artichoke Dip

(Prepared by Sandy and Chuck)

Sicilian dinner, May 17, 2008

- 1 Cup mayonnaise
- 1 Cup (4 ounces) grated parmesan cheese
- 1 Can (14 ounces) artichokes hearts, drained, chopped
- 1 Can (4 ounces) chopped green chilies, drained
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons sliced green onion
- 2 tablespoons chopped tomato

Heat oven to 350 degrees F.

Mix all ingredients except onion and tomato. Spoon into 9-inch pie plate.

Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until lightly browned. Sprinkle with onion and tomatoes. Serve with tortilla chips, crackers or pita bread wedges. Makes 2 1/2 cups.

Mix all ingredients except onion and tomato. • Spoon into 9-inch pie plate.

Microwave on medium (50%) 6 to 8 minutes or until mixture is warm, stirring every 4 minutes. Stir before serving. Sprinkle with onion and tomato. Serve as directed.

Variation: Omit chilies. Stir in 1 package (8 ounces) Louis Kemp crab delights salad shreds.

### **Pasta with Sicilian-style "pesto"**

(Prepared by Joan and Bob )

Sicilian dinner, May 17, 2008

- 16 Ounces spaghetti
- 2 sprigs of mint
- 2 sprigs of basil
- 2 Ounces almonds]
- 2 Garlic cloves
- 1 Ounce grated caciocavallo cheese
- Olive oil (6 fluid ounces)
- Salt and pepper

Finely chop the basil, the mint, the garlic and the almonds. Add the oil, the caciocavallo cheese, salt and pepper. Leave to rest for a couple of hours. Boil the spaghetti in plenty of salted water, drain and mix with the sauce. Serve piping hot.

### **Sicilian-Style Potato Gratin**

(Prepared by Pat and Jack )

Sicilian dinner, May 17, 2008

- 1 Garlic clove, halved
- Olive oil for brushing plus
- 4 Tablespoons, divided
- 2 Cups chopped onions
- Coarse kosher salt
- 2-1/4 Pounds russet potatoes, peeled, very thinly sliced \*
- 8 Tablespoons (packed) grated Pecorino Romano cheese, divided \*
- 3 Tablespoons drained capers
- 2 Cups low-salt chicken broth \*

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Rub 13x9x2 inch glass baking dish with cut side of garlic clove. Brush dish with olive oil. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in heavy large skillet over medium heat. Add onions, sprinkle with coarse salt, and sauté until soft and beginning to brown, stirring frequently, about 13 minutes.

Arrange 1/3 of potatoes in even layer in prepared dish. Sprinkle with coarse salt and pepper. Makes 6 servings

\* Most reduced the broth to 1 cup and added additional cheese; also cook POTATOES uncovered for 30 minutes and let stand for 15 minutes before serving

### **Sicilian Spinach Sauté**

(Prepared by Joan and Bob)

Sicilian dinner, May 17, 2008

- 2 10-ounce packages ready-to-use spinach leaves
- 1/4 Cup water
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons chopped garlic
- 1/2 Cup dried currants
- 3 Tablespoons drained capers
- 1/2 Cup coarsely grated Romano cheese

Combine spinach and 1/4 cup water in heavy large pot over high heat. Toss until spinach wilts but is still bright green, about 3 minutes. Transfer spinach to colander; press to release excess liquid.

Heat oil in same pot over medium heat. Add garlic; stir until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add currants and capers and stir 1 minute. Mix in spinach, then cheese and toss until heated through, about 1 minute. Season spinach to taste with salt and pepper and serve. Makes 4 servings.

### **Aubergine Caponata**

(Prepared by Cheryl and Dick)

Sicilian dinner, May 17, 2008

- 4 Medium size aubergines
- 1 White onion, diced
- 2 Celery stalks
- 3 Ounces pitted green olives
- 2 Ounces Pantelleria capers
- 3 Ounces white vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon sugar
- 1 Tablespoon tomato puree
- salt
- Olive oil

Coarsely dice the aubergines, sprinkle them with salt and leave them to rest in a colander so that they deposit the bitter liquid. In a saucepan, boil the chopped celery, green olives and desalted capers for about 10 minutes. When cooked, drain and set aside, reserving the water that can be used to correct the density of the mixture. Fry the aubergines, and set aside. Brown the onion in the oil for about 2 minutes and then add the prepared vegetable mixture and brown for a further 5 minutes. Add the vinegar and cook until it evaporates. Then add the sugar and the tomato puree and mix thoroughly, adding the vegetable cooking water. Correct the salt and cook for a further 10 minutes, adding the diced aubergines towards the end. Serve the caponata cold.

### **Ossobuco**

(Prepared by Barbara and Jerry)

Sicilian dinner, May 17, 2008

- 3 Veal shanks
- 1/2 Cup of butter
- 1/2 Cup chopped onions
- 1/2 Cup chopped celery
- 1/2 Cup chopped carrots
- 1 Garlic clove, minced
- 1 Heaping tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/2 Cup of flour
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 Cup olive oil
- 1/2 Cup white wine
- 1/2 Cup chicken broth
- 2 Cups canned chopped Italian plum tomatoes, strain juices

Melt the butter in a large Dutch oven over medium

heat. When it is hot add the onions, celery and carrots. Stir often. When the onions are transparent turn off the heat. Add the garlic and parsley and stir for a few minutes

Put about one half cup of flour in a paper bag. Add salt and pepper and the veal shanks. Shake the bag vigorously. Shake the excess flour from the shanks.

In a separate skillet, brown the shanks in the olive oil. Remove them from the skillet and place them on top of the vegetables in the Dutch oven.

Use the drippings in the skillet as a base for your sauce. Start by pouring out any excess fat. Add the wine to the remaining drippings and cook rapidly, until the mixture thickens.

Now add the broth, bay leaf and tomatoes. Bring the sauce to a boil. Then pour it over the veal and vegetables in the Dutch oven.

Cover the Dutch oven and bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for one and one half hours. Baste often. Add more broth if it starts to dry out but do not drown the veal shanks.

Remove the bay leaf. Serve as is over noodles. Don't forget to provide a spoon for each person to scoop out the wonderful, tasty marrow.

### **Strawberry and Champagne Brunch**

The weather was sweltering for our Strawberry and Champagne Brunch on June 8, and so we had the party indoors.

As always, the food was varied and tasty. Barbara Rubino's lemon cookies received particular favorable comments.

It was nice to see old friends, Diane and Duane Kaeding, at the brunch. Duane is now recovered from his knee surgery and we hope to see more of the Kaedings at future events.

### **Huevos Rancheros Casserole**

(Prepared by Ann and Dick)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

- 2 Cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 Cans Chopped green chiles (four ounce cans) undrained
- 1 Cup Shredded Sharp Cheddar cheese
- 12 Eggs
- 2 Cups light sour cream
- 1/2 Teaspoon chile powder
- 1 Teaspoon salt

#### **Sauce**

- 1 Cup salsa
- 1 8 ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 Teaspoon chicken bouillon granules

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Grease a three quart casserole dish or nine by thirteen baking dish.

To prepare the casserole, sprinkle Monterey Jack cheese in bottom of baking dish. Spoon chiles over the Monterey Jack cheese and top with Cheddar cheese.

Combine eggs, sour cream, chile powder and salt in

a large bowl; whisk until foamy. Pour over the cheese mixture. Bake uncovered for fifty minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

To prepare the sauce, heat the salsa, tomato sauce and bouillon granules over a medium high burner. Serve with casserole. Serves twelve to sixteen.

### **Cheese And Sausage Breakfast Casserole**

(Prepared by Joe and Paula)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

- 16 white bread slices, cut into cubes
- 2 Pounds bulk pork sausage, crumbled and cooked
- 3 Cups grated sharp cheddar
- 20 Large eggs
- 4 Cups milk (do not use low fat or nonfat)
- 4 Teaspoons dry mustard
- 2 Teaspoon salt
- Pepper

Grease Two 9x13 inch glass baking dishes. Place bread in prepared dishes. Top with sausage and cheese. Beat together eggs and next three ingredients. Season with pepper. Pour over sausage mixture. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Chill.)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Bake casserole until puffed and center is set, about 50 minutes. Cut into squares. Serves 20

### **Broccoli Slaw**

(Prepared by Sandy and Chuck)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

- 2 Packages beef noodles --- crush and put in bottom of bowl
  - 1 16 ounce broccoli slaw bag-- layer on top of noodles
  - 1 Package toasted sliced almonds --- layer on top
  - 1 Package sunflower seeds --- layer on top
  - 1 Bunch of green onions, sliced -- - layer on top
- A few boneless skinless cooked chicken breasts, shredded--- layer on top (I use Purdue, shortcuts)

Whisk together 1 cup sugar, 3/4 cup canola oil, 1/2 cup white vinegar, and beef flavor packets. Pour all over salad and refrigerate overnight. Toss and serve.

### **Tuscan Treat**

(Prepared by Barbara and Ron)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

- 3 Pounds fresh, ripe red tomatoes
- 3 Pounds fresh mozzarella cheese
- Fresh basil (torn is small pieces)
- Dressing
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Balsamic vinegar - to taste

Slice tomatoes and slice cheese. Arrange sliced tomatoes on serving dish, top tomatoes with a slice of the cheese and torn basil, and drizzle with the oil and vinegar. Salt and pepper to taste. Serves 12

## Salmon corncakes

(Prepared by Joan and Bob)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

- 2 Cups water
- 1 Cup dry white wine
- Bay leaf (preferably fresh)
- 4 Whole peppercorns
- 2 Sprigs parsley
- A few celery leaves
- 2 Salmon steaks, about 1/2 lb. each
- 1 Cup fresh or frozen corn kernels, cooked
- 1/2 Cup finely chopped shallots
- 1-1/2 Cups cracker crumbs
- 1/2 Cup finely diced red pepper
- 1/2 Cup finely diced celery
- 1/4 Cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 1/2 Cup nonfat plain yogurt, drained for 15 minutes in a fine strainer
- 1/2 Cup mayonnaise
- Dash of Tabasco sauce
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 Whole egg plus 1 egg white, lightly beaten
- 4 Tablespoons olive oil

Combine water, wine, bay leaf, peppercorns, parsley and celery leaves in a shallow 8x8 inch pan. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and add salmon steaks. Simmer until salmon is just cooked through-7-10 minutes, depending on thickness. Remove with a slotted spatula, drain and cool slightly. Gently flake salmon into a bowl; discarding skin and bones. To the salmon, add corn, shallots, red pepper, celery and cilantro. Fold together gently with a rubber spatula.

Combine yogurt, mayonnaise, mustard and Tabasco sauce in a separate bowl. Fold into salmon mixture. Season with salt and pepper. Gently fold the egg, egg white and 1/4 cup of the cracker crumbs into the salmon mixture.

Form into 12 medium-sized patties. Lay some cracker crumbs on a plate and coat the patties on both sides, using more crumbs as needed. Cover and refrigerate for up to 1 hour.

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat in a nonstick skillet. Cook salmon corncakes a few at a time until golden, about 3 minutes per side. Add more oil to skillet as needed. Serve immediately.

## Orzo With Garbanzo Beans, Goat Cheese, And Oregano

(Prepared by Duane and Diane)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

- 1 1/2 cups orzo (about 9 ounces)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 15- to 15 1/2-ounce can garbanzo beans (chickpeas), rinsed, drained
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
- 15-ounce log soft fresh goat cheese, crumbled (about 1 cup)

Cook orzo in large saucepan of boiling salted water

until just tender, stirring occasionally. Drain orzo.

Whisk olive oil, fresh lemon juice, and minced garlic to blend in large serving bowl. Add drained garbanzo beans, cooked orzo, and chopped fresh oregano; toss salad to coat. Season salad to taste with salt and pepper. Gently stir in crumbled goat cheese. Serve orzo salad warm or at room temperature. Serves 4

## Salmon Loaf with Cucumber-Dill Sauce

(Prepared by Fran and Jerry)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

- 1 14-3/4 ounce can salmon with bones, drained and flaked
- 2/3 Cup fine dry bread crumbs
- 2/3 Cup skim evaporated milk
- 1/4 Cup diced onion
- 1/4 Cup diced green pepper
- 1 Egg, lightly beaten
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/4 Teaspoon celery salt
- 1/4 Teaspoon black pepper

Cucumber-Dill Sauce (make while loaf is baking)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Combine all ingredients for loaf, and mix well. Spray or grease an 8 x 5 x 3-inch loaf pan, and press loaf mixture into it. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes. Remove from oven and let stand for 3 minutes, then remove from pan. Serve warm with Cucumber-Dill Sauce. Yield: 6-8 servings.

### Cucumber-Dill Sauce

- 3/4 Cup plain low-fat yogurt
- 1/2 Cup seeded, unpeeled diced cucumber
- 1/4 Cup reduced-fat mayonnaise or Miracle Whip
- 1 Tablespoon minced fresh onion
- 1 Teaspoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1/4 Teaspoon dried whole dillweed
- 1/8 Teaspoon salt

Combine all ingredients, and mix well. Cover, and chill while loaf is baking. Stir before serving.

## Coconut Macaroons

(Prepared by Lindsay and David)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup Water
- 6 tbs. Corn Syrup
- 3 tbs. Unsalted Butter
- 12 oz. Sugar
- 12 oz. Coconut Macaroon
- 1-1/2 oz. Cake Flour
- 1/4 tsp. Salt
- 1/2 cup Egg Whites

Preparation:

Bring water, butter and sugar to boil.

Add corn syrup to cool down off heat.

Place coconut, egg whites and flour in bowl with pad-

dle and mix together.

Add liquids to mixer and continue mixing till cooled down.

Scoop out onto oiled parchment paper and bake in the oven at 350 degrees F., or until done.

### Almond Macaroons

Ingredients:

7 oz. Almond Paste

7 oz. Sugar

1 Egg White

Preparation:

In a mixer combine almond paste and sugar for 7 minutes.

Slowly add egg whites until a paste is formed. Then add a little more and wait until it is incorporated before adding more.

Bake at a 350 degree convection oven for 20 to 25 minutes.

### Best Chocolate Chip Cookies

(Prepared by Wendy and Mark)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

- 1 Cup butter, softened
- 1 Cup white sugar
- 1 Cup packed brown sugar
- 2 Eggs
- 2 Teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3 Cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Teaspoon baking soda
- 2 Teaspoons hot water
- 1/2 Teaspoon salt
- 2 Cups semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 Cup chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Cream together the butter, white sugar, and brown sugar until smooth. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then stir in the vanilla. Dissolve baking soda in hot water. Add to batter along with salt. Stir in flour, chocolate chips, and nuts. Drop by large spoonfuls onto ungreased pans.

Bake for about 10 minutes in the preheated oven, or until edges are nicely browned.

### Deep Chocolate Brownies

(Prepared by Duane and Diane)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

Pre heat oven at 350 degrees F. Lightly greased 9 x 13 pan.

Topping

- 1 egg
- 1 cup butterscotch flavored ice cream topping
- 2 cups coarsely chopped pecans
- 2 cups flaked coconut

In a small bowl, beat the egg with electric mixer on medium speed till fluffy and light colored. Stir in flavored topping. Fold in pecans and coconut and set aside.

Brownie:

- 3/4 Cup butter, sifted
- 1-1/2 Cups dark brown sugar
- 8 Ounces bittersweet chocolate, melted and cooled
- 2 Eggs
- 2 Teaspoon vanilla
- 2 Cups all purpose flour
- 1 Teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 Teaspoon baking soda
- 1 12 ounce package. chocolate chips

In a large bowl, beat butter on medium-high speed for 30 seconds. Beat in brown sugar until fluffy. Beat in cooled chocolate, the 2 eggs and vanilla. Stir the dry ingredient into the chocolate mixture. Stir in chocolate chips. Spread in prepared pan. Spread nut mixture over batter. Bake about 35 minutes, till golden and set. Cool in the pan. 24 bars.

### Lemon Bars

(Prepared by Jerry and Barbara)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

For the crust:

- 1/2 pound unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 1/8 teaspoon kosher salt

For the filling:

- 6 extra-large eggs at room temperature
- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons grated lemon zest (4 to 6 lemons)
- 1 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 cup flour

Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

For the crust, cream the butter and sugar until light in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Combine the flour and salt and, with the mixer on low, add to the butter until just mixed. Dump the dough onto a well-floured board and gather into a ball. Flatten the dough with floured hands and press it into a 9 by 13 by 2-inch baking sheet, building up a 1/2-inch edge on all sides. Chill.

Bake the crust for 15 to 20 minutes, until very lightly browned. Let cool on a wire rack. Leave the oven on.

For the filling, whisk together the eggs, sugar, lemon zest, lemon juice, and flour. Pour over the crust and bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until the filling is set. Let cool to room temperature.

Cut into triangles and dust with confectioners' sugar.

### **Buttermilk Cinnamon Bread**

Prepared by Linda and Shelly)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

4 Cups all-purpose flour  
2 Teaspoons baking soda  
1 Teaspoons salt  
1/2 Cup vegetable oil  
2-1/2 Cups sugar, divided  
2 Cups buttermilk  
2 Eggs  
1 Tablespoon ground cinnamon  
1 to 2 Tablespoons chopped walnuts

In a large bowl, combine flour, salt and baking soda. In a small bowl, combine oil and 1-1/2 cups sugar. Add eggs and buttermilk; mix well. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Fill two greased 8 x 4 x 2 inch. loaf pans about one-third full. Combine cinnamon and remaining sugar; sprinkle half over the batter. Top with remaining batter and cinnamon-sugar. Swirl batter with a knife. Sprinkle with chopped nuts. Bake at 350° for 45-55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool in pans for 10 minutes before removing to a wire rack

Yield: 2 loaves

### **Orange Nut Bread**

Prepared by Linda and Shelly)

Strawberry Champagne Brunch, June 8. 2008

4-1/2 Cups all-purpose flour  
1-3/4 Cups sugar  
4 Teaspoons baking powder  
1-1/2 Teaspoons salt  
1 Teaspoon baking soda  
1-1/2 Cups chopped walnuts  
1 to 2 Tablespoons grated orange peel  
2 eggs  
1 Cup milk  
1 Cup orange juice  
1/4 Cup butter or margarine, melted

In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and baking soda. Stir in nuts and orange peel. In a small bowl, beat eggs, milk, orange juice and butter until smooth. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Pour into two greased 8 x 4 x 2 inch loaf pans. Bake at 350° for 50-60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool in pans for 10 minutes before removing to a wire rack

Yield: 2 loaves