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TWENTY SIXTH YEAR

January 2009

NEWS LETTER

#100

#### GOURMET COUPLES SCHEDULE FOR 2008

January 25 – Planning Party , 4:00 – 5:00 PM; Bread and Soup Supper, 5:00 – 7:00 PM  
February 21 – Dinner Party  
February 28 – Alternate Dinner Party  
March 14 - St. Patrick's Day Party  
March 29 – Planning Party, 6:00 – 8:00 PM  
April 4 – Dinner Party  
April 18 – Alternate Dinner Party  
May 2 – Kentucky Derby Party, Dorothy and Dick , host  
May 17 thru May 20 – trip to Culinary Institute of America, FDR Library and home  
June 7 – Strawberry Brunch, Linda and Shelly , host  
June 28 – Restaurant visit – location TBA  
July 12 – Planning Party – 6:00 – 8:00 PM  
July 25 – Dinner Party  
August 1 – Alternate Dinner Party  
August 22 – Minor League Baseball & Tailgate Party (tentative)  
September 11 – Army-Navy Club Restaurant, 6:00 PM – Ann and Dick , host  
October 3 – Crab Feast, Paula and Joe , host  
October 18 – Planning Party, 4:00 – 6:00 PM  
October 24 – Halloween Party, Mitzi and Bob , host  
November 7 – Dinner Party  
November 14 – Alternate Dinner Party  
December 6 – Restaurant Brunch, 12 noon  
January 9 – 12th Night Party

#### Planning Party and Soup and Dessert Supper

This year our January planning party will be followed by a bread and soup supper (with maybe a little dessert). Our planning party will be from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm on January 25 for all who will participate in either the February 21 or 28 dinner parties. The bread and soup supper will follow at 5:00 pm. (Because we are having supper after the planning party, don't bring an appetizer to the planning party). If you cannot make the planning party, but want to participate in the bread and soup supper, please come at 5:00 p.m.

The planning party and bread and supper will be at the home of Fran .

#### Bistro Bistro Restaurant

Cheryl and Dick did another great job selecting Bistro Bistro in Arlington VA for the Gourmet Couples December Brunch outing. Nine Couples attended the brunch and enjoyed the buffet food.

#### 12th Night Party

Our 12th Night Party was a highlight of our year. Twenty-eight of us gathered at the home of Joan and Bob on January 3, 2008 for our yearly festive evening. Many of the men were decked out in tuxes and the women were elegantly dressed.

The desserts were especially good with Barbara Patrick's offering – almond praline cake with mascarpone and chocolate bark - a particular favorite. Popular appetizers were bacon-parmesan triangles (Jerry & Fran ) and salmon mousse with dill sauce (Barbara and Ron).

The gift exchange was spirited. Popular items which exchanged hands several times were wine, a gift basket, a knife set and table linen. Thanks to Jerry for serving as the Gift Exchange Master of Ceremony.

#### Almond Praline Cake with Mascarpone Frosting and Chocolate Bark

(Prepared by Barbara and Jim Potzick)  
Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009-

#### Ganache filling:

1-1/4 Cups heavy whipping cream  
3 Tablespoons (packed) dark brown sugar  
10 Ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped

#### Almond cake:

1-1/2 Cups cake flour  
2-1/4 teaspoons baking powder  
3/4 Teaspoon salt  
1 Cup (packed) dark brown sugar  
3/4 Cup (1-1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature  
3 7-ounce packages almond paste,\* crumbled into 1-inch pieces  
7 Large eggs  
1 Tablespoon vanilla extract  
1-3/4 Teaspoons almond extract

#### Almond praline:

1 Cup sugar  
2 Cups whole almonds, toasted

#### Mascarpone frosting:

1-1/2 8 ounce containers mascarpone cheese\*\*  
1-1/2 Cups chilled heavy whipping cream  
3 Tablespoons sugar  
1 Tablespoon vanilla extract

**Chocolate bark:**

4 Ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped

\*Available in the baking section of most supermarkets and at specialty foods stores.

\*\*Italian cream cheese; available at many supermarkets and Italian markets

**Preparation:****For ganache filling:**

Simmer cream and sugar in medium saucepan, stirring to dissolve sugar. Add chocolate; whisk until smooth. Chill until just spreadable, about 6 hours.

**For almond cake:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Butter three 9-inch-diameter cake pans with 1 1/2-inch-high sides. Line bottoms with parchment paper; dust pans with flour. Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt in bowl. Using heavy-duty mixer, blend brown sugar and butter in large bowl. Beat in almond paste 1 piece at a time, then beat until smooth. Add eggs 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in extracts. Fold in dry ingredients. Divide batter among pans; smooth tops. Bake cakes until tester inserted into centers comes out clean, about 25 minutes. Cool cakes in pans on rack.

**For almond praline:**

Line baking sheet with foil. Stir sugar and 1/4 cup water in heavy medium saucepan over medium-low heat until sugar dissolves. Increase heat; boil without stirring until deep amber, swirling pan and brushing down sides with wet pastry brush occasionally. Mix in nuts. Pour onto foil; cool. Peel foil off praline. Chop praline coarsely. DO AHEAD Praline can be made 1 day ahead; store airtight at room temperature.

**For mascarpone frosting:**

Beat all ingredients in large bowl just to soft peaks (do not over beat or mixture will curdle).

Run knife around pan sides to loosen cakes. Turn cakes out; peel off paper. Place 1 cake layer on platter. Spread half of ganache over; sprinkle with 1/4 cup praline. Top with second cake layer. Spread remaining ganache over; sprinkle with 1/4 cup praline. Top with third cake layer. Spread frosting over top and sides of cake. DO AHEAD Cake can be made 1 day ahead; cover with cake dome and chill. Store remaining praline airtight at room temperature.

**For chocolate bark:**

Line baking sheet with foil. Melt chocolate in small bowl set over saucepan of simmering water. Stir until smooth. Remove from over water. Drizzle all but 1 tablespoon chocolate over foil in thick (about 1-inch-wide) zigzag lines (chocolate will pool in spots). Sprinkle 3 tablespoons praline over chocolate; chill bark until firm, about 1 hour.

Press praline around bottom 2 inches of cake; sprinkle more atop. Peel foil off bark; break into pieces. Press edges into frosting atop cake. Re-melt 1 tablespoon chocolate over simmering water, stirring often. Using spoon, drizzle chocolate over cake. DO AHEAD Chill up to 4 hours. Serve cold or at room temperature.

**Bacon-Parmesan Triangles**

(Fran and Jerry)

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009-

1-1/4 Cups real mayonnaise  
 12 Tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese  
 6 Tablespoons finely chopped onion (1 small one)  
 6 Tablespoons finely chopped crisp cooked bacon (5 or 6 slices)  
 1/4 Teaspoon salt  
 1 Loaf party rye bread (two-and-a-half-inch square)

Mix first five ingredients well. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour to blend flavors. Spread on party rye. (May be refrigerated or frozen at this point. If frozen, thaw well before broiling.) Place on a baking sheet and place under broiler for 3 to 5 minutes or until cheese is bubbling and beginning to lightly brown. Makes 24 pieces, which may be cut diagonally in half to form 48 triangles. Serve warm.

**Banana Bread**

(Prepared by Wendy and Mark )

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009

**INGREDIENTS**

2 Cups all-purpose flour  
 1 Teaspoon baking soda  
 1/4 Teaspoon salt  
 1/2 Cup butter  
 3/4 Cup brown sugar  
 2 Eggs, beaten  
 2-1/3 Cups mashed overripe bananas

**DIRECTIONS:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease a 9x5 inch loaf pan.

In a large bowl, combine flour, baking soda and salt. In a separate bowl, cream together butter and brown sugar. Stir in eggs and mashed bananas until well blended. Stir banana mixture into flour mixture; stir just to moisten. Pour batter into prepared loaf pan.

Bake in preheated oven for 60 to 65 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into center of the loaf comes out clean. Let bread cool in pan for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack.

## CRAB BALL

(Prepared by Cheryl and Dick)

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009

- 1 Pound backfin crabmeat
- 1/4 Cup mayonnaise
- Old Bay Seasoning to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 8 Ounces cream cheese, chilled
- Chili sauce
- Crackers

Gently mix crabmeat, mayonnaise and seasonings. Place cream cheese between sheets of aluminum foil and roll into approximately a 9-inch circle. Form crabmeat into a ball and place in the center of cream cheese. Wrap cream cheese around crabmeat. Place seam side down on a plate. Cover with chili sauce just before serving. Serve with crackers.

## Texas Pecan and Beef Dip

(Prepared by Joe and Paula)

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009-

- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
  - 1/2 Cup pecan pieces
  - 3 Tablespoons thinly sliced green onions
  - 1 Package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened and cut into cubes
  - 1/3 Cup lager beer
  - 1/2 (2.2 ounce) jar dried beef, rinsed in hot water, drained and cut into 1/4-inch pieces
  - 1-1/2 Teaspoons BBQ seasoning blend
- Breadsticks, pita bread or assorted fresh vegetables for dipping

Heat oil in small saucepan over medium heat. Add pecans and onions; cook and stir 3 to 5 minutes or until pecans are toasted and onions are tender.

Add cream cheese and beer to saucepan; cook over medium-low heat until cheese is melted. Stir in dried beef and BBQ seasoning; cook and stir until hot. Serve with breadsticks. Makes 1-1/2 cups dip

## Smoky Cheese Ball

(Prepared by Deborah and John)

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009-

Finely chopped walnuts, peanuts, or toasted almonds make a crunchy coating-

- 2 8 ounce packages cream cheese, softened
  - 2 Cups shredded smoky cheddar cheese (8 ounces)
  - 1/2 Cup butter or margarine, softened
  - 2 Tablespoons milk
  - 2 Teaspoons steak sauce
  - 1 Cup finely chopped nuts
- Assorted crackers

In a mixer bowl combine cream cheese, shredded-cheddar cheese, softened butter, milk, and steak sauce. Beat mixture with electric mixer till fluffy. Chill slightly; shape

into a ball. Place chopped nuts on waxed paper; gently roll cheese ball over nuts to coat. Serve with crackers. Makes about 3-1/2 cups.

## East Indian Cheese Ball

(Prepared by Joan and Bob)

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009-

- 2 8 ounce packages softened cream cheese
- 1 Cup cottage cheese
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- 1 Cup finely chopped green onions, including tops
- 1 Cup chopped dry roasted peanuts
- 1 Cup raisins
- 1/2 Cup shredded coconut
- 3/4 Cup mango chutney

Beat cream cheese, cottage cheese and curry together until smooth. Beat remaining ingredients except chutney by hand. Refrigerate overnight.

Form into 2 balls and wrap in wax paper. Chill at least 6 hours.

To serve, place ball on platter, spoon chutney on top and surround with toasted pita triangles or crackers.

Note : Freeze the second ball if only serving one.

## Tortilla Appetizer Wedges

(Prepared by Sandy and Chuck)

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009-

- 1 8 ounce cream cheese, softened
  - 1/2 Cup sour cream
  - 1 Can diced green chilies
  - 1/2 Cup sliced green onion
  - 1 Teaspoon minced red or green jalapeno peppers
- Salt and pepper
- 10 Flour tortillas, salsa or picante sauce.

In median bowl combine cream cheese and sour cream. Mix well. Stir in chilies, onions and jalapenos. Season with salt and pepper. Spread 1 tortilla with a 1/4 cup cream cheese mixture; top with another Tortilla. Continue stacking with 5 tortillas. Make 2 stacks of 5 tortillas each. Wrap tortillas in plastic wrap. Refrigerate at least 1 hour. Cut each stack into Wedges. Arrange in pinwheel fashion around a cup of salsa or picante sauce.

### Salmon Mousse with Dill Sauce

(Prepared by Barbara and Ron)

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009-

- 2 Envelopes un-flavored gelatin
- 1/3 Cup water
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 Cup boiling water
- 2 7-1/2 ounce cans pink salmon (drained, boned, and skinned) Kirkland brand is best.
- 1/2 Cup half and half
- 1/2 Cup mayonnaise
- 1 Small onion, quartered

#### Dill Sauce

- 1 Cup sour cream
- 1 Cup mayonnaise
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 Tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 1 Tablespoon chopped capers

In container of electric blender, sprinkle gelatin over water and lemon juice and let stand 5 minutes. Add boiling water and whirl about 30 seconds, until smooth. Add salmon, mayonnaise, half and half, and onion; whirl again until smooth.

Pour into an oiled mold, cover with plastic wrap, and chill until set (about 3 hours or overnight).

Combine ingredients for dill sauce and chill. Serve with mousse.

For a variation of the mousse, dill may be added directly to the mousse and omitted from sauce. The same is true of the capers.

### Chocolate Chip Pound Cake

(Prepared by Pat and Jack)

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009-

- 4 eggs
- 1 1/2 Cups water
- 1 Teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 package butter recipe cake mix
- 1 3.4 ounce package instant vanilla pudding mix
- 1 3.4 ounce package instant chocolate pudding mix
- 1/2 Cup (1 stick) melted butter
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 6 Ounces chocolate chips
- Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a tube pan or bundt pan. In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs, water, and vanilla by hand. Stir in the cake mix and pudding mixes. Slowly add the butter and oil, and mix well. Stir in the chocolate chips. Pour into the prepared pan. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes, then invert onto a cake plate. Sift confectioners' sugar over the cake, or drizzle chocolate sauce over it, if desired.

### Chocolate Fudge Cheesecake

(Prepared by Linda and Shelly)

Twelfth Night Party, January 3, 2009

#### Ingredients:

- 1/4 Cup toasted, chopped pecans
- 2 (1-ounce) unsweetened chocolate baking squares
- 1/2 Cup butter, softened
- 1 Cup sugar
- 2 Large eggs
- 1/2 Cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 Teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 Cup semisweet chocolate morsels
- 2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- 3/4 Cups + 2 Tablespoons sugar
- 3 Large eggs
- 1 Teaspoons vanilla
- 1 Chocolate Glaze

Garnishes: fresh mint sprigs, sliced strawberries

#### Preparation:

Sprinkle pecans evenly over the bottom of greased and floured 9-inch springform pan.

Microwave chocolate squares in a microwave-safe bowl at MEDIUM (50% power) 1 1/2 minutes, stirring at 30-second intervals until melted. Stir until smooth.

Beat butter and 1 cup sugar at medium speed with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add 2 eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended after each addition. Add melted chocolate, beating just until blended.

Add flour, beating at low speed just until blended. Stir in 1 teaspoon vanilla and chocolate morsels. Divide batter evenly between pans, spreading over chopped pecans.

Beat cream cheese at medium speed with an electric mixer until smooth; add remaining cups sugar, beating until blended. Add 3 eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended after each addition. Stir in 1 teaspoon vanilla. Spread cream cheese mixture over brownie batter.

Bake at 325 degrees F. for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until set. Remove from oven; cool completely on wire rack.

Spread top of cooled cheesecake with 1 recipe Chocolate Glaze; cover and chill 8 hours. Remove sides of pans before serving. Garnish, if desired.

#### Chocolate Glaze

##### Ingredients:

- 1 (12-ounce) package semisweet chocolate morsels
- 1/2 Cup whipping cream

##### Preparation

Melt 1 (12-ounce) package semisweet chocolate morsels and 1/2 cup whipping cream in a 2-quart microwave-safe bowl at MEDIUM (50 percent power) 2-1/2 to 3 minutes or until chocolate begins to melt. Whisk until chocolate melts and mixture is smooth.