



Culinary Arts Society of Ajijic

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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www.ajijiccasa.org

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CASA MISSION STATEMENT

CASA members, associates and guests are provided a monthly forum to share foods; learn new preparation techniques; stimulate culinary ideas and meet new people who enjoy the wonderful world of food in a competitive atmosphere that encourages creativity and rewards excellence.

2015 CASA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Margaret Ancira
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NEXT CASA MEETING

REMINDER:

Date changed to **December 14th** at Manix Restaurant, Ocampo # 57, 1 block east of Aquiles Serdan and Ocampo.

There is still space if you would like to bring a guest; \$200 pesos for a hot buffet and the Presentations for Botanas & Holiday desserts. For reservations contact Rick at casalakeside@yahoo.com

December 14th Categories

Category A - Botanas

Category B - Holiday Desserts

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CASA President - Margaret Ancira

This wonderful host country of ours is replete with culinary surprises that never fail to astound me. There are many nearby towns to visit as very good day trips from Ajijic. Last weekend was a full day in Tapalpa, a small historic mountain town 2.5 hours away where there are many "cremerias" and borrego (goat) barbeque places to enjoy. It seems a very special wood burning flavor is imparted that just doesn't seem to be realized here in the lower altitude. There were also bags of pecans for sale at \$100p the large bag. What a perfect ingredient to get at this holiday time of year. The cheeses and creams in Tapalpa seem to also taste differently. It must be the diet that the

cows and goats get at that altitude as well. The string "Oaxaca" cheese is especially good, I find. Look at the homemade salsas too. There are good restaurants to enjoy in Tapalpa – do consider a day trip there if you haven't yet done so.

The bridge weekend was spent in San Miguel de Allende, Dolores Hidalgo and Guanajuato. I learned a thing or two about salsas there! The avocado style salsas had never been one of my favorite types until a few days ago. Let me make some suggestions that were shared with me from the waiters in carnitas restaurants: In a blender put a cut up avocado, some juice from a can of jalapeno en escabeche, some crema de batir (whipping cream), a handful of fresh cilantro, a touch of lemon juice and blend to puree. YUM!! Other variations: add a jalapeno from the can – it will be a bit hotter. This is excellent on your quesadillas and tacos and even as a dip for jicama and other veggies. My maid Lupita does a variation of this: she adds a chopped seeded serrano chile and no cream but I think the cream helps the consistency. She uses white vinegar instead of the juice from the jalapenos en escabeche but two restaurants said they used the canned "vinagre". It's amazing how flavors can change by just one ingredient!

Store covered in aluminum foil, not plastic wrap. It will reduce the browning action on the surface. And add a seed of the avocado as well.

In Dolores Hidalgo if you see "Carnitas Vicente" pull to a STOP and try this sensational style of carnitas. You cannot believe that 4 adults can gorge on a sensational repast for a total of \$10 US dollars! Is this a great country or what?

Margaret Ancira CASA President

Culinary Arts Society of Ajijic

Meet our November 2015 Judges

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Ann Szarka

Food is the heart... The heart of Ann's Italian and her Hungarian husband's families. Both of their mothers cooked without the aid of a written recipe. Through their knowledge she followed in their footsteps. Ann, like so many of us, can't seem to follow a written recipe without altering the ingredients to suit her or her family's taste buds.

She did attend cooking classes throughout the years but her real satisfaction comes through pleasing her family and dinner guests with the old familiar favorites. Trying to answer the requests for the recipes is very difficult. You have to tell what the main ingredients are along with a handful of this and a pinch of that! Trusting the vision, the nose, fingers and taste buds, are the answers she gives to their requests.

Because of the growing of GMO (genetically modified organisms) in wheats, soya and corn in Canada, Ann no longer use them in her cooking. Very rarely does she use treated dairy products, sugars, or table salt. She has never been a fan of processed foods either. This all creates quite a challenge, but the Internet is a place to search for healthy substitutes. This later style of cooking has been quite a challenge with some interesting and unfortunately, not so interesting results.

Ann Szarka
aszarka@vianet.ca



Andrew Robertson

Chef Andrew Robertson has a cooking career that spans 34 years. After experiencing various cooking positions and reviewing the opportunities he decided it was time to attend culinary school in order to accomplish his career goals as a certified Chef.

His first assignment was for the Essex Park Hotel in Toronto, followed by the Royal Canadian Yacht Club. From here he moved up to the fine dining room and was very proud to be the one that could work every station; grilling, prep. for vegetables, and sauces. He felt very fortunate there to have worked an event for Prince Edward, the Queen of England's third son.

He was about to be made Banquet Chef when he decided to move to Mexico and start his own restaurant which was successful for 3 years. He then partnered with Tom from Tom's Bar for 2.5 years and was the first restaurant to offer Thai food. He has worked in many restaurants such as Number 4 and Roberto's, in addition to catering many events. His favorite events are for the musicians of the Northern Lights Music Festival and preparing botanas for the annual Gala for the Ninos Incapacitados event.

Chef Andrew enjoys preparing a dish that came from his own creativity and from the satisfaction and appreciation of his clients. The one item he has learned the most from cooking is that he seems to get the best results when the pressure is on and the clock is ticking! Also, that it is not about quantity but rather quality, less is more. And that it is important not to over season but to stay at just the right amount.

Chef Andrew enjoys catering as it allows him the flexibility to work and raise his 2 daughters, Andrea and Allison, as he is a single parent.

Chef Andrew Robertson



James Wayne

We are happy to have James back with us today as he has previously been a speaker for us, category Soups and Stews and Chili. Jan. 2015.

James has been a resident of Ajijic for 8 years now, and is partner to Colin Smith a former CASA member and Award winner.

He is the owner of Wayne Consultants Unlimited which is a small business consulting with restaurants, B&B's, Start Ups and Web based companies owned locally in Ajijic.

James is also part owner in the Lake Chapala Ballroom, Fitness Instructor of Dance Fit and SitFit. They will be performing at the Chili Cookoff.

For James, cooking began at an early age with a gift of the Betty Crocker Cookbook for Kids. He adapts all his recipes to reduce calories and fat content.

He prefers natural flavours verses spices when cooking. Favourite dishes are Chicken and Rice, full of vegetables and Black Beans and Rice made with Chorizo.

Cooking in Mexico is great, he says due to the abundance of fresh ingredients and access to them daily.

James Wayne
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Meet our November 2015 Winners

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Category A Comfort Food Main Dish



Category A First Place Winner
Jose Fernández



First Place Jose Fernández
Chicken with Garlic & Roast Ratatouille



Second Place & People's Choice
Monique Grossman
Tourtiere with a Pastry Bottom,
5 Meats & Potato Topping

Honorable mentions

Category A

Third Place Avril Stephenson
Steak and Kidney Pie

Best Presentation Margaret Ancira
My Momma's Meat Loaf

Category B Pies, Tarts & Cobblers



Category B First Place Winners
Collette Clavadetscher & Carole Wolff



First Place (Tie) Carole Wolff
Chocolate Walnut Pie



First Place (Tie) & People's Choice
Collette Clavadetscher
Lemon Crunch Pie



Second Place & Best Presentation
Judith Greenberg
Rainbow Fruit Tart

November Speaker

Donna has spent her entire career working in the food industry. She first worked in the bar: The Golden Totem and then graduated to the five-star Dining Room catering to VIPs only at Ottawa International Airport. Spending endless hours waiting for customers she found herself in the kitchen with Chef Lee Ares. Here she was trained to cook an entire meal at the table and that was the beginning of her great interest in Gourmet Cooking.

Donna went on to open her own Catering Company called "Diners Delights" which she owned for 20 years. At that time some of her customers were with her for 16 years.

She says the most exciting thing about cooking is the fact that you can change your recipe every time you cook it and make it better. There are so many little tricks you can learn to make your work easier and faster.

Having no sense of smell Donna relies on her taste buds to perfect the food she cooks.

She feels that the best thing about cooking is watching the people you cook for, enjoying the meal.



Donna Blackburn
Demonstrating carving a Turkey



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November 2015 Winning Recipes

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FIRST PLACE

CHICKEN WITH GARLIC & ROAST RATATOUILLE

Jose Fernandez

Ingredients

- 3 Lbs. of de-boned and skinless (if you prefer) chicken breasts and thighs cut to bite size.
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 12 Cloves of garlic
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground black or chili peppers
- 1 Bay leaf
- 1 Cup of white wine

Heat the oil in a large heavy frying pan until begin to smoke. Add the chicken, lightly salted, to the oil until golden. Pour the wine with the bay leaf chili peppers and salt as required. Let it simmer until well reduced (just enough to coat the chicken)

et voila!!

Escalivada

- 1 Red pepper
- 1 Yellow pepper
- 1 Lb. Eggplant
- 1 Medium onion
- 1 Oz. Olive oil
- 1 tsp. Salt
- 1tbs. Black pepper

Coat the peppers, eggplant and onion with oil, wrap them in foil and roast for 1 hr at 350 degrees F.

After roasting peel and cut to ½ inch stripes.

Mix in a large plate with the rest of the olive oil, salt and pepper and let it set for ½ hour

FIRST PLACE - TIE

LEMON CRUNCH

Collette Clavadetscher

Ingredients

- 200 g Ginger Nuts (I used Maria's simple butter cookies)
- 30 g Unsalted butter/ or margarine
- Can of Condensed Milk (397g Tin) La Lechera
- 125 ml Double Cream
- Zest and Juice of 2 Lemons
- Grated Chocolate

Method

1. Blitz ginger nuts in a food processor until they are ground down.
2. Melt butter in the microwave and add to the ginger nut mix. Mix well.
3. Add the ginger nut mix to a 30cm flan dish, and press down well to make a strong base. Place in freezer while you complete the other steps.
4. In a bowl, whisk the condensed milk, double cream, lemon juice and zest until thick and creamy.
5. Pour the lemon mix over the biscuit base, and grate over as much chocolate as you like. **Chill overnight.**

FIRST PLACE - TIE

CHOCOLATE WALNUT CAKE

Carole Wolff


Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 2/3 cup white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup margarine
- 2 (1 ounce) squares semisweet chocolate
- 1 cup corn syrup
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 recipe pastry for a 9 inch single crust pie

Add all ingredients to list

Directions

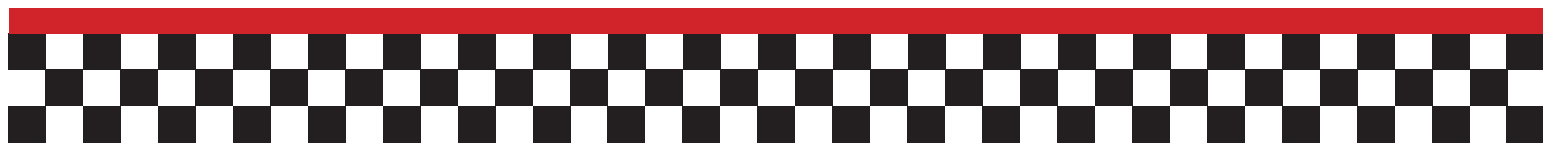
1. Melt the margarine and the chocolate together, stirring until chocolate is smooth. Add eggs, sugar, salt, and syrup. Stir until everything is mixed thoroughly. Stir in walnuts. Pour into unbaked pie shell.
2. Bake at 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) for 40-50 minutes, or until pie is set. Let sit for 30 minutes before slicing.



CASA CULINARY CORNER

November's Culinary Tip

One of our members shared a great tip - If you like to bake and you want fresh yeast you can purchase it directly from the panaderia on the north side of the Caraterra 1 Block past Colon. Keith Sofka is an amazing bread maker and cook. Thank you Keith for sharing this tip.



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CASA'S BING AWARD

The BING Award is given to each CASA Presenter with 3 First Places throughout the year. The BING Award was instituted in 1987 by Charlotte MacNamara, CASA's first president, who is the founder of Vogue Magazine. Her best friend was Bing Horn of the BING Ice Cream Company in Guadalajara. Bing wanted to do something special for Charlotte and CASA, so he paid for the trophies. The 2 friends then decided that "in honor of CASA and BING Ice Cream" they would award a trophy to anyone who won 3 first places during that calendar year and named this the "BING" Award. To date, many have achieved this - a few more than once.

**SO FAR THIS YEAR WE HAVE
5 BING AWARD WINNERS!**

Catherine Suter, Monica Molloy

Leslie Yanko, Marina Benz

& Rick Feldmann



January 18th

Category A - Vegetarian Main Dish

Category B - Mousses, Puddings, Custards

February 15th

Category A - Cajun/Creole Main Dish

Category B - Anything Chocolate

March 14th

Category A - Chopped Pairs Main Dish (1)

Category B - Chopped Pairs Desserts (1)

April 18th

Category A - French Main Dish

Category B - Cakes, Torts, Cheesecakes

May 16th

Category A - Pates, Terrines, Spreads

Category B - Yeast Breads, Buns, Crackers

June 20th

Category A - Fusion Main Dish (2)

Category B - Fusion Desserts (2)

July 18th

Category A - Mediterranean Main Dish (3)

Category B - 3 Ingredient Desserts (4)

August 15th

Category A - Seafood

Category B - Filled Pastries

September 19th

Category A - Mexican Main Dish

Category B - Mexican Desserts

October 17th

Category A - Chopped Individual Main Dish (5)

Category B - Chopped Main Dish Dessert (5)

November 21st

Category A - Outing - No Meeting

Category B - Outing - No Meeting

December 19th

Category A - Botanas/Appetizers

Category B - Holiday Desserts

(1) Cooking members will sign up at the February meeting or notify the Membership Director in advance of their interest to participate if they can't be at the February meeting. Cooks will be paired up at the February meeting and they must make a main dish or dessert of their choice together that must include four ingredients selected randomly for each category by the members at the February meeting. Winning members will both receive full points for their wins.

(2) Cooking members must prepare either a main dish entrée or a dessert by combining two or more recipes of different countries (Mexico and Italy as an example).

(3) Mediterranean Main Dish may be from any country on the Mediterranean Sea.

(4) 3 Ingredient Dessert must contain nuts, a fruit, and a liqueur in its list of ingredients.

(5) This is the same as number 1 above, except cooking members will not be paired. The four ingredients will be selected at the September meeting by the members attending.



MEET OUR 2016 CASA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President - Monica Molloy

Vice-President - Michele Lococo

Secretary - George Lindahl

Treasurer - Leslie Yanko

Director at Large - Judith Greenberg

Congratulations!!

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PECAN SQUARES

Pecan Squares

Recipe courtesy of Ina Garten

"We make these all year long and when we want to go "over the top" we dip half of each square in warm chocolate."

Total Time: 55 min

Prep: 10 min

Cook: 45 min

Yield: 20 large squares

Level: Easy

Ingredients

Crust:

- 1 1/4 pounds unsalted butter, room temperature
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3 extra-large eggs
- 3/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Topping:

- 1 pound unsalted butter
- 1 cup good honey
- 3 cups light brown sugar, packed
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon grated orange zest
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 2 pounds pecans, coarsely chopped

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

For the crust, beat the butter and granulated sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, until light, approximately 3 minutes. Add the eggs and the vanilla and mix well. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Mix the dry ingredients into the batter with the mixer on low speed until just combined. Press the dough evenly into an ungreased 18 by 12 by 1-inch baking sheet, making an edge around the outside. It will be very sticky; sprinkle the dough and your hands lightly with flour. Bake for 15 minutes, until the crust is set but not browned. Allow to cool.

For the topping, combine the butter, honey, brown sugar, and zests in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan. Cook over low heat until the butter is melted, using a wooden spoon to stir. Raise the heat and boil for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in the heavy cream and pecans. Pour over the crust, trying not to get the filling between the crust and the pan. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, until the filling is set. Remove from the oven and allow to cool. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until cold. Cut into bars and serve.

DECEMBER CASA MEETING

Date Change from Dec. 21st to Dec. 14th
Holiday party at Manix Restaurant

Members & Guests \$200 pesos

Ham glazed in mustard with roasted
pineapple and a horseradish sauce

Roast chicken

Ratatouille of roasted peppers, zucchini,
chayote & other vegetables with herbs

Corn souffle

Due to inflation the costs have risen for this year's Holiday Party. We must charge \$200 pesos per person attending. Presenters and the judges will attend "at no charge".

You must make reservations for the Holiday Party if you are not presenting or judging. All reservations must be prepaid. We will need to know if you wish to eat ham or roast chicken so Manix can properly plan the meal. Guests are welcome.

Please see Rick Feldmann to make your reservations and payment.

This will complement CASA's presenters of Holiday Botanas and Holiday Desserts.

No Speaker in December
yay, more visit time!



See You There...