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Jacobson, co-producer, Cindy Franklin of Farmington, and their committee are busy putting finishing touches on centerpieces, and making chocolate roses for the event, which features a star-studded dessert buffet, celebrity auction, "creative" black tie attire, and surprise celebrity appearances. Musician Reni Kaufmann will sing and play movie themes.

"The women who are on the committee will be acting like press photographers snapping photographs of the guests as they arrive," said Jacobson. "Al Muskowitz 'Big Al' from the Dick Purtan Show on Oldies 104.3 FM-WOMC will interview guests as though they themselves are Oscar nominees. We'll have valet parking too."

There's no magic to creating a magical event, just a lot of hard work and planning. Jacobson knows, her husband Michael is a magician and has a few tricks up his sleeve to entertain guests.

"We want guests to mingle and have fun," said Jacobson. "When they arrive we'll put a name tag

on their back. It will be the name of a movie star like Sean Connery or Lauren Bacall. The person has to guess who they are. They can ask up to three questions. Once they guess who they are they can turn in their name tag."

Each guest will receive a ballot and have the chance to guess the winners of the Academy Awards. A prize will be given for the most correct answers.

"Be creative with decorations. We're using top hats with stars and balloons," said Jacobson. "If

you've got some old movie reels those would make nice decorations too."

Since the Academy Awards ceremony isn't starting until 8 p.m. on Sunday, March 21, Jacobson and her committee decided to serve desserts. "We'll have hors d'oeuvres, pop corn, caramel corn and other snacks too," she said.

It's not too late to call a few friends and plan a party of your own.

The menu doesn't need to be elaborate. Do what caterers for

the stars do, be a little cheesy. According to a recent survey of star caterers from New York, Los Angeles and Washington D.C., 93 percent of caterers surveyed said they would put cheese on their Oscar party menu.

According to the survey, Cheddar (75 percent), Brie (74 percent), Swiss (61 percent) and Gouda (65 percent) were the most popular cheeses served at parties. Caterers' favorite cheese pairings included fruit (63 percent) and bread and crackers (61 percent).

Mary Bergin, executive pastry chef at Spago restaurant in Las Vegas, recommends pairing cheese with Fuji apples or Red Flame seedless grapes and flavorful breads like caraway rye.

"People are passionate about the glitz and glamour that comes from Hollywood's biggest night," said Bergin. "Hosting an Awards party not only gives diehard fans a front seat at the Awards ceremony, it allows them to sit in the director's chair and create their own spectacle with food and fun."

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Lemons are useful to the dish and add color and texture to improve the overall taste as well as visual appearance of the shrimp cocktail.

Here are some basics to keep in mind:

- Make sure items are the appropriate size (especially for passed items).
- Use a clean, sharp knife for precision.
- Your serving vessel, i.e. size, shape and color, are important to the overall look of your presentation.
- Use functional garnishes — no purple kale!
- A spritz of olive oil or vinegar on platters lends an extra special touch.
- Fresh herbs and seasoning

are a must!

Give yourself enough time, so you won't be rushed at the most crucial finishing stages.

- Simply elegant is a good rule of thumb vs. not overdone, cutesy or too fancy.
- Employ proper cooking methods.
- Include complimentary dishes in your presentation for total menu balance.

**Chef Kelli L. Lewton is owner of 2 Unique Caterers and Event Planners in Bloomfield Hills. A graduate of College's Culinary Arts program, Kelli is a part-time instructor at the college. Look for her column in Taste on the second Sunday of the month.**

Spring into the new season with these tasty dishes

**See related story by Peggy Martini-Everts on Taste front.**

**VEGGIE TOSTADAS**

Serves 8

- 2 medium zucchini
- 2 (3-ounce) cans sliced mushrooms, reserving liquid
- 1/4 cup chopped celery
- 1/4 cup chopped radishes
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 small green pepper, chopped
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
- 8 corn tostada shells
- Tabasco sauce to taste
- Salsa
- Fat-free sour cream

Preheat oven to 350°F. Sauté vegetables in mushroom liquid on stove until translucent. Add Tabasco sauce to taste if desired.

Spoon vegetables on top of tostada shell and top with cheese. Bake for five minutes until cheese is melted.

To serve, top with salsa and a dollop of fat-free sour cream.

**Nutrition information per serving (excluding sour cream and salsa):**

Calories: 184; Protein 9g; Fat 12g; Sodium 282mg; Carbohydrates 11g. Percent of calories from fat: 57

**STRAWBERRY-RHUBARB FRUIT CRUMBLE**

Serves 9

- 3 cups sliced fresh or frozen rhubarb (1/2-inch pieces)
- 1 cup cubed peeled apples
- 1 cup sliced strawberries
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 2/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 2/3 cup quick-cooking oats

Combine rhubarb, apples and strawberries. Spoon into a greased 8-inch square baking dish.

Combine sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over rhubarb mixture. Set aside.

In a bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in brown sugar and oats. Sprinkle over rhubarb mixture. Bake at 350°F for 40-50 minutes or until lightly browned. Serve warm or cold with a scoop of ice cream, if desired.

**Nutrition information per serving:** Calories: 22; Protein 2g; Fat 6g; Sodium 120mg; Carbohydrates 42g. Percent of calories from fat: 26.

Make an impression with beef tenderloin platter

See related 2 Unique column on Taste front. Recipes compliments of Kelli Lewton.

**BRUSHETTA MIXTURE**

- 2 Roma Tomatoes, diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon sun-dried tomatoes, diced
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt

Pinch black pepper

1 baguette, sliced

Combine all ingredients, mix well. Put mixture on baguette slices to serve as an appetizer.

**WARM ARTICHOKE DIP**

- 1 1/2 cups sour cream
- 1 1/2 cups cream cheese
- 3/4 cup artichoke hearts
- 1 cup Mozzarella cheese,

shredded

- 1/2 cup feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- Pinch white pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 cup prepared pesto
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Grind artichoke hearts in food processor.

Add cream cheese and parsley and continue mixing. Add in all other ingredients and mix thoroughly. Place in oven-proof dish.

Bake for approximately 20 minutes in a 350°F oven. Serve.

**BEEF TENDERLOIN PLATTER**

- 1 whole beef tenderloin
- 2 tablespoons prepared pesto
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 (oven roasted) whole bulb garlic for garnish — cut in half (see garnish instructions)
- 1 thinly sliced red onion (see garnish instructions)
- 1 roasted green or red peppers (see garnish instructions)

1/4 cup Balsamic vinegar

1/4 cup olive oil

Clean tenderloin. Season with salt and pepper. Rub with Pesto and chopped garlic.

Broil or Grill to sear all sides. Finish in a 350°F oven until internal temperature reaches to 115°F-125°F, about 15-20 minutes.

Use meat thermometer to check doneness.

Let rest — refrigerate.

Cut off butt piece and slice remainder to 1/4-inch medallions.

bake in 250°F oven until soft and caramel in color, with salt, pepper and herbs — 1 1/2 to 2 hours

**Onions:** Sauté thinly sliced onions in Olive Oil until caramelized. De Glaze pan with Balsamic Vinegar.

**Peppers:** Roast under broiler until skin turns black and softens — remove from broiler cool then peel off skin — Slice in thin strips.

**TO ASSEMBLE PLATTER**

At the end of platter arrange garlic, onions, peppers and butt piece

Arrange sliced meat in a fanned pattern

Serve with horseradish and mustards.

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