

Clarkston eateries cook up festive holiday treats

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Christmas wouldn't be complete without the special dishes prepared only at this time of year.

From the kitchens in our homes to the kitchens in some popular downtown eateries, the holidays are made a little more festive with the foods we serve at parties and family gatherings.

So, the staff at The Clarkston Eccentric decided to ask some special chefs just what's cooking for the holidays.

The Clarkston Union Bar & Kitchen, 54 S. Main St., prepares weekly specials. But for the holidays, they've created special dishes suitable for Santa himself. Jeff Lee, head chef and catering manager, said the food served at the Union is eclectic enough to be a conversation piece during holiday parties.

"We put a twist on it here and a twist on it there," said Lee, of the items they prepare.

For example, on New Year's Eve, he will make a Thai Chicken Cracker Crust Pizza, complete with chili peanut sauce, chicken marinated in soy sauce and ginger, bean sprouts, carrots and smoked mozzarella cheese. Other special menu items will include a roast pork loin with brandy applesauce and a shell

fish chowder.

Village Bakeshop, 10 S. Main St., employees have been busy frosting their holiday cookies lately. During the holiday season, said co-owner Stephanie Vo, "we can't even keep up."

The cookies are difficult for even Vo to describe. She described them as a cross between sugar cookies and shortbread cookies, but the recipe is kept hush-hush.

"These are very special," said Vo, who owns the bakeshop along with her husband, Eric Vo. "We make a ton of them."

Vo estimated that she sells between 20 and 30 dozen a day. As Christmas approaches, that number is expected to rise to between 50 and 70 dozen cookies a day.

They are decorated as white-iced snowmen, green holiday trees, and festive yellow bells. Though the bakeshop used to make candy cane frosted cookies, they no longer offer that shape since it breaks easily and is more difficult to frost.

Vo has her own idea of what glazed cookies mean during the holidays.

"They're pretty and colorful," she said. "They make it look like Christmas ... like the holiday season."

Clarkston Cafe, 16 S. Main St., brings in some seasonal

dishes this time of year, such as acorn squash, brussels sprouts and even pumpkin bread with ginger sauce. Valerie Larose, dessert chef, said she uses more cranberries in desserts and sauces this time of year. The deep red color brings a little holiday cheer to the dishes, she said.

As for their raspberry pie is a favorite dessert. It's so popular, she said, they have in the past printed out the recipe and handed it to interested customers.

Adam Siano, head chef, said the menu itself does not change drastically around the holidays.

"We're just selling a lot more," he said.

Though Siano isn't sure why, he does seem to prepare more steaks, like prime rib, this time of year.

"It's the change of season, or just a craving," he said.

He doesn't consider any certain food to be more or less important during the holidays, but he said, "it just fills in part of the atmosphere, beyond just the decorations."

Rudy's Quality Market, 9 S. Main St., offers an array of food both prepared and ready to make. During the holidays, the store sells mainly filet mignon and standing rib roast for festive or family gatherings.

Christopher Thomas, co-owner of Rudy's, said they already have

150 orders of filets and 130 orders of standing rib roasts for the holidays. He expects to fill a couple hundred more orders of each before the season ends.

"They're more traditional (meats)," said Thomas. "These are two of the No. 1 meats. These are the most tender meats you'll be able to buy."

Thomas said the important thing to remember when preparing these meats is to salt them to taste after they are cooked. The meat will be more tender and tends to shrink less. At Rudy's, it's possible to get standing rib roast that is "cradled," a process where the bone is cut off and tied back onto the meat. It will cook with the bone, but can be easily treated as a "boneless meat" when it's ready to serve.

For anyone searching for a new holiday recipe, some holiday restaurants have given hints and explicit instructions for a few of their most popular dishes:

• Rudy's Recipe for Whole Beef Tenderloin (Filet Mignon)

1. Season the meat, between 6-8 pounds, with fresh garlic, olive oil and black pepper, by rubbing in the spices.

2. Let meat sit at room temperature for about 90 minutes to absorb the flavor.

3. Cook uncovered at 425

degrees. Rare meat should cook for 35 minutes; medium for 40 minutes; and well done for 45 minutes.

4. Salt to taste.

• Rudy's Recipe for Standing Rib Roast

1. Purchase about one pound of meat per serving because it is a bone-in meat.

2. Season with olive oil, garlic, black pepper and rosemary.

3. Pre-heat oven to 500-550 degrees (on bake).

4. Sear 30-45 minutes.

5. Turn oven down to 375 degrees.

Rare-16 minutes per pound

Medium-18 minutes per pound

Well-22 minutes per pound

*Always cook uncovered

*First 45 minutes included in cooking time

• Rudy's Au Jus

Combine:

4 oz. Maggi Seasoning (a small bottle costs about \$2.99 at Rudy's Quality Market.)

4 oz. water

2 oz. unsalted butter

Simmer the above in a saucepan for about 15 minutes. Serve with meats.

2. Pie

Make and bake pie crust. Let

cool. Fill halfway with cooled

pastry cream. Add raspberries

on top of that (½ pint) and top off

with raspberry glaze. You have

to put glaze on a couple of times

until berries are all covered.

3. Glaze

½ pint raspberries, ½ cup

water, ½ cup sugar and 3 table-

spoons of gelatin. Cook off and

strain — have just liquid. Put on

pie with pastry brush. Let pie

cool after each application.

cheese

2. Roll dough to fit 8-9 inch

pizza screen.

3. Spread pennut sauce over

the dough, using a spoon. Leave

a border.

4. Sprinkle ½ oz cheese over the

sauce.

5. Sprinkle the rest of the

ingredients over the dough.

6. Sprinkle the rest of the

cheese over the top.

7. Bake at 425 degrees for 12-

15 minutes or until the crust is

golden brown.

• Clarkston Cafe Raspberry Pie

1. Pastry Cream

1 cup half and half

½ cup sugar

2 egg yolks

2 teaspoons cornstarch

½ cup butter

Heat cream in heavy bottom

pan. Meanwhile mix all other

ingredients except the butter.

Add a little of the heated cream

to mixture to temper it, then

pour the mixture into the

remaining cream in the pot on

the stove, and stir constantly so

it won't burn. Put mixer on high

and beat 'till cool, then add

room-temperature butter and

whip in. Refrigerate.

2. Pie

Make and bake pie crust. Let

cool. Fill halfway with cooled

pastry cream. Add raspberries

on top of that (½ pint) and top off

with raspberry glaze. You have

to put glaze on a couple of times

until berries are all covered.

3. Glaze

½ pint raspberries, ½ cup

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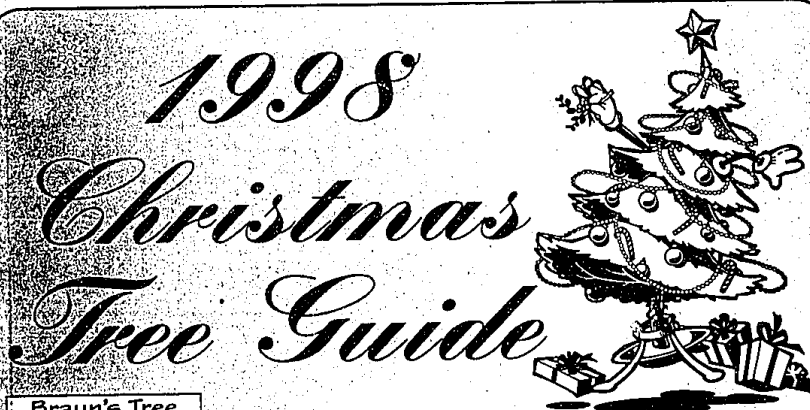
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