

Food & Drink

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DESERT SUN FILE PHOTO

Mother and daughter team Andie Hubka (right) and Jane Angwin own Cooking with Class in La Quinta.

Wine and dine with 'the cork and fork'

Back in May, the folks at Cooking with Class, the "recreational cooking school" in La Quinta, came up with an interesting idea for the summer. On Wednesday evenings they would have a "Cork and Fork" night, a sort of wine bar evening, open to the public, in which they would serve a limited but by no means unadventurous menu with Chef Andie Hubka and sommelier Katie Finn.



henry fenwick

It was a brave move for the group. In the first place, as Cooking with Class co-owner (and Andie's mother) Jane Angwin pointed out recently, they are not restaurateurs. This was a leap in the dark, planned as a special favor and thank you to the locals who would be staying through the summer.

"We were a little nervous," she said. "Who knew if anyone would come?"

But Katie and Andie are a dynamic pair. "They call each other 'the cork and the fork'; they even have T-shirts saying that. They're just amazing together," Jane said.

The plan was that the menu would be very seasonal; Andie would make a trip into Los Angeles early in the week to see what she could find that wasn't available in the desert, work out the menu and post it on her blog. Then she would e-mail those people she knew would be interested while Katie worked out the wine pairings.

"It's been a terrific success," said Jane. "We're not a big place," (the fire department allows them to sit up to 49 people), "but we have a wonderful group of locals who come in all summer. We don't turn customers around much — people just come and stay."

"I think other chefs would be a little jealous of me," Andie chuckled. "We have total carte blanche about what we do. It's like we're a new restaurant each week."

It means that they never know what they will be serving until the night before they serve it. It's not only a surprise to customers, it's a surprise to the staff too.

Rounding out the menu

Last Wednesday's menu included a "farm-stand bruschetta" with what Andie described as "secret" tomatoes, a mussels dish with Marinara sauce, potato gnocchi with shiitake, oyster and portabella mushrooms and peas, artichokes with a blue cheese butter and a pear mustard vinaigrette, and an "Irish supper."

The "secret" tomatoes, Andie explained, came from a farmer in Oxnard, Farmer Joe. "He comes down and sells his tomatoes 'round here in La Quinta, and they're terrific. They are heirlooms, and they're like you remember beefsteak tomatoes tasting like," she said.

Chef Julie Stahl, the Cooking with Class sous-chef, was responsible for the mussels Diablo.

The gnocchi was another Julie specialty. She prepared the gnocchi, and Andie prepared the mushroom sauce. "They call me the sauce girl," Andie laughed. The mushrooms she had picked up on her regular Los Angeles trip the day before the dinner. "They were wonderful, all woody and perfect. The peas just rounded it out, gave it a little sweetness. That was probably my favorite dish that night."

The artichokes were another L.A. find: Purple Haze artichokes. "I steam them then grill them to give them a little seared flavor. Artichokes have a sweetness and the (contrast of the) blue cheese brings that out, and then the

Please see FENWICK, D2

Smoothie operators



STOCKXPRT.COM

Whip up a frenzy with fruit, juice

BY JUDITH SALKIN

The Desert Sun

According to smoothiecentral.com, back in 1904 a "smoothie" was someone who behaved with assurance and easy competence.

In 1932, Smoothies was the name of a line of ladies' foundation garments.

But by the late 1960s, the word smoothie had taken on a whole new, more delicious meaning — fresh or frozen fruit, your choice of nutritional supplements with milk, juice or yogurt blended into a refreshing breakfast, lunch or snack.

We looked at a few Coachella Valley locations where smoothies are the specialty, especially during summer when no one wants to be weighed down by a heavy mid-day meal.

ULTRA BLENDS
4050 Airport Center Drive,
Palm Springs

Cost: \$4-\$5.50
Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday; 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday

Information: (760) 323-8027
Signature blend: Every Monday, Koren Esparza of Desert Hot Springs orders five Ripped and Wired smoothies with a shot of peanut butter. "I drink one and take the rest back to my office to freeze for lunches the rest of the week," she said.

Owner Joe Cox bought the smoothie bar a couple of years ago from the original owners, a couple of dieticians who designed the menu.

The small shop is located in the Gold's Gym center, so it caters to many customers who come in after their workouts. Esparza's favorite — The Ripped and Wired — is made with coffee and chocolate protein powder and is one of the most popular items on the menu.

Please see SMOOTHIE, D2

Make your own

A basic smoothie is "some fresh fruit, ice and juice," according to Clark's Nutrition assistant manager Debbie Donnell.

To bump up the nutrition, Donnell recommends adding acai juice, protein powder, weight-loss powder or muscle-building powder — all available at most health food stores.

Get started with this simple smoothie:

Strawberry Banana Smoothie

Serves 2

1 ripe banana, peeled and quartered (can be frozen)
1 cup strawberries (fresh or frozen)
1 tablespoon honey (optional)
1-2 tablespoons protein powder (optional)
1 cup nonfat milk or apple juice
1-2 cups crushed ice

Instructions: In a blender cup, add banana and strawberries. Sweeten with the honey if desired. Add the milk or juice. If desired, add 1-2 tablespoons of protein powder. Blend on medium speed and purée until smooth. Add crushed ice, 1/2 cup at a time, and continue to blend until smooth and desired thickness is achieved. Serve immediately.



Other places to get a smoothie fix

JUICE IT UP

Where: 72-877 Dinah Shore Drive, Rancho Mirage; 9024 Highway 111, Suite 103, La Quinta
Details: New "planet friendly" smoothies include Brazilian Tango, Acai Mango Monsoon, Eco-Berry Maté and Eco-Chai Maté
Hours: Varies by location
Information: (760) 202-7713, Rancho Mirage; (760) 564-9059, La Quinta; juiceitup.com

JAMBA JUICE

Where: 425 S. Sunrise Way, Palm Springs; 72-840 Highway 111, Palm Desert
Other details: New on the menu is the Blackberry Bliss smoothie
Hours: Varies by location
Information: (760) 325-0550, Palm Springs; (760) 341-0656, Palm Desert; jambajuice.com

Find more locations for a smoothie fix at palm Springs.metromix.com

CHEAP EATS

Jalapeños not as hot as this smokin' deal

BY BARBARA LOWELL

The Desert Sun

I have a friend who loathes coupons, and never misses a chance to make fun of me and my little pink plastic coupon caddy, which I dutifully tend and carry to the supermarket each time I shop.

But I think even she would have pulled out the scissors for this deal — a taco and enchilada platter, plus a free fountain drink, for \$5.

I found the coupon in a special over-wrap of Monday's paper, and the meal at Taco Del Mar in Palm Springs.

The restaurant, in the Ralph's shopping center at the corner of Sunrise and Ramon, specializes in Baja cuisine made with fresh ingredients.

You'll find lots of tacos, burritos, nachos and salads offered in many different combinations and tastes.

The advertised platter came with lots of choices — what kind of meat in your taco and enchilada (choose from braised chicken, carne asada, shredded beef, ground beef, seasoned pork or Atlantic fish); what kind of beans on the side (refried, pinto or black); flour or corn tortilla, and how many toppings (lettuce, cheese, pico de gallo, guacamole or sour cream).

I was impressed with the huge amount of food piled onto the deep hexagonal plate (did I mention you get a big scoop of rice, too?) and since the counter clerk made it all to my specifications, there was no picking out stray peppers or scraping toppings away.

My taco was stuffed with excellent shredded chicken, and the ground beef in the enchilada had a zippy tomato-based spice to it.

The red sauce ladled over the enchilada seemed extra spicy to my weenie palate (thank you, free refillable iced tea!), but the teens at the next table were shaking red droplets from bottles of hot sauce onto their burritos with reckless abandon, so you decide.

The platter usually sells for \$6.49, with a few dollars more for the drink, so take that, coupon snobs — a little clipping can save you big!

Taco Del Mar

425 Sunrise Way, Palm Springs, (760) 778-9203

DRINK OF THE WEEK



LARRY CROWE THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Zucchini Tini combines water extracted from the vegetable along with unfiltered sake and gin for an unusual cocktail.

Let ubiquitous veggie star in a fresh new drink

BY VICTORIA BRETT

The Associated Press

Zucchini is the summer vegetable that keeps on giving. Anyone with a summer garden usually harvests more zucchini than they know what to do with. Luckily, zucchini is versatile. Ratatouille, zucchini bread and grated zucchini are obvious choices.

But with so many possibilities, pairing drinks could be a chore. Which is why Food Network host Claire Robinson comes at it from another angle, using the zucchini to make a drink she calls the zucchini tini.

"Zucchini is an awesome vegetable, and it actually contains quite a bit of water," she says. "I love to extract the delicate flavor of zucchini water and add it to cocktails when serving zucchini. This carries the vegetable's notes throughout a meal."

To make zucchini water, Robinson grates a large zucchini into a fine mesh strainer set over a bowl. She then tosses the grated zucchini with a pinch of coarse salt and allows it to sit for 15 minutes.

Please see ZUCCHINI, D2



Need a drink?

Find local bars and restaurants at palm Springs.metromix.com