

WHAT EVERY WOMAN NEEDS

A Foolproof, Five-Course Menu for the Holiday Season

BY PAMELA BIERI • PHOTOS BY JOSEPH AARON

There's a well-circulated saying that every woman needs the following: A black lace bra, a cordless drill and a friend she can cry with. We'll add one more: A goof-proof, gourmet dinner that will make her friends feel honored.

If you don't have this last essential in your arsenal, we're here to help. To create such a treasure, we've called upon Executive Chef Andie Hubka, owner of Cooking with Class in La Quinta. Hubka's passion in life is to impart through regular classes the fun and magic of cooking. Just for us, she has created a five-course, dependable menu that takes inspiration from the spices, fragrances and flavors of fall.

"Everything about this meal can be made in advance with last-minute assembly," says Hubka, "so you can be a



MENU

with Suggested Wine Pairings

FIRST COURSE

Blue Cheese & Almond-Stuffed Dates with Chive Oil

Wine: Paul Chenau "Lady of Spain," Cava, Spain

SECOND COURSE

Spiced Butternut Squash Soup

Wine: URBAN Riesling, Alsace

THIRD COURSE

Shrimp and Mango Salad with Avocado & Bacon

Wine: Zolo Torrontes, Argentina

FOURTH COURSE

Cardamom Coriander Rubbed Pork Medallions with Parsnip Puree

Wine: Block Nine Pinot Noir, California Appellation

FIFTH COURSE

French Almond Cake with Freshly Whipped Cream and Berries

Wine: Quinto Do Crasto LBV Port, Portugal

Blue Cheese and Almond-Stuffed Dates with Chive Oil

A FOOLPROOF, FIVE-COURSE MENU

relaxed, consummate hostess. Each dish has a spice component—such as the cardamom coriander spice rub for the tenderloin. And we use local produce whenever possible, such as the dates.”

All the recipes are from Hubka’s first cookbook, being released next month, “Cooking with Class Presents—Our Most Requested Recipes.” All ingredients are readily available at Trader Joe’s, Costco, Jensen’s Fine Foods and



most area supermarkets. All of the wines mentioned are available at Cooking with Class.

Executive Chef Andie Hubka of Cooking with Class, La Quinta prepares the second course, Spiced Butternut Squash soup. See page 67.



BLUE CHEESE AND ALMOND-STUFFED DATES WITH CHIVE OIL

Makes 12 pieces

12 large pitted dates, preferably Medjool
2–3 ounces cave-aged blue cheese, such as Maytag
2 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted
4 tablespoons chopped chives
1 clove garlic
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper.
2. Slice the dates lengthwise, on one side only, taking care not to cut all the way through. Fill the cavities of the dates with about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon blue cheese.
3. Add a sliver of almond to the top of each date cavity, and arrange dates in the baking pan.
4. Meanwhile, add chives, garlic, oil, salt and pepper in a blender or use an immersion blender to process until the chives have been completely eviscerated and the chive oil has a consistent, not chunky texture.
5. Bake dates until warm and cheese has melted, about 8 minutes. Serve warm, with chive oil drizzled below and on top.

continued on page 67

A FOOLPROOF, FIVE-COURSE MENU

continued from page 36

SPICED BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

Makes 6 servings

“What a gorgeous expression of one of my favorite winter vegetables!”

—Executive Chef Andie Hubka, Cooking with Class, La Quinta

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
¼ cup diced celery
¼ cup diced carrots
1 cinnamon stick
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 quart vegetable stock
½ teaspoon ground, toasted coriander
½ teaspoon ground allspice
½ teaspoon ground cloves
1 pinch freshly grated nutmeg
2 cups roasted butternut squash, flesh only
½ cup heavy cream
Additional salt and pepper

1. Heat the olive oil in a large soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion, celery, carrot, and cinnamon stick and sauté until softened but not browned, about 12 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Add the stock and the remaining spices, and bring to a boil. Simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Stir in the squash and cook for 15 minutes.
4. Discard the cinnamon stick and then use an immersion blender to puree until smooth. Simmer gently for about 10 minutes.
5. Add the cream and then adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper. Keep warm until ready to serve.



A FOOLPROOF, FIVE-COURSE MENU

SHRIMP & MANGO SALAD WITH AVOCADO AND BACON

Serves 4-6

1 pound large shelled and de-veined shrimp, cooked, tails removed
2 large mangoes, peeled, pitted and chopped
2 large avocados, flesh cubed
1 pound applewood smoked bacon, cooked and diced
1 shallot, minced
1 small bunch cilantro leaves, minced
2 tablespoon mayonnaise
1 tablespoon citrus vinegar
Zest of one lime
Juice of one lime
1 tablespoon honey
2 teaspoons fresh ginger, minced
2 green onions, minced
Salt and pepper to taste
Butter lettuce leaves for serving

1. Combine shrimp, mango, avocado, cilantro and shallots in a large bowl and toss gently. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve, if making in advance.
2. Combine the remaining dressing ingredients, season and stir well.
3. When ready to serve, toss the cooked bacon and reserved dressing in to the rest of the mixture. Taste and season to your liking with salt and pepper.
4. Serve mounded in butter lettuce cups for presentation.





CARDAMOM CORIANDER DRY-RUBBED PORK TENDERLOIN

Serves 6 to 8

3 tablespoons brown sugar
 1 tablespoon coriander
 1 tablespoon cardamom
 1 teaspoon allspice
 1 teaspoon dry mustard
 1 teaspoon grated fresh nutmeg
 2 teaspoons salt
 1 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
 2 pounds pork tenderloin, trimmed
 2 tablespoons grape seed or canola oil

“This recipe became an instant favorite in our “Men’s Only” cooking class. The technique takes the guesswork out of knowing when the pork is done, and allows you to do much of the work in advance, finishing just before serving”

—Executive Chef Andie Hubka

1. Combine dry-rub ingredients in a small bowl. Rub mixture all over meat. Cover and allow to marinate for at least 30 minutes, or 2–3 hours in the refrigerator.
2. Heat a large nonstick skillet over high heat. Add oil and then brown the meat well on all sides. Remove and allow to rest for 15 minutes.
3. Slice the meat into 1-inch thick slices and place face up on a parchment-lined baking sheet.
4. To finish, place the sheet under the broiler until all distinct redness is gone and meat is just cooked through, about 1–2 minutes. Flip all pork medallions over and cook the other side of the pieces in the same manner. Serve immediately. Pork can be prepared in advance through step 3. You can then chill the pork, bringing it back to room temperature before continuing with step 4.

PARSNIP PUREE

Makes 4-6 Servings

1 pound parsnips, peeled and cubed into ½ inch pieces
 ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened,
 ½ - ¾ cup heavy cream
 Salt and pepper

1. In a large pot of salted boiling water, cook parsnips until they are fork tender, about 20 minutes.
2. In the work bowl of a large food processor, place drained cooked parsnips, still warm.
3. Add butter and process, streaming in cream through upper feeding tube. Puree should be slightly thinner than desired, as it will thicken slightly as it sits.
4. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Keep warm until ready to serve.



FRENCH ALMOND CAKE

Serves 8

4 ounces unsalted butter
 8 ounces almond paste
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking powder
 3 large eggs
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup all purpose flour, sifted
 2 tablespoons rum

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Line the bottom of 9-inch round cake pan with parchment paper.
3. In a stand mixer using the paddle attachment, cream butter with almond paste until smooth. Add the sugar, vanilla and baking powder. Cream until light and smooth, about 2 minutes.
4. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating on low until well blended.
5. Add the flour on low speed. When it is just incorporated, add the rum.
6. Pour the batter into the prepared pan, smoothing out the top with an offset spatula.
7. Bake for approximately 40 minutes, until the center of the cake is just done. This is a very moist cake. It may sink in the middle as it cools; this is normal.
8. Let cake cool for at least 10 minutes. If necessary, run a sharp knife around the edges to loosen it away from the pan.
9. Invert the cake onto a plate and flip over, remove the pan carefully. Cool completely.

This cake may be wrapped tightly in plastic and frozen for several months.

“A very popular staple around here, and one of the many recipes my Mom calls ‘her very favorite.’ Make sure to use almond paste and not something labeled marzipan, or the cake will be overly sweet.”

—Executive Chef Andie Hubka

A SPECIAL CLASS

If you feel intimidated about preparing this menu on your own, Cooking with Class is offering a step-by-step class on the Desert Magazine Seasonal Fall Menu on Friday, November 19th. It will be part of the Friday night “Dinner & a Date” series. Cooking with Classes, 47875 Caleo Bay Drive, #A107, La Quinta; (760) 777-1161; cookingwithclasslaquinta.com.

You can see these recipes and many more in Chef Hubka’s new cookbook, “Cooking with Class Presents—Our Most Requested Recipes.” The cookbook will be available in December at the school, as well as at the local Borders and Barnes & Noble Booksellers.

