



Richmond Hill Epicurean Society
Newsletter, March 2010

Richmond Hill Epicurean Society Chef's Desk

We had a successful fund raising dinner in aid of Haiti on the 19th February 2010, and I would like to thank Randy Carr for accepting the challenge and our volunteer members for pulling their resources together to make it happen. Such an event is very much a team effort and everyone involved from food production, soliciting donations, decorating the dining room, managing the silent auction, operating the beverage station and not forgetting the housekeeping aspect.

Special thanks to our sponsors and individuals who donated their products and time and our guests who supported the event wholeheartedly. It was a memorable and worthy cause that brought us together. It is amazing that Canadians have such a strong moral instinct and humanitarian grace that makes me proud to be one.

The devastation and sufferings of the people of Haiti cannot be measured and it is impossible to compensate for their loss and anguish. We can only offer a small token to elevate some hardship with the wish that others may follow, and that alone will keep their hopes alive. Perhaps, if they are aware that their plight is shared by others who care, then the light at the end of the tunnel will shine a little brighter. Let's give them hope.

Happy Cooking

Fred



Richmond Hill Epicurean Society

Cook Off Review

- ❖ Challenges, some call it problem, others will avoid it, but it takes courage to grab it by the horns. That is exactly what we do when we offer the “Mystery Item” cook-off theme. I am not retired yet, living on the wild side (within the law) sets the adrenaline on hyper drive. The sense of accomplishing a tricky task is more satisfying and learning from failure will only make you wiser.
- ❖ Our mystery item was duck, squid and for dessert, bananas. We revisited the Onion Soup to reclaim our bruised ego from the last episode.
- ❖ In our previous attempt at making the onion soup, the results were not even close to our minimal expectations. It did not even look like onion soup, just pale and mildly sweet on the palate. That time, all the onions were dumped together in a pot causing the onions to steam due to the vast amount eliminating the caramelizing effect. Lesson learnt . This time around Mindy and Louise caramelized the onions in smaller batches to create the amber color and evoke the flavours of the onion. They later deglazed it with a rich chicken stock to pull out the flavours from the fond at the bottom of the pan. It was left to simmer to soften the onions and meld the flavours together. The soup was finished with a crouton topped with a blend of cheeses, melted of course!
- ❖ Duck as a mystery item poses a tricky situation for most cooks as it has two distinct muscle groups that require separate cooking times. The breast portion is best eaten medium rare to medium, and the leg portion is best prepared over slow and low heat.



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Cook Off Review (cont'd)

- ❖ We encountered some difficulties as the ducks were not thawed completely and our two hour allotment for cooking evaporated into one hour. Our team prepared the ducks in three ways, pan searing the breast, braising the legs and simmering the wings. The breast was scored on the skin side to render off excessive fat during the pan searing part and finished in the oven. A fruit compote accompanied the dish.
- ❖ We tried to braise the legs but ran out of time and it was rather chewy. An ideal braise time should be about two hours, preferably 3 or more over low heat. We prepared confit canard, which traditionally requires a salt cure for a day then braised in its own fat to complete the cooking. The flesh should fall off the bone when it is completed. This is classical French offering still offered in traditional restaurants.
- ❖ The wings were simmered in a mixture of light soy sauce, brown sugar, maltose, oriental five spice, rice wine and seasoning. That did not require as much time and our dinner was not a complete failure.
- ❖ The squid was grilled then sliced into rings and marinated in olive oil and lemon juice, seasoned to taste. A quick and delicious way of preparing a nutritious meal.
- ❖ For the dessert, banana was the mystery item. Our dessert team lead by Darryl made a fabulous banana nut bread, served with chantilly cream (sweetened whipped cream). It was well received; some members went up for seconds. That speaks for itself.
- ❖ **Upcoming Events and Next Cook-Off**





Epicurean Society Fifth Anniversary



- Our next cook-off will be a celebration of the society's fifth anniversary. Over the years, we have explored different aspects of cooking, enjoyed good food, tolerated mediocre food, but mostly shared our common interest amongst friends. I am proud of our members, their great attitude as they march into the kitchen, fearless in taking on new challenges and graciously spontaneous with their humour. The culinary skills are maturing in depth and spectrum and the awareness of food has taken on a new light. Our members view food in a higher level of perspective and the respect for it has grown. I feel that we are on the right track and with each session, a new dimension is fostered.
- On the 31st March, I am inviting our members to offer their signature dish in the following categories; Canapés, Appetizer (Hot or Cold), Salad, Entree (Meat and Vegetarian, including the accompaniment of vegetable and starch) and Desserts or Pastries. Please submit your suggestion soon as a decision has to be made and ingredients brought in. All dishes must be garnished in an elegant manner. A celebration package containing your contribution will be published as a memento for the occasion. Our first members cook book! (All contributions will be published, only selected recipes will be featured during the cook-off. Members will be informed ahead of time).



Richmond Hill Culinary Society

❖ Beverage Program

- ❖ Our society will be introducing a new facet in the summer time. We will be adding a “beverage” element to our monthly cook-off. I haven’t figured out the logistics yet but I am certain that we will work out the bugs in order to incorporate this essential portion to our repertoire. It will encompass a wide ranging spectrum from wines, sprits, mixology and virtually any form of beverage. I urge the members to be patient during the start up as we find the optimum way of getting this show on the road.



❖ **Members Workshop**

❖ Culinary Arts with Salt Dough



This versatile art form made from edible materials will be offered on 21st April, 2010 for members only. The workshop will cover; Different Types of Salt Dough, Basic Floral Designs, Table Decoration, Food Presentation. Registration is limited to 8 spaces, and cost \$50.00 per person. Registration closes on 14th April 2010. Snacks and refreshments provided. Students will bring home all their finished pieces.



Richmond Hill Culinary Society

What's New in Cuisine – (New Culinary Products, Ingredients, Places and People)

Imperial Black Garlic

It looks like a black truffle, has the texture of fudge and its flavour has been compared to molasses, candy, coffee, balsamic vinegar, licorice, dark soy sauce, cheese, wine, even French onion soup.

Long prized as a health food, garlic now has a different look. In 2008, black garlic became the latest sensation in the culinary world and is being hailed as the new superfood.

Imperial Black Garlic is simply 100% natural regular garlic, which has been aged or fermented for a period of time under controlled heat and humidity. During the process, the white garlic turns black, hence the name “black garlic”

It differs from the fresh white garlic in that it is sweet to taste. The texture is soft and chewy and the flavour is much more delicate than the fresh raw garlic. It even produces a zingy sensation to your taste buds that is difficult to describe.

Imperial black garlic is the original. MSDF Farm first introduced it at the Osaka Food Expo in 1997. The modern natural fermentation technology is a result of over three generations of Chinese Medicine doctors' efforts.

In 2008, MSD Farm received the grand prize at the annual innovative technology competition in Korea for their advanced fermentation technology. Using natural elements such as the earth, air and fire, the Imperial Black Garlic is pure black garlic with superior taste and quality.

The garlic is placed in a clay pot which is a porous material and is kept in there for up to 21 days, by this time, it will turn black naturally. The fermented black garlic bulbs are then pasteurized through the process of controlled heat (121C or 250F) for 12 hours.

The epicurean volunteers had the pleasure of working with this ingredient during the Haiti Gala Dinner and it was delicious. Our supplier was Chris Stewart from ARS Foods Inc and could be contacted at cstewart2@rogers.com

For more information, check out the web site www.blackgarlicfoods.com



ANNOUNCEMENT



Reginald Herbert Carr

It is with great sadness to inform you that our founding member Randy's father passed on the 20th of February.

In the short time that I have come to know him, he has treated me like family and was always in good spirits even though his physical health was on the decline. He always placed his friends and family above himself to the time of his passing. Our prayers are with him on his journey to heaven and our condolences to the Carr Family for their loss of a wonderful man. He will be missed by all.



Richmond Hill Culinary Society

❖ **Richmond Hill Candidate for Ward 3**

One of our long-time members, Vik Gandhi is running for councillor in Ward 3, Richmond Hill. Election will be held in October and we wish him the very best. To follow the race, check out his web site www.vikgandhi.com

❖ **Photo Bug**

Amidst the pool to talents in our society, we find a shutter bug happily snapping away and capturing the moment in pixels. As comfortable as she is with a whisk or chef's knife, she also straps a heavy duty camera around her neck, just waiting for the perfect opportunity to shoot someone. Yup, Joyce Lau does not offer any warnings for her action. So keep that smile on your face while you are around her.

Her photos of our event are found in our web site www.culinaryarts.ca and hit the Epicurean Society button, under Haiti.

