



Official e-Newsletter of the American Personal & Private Chef Association

January/February 2008

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From Candy Wallace, Executive Director

Happy new year, everyone!

This message may reach you a few days after the official holiday, but the sentiment is genuine. I wish each and every one of you a 2008 filled with success, profitability, personal fulfillment and great joy.

The path you have chosen to follow as personal chefs is one that is evolving each year. We have come so far from where I started out as a personal chef almost 15 years ago. The progress we have made educating the general public as to who we are, what we do and why they need us is huge, and we have actually secured the term “personal chef” in the American lexicon, which is something we are very proud of. The retention of our No. 1 ranking on the Internet for more than 12 years is also something we are very proud of, and we have Dennis, our intrepid Webmaster, working full time along with Mamoon to maintain that position and create the outstanding visibility for our members that they deserve.

We are going to continue to devote our energies to keeping our members at the forefront of the industry through developing and offering the best and most cutting-edge benefits and resources necessary to run a successful business as a personal chef and keeping our members in the consumer’s eye through media exposure and continued No. 1 position on the Internet search engines.

Many other organizations copy us, but NONE of them can offer the professional support, credibility, innovations or professional backup that we offer every member. We shall continue to operate under the mantra of “Promises Made - Promises KEPT.”

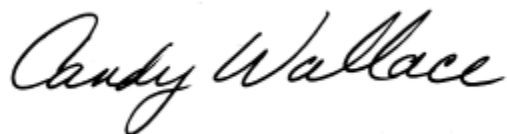
We have been validated as a legitimate career path and are assisting many of the culinary schools in the development of curricula specifically for individuals seeking careers as professional personal chefs. Our textbook—the first and only in the industry—is published and available not only to schools who wish to teach the program, but also to individuals who wish to start up and operate legitimate successful businesses as personal chefs.

Our first International Summit was a screaming success. It was a trip none of us will ever forget, and I truly hope that our next trip abroad is as meaningful, educational and FUN! Just ask any of the members who traveled to Parma with us and then sit down and get comfortable, because you’re going to hear about the whole trip—it was amazing. We learned so much, cooked with some wonderful and talented chefs in Italy, and ate food that was breathtaking in flavor and freshness. What an experience!

Our next opportunity to gather to learn, taste and collaborate is coming up in February in Las Vegas. We have secured a terrific location that is totally affordable with post-holiday airfares being at their most reasonable, and have put together an agenda that will contribute to your bottom line by assisting in making your personal-chef business more efficient and more profitable. This is a tremendous opportunity to take your business to the next level and one you will not want to miss.

I can’t urge you strongly enough to attend the 2008 APPCA Summit in Las Vegas, Feb. 24 and 25. Members who have attended past conferences will tell you how they have made a difference in their bottom lines, and that if you are serious about success as a personal chef you will attend and participate in these conferences. Sitting on the sidelines never made a champion.

We’re here to help you succeed, and we’re looking forward to seeing you and working with you personally in 2008.



Sam’s Town Reduces Lodging Rate at 2008 Summit Reserve before January 24!

APPCA is pleased to announce its 2008 Personal & Private Chef Summit in Las Vegas during the immensely

popular caterer source conference and trade show. Our theme: “Back to Basics,” beginning with a cocktail reception on Sunday evening, Feb. 24, delivering a full day of programming on Monday, Feb. 25, and offering an optional half-day training session on Tuesday, Feb. 26, on APPCA’s new Personal Chef Office business-management software.

Where we’ll be

We’ll meet at Sam’s Town Hotel & Gambling Hall, which recently lowered our per-night rate to only \$49.99 (plus room tax) on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights, single or double occupancy. (Friday and Saturday rates are at prevailing rates.)

The hotel is located off the Las Vegas Strip with regular complimentary shuttle service to Strip and downtown locales. What’s more, the property has a vast array of dining and entertainment options, including boutique and Western stores, an 18-screen movie theater and 56-lane bowling alley. Call (877) 593-5993 and mention code APPB08A to obtain our group rate, or reserve lodging online at www.samstownlv.com. (A deposit is required at reservation; your credit card will be charged for the first night.) Our block is limited; reserve your room by January 24 to get APPCA’s special rate.

After January 24, rooms at Sam’s Town are not guaranteed for our group, so reserve soon! Members who already reserved rooms at the higher rate of \$54.99 will have their rates adjusted to the new, lower rate by the hotel.

Marketing Tips, Cooking for Diabetics: Two More Highlights of 2008 Summit

In the last issue of “à la minute,” we highlighted our keynote presentation by Tim Schlitzer of FoodRoutes Network as well as our exciting cooking demo to be presented by John Deatcher, chef/owner of Foodini’s Catering. In this edition, we’re pleased to promote two other presentations, “The Diabetes Epidemic and the Role of the Personal and Private Chef,” and a special session during lunch on successfully marketing your personal-chef business.

According to the American Diabetes Association, 20.8 million children and adults in the United States, or 7% of the population, have diabetes—and that number is increasing, particularly the incidence of type 2 diabetes. APPCA has always had a mission to help its members enrich the lives of diabetic clients who desire flavorful meals. In the morning half of the general session on Monday, Feb. 25, Brian Kasten, chef/owner of The Supper Solution serving the Connecticut River Valley in Vermont and New Hampshire, will provide an overview of diabetes from the medical and client sides, and expound on meal planning and tying in to other diet plans. Brian’s success with his diabetic clients is seen in the improvement of overall health of his growing client base, thanks to his ability to meld flavor with healthy cooking. He’ll reveal how you, too, can make a difference in your community by providing meal solutions to people with diabetes.

Karen Tursi, chef/owner of CHOP Personal Chef Services in greater Chicago and president of the Chicago-area chapter of APPCA, will present during our luncheon on successful marketing of your personal-chef business. In particular, Karen—who operates an extraordinarily successful personal-chef business in a highly competitive market—will speak on the importance of developing your business’ Web site (with APPCA link), the power of strong word-of-mouth promotion, how to acquire and package professional referrals, why niche outreach might be right for you, and marketing strategies that work and those that don’t.

You won’t want to miss a single presentation at the 2008 APPCA Summit! Registration, at only \$199, includes Sunday’s reception on Feb. 24 and all programming and meals on Monday, Feb. 25. For Personal

Chef Office on Tuesday, Feb. 26: additional fee of \$75 (registration for Personal Chef Office is limited to 20.)

Guests of members may register for the full Summit at the same member fee, or may purchase a reception ticket on Sunday at \$75 or a lunch ticket on Monday at \$50. To register for the 2008 Personal & Private Chef Summit, or for more information, visit www.personalchef.com or call (800) 644-8389.

Personal-Chef Training through March 2008

The personal-chef segment of the foodservice industry has expanded enormously and blossomed into a recognized career path, with the demand for high-quality food and service growing each year throughout the country. Join us at one of the following scheduled training sessions, where APPCA will deliver a dynamic two-day, high-intensity seminar providing the best tools and educational materials in the industry for you to operate a successful personal-chef business.

Gaithersburg, Md.
February 9-10

New York, N.Y. (one-day accelerated training)
March 9

[Click here for more..](#)

“Cat”ifi Skewers

*A palate-specific recipe from
Linda West, chef/owner
Melange Catering & Special Events, Houston
Yield: 24 portions/72 skewers*

In honor of the 2008 catersource Conference in Las Vegas (immediately following the 2008 APPCA Personal Chef Summit, also in Las Vegas), we offer a delicious and delightful hors d'oeuvres recipe from a successful Houston caterer and one of the conference's organizers.

72 catfish nuggets or strips
Salt and ground black pepper, as needed
2 lb. kataifi (shredded phyllo), thawed
Melted salted butter, as needed
Four dipping sauces, including Chipotle Red Pepper Sauce (recipe follows)

Method:

1. Season catfish nuggets or strips with salt and pepper. Place 1 nugget or strip on each soaked bamboo skewer.
2. Spread portion of kataifi into single layer on clean work surface. Roll catfish in kataifi until evenly coated. Place on sheet pans; refrigerate at least 2 hours before cooking to serve.
3. Just prior to service: Leaving catfish skewers on sheet pans, brush catfish with melted butter. Bake at 375°F for 15 to 18 minutes or until golden brown and cooked through. (Skewers may be held in warming oven or chafing dish for up to 20 minutes before serving.)

4. Serve skewers with variety of dipping sauces such as citrus/ginger aioli, jezebel sauce, two-mustard sauce and chipotle red-pepper sauce.

Chipotle Red Pepper Sauce

Yield: approx. 1 qt.

5½ cups (about 4 large) coarsely chopped red bell pepper
3 cups (about 2 medium) coarsely chopped sweet onion
2 Tbsp. olive oil
½ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup vinegar
¼ cup water
1½ Tbsp. chopped canned chipotle chiles
Salt and ground black pepper, as needed

Method:

1. In skillet, sauté pepper and onion in oil until limp, about 5 minutes.
2. Add sugar, vinegar, water and chipotle. Simmer over low heat until vegetables are very soft. Remove from heat; cool slightly.
3. Process cooled mixture in food processor until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Cover; refrigerate at least 2 hours before using as dipping sauce. May be kept up to 5 days.

Good Things Come to Those Who Wait

Eve Clulow followed her heart—while tackling big obstacles—to become a personal chef.

By Lisa Shames

Finding and then following your life's passion can be a bumpy road. Just ask Eve Clulow, who, after years of working as a theater stage manager, finally had her ah-ha moment and decided to chuck it all—career, house, etc.—and become a chef.

Eve Clulow, chef/owner of Chef Eve Clulow, LLC, in Norwalk, Conn., first discovered her love for the culinary world in high school, while working as a short-order and prep cook at a local country club. But after a horseback-riding accident, followed by five knee surgeries, a career that involved standing on her feet for long periods of time was out of the question... or so she thought. So off she went into the theater world—still cooking on the side to “relax,” she says—until one day she'd had enough. “I had one of those mornings when I asked myself, ‘What are you going to do with the rest of your life considering how miserable you are?’” she says. “That was my moment of ‘I want to cook.’” Clulow enrolled in the 15-month program at Le Cordon Bleu's Scottsdale Culinary Institute in Arizona (“The best year of my life,” she says), graduating with an associate's degree. Here are some insights she's learned along the way.

APPCA: Why did you choose to become a personal chef?

Clulow: As I was driving cross-country on my way to Le Cordon Bleu, I was thinking about what I was going to do after I graduated. But I knew more of what I wasn't going to do. I didn't want to spend a lot of time on the restaurant side because of the physical abuse. But what I really wanted to do was somehow have individual clients and cook for them. I had never heard the term ‘personal chef’ before I went to cooking school, and it really wasn't discussed, although we certainly knew about it. Two of my chef-instructors had been private chefs before they went back to teaching. I graduated in the summer of 2003 and worked for about six months in my externship at The Ritz-Carlton in New York. Then I incorporated my business in the fall of 2004.

APPCA: It happened very quickly after you graduated?

Clulow: Yes. I started investigating it [personal chef business] almost as soon as I got out of school. The very week I left The Ritz-Carlton, my brother was diagnosed with breast cancer. I spent the next six months taking care of him. But during that time I was researching. I found APPCA and I did my initial class at the Personal Chef Summit in Minneapolis. That was such a wonderful experience, meeting all these interesting people. It gave me the spark to get things going. That was what finally got me back on my feet and got my business started.

APPCA: What appealed to you about being a personal chef?

Clulow: The instant gratification. When you cook in a restaurant, once you plate the food, it's gone, whereas you get instant feedback from your clients when you're a personal chef. The double-edged sword of that is that it makes it easier for criticism, too. But I tell my clients that all feedback, good or bad, is important. Also, if you work in restaurant, you're doing the identical mise en place every day and you're doing identical cooking everyday. As a personal chef, you get a bit more variety.

APPCA: What skills are important to be a successful personal chef?

Clulow: You have to have social skills. I can tell you that a great many of the restaurant chefs I worked with absolutely didn't. Anyone will tell you a restaurant kitchen works better if people work well together, but that's not always the case. I was lucky in that I was already very good at that. The skills that I needed to be a good production stage manager were exactly the same ones needed to be functional in the cooking world in terms of being very deadline-oriented and very people-oriented. It was the most amazingly easy switch.

APPCA: Describe the services you provide.

Clulow: What I tell my customers about my service is that it is completely and totally customized to their needs. I do a lengthy interview with them beforehand that allows them to get to know me and me to know them. There are obvious culinary questions that have to be asked, such as likes and dislikes and allergies and that kind of thing.

APPCA: What are some of the challenges of working as a personal chef?

Clulow: It's very physically demanding, but in a very different way than on the restaurant side. You're hauling your kit and groceries around. I'm in the stores a minimum of four days a week. You have to be very organized. If you're not the kind of person who makes lists, you're probably in bad shape. I usually spend about an hour each night putting together my lists, my menus and my schedule for the following day. Otherwise I'd be lost.

APPCA: What have you learned along the way?

Clulow: I remember someone recommending cutting up all of the ingredients at once. In other words, if you're going to be using onions in three of your five dishes, cut all your onions at the same time. That was total disaster for me. My mind wasn't organized that way. My first day as a personal chef, I was an absolute wreck. I thought, "I'm never going to get anything done and I'm going to be fired on that spot." So I had to go back to doing it the way I was used to doing it, the way I would do mise en place in a restaurant. That was a valuable lesson.

APPCA: What have been some of your biggest accomplishments?

Clulow: I would have to say being able to persevere and keep my business going through some very difficult times. I had to put my business aside because of my brother's illness, right before I started and then again in 2006. He has since passed away. Twice I've had it rise out of the ashes, so to speak. Certainly, there have been times when I said to myself that I should just go get a restaurant job instead, but I knew I wouldn't be happy if I went back to that.

APPCA: What kind of advice can you offer for those seeking to become personal or private chefs?

Clulow: I financed myself by selling my home, and that's not the way I would recommend doing it. If you can maintain some kind of part-time job while building up a client base, you'll have a lot more security. I'm a big believer in having peace of mind, and worrying about how you're going to pay the bills is something that doesn't lend itself to that.

You need to decide for yourself if you're someone who loves to cook for your family or someone who is passionate enough about cooking that you're going to put yourself out there and be good enough to do this for other people in a style that represents restaurant-quality food. We as personal chefs are trying to keep our clients in the home, not send them out to restaurants. Also, you have to be able to not only take criticism, but use the criticism, as well.

APPCA: What do you have planned for the future?

Clulow: I would like to look into setting up a commercial space so that I can take on more clients. I do have some ideas about working with a local radio station and possibly doing a half-hour cooking show for them. I also, at some point, want to get Le Grande Diplôme from Le Cordon Bleu. You have to always keep learning. For me that's the exciting part.

For more information on Chef Eve Clulow, LLC, visit <http://www.chefeveclulow.com>

A Day in the Life

Javier Fuertes ("Chef Jav"), chef/owner of The Dinner Maker in Fitchburg, Mass., continues our dialog featuring a diary of a typical cookdate for a successful personal or private chef.

The following is just one day in several scenarios that can occur in the life of The Dinner Maker. Some days I wake up later and stay up later, too. I don't teach at the gym every day, but some days I do go to the gym just to work out. Some days my wife works, which means daddy day care has to be planned accordingly when I get home from a cookdate. However, below is what a typical Tuesday can look like.

The cookdate ...

6:00 a.m. Wake up....well...snooze for seven minutes, of course!

6:10 a.m. Go into kitchen half asleep and brew coffee. Turn tube on and watch news while coffee brews. Catch up on weather, sports, headlines, etc. Pour a cup of wake-up juice and head to office. Work in office, answer e-mails, Web site work, work on current newsletter and update current mailing list. Check out APPCA Web forums and catch up on new threads and add my 2 cents if time permits. Today not much to say.

8:15 a.m. Shower, dress and get ready for cookdate.

8:45 a.m. Load up van with cooking kit (spices, oils, vinegars, etc.), pots/pans and tools kit, and backpack cooler with frozen ice blankets ready to go. Also pack up client folder with all paper work for cookdate. Folder contains: shopping list, heating instructions, labels, recipes, client profile with all contact info plus Mapquest directions (in case I daze off on the highway and forget where I'm going). At this point I take a peek at the menu for the day and get my head geared for "flow of menu execution."

8:55 a.m. Make a protein shake, take essential vitamins, grab apple and banana.

9:05 a.m. Play with kids for a few minutes and then say bye to the fam.

9:10 a.m. Head out to butcher store first. Purchase the day's meats: chuck beef for stew, petite filets and bone-in pork chops. Chicken and scallops I'll pick up at the supermarket today. Gab with butcher and clerks for a few and then head out to supermarket.

9:35 a.m. Arrive at Hannaford Supermarket. Bust out my shopping list, which is sorted in a relative order of my shopping flow. Produce first. Pick up all necessary items in this department. While there I

request fresher-looking green beans for my pan-roasted cauliflower and green beans with light peanut dressing. Continue shopping while they bring out better-looking beans. Pays to schmooze with department managers. Pick up a loaf of fresh artisan bread and then move on to next section, the seafood department. Pick up sea scallops and have clerk remove side muscle for me. Doesn't cost me any more to have them do it, plus, it'll save me time later. Next comes the poultry area, where I pick up a package of chicken breasts for four portions. Once done there, I move on to the bulk-foods area and purchase wild rice and brown basmati rice for the day. Then I rip right through general grocery area for odds and ends and finish up in the dairy area, where I pick up some light cream. On the way to check-out I pick up some aluminum foil.

10:05 a.m. Finally check out and leave store. Pack up van with groceries. Any meats, seafood and perishables get placed in backpack cooler.

10:10 a.m. Drive through Dunkin' Donuts for more coffee and get gas. Drive off to client's house.

10:45 a.m. Arrive at client's house. Unload groceries and cooler first. Place perishables in refrigerator. Unload both kits. Finally unload any odds and ends like coffee, i-Pod, replacement containers, etc. Set up fan to help cool food off. Place ice blankets in freezer. Client check placed in my wallet. Inspect client containers for warped, chipped, gross-looking, old, etc. Replace containers that need replacing. Plug in my i-Pod and start listening to current routine I have to teach later today, plus listen and go over mentally new release to be launched in two weeks.

10:55 a.m. Start cooking. Look at menu again and realize ... this cookdate is going to be a breeze. Woo hoo! Note: Throughout cooking process I wash everything as I go. I don't like to see accumulating piles. Drives me crazy.

11:00 a.m. Cover stove with foil to make clean-up easy at the end. Set up my cooking tools and get pots on stove that will be used first. Take out salt and pepper mill and oils that are in squeeze bottles and set next to stove. Usually at this point I get a pot of boiling water going, but today by some chance there are no things to be blanched or cooked off (like pasta). Like I said ... a breeze.

11:15 a.m. Set up marinades for chicken and pork dishes in stainless-steel bowls. Marinade both.

11:20 a.m. Start to mise en place most veg. Cut up mire poix for stew, shave fennel for scallop dish, dice up onions for various dishes, batonnet zucchini and carrots, brunoise sweet potatoes, cauliflower florets, snip green beans, etc.

11:45 a.m. Once vegetables for caraway roasted vegetables are prepped, I season in bowl, toss with salt and pepper and place on sheet pan. Place in oven to roast.

11:55 a.m. Start wild rice in smaller pot over stove and then place in oven to cook off.

12:05 p.m. Sear off beef for stew and place browned pieces into pressure cooker. Cook off mire poix in same pan and brown off also. Deglaze, add various ingredients to pan and then add to pressure cooker. Add stock and bay leaf to pressure cooker. Cover and bring to pressure. Once it starts to whistle I time for 12 to 15 minutes.

12:15 p.m. Take a personal call and chat for a little.

12:20 p.m. Meanwhile, I start red pepper coulis for scallop dish. Sauté ingredients and then place in blender and purée. Set aside. At this point I remove roast vegetables from oven, re-season them and add finishing touches. Cool off in sheet pans first before placing in containers.

12:35 p.m. Season scallops and sear off. Remove and place in chilled sizzle platters. Cool down near fan. Then add shaved fennel to pan. Cook and then add coulis to pan. Lower temp and then cook off until

fennel is crisp tender. Place fennel mix in stainless bowls over ice-water bath. Stir until cooled down completely.

12:50 p.m. While scallops dish is cooling, finish stew dish. Thicken with signature secret and add finishing touches to dish. Pour stew on sheet pan and cool down near fan.

1:10 p.m. Sauté off sweet potato and zucchini brunoise to add to wild rice. Remove wild rice from oven, add vegetables and add fresh chives. Stir and spread on sheet pan.

1:20 p.m. Start coconut brown rice. Start on stove and place in oven to finish. Toast coconut shreds and set aside

1:35 p.m. Sear and cook off pork-chop dish. Finish in oven along with seared and cooked-off chicken-breast dish. Both have sauces that are reduced once proteins are done and removed from pans. Proteins are placed in containers to cool off. Meanwhile, sauces are reducing.

2:00 p.m. Cook off carrots and zucchini medley. Sauté, season and butter up! Place on sheet pan and allow to cool.

2:15 p.m. Start to place cooled items in containers and free up sheet pans as I go.

2:30 p.m. Almost done. Eat some fruit I purchased at the store, an energy bar, leftover zucchini and carrots and yogurt. Oh ... and guzzle down some water, too. Very important. Take a peek at workout video on my i-Pod and go over part of a track that's not sticking in my head.

2:40 p.m. Okay, back to cooking. Now I sear petite filets for final entrée dish. I sear at high heat and don't go rare temp. Place in containers. I let client finish off to their liking using my heating instructions. Make sauce for that and then place in bowl over ice bath to cool. Drape filet and then do the same to other sauces and drape over appropriate proteins. Meanwhile, I finish coconut rice and garnish with coconut shreds. Cool off on sheet pans, as well.

3:15 p.m. Everything is cooked, so it's now time to clean up. Wash remaining pots/pans, tools, etc. Clean counters, remove foil from stove and side counters and clean, as well. Finish placing cooled-off food into containers. Label all containers. Dry everything and pack up for departure.

3:30 p.m. Client arrives just in time to hear them say, "Ahhhh ...it smells so good in here!!" Chat for a bit. Client offers to put all the food away for me. Awesome!

3:40 p.m. Car is packed. Call home to see if anything is needed.

4:05 p.m. Arrive at home. Unpack dirty towels and soak them for wash. Clean up spice kit and refill any spices that are needed, fill up oils, vinegars, salt, sugar, etc.

4:20 p.m. Start to set up for the next day's client. Organize paper work for them. Check e-mail, sort through mail, check my schedule to see what needs to be done around house and work-related, make a couple of client and potential-client phone calls.

5:00 p.m. Grab a sandwich and juice and change. Play with kids for a little and then head to basement to practice my work-out routines

5:50 p.m. Change into work-out gear and help with the kids. Help with dinner. Cool, there's leftover roast chicken and some scallion brown rice and broccoli amandine in fridge. Wife and kids are all set. But, no dinner time with the family for me tonight. Got to run.

6:10 p.m. Leave for gym

- 6:30 p.m. Start my class
- 7:30 p.m. End class, talk with a few members about class and open conversation about what I do as a personal chef. You never know where the next client will come from, right?
- 7:50 p.m. Get home and start to help tuck in the rugrats and read bedtime stories.
- 8:30 p.m. Quick shower, grab some food and talk to wife about day's events.
- 9:00 p.m. Go back to office and surf the 'net, visit APPCA forums, pay bills, reply to a new potential client and work on check list. Add to it and cross out any items done.
- 10:15 p.m. Sit in front of the tube for a while and channel check, mostly.
- 11:00 p.m. Lights out
-

Getting the “Boot”

A peek inside Parma, Italy, through the eyes of the personal chefs who visited as part of APPCA's first International Summit.

By Lisa Shames

Milan is known for fashion, Venice for its canal, Rome for the Coliseum and Florence for its historical art collection. And Parma? Here's a hint: Parma is located in a region referred to as the “The Belly of Italy.” There's an old Italian saying: “Go to Tuscany to drink, but go to Parma to eat.”

Located in north-central Italy, midway between Milan and Bologna, Parma is nestled in the fertile valley of the Po River in the heart of the richest of all Italian provinces, the Emilia-Romagna. While Parma has had its share of artists and musicians—most notably Arturo Toscanini and Giuseppe Verdi—it's the food, including its Parmigiano-Reggiano and prosciutto di Parma, that visitors and natives remember most.

Here's what else those on the trip to Parma learned during the first APPCA International Summit, Nov. 4-9, 2007:

I was very impressed that the artisans in Parma take great pride in their work, and all the locally produced items are seriously handcrafted. The cheese, the prosciutto and the balsamic vinegar are all handmade from start to finish. Additionally, I now know the difference between olive oils of various regions, balsamic vinegar of various ages and that the difference in the age of cheese will predict its use, i.e., eating versus grating. I am already using this knowledge to purchase the best-quality ingredients. I also had my first experience with pasta making. Using the Italian “00 flour” makes the pasta silky and tender. While I sometimes feel like a food snob, in reality, knowledge is power!

—**Chef Julie Cicero, TasteBuds, Nashville, Tenn.**

I have come up with two things that I learned from the trip to Parma that I will use in my business. The first is a very concrete concept: READ labels. Make sure you read the labels on your olive oils, balsamic vinegars, cheeses and hams to make sure they are authentic products and no “look-alikes.” I found the education on the products listed above to be very important. The second thing is much less concrete. I learned that people who have a love of food, as we do in the APPCA, also have a love of travel, of fun, of being together as a group, and of bonding new friendships. People who are passionate about food are passionate about life. I can't imagine traveling with a more delightful group. I hope I can convey this sense of joy in the cooking classes that I teach.

—**Shelbie Wassel, Shallots Personal Chef Service, Owings Mills, Md.**

I learned to “cook with love.” For me, that means caring about where my ingredients come from and taking the time when cooking them to let their flavors develop naturally. I am actually teaching a class in Atlanta using recipes from the trip: gnocchetti rosa al prosciutto di Parma (pink gnocchetti with prosciutto di Parma) and mousse di ricotta e mascarpone con fragole all'aceto balsamico (ricotta and mascarpone mousse with balsamic strawberries).

—Lynn Novo, *Comfort Sisters*, Decatur, Ga.

I learned many things, but one thing that I learned in Parma that I will use and have already used in my business is how to make great gnocchi! I have a couple of clients who love gnocchi—especially their kids. It's fun “finger food” for them. I've made it numerous times, but didn't have the technique right. Also, the right flour is key. I recently ordered six bags of Italian-style flour (“00” flour) from King Arthur. It made all the difference.

—Carol Borchardt, *A Thought For Food*, Memphis, Tenn.

We think of the most recognizable food products that are exported from Italy: Parmigiano-Reggiano and prosciutto di Parma. Our tours showed us the best of each, and the artisans who produce these products lovingly by craft and by hand. Considering that these products are made artisanally, yet are supplied to the world exclusively from this region, it seems pretty impossible for supply to meet demand! Yet we saw Parmigiano-Reggiano wheels, some 14,000 of which were approved (or rejected!) by experts, after which they were brought to this stage by people and not by machines! Each stage of production was carefully overseen, temperatures and other conditions were carefully monitored and controlled, and all by people.

While some machinery is used in production of prosciutto di Parma, most of it is used in the movement of the product to each of its destinations within the plant for its time to be spent at each stage of maturation. Each area of storage has carefully controlled conditions for the aging of the product to perfection; each ham is tested for standards of excellence—will it be approved or rejected? Each step is carefully overseen by PEOPLE.

We viewed balsamic vinegar of Modena in various stages of aging in the ancestral home of its maker, in his attic! Unbelievably, the temperature/atmosphere control included one window being open all the time, screened to prevent bugs and other trespassers from tampering with the barrels, which are organized by age, and all open; they are simply covered with small squares of linen to keep them pure.

The program at Academia Barilla illustrated the simplicity of the food of the centuries-old Italian culture, using only the freshest and finest seasonal and regionally available foods, to be combined in basic culinary methods to produce what others would perceive as masterpieces. No complex or hard-to-find ingredients here; we made pasta with flour and eggs, adding beets (or tomatoes or spinach) for color and flavor, and using our hands to knead and bring the ingredients together to make the product. But it was the culinary staff that made the difference—the knowledge of the culture and its cuisine and the ingredients and procedures they used, not to mention the passion for excellence they exuded and made us feel while we were executing their instructions.

All in all, when one thinks of a personal chef whose undertaking is to serve the client with special attention to detail and love of what we do, those we encountered and observed in the Parma region of Italy were all personal chefs. We all know how to cook, but being shown the simplicity of fresh, local ingredients combined with basic culinary methods made us all richer in our knowledge, and showed us that we can do these same things at home by utilizing our seasonal and local knowledge, our suppliers and local artisans and growers, our basic culinary procedures, our love of our industry. The simplicity of combining these together all make a difference in what we do, that is, providing healthy, quality-oriented foods for our clients and guests.

What did I learn? Keep it simple, use the best-quality ingredients, and present it with love. What a great way to reinforce what I've always believed.

—Linda Rosner, *Lexington College*, Chicago

SIDE DISH

Wallace Named Distinguished Guest Chef at Sullivan U.

Candy Wallace, founder and executive director of APPCA, will be honored as a Distinguished Guest Chef by the National Center for Hospitality Studies at Sullivan University in Louisville, Ky., Feb. 13-14. In addition to being recognized by one of the top culinary-training programs in the nation, Wallace will deliver a “train the trainer” workshop on Feb. 13. On Valentine’s Day, she will conduct a series of two-hour cooking demonstrations for upwards of 900 students. Look for the March/April 2008 edition of “a la minute” for more details on the Sullivan University honor bestowed upon Wallace.

www.sullivan.edu

APPCA Represented at ACF Conference.

Candy Wallace, founder and executive director of APPCA, will present on “Becoming a Personal Chef” at the 2008 Western Regional Conference of the American Culinary Federation (ACF), Inc., on April 19 at the Hilton Salt Lake City Center.

<http://www.acfchefs.org/Content/Events/RegionalConferences/Western/default.cfm>

Food Trends for 2008.

Curious what will become the hot food trends of this year? So are we. That’s why a recent article in the Philadelphia Inquirer (“Trends on 2008’s front burners”) caught our attention:

- Local, fresh, natural, organic. Ongoing and affecting every level and aspect of food, from farmers markets to convenience stores, even fast-food chains.
- Probiotics. The friendly bacteria that keep us healthy are moving beyond yogurt to a wider range of foods, even chocolate bars. While most aid digestion, one strain targets cold and flu symptoms.
- Natural no-cal sweeteners. The introduction of erythritol (zero-calorie natural sugar) sweeteners and Coca-Cola’s move toward gaining patents and FDA approval for the food use of stevia (up to 300 times sweeter than sugar) put that longtime industry goal within reach. And artificial sweeteners are on the “out” list.
- Umami. The satisfying but hard-to-describe taste sensation is linked to high levels of glutamate in foods such as Parmesan cheese and mushrooms. As more foods are stripped of fat, sodium, sugar, calories—and with that, flavor—chefs are starting to use umami-rich ingredients to compensate and heighten remaining flavors naturally.
- Eco-friendly. From individual foods and packaging to sustainable agriculture, wind- and solar-powered farming, fair-trade foods, it’s the wave of the future.
- Farmers. These new food stars are moving into the high-profile territory ruled by celebrity chefs.
- Food on speed dial. Quick cook, quick serve, it’s all about convenience and saving time. Placing orders (and paying) by cell phone while en route to pick up food from a take-out, a supermarket or a neighborhood restaurant is about as quick as you can get. But APPCA asks: Is that stuff good for you?
- Online groceries. A slow starter, but catching on as delivery service improves.
- Gastro-pups. Coined by Roxanne Gold, author of Kids Cook 1-2-3, the term refers to the revival of serious kids’ cooking. Kids’ cooking classes are cropping up across the country, and we’re seeing more prepackaged kids’ foods in stores.
- Bottled-water backlash. Still a huge chunk of the beverage market, bottled water is seen by activists as a major source of environmental overload, however recyclable.

Cookies with Credentials.

Home on the range has special meaning for Jill Bosich, executive chef of Southern California Gas Company, whose favorite childhood memories stem from gathering around the stove in her family’s

kitchen. It seems Bosich, a Certified Executive Chef, Certified Culinary Educator and Regional Team manager for Culinary Team USA 2008 (we have high hopes for Bosich and her team at the “Culinary Olympics” in Germany in October 2008), was doing a lot more than simply enjoying the wonderful food. Get a taste of her family values in action with Cowgirl Cookie Co., a new mail-order baked-goods company she started with her mother—the “real” chef in the family, according to Bosich. The five varieties of cookies (think Cowgirl Chip, Molasses Flat, SnickerBobs) and one bundt cake prove Bosich isn’t horsing around.

<http://www.cowgirlcookieco.com>

A New Way to Shop for Groceries.

Bloom Grocery, owned by Food Lion, LLC, is an interactive grocery-store chain on the East Coast. Customers use hand scanners to scan their groceries as they go through the store, then pay for their groceries on their way out. No loading up the old conveyer belt, then bagging and reloading the cart. Technology aside, the quality and selection are impressive.

<http://www.shopbloom.com>

Beware These Food “Frauds.”

Did you know that all varieties of Smucker’s Simply Fruit contain more fruit syrup than actual fruit? And that the syrup doesn’t even come from the fruit in the products’ names, but from (cheaper) apple-, pineapple- or pear-juice concentrate? Find more food frauds on the Web site of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a Washington, D.C.-based consumer-advocacy organization conducting research in health and nutrition to provide consumers with current, useful information about their health and well being. You’ll never look at a chicken burrito from Chipotle (1,180 calories, 19 grams of fat) or Gerber Graduates for Toddlers Juice Treat (leading ingredients: corn syrup and sugar) the same again.

<http://www.cspinet.org/nah/foodfrauds.html>