

## Private Chef, Catering & Cooking Classes

I'd be delighted to help you with any and all of your celebrations.

## Join Me Around the Table for an Eat Well-Do Good Dinner!

Support the fight against Alzheimer's Disease & Enjoy delicious food & fun!

## Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

Cook like a chef or just look like one!

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What's not to love about Halloween? Yes it falls in that dreary time of year when summer is over and snow is still a month or two off. It is apt to be cold and rainy on Halloween night but in spite of generally miserable weather, it has always been one of my favorite holidays. The decorations are great. The costumes are wonderful. And the proliferation of chocolate is definitely a plus.

At three, I joined the horde of children haunting our neighborhood for the first time. Mary Ann Lane was

packed with kids on All Hallows Eve. As a matter of fact, it was packed with kids all the time. It was one of those family-friendly neighborhoods. Our little starter home was wedged between two big houses with eight or ten kids, not between them but each. (My mom always said she kept her window closed at night in case it was catching.)

Not sure if he volunteered or was drafted but Dad took my then six year old sister Brenda and me trick or treating. As I remember it, and granted it was a while ago, it was absolutely thrilling to be out and about in the dark. Not that it was terribly late at night. Combine a grey fall day with a 5:00 sunset and early evening can seem like the middle of the night to a three year old.

Forget about look-both-ways. The big kids raced from house to house and my short little legs did their best to keep up. Dad did his best to keep up with his two little girls. Good thing cars stayed off the road on Halloween night in those days.

Of course I looked adorable. A roly-poly toddler, I was the definitive pumpkin. I didn't even mind that my costume was a hand-me-down. At least I don't think I minded. Dashing about with my paper sack I was beyond excited. The street wasn't that long so my guess is that we were out for maybe fifteen minutes. Thirty tops if my always-chatty dad stopped to talk and accept compliments on his adorable children. I can't imagine that we let him linger too long. Before the chocolate bar, popcorn ball or candied apple could hit the bottom of the bag, Brenda and I were ready to turn and dash to the next house. All the while, I sang an endless chorus of *bick-or-beat, bick-or-beat*.

Somewhat miraculously, Dad managed to get his two little girls to every house on the street and back home again in one piece. Well, almost. At the end of our adventure, I burst into the house with an enormous grin, a sack full of sweets and a cold, little foot in a muddy sock. Somewhere, somehow along the way I lost a sneaker.

The next spring we moved to Jackson Road. If anything Halloween became more exciting. Yes, I was forced to reprise my role as a roly-poly pumpkin. But it was new to the neighborhood and I was still adorable. More important, the street was longer and houses were packed close together. Our bags were filled to overflowing with sweet loot by the time Dad corralled us home. I even managed to hang onto both sneakers!

Halloween is fast approaching. Is your costume ready? Jack O'Lanterns carved? Don't forget to stock up on treats for adorable pumpkins who might come calling. I'm partial to peanut butter cups but will settle for a glass of chardonnay.

Have a spooktacular Halloween and bon appétit!



## Butternut Squash Lasagna



*Yes, it's complicated! Yes, it takes too much time to make! ... But this crowd favorite is definitely worth the effort. Keep the rest of your menu simple, simple, simple and enjoy a casual Halloween celebration with your best pals.*

Serves 10-12

1 (1 1/2 to 2 pound) butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch cubes  
 1 large onion, finely chopped  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar  
 Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste  
 2-3 cloves garlic, minced  
 1/2 cup white wine  
 1/2 cup chicken broth  
 1 1/2 pounds Italian sausage; hot, sweet or a mix, casings removed  
 Béchamel-Sage Sauce (recipe follows)  
 8 ounces lasagna noodles (12 noodles)  
 12 ounces ricotta  
 12 ounces shredded whole-milk mozzarella cheese  
 2 ounces grated Parmesan  
 2 ounces grated Pecorino Romano

Position the rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Put the squash in a roasting pan, toss with olive oil and balsamic vinegar to coat. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and bake uncovered at 375 degrees for 20 minutes. Add the onion, toss to combine and cook 10 minutes more. Add the garlic, wine and chicken broth, toss to combine and continue cooking until the squash is tender, about 10 minutes. Roughly mash the squash with a potato masher or fork.

Meanwhile, heat a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and, breaking the meat up into bite-size pieces, cook until brown. Remove from heat, drain the fat and combine with the squash.

Make the Béchamel-Sage Sauce (recipe follows).

Cook the lasagna noodles according to package directions less 1 minute.

Put the mozzarella, Parmesan and Romano cheeses in a large bowl and toss to combine. Butter a large, deep ceramic or glass baking pan.

Spread about 3/4 cup of béchamel-sage sauce in the bottom of the prepared baking pan. Arrange 4 lasagna noodles on top of the sauce. Spread 1/3 of the squash-sausage mixture and 1/2 of the ricotta over the noodles; drizzle with 1/3 of the béchamel-sage sauce and sprinkle with 1/3 of the cheese. Repeat with



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a second layer of noodles, squash-sausage, ricotta, béchamel and cheeses. Make a third and final layer with the remaining noodles, squash-sausage, béchamel and cheeses.

Cover the pan with foil. (You can refrigerate for up to one day at this point.) Bake the lasagna for 45 minutes (longer if it is cold from the refrigerator). Remove the foil and continue baking until the lasagna is bubbly and golden brown, about 15 minutes. Let the lasagna sit for 15 minutes before serving.

### Béchamel-Sage Sauce

4 tablespoons butter  
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
4 cups whole milk  
1 tablespoon fresh chopped sage  
1/2 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves  
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper



Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour and cook, whisking continuously, for 1 minute. Gradually whisk in the milk. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Whisk in the sage and thyme. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, whisking often, until the sauce thickens slightly, about 5 minutes. Whisk in the nutmeg and add salt and pepper to taste.