



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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Life is filled with simple truths. Some we believe intuitively while others are learned through trial and error. Some gems of wisdom are passed down from our parents. In case you haven't figured it out, many of those gems are not true. For instance, your face will not freeze that way and chocolate will not give you pimples. Anyway, here are a few things you should know if you don't already:

1. Recipes with more than six ingredients are NOT difficult to make. They just have lots of ingredients. Sure there is a bit more measuring but how difficult is it to spoon out a teaspoon of this and a half teaspoon of that. And yes, you'll probably have a little more chopping to do. But heck, if you can chop a carrot, you can chop a radish.

When in doubt, read the recipe carefully, take a deep breath and be fearless!

2. It's okay to use olive oil to sauté, roast or grill but use a good extra virgin for vinaigrettes, sauces, dips and that final, finishing drizzle. Season as you go, never cook with wine that isn't good enough to drink and always cook with love. You'll taste the difference. When in doubt, remember "everything tastes better with butter." If you don't believe me; believe Julia.

3. Lots of people will tell you to choose a recipe, it doesn't really matter what, and make it your signature dish. Once you've perfected it, your friends and family will shower you and your fabulous red velvet cupcakes or goat cheese tartlets with unwavering praise.

Until maybe the umpteenth time (sometimes even sooner), when all that unwavering praise will inexplicably begin to waver, then falter and even evaporate. It's our short attention span, culinary and otherwise. You'll know everyone is tired of you tartlets when you are specifically instructed to bring a salad to the next potluck.

Change is good.

Except maybe at Thanksgiving. Then your family won't be looking for your specialty. They'll be looking for your mother's specialty. Except she actually got it from her mother who got it from her mother all the way back to Ellis Island, Plymouth Rock or the invention of Campbell's Cream of Mushroom Soup in 1934.

4. Eight is the perfect number for a dinner party when you want sparkling conversation to go with your amazing food. On the other hand, the more the merrier on Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. It wouldn't be the holidays without a side order of melodrama to go with the turkey or leg of lamb. Same holds true for a Super Bowl bash and any birthday that ends with a zero.

5. Unless it's a small, intimate dinner party, don't bring flowers. A nice bottle of wine, a box of chocolates or a sweet little tchotchke from your favorite gift shop – they're all good.

I love flowers. I really do. However, I remember one party when nineteen people piled into my little apartment and more than half of them brought flowers. I was already juggling coats and kisses, pouring wine and passing canapés. Adding a mad scramble to find more vases than I owned was ... well ... you get the picture.

If you insist on flowers (and I'd be delighted if you did), don't be offended if your host unceremoniously plunks them in an old jug in the corner of the kitchen. If she's like me she will happily find the perfect vase and spot for them in the morning.

Better yet, send a nice bouquet the day after the party.

Bon appétit!



Israeli Couscous

A great side dish, Israeli Couscous is delicious with a lovely fish stew on a cold winter night. In the summer, serve it hot or at room temperature with grilled lamb or chicken. Enjoy!

Serves 6-8

2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
 1 1/2 cups Israeli couscous
 Pinch saffron
 1/2 teaspoon fresh thyme
 Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
 Grated zest and juice of 1 orange
 Grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
 Extra-virgin olive oil
 2-3 tablespoons chopped parsley
 2 tablespoons toasted pine nuts
 2-3 scallions, thinly sliced

Bring the broth to a boil, stir in the couscous, saffron and thyme; season with salt and pepper and return to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer until the broth is absorbed.

Add the citrus zests and juices, drizzle with a little olive oil and toss to combine. Let the couscous sit for a minute or two to absorb the juices. Sprinkle with pine nuts, parsley and scallions, toss to combine and serve hot or at room temperature.

