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Lafayette's Jim Peacock Shares His Story and His Kitchen!

By Susie Iventosch



Jim Peacock in his kitchen Photo Susie Iventosch

Lafayette resident Jim Peacock is one of six homeowners who will open their kitchens to the public on Saturday May 16 as part of the 10th Annual Lafayette Juniors Kitchen Tour. Peacock is not only a contractor who designed and remodeled his own 1929-era kitchen, but he is an avid cook, who has travelled across the ocean to partake in cooking classes in Italy and France.

"About three years ago I went to Italy and attended the Apicius Cooking School in Florence for 10 days," Peacock said. "I could have stayed forever!"

Peacock first began cooking at the ripe old age of five. He made his first complete meal when he was 8 years old and never looked back! He says it was his mom who gave him the love of cooking and he always enjoyed being in the kitchen with her.

"As a teenager I use to bake all the time but would never have let my friends know," he confessed. "Boys didn't cook much in those days. When I was 14, I started canning and have done this every year since."

Sometime in the 1980s, Peacock decided to expand his knowledge of cooking and enrolled in Chocolatier Dessert School, taught by Flo Braker.

"I was the only male in the whole class!" he remembered.

This sparked a series of cooking vacations, including a one-week intensive course at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris.

"That really got me going. I came home and started going to cooking schools and would work as an assistant at several of them, because it was free and hands on."

Peacock loves to entertain friends for dinner parties, and hosted and cooked for his mom's 80th birthday garden party.

"I have done a wedding for 90, a birthday party for 150, a seven-course Italian summer dinner for 35, and on and on," he said. "I love to plan the menu."

As the proud owner of 1,200 cookbooks, Peacock has plenty of recipes to choose from for his menu planning. He says he uses all of them and created a special library for the sole purpose of storing these books. Actually, there are so many cookbooks, that they spill over into almost every nook and cranny of his house! The cookbook collection "dwarfs" his 600-bottle wine collection, but both are impressive and the wine cellar has the additional claim of being temperature-controlled!

Perhaps one of his most interesting collections is his 200-piece copper collection.

"When you come to my home you will see over 200 pieces of copper on display and every cooking gadget known to man," he remarked.

Peacock was excited about sharing this Tuscan Meat Soup recipe he learned at the Apicius Cooking School in Florence.

"It's made by feel," he says. "The Italians are not big on giving you the exact cooking times. Make sure you use a good cut of veal and pork otherwise they can be tough."

His trick for tenderizing the veal and pork is to marinate them in a little lemon juice for several hours before cooking. It usually takes about 30-45 minutes to make this dish.



Tuscan Meat Soup

Tuscan Meat Soup

Ingredients

½ chicken

½ rabbit*

1 squab (pigeon)*

¾ lb. pork

¾ lb. veal

3 carrots chopped

1 large onion chopped

3 celery stalks chopped

28-ounce can chopped tomatoes (without onions and spices)

¼-1/3 cup good olive oil

1 cup red wine

Chicken stock (1-2 cups, depending upon desired thickness)

1 tsp. hot chili pepper flakes

Salt to taste

Toasted French bread

Directions

Sauté the chopped vegetables in olive oil in a large saucepan. As they become soft, add all the meat which has been cut into smaller pieces and braise, first on low heat with pan covered. After a few minutes remove cover and cook a little longer. Pour in wine and let it almost cook off. Add the canned tomatoes and salt. Finish cooking adding the stock as needed.

Slice the bread and toast. Rub slices with garlic. Place all of the soup in a large bowl or soup tureen (family style) and place the bread all around the sides of the bowl and into the soup. Drizzle extra virgin olive over the soup as it is placed on the table.

*You can delete the rabbit and squab. Just add additional chicken, pork and veal.

Reach the reporter at: suziven@gmail.com

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