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Cuisiner Dans Le Jardin (Cooking in the Garden)

By Susie Iventosch

If you love to cook and enjoy a beautiful garden setting, then perhaps you'd find pleasure cooking your meal right in the garden! Chef Philippe Chevalier is hosting a series of cooking class demonstrations this summer. What makes them so special is not only the food, but the fact they are held in the beautiful garden outside his Lafayette restaurant!

Every other Saturday, cooking enthusiasts gather amongst the roses and geraniums to prepare, and devour, a menu designed to incorporate locally grown, seasonal produce. Wine pairings are available for those wishing to sample French wines to accompany the various courses.

"People had been asking me to offer cooking classes," Chevalier said. "I think it helps to take their minds off the economy and helps them to focus on something pleasant, like learning to cook special meals at home. I love that." Students dine family style in the garden, which also gives them an opportunity to meet new people.

"In France we have a saying, 'adorer la vie', meaning to take the time to cook and enjoy a nicely prepared dinner with family and friends at home," Chevalier mentioned.

Obbe Knoop, who attended the first class on June 11, said it was a wonderful way to spend the afternoon. "We dine at Chevalier a lot. I'm European and moved here from Holland 10 years ago. Chef Philippe's food is very authentic French-upscale food, great taste, beautiful presentation and the atmosphere is awesome, too."

So, when Knoop received an email about the cooking class in the garden, he didn't hesitate.

According to Knoop, Chef Chevalier served foie gras right off the top to settle any hunger pangs, and then started explaining all about the ingredients he was using and demonstrated exactly how to make the dishes. He offered tips and welcomed questions about what he was doing, too.

"The weather was gorgeous," Knoop pointed out. "And, it was a beautiful day in the garden, with wonderful food and wine. We all sat family style, so my wife Shannon McDaniel, our friend Lesli Nordgren and I enjoyed the afternoon dining and learning with brand new acquaintances, which was all part of the fun."

Upcoming class menus are listed on the website, but folks are also welcome to phone the restaurant directly. The July 9 class will feature Wild King Salmon Tartare with baguette and chive whipped cream, Rack of Veal with roasted potatoes and fresh herbs, and Fresh Black Mission Fig Salad.

On July 14, in honor of Bastille Day, Chevalier will roast a whole pig on the spit out in the garden. This special will be in addition to the regular menu.

TIPS

In case you don't own an egg poacher (like me), Chef Chevalier has a tip for poaching eggs in a pot of water. You simply add approximately 3 tablespoons of white vinegar to 2 cups of water and crack the eggs, one at a time, into the boiling mixture. The vinegar helps to coagulate the egg white. Once, cooked, extract the poached egg from the water with a slotted spoon. It worked for me!

"Cuisiner Dans Le Jardin" classes are every other Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and include lunch.

The cost per student is \$45 for the demonstration and lunch, and \$18 for the wine assortment to pair with each of the three courses. Wine is optional.

For class or dinner reservations please call or visit:

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