

“Art Appassionata” Opens at the Moraga Art Gallery

Submitted by George Ehrenhaft



“Lady in Green” and “Petaluma Sheep” by Orinda artist Lisa Gunn

The exhibit “Art Appassionata” opens today and runs through March 24, featuring light-washed

landscapes and portraits by Lisa Gunn of Orinda and oil paintings of the California coastline by Carol Tarzier. A

free opening reception will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 17 in the gallery at Moraga’s Rheem Shop-

ping Center, 522 Center Street. Gunn, a classical pianist, fuses musical and artistic principles – texture, tone and color – in her oil paintings, and concentrates on capturing qualities of light. “If it is cloudy, the colors are muted,” she explains. “On bright, sunny days, contrasting light and dark colors take precedence.” She strives to create a bond between herself and the viewer. “I don’t show every detail, but paint as though it is a musical moment for me. I pick my subjects with great care – like a composer – and paint only what I find expressive or

wonderful. ... Over time,” she says, “I have discovered that music and art, although executed differently, rest upon the same platforms.”

Tarzier, renowned for both bronze sculptures and painting, teaches at the Academy of Art University and at Oakland’s Studio One Art Center. Her focus is figurative work in bronze and painting in oil, with ventures into abstract sculpture and pastel drawings on black Arches paper.

Fifteen member artists of the gallery also have paintings, photographs, ceramics, jewelry and finely-crafted woodware on display. The gallery’s hours are Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, go to www.moragaartgallery.com, call (925) 376-5407 or email moragaart-gallery@gmail.com.

Family Focus

A True Gift for Your Children

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

Happy New Year! Although the holidays are over, there are still gifts we can give to our children all year long. One is the gift of emotional protection – shielding them as much as possible emotionally, as well as physically, from the turbulence and violence that exist in our world today. Doing this requires a major effort since disturbing or potentially threatening events seem to surround us frequently.

Often children react to scary situations, real and imagined, with anxiety and fear. For example, the 7-year-old son of a couple I see refused to get out of his father’s car in the morning to go to school. “Jake” liked school and did well academically and socially. We discovered that he was afraid something would happen to one of his parents while they were at work and he was in school. He had heard his parents discussing a tornado where his cousins live in Oklahoma. Because Jake’s actions first became a school and family disciplinary issue, it took some intervention to find the source of his

troublesome behavior.

Another couple’s 8-year-old son refused to sleep in his own bed, and he slept on the floor next to his parents’ bed for months. He had overheard his parents arguing loudly many times, slamming doors and mentioning divorce. Not surprisingly, he became more fearful and insecure. His reaction finally prompted this couple to get help for their relationship.

Sadly, many children are exposed to news media coverage that they are not equipped to handle. When hostages were beheaded in Syria recently, a 10-year-old girl I work with began having heightened anxiety and nightmares. She had not only heard what had happened via television news, but she also saw the image of a kneeling hooded figure and a man with a large machete behind him.

It is important to limit children’s exposure to television, computer, phone, radio and print news, and to monitor their access to social media sites. You can show them positive and uplifting events, or even small

amounts of sad news so they can begin to learn to deal with reality. But they should be sheltered from potential references to violence until they are old enough to cope, which is at least over the age of 13 or 14. Each child is different of course, but the longer you can protect them, the better. It doesn’t make sense to encourage our kids to believe in Santa Claus throughout elementary school only to expose them to real world violence at the same time.

To be sure, children pick up information from their friends and classmates. Unfortunately, parents cannot provide complete protection. But in addition to working to limit their exposure, you can be the source of effective reassurance for your children. For example, you can point out every step you have taken to ensure their well-being. Even if you have your own doubts, you need to set those aside and help your children believe they are safe, and that you are convinced they will be safe.

Few things are as scary and

threatening to children as seeing their parents worried and fearful, because they will not feel that you are able to protect them. Serious and upsetting events in our community and the world at large are hard for adults to handle at times. But like using the oxygen mask on an airplane, you must first help yourself before you can assist your child. If you are experiencing too much worry and anxiety, it is important for you to get help for yourself. Then you will be able to block your own anxieties from affecting those close to you.

As parents it is also important not only to set boundaries for exposure to external sources, but to set your own limits for what your children receive from you. Too often parents talk to each other about sensitive issues or converse on their phones within earshot of their children. Some even discuss inappropriate subjects directly with their children. Worrisome topics such as someone’s serious illness or financial problems, or seemingly innocuous topics such as how fat you’re

feeling or how upset you are with their father (or mother) often contribute to children’s unease and fears. It is important to have clear boundaries so that our children understand that adult matters are off limits for them. Practicing discretion is another way to give our kids the valuable gift of increased emotional protection.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. Contact her at (925) 376-9323 or margierye@yahoo.com. She is the author of “Treat Your Partner Like a Dog: How to Breed a Better Relationship” and “Appetite for Life: Inspiring Stories of Recovery from Anorexia, Bulimia, and Compulsive Overeating.”

Roll Out the Eggplant for This Delicious Dish

By Susie Iventosch



Eggplant Rollatini with Balsamic Syrup

Photo Susie Iventosch

Eggplant is one of my all-time favorites, especially Eggplant Parmesan, but it can be a lot of work! This dish offers up a simpler recipe that can be served as an entree or an appetizer. The filling can be adjusted to use ricotta and mozzarella, or even

just cream cheese, but if you’re a fan of goat cheese it is especially delicious in this recipe. As a twist, you can insert a fresh basil leaf right on top of the filling before rolling for a tasty and aesthetically pleasing effect.

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. **This recipe can be found on our website:** www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



Eggplant Rollatini with Balsamic Syrup

(Makes approximately 8 rolls, serves 2 for dinner or 4 for appetizers)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large eggplant, sliced into 8 thin slices (the long way), leave skins on
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 8 ounces of goat cheese (or goat cheese/cream cheese mixture)
- 1/4 cup sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
- 1/4 cup basil pesto
- 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted
- 1-2 fresh tomatoes, coarsely chopped (or 1 cup cherry tomatoes)
- 1 cup balsamic vinegar, reduced over medium-high heat until thick and syrupy

DIRECTIONS

Cut off the very top and very bottom of the eggplant and slice lengthwise into 1/4-inch slices. Lay on a tray and salt on both sides. Allow to sit for 30 minutes to one hour. Meanwhile, mix goat cheese, sun-dried tomatoes and pesto in a small bowl.

When ready to assemble, take a paper towel and absorb any liquid that has sloughed off due to salt from both sides of the eggplant slices. Heat some of the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, place eggplant in pan, cooking until just pliable and beginning to turn golden brown. Flip to repeat on other side. Remove to cutting board.

Place about a tablespoon of the filling at the wide end of the eggplant and roll into a log, using a toothpick to secure if needed. I use the end pieces, too, and just roll them inside out, putting the skin on the inside.

Bake eggplant rollatini in 350-degree oven, until heated through and cheese filling is piping hot. Serve at once over or next to a bed of chopped tomatoes, and garnish with pine nuts. Drizzle balsamic syrup over all.

We served this with baguette slices (crostini) covered with mozzarella and broiled until bubbly and golden brown.

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