

TIRED OF COOKING?



**By: Jacquie Bushee,
Personal Chef**

I pull into Ellen's about 11:30 a.m. the car loaded with groceries, my bag of utensils, a cooler and a pantry bag. I let myself in with the key provided, as I have for the past four years. On the counter there is a lineup of yellow stickers...one for the nanny, a few reminders for the boys regarding their after-school games activities etc., and one for me that reads "Jacqui, you are at the top of my 'things to be thankful for list' don't know how we could survive without you". This is why I love being a personal chef. Whether it is weekly clients or occasional clients, I know that I am helping to make their lives easier and give them one less thing to worry about.

The personal chef business has

grown out of necessity and is no longer regarded as a luxury. Entrepreneur Magazine named it the 6th fastest-growing profession. Two-income families and singles that work long hours just don't have the time to shop and prepare meals. The health wars are raging and fast food is losing. The savvy family today wants healthier, less processed, home-cooked food and personal chefs are becoming the answer to "What's for Dinner"?

About a year ago I started offering organic foods in my service, along with meatless protein dishes, a variety of whole grains, and vegetarian alternatives. As a nutritional consultant I can help take the guesswork out of well-balanced meals. I plan complete meals of 4 or 5 entrees, each with a side dish of vegetable or grain. More often the selection will be a fresh vegetable. It is all based on individual client preference and taste. This information is obtained at the initial consultation with the whole family. I find out their likes and dislikes and if they have any food allergies. Based on this information I am able to plan their menu. Some like to email or call in their choices and others like to be surprised. I leave a full menu along with heating instructions for

CHEF'S RECIPES

Baked Potato Salad

Makes 4 – 6 servings

<p>4 baking potatoes 6 ounces sour cream ½ cup of mayonnaise 3 chopped green onions</p>	<p>4 strips of cooked bacon, chopped 1 cup of shredded cheddar cheese salt pepper</p>
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Scrub four baking potatoes, pierce with fork and microwave on high for 12 minutes or until done. When done, place in large Ziploc bag and plunge into an ice bath until fully cooled. Cut potatoes (with skin) into 1/2-inch cubes. In mixing bowl, combine potato cubes, sour cream, green onion, bacon and shredded cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste. For added flavor, add chopped fresh rosemary and chives. Store in refrigerator. Serve chilled.

all their meals. If they wish to freeze some dishes, I provide containers and label everything with dates and defrosting and reheating instructions. I have made it my job to know where to shop, how to shop and what is the best choice.

In addition to my family meal service, I also offer dinner parties and cooking class. At dinner parties I provide the host/hostess with the ultimate party service: menu-planning, table settings, theme décor, flowers, wine selection, waiter service and the best of all, complete clean-up. You really do

become a guest at your own party. In fact most of my dinner party clients were guests, or friends of guests, at one of the parties I hosted.

In-home cooking classes are the latest in party entertaining. Invite your friends who love to cook or those who want to learn to cook. This is a great idea for couples or girls night out. Whether you are a hands-on guest or not, you come away remembering a fun filled evening of feasting. Everyone gets recipes, how-to tips and game plans to pull-off their own dinner party. Menus can be seasonal or focus on specific items, which involve techniques that will save time and make entertaining easier for the home-cook.

I also offer a special introductory meal service so a family can try out the service and see if it works for them. The next one will be the "Back-to-School" special. In addition, I host cooking classes at the Red Oak Winery in Middleton among the beautiful ambience of oak barrels and fine wines. To find out more, check my web-site or call me for details.

If asked what is the best part about being a personal chef, I would have to say it is the satisfaction of knowing how much my clients appreciate me and look forward to the day I come to cook for them.

What's New

Berries are very rich in antioxidants and in the past I mentioned the wonderful attributes of

pomegranate juice (February/March 2005). Make way for the berry from Brazil, the acai berry (pronounced ah-sigh-ee). This berry is rich in anthocyanins and other antioxidants and even a bit of omega-6 fatty acids. It is turning up in juice bars and health food stores everywhere. The flavor has been described as "very berry, with a hint of chocolate". Two great tastes for the price of one.

**Jacqui's Culinary Capers
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Chef's Tips

While cheffing at clients' home recently, I came across a bottle of rancid oil (it will smell like oil paint) and proceeded to through it out and leave a note for them. Here are some tips in storing oil, especially during these warm summer months.

- As lovely as all the bottles of flavored oils look on your stove or counter near the oven, please keep track of their shelf life. If you haven't used it in the last month or so, smell it first before using. Once a bottle is opened, use it within 3 months for optimum flavor.
- Fine olive oil does not age well like fine wine. Purchase smaller quantities that will be used up quickly.
- If you need to store larger quantities of oil, store in green or brown glass containers, stainless steel or tin. Never store in plastic or rubber because the taste of such materiel will effect the oil flavor.
- Store oil in a cool dark place away from light and heat. Refrigeration is not recommended for fine olive oil. Any oil you cook with that is high in monounsaturated fat, should be refrigerated along with any oil you have already cooked with.