

STEPPING OUT

BEST BETS, CALENDAR, EVENTS, MOVIES, PEOPLE, PLACES

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bloomin' delicious

Hollis cook teaches others how to incorporate flowers, herbs into their dishes

By Eric Stanway
Cabinet staff

Liz Barbour has found a unique way to combine her two main passions in life – gardening and cooking.

Barbour, creator of the website Creative Feast, has taken the unusual step of incorporating edible flowers into her dishes. On Friday, June 13th, she will be demonstrating her techniques in a cooking class to be held in Bedford. Attendees will be taught how to grow, harvest and store flowers and herbs, as well as discovering which herbs and flowers go best with which dish.

A professional chef who worked in Boston starting in 1992, Barbour decided on a change of career when her two children came along. She was determined to spend more time with her family, and the idea of hosting cooking classes seemed ideal. “Really, I wanted to make my own hours,” she said.

When she moved into her 1744 Cape in Hollis, there were no gardens whatsoever on the property. That was soon to change, however. Now, the entire garden is full of nasturtiums, Egyptian onions, basil, thyme, roses, and several different varieties of sage. “I went a little crazy with the sage,” she admitted, citing the inclusion of pineapple sage, sporting bright red tubular flowers that actually taste like pineapple,

with a hint of sage in the background.

As host of Creative Feast, Barbour holds cooking seminars at private homes, non-profit associations and garden clubs. There, she holds forth with some very definite thoughts about how herbs should be utilized in a dish. “We tend to put too many herbs in what we eat,” she said. “Then the flavors get lost, as they start to fight each

other.” She feels that herbs should complement a dish, not overpower it. When asked what her personal favorite is, she immediately names flat leaf Italian parsley – “but it must be fresh.”

At her cooking demonstration in Bedford, Barbour plans on making a pork dish, utilizing rosemary. The topper will be a garnish of sage flowers.

Among the edible flowers that Barbour uses regularly are chives, marigolds, petunias and dianthus. Day lilies can also be eaten, and she recommends sautéing the young buds in butter. However, she adds a caveat: make sure your day lilies aren't of the Asian varieties, as they are poisonous.

Roses are prominent in the garden, which Barbour uses in desserts, as well as to produce rosewater. If gardeners are planning on using any of their edible flowers in cooking, Barbour says they should only use organic fertilizers in their gardens. “And keep away from pesticides, of course,” she adds.

There is another advantage to having the garden in front of the house. The road facing it tends to have a lot of traffic, and its sheer beauty tends to slow down drivers.

As most of the flowers are used as a garnish, they tend to brighten up meals and add a splash of color to almost any occasion. That, says Barbour, cannot be overestimated. “We eat with our eyes,” she said.



Photos by Eric Stanway

Liz Barbour, of The Creative Feast, stands in the garden in front of her Hollis Home. Below, a sampling of some of the herbs and flowers she uses in her cooking.

IF YOU GO:

WHAT: Cooking Class: Cooking with Herb and Edible Flowers

WHEN: Friday, June 13, 6-9 p.m.

WHERE: Granite State Cabinetry, 384 Route 101, Bedford

TICKETS: \$65

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Call 465-6929 or visit www.thecreativefeast.com



CREPES WITH CINNAMON BASIL SYRUP

Makes 10 crepes,
7 inches in diameter

1 cup flour
2/3 cup milk
2/3 cup water
3 eggs
1/4 tsp. salt
3 tbsp. melted butter

2 cups sliced strawberries
1 cup fresh raspberries
1 cup fresh black berries
1 cup fresh blue berries
1 cup Greek style yogurt
Cinnamon Basil Syrup

Place flour in a bowl and whisk in dribbles of milk and water until smooth.

Whisk in eggs, salt and melted butter.

Heat a nonstick skillet or crepe pan over medium-high heat. Brush lightly with butter. Pour about 1/4 cup batter into skillet and tilt the pan in all directions to thin the batter.

Cook 30 seconds, until bottom is golden. Flip with fingers or crepe flipper and cook briefly on other side. Cool completely on a cooling rack before stacking the crepes.

Toss the berries with the syrup

Place 1/3 cup of fresh berries along the middle of each crepe, roll and serve draped with yogurt

CINNAMON BASIL SYRUP

1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup water
2 cinnamon sticks

1/4 cup fresh cinnamon basil
or sweet basil leaves

Bring the sugar, water, and cinnamon to a boil in a small saucepan.

Reduce the heat and simmer the syrup for 3 minutes.

Stir in the basil leaves and remove from the heat. Let the syrup cool to room temperature. Strain. Store in refrigerator until ready to use.

Recipe from thecreativechef.com

