

DVDs on Bernardo's menu

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Bernardo's will have something new on their menu by the month's end.

Chef Bob Cioffi added cooking classes at Bernardo's last year and now he will be coming out with a live DVD series of his cooking classes, produced by Televisual Productions.

The first DVD is expected to be the live cooking class on April 21. "The premise of the classes is eliminating the fear of cooking and experimenting," Cioffi said.

Cioffi's cooking classes have students that range in age from 13 to 75.

What makes the class unique is that the students get to go inside the commercial kitchen, where they gather around Cioffi while he shows them how to cook certain meals. Each class is based on a theme.

"I start by telling the students what we are going to do that night and what I had to do to prepare everything beforehand," he said. "We cook several different meals at a time from scratch."

After the explanation period, the process is taught step by step. Students get to see the way it is done when they order from a restaurant.

"I show people how I can take something as basic as chicken and make it not boring by using five different sauces in a matter of minutes," Cioffi said. During the class he shows the students how to prioritize meals. He cooks eight to 15 different meals during a class. After entrees are prepared there is a question and answer period.

On the demo spring DVD that has been filmed Cioffi said there are at least 30 questions from students.

"Not everything is done at once [like Thanksgiving dinner] that's what I teach them," he said. "I happen to know what holds better than others."

Cioffi, who is self-taught, teaches his students innovative secrets.

"People can buy a series of four classes and they fill out a form about what they are most interested in learning," Cioffi said. "I find that greater than three quarters of them want to know how I make sauces," he said. Their answers dictate the theme of the class.

Cioffi said that it is important to not over season when cooking.

"Seasons are to be used to enhance the flavor of the product, not overpower it," he said.

The goal of the cooking classes offered at Bernardo's is for the students to reach their comfort zone, Cioffi said.

"Cooking is an art form and baking is a science," he said. "Cooking is let's try this and let's be creative."

Cioffi said that interaction in the kitchen is welcomed.

"I'm a business man; I teach them how to stretch their money and how to cook affordably," he said.

After students get a chance to sample all the dishes, they go into the lounge and have a complimentary glass of wine and an open forum.

"They learn what they were afraid of, see it prepared and when we finish there is time to sample and socialize," Cioffi said.

As demand has gone up, he offered more classes, and the class size has grown.

The classes are about cooking and serving. Classes are not like a Food Network show where they have been cooking the casserole for three hours and then they put the raw materials together on the show, he said.

"It is on-hand factual information," Cioffi said. "What makes it appealing is it is live in a commercial kitchen. Producers were impressed with the creativity and the simplicity of how I broke everything down...I slow it down to a snail's pace."

The DVD series will be along the theme "Live at Bernardo's with Chef Bob Cioffi."

"My classes are all about the students," Cioffi said. "They're not about playing to the camera; the DVD is reflective of that."

Each class is \$45 per person, per month, per series. For more information e-mail bernardos1@comcast.com, or visit bernardosrestaurant.com or call 781-293-0555.

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