

Latest News



Christine Brodie relished in the opportunity to learn the art of Chinese cooking during a virtual class recently in celebration of the Year of the Ox.
Photo submitted

Brodie dishes up turnip cake and dumplings

By Don Fennell
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You may have heard the old adage about labouring over a hot stove all day. But while cooking may be nothing more than an unavoidable chore for many, for others it is the ultimate labour of love.

Creativity is as much a part of the joy of cooking as the chopping and stirring. The choice of ingredients—intended or not—always ensure a unique dish.

This is what excites Christine Brodie, who has long had a passion for cooking—a love that has been passed on to her family.

While many families won't be able to celebrate this Year of the Ox in person, the first-ever virtual Chinese New Year virtual cooking class with chef Denice Wai—streamed live from the River Green Presentation Centre recently—showed how cooking and technology can still bring everyone together.

Brodie is among them.

Quick to sign up for a spot in the virtual class, she was able to be joined by her daughter and three grandkids in Alberta for Wai's cooking class on the new EverythingGoesVirtual.com platform. Together, they learned to make two healthy yet traditional Chinese New Year dishes—nagaimo (a type of yam) and turnip cake and nagaimo and mushroom dumpling.

"It was very exciting, and so wonderful to be able to cook with my daughter and grandchildren while on Zoom and having Chef Denice teach us how to do things we didn't know," Brodie says. "It was an event scheduled really for family, and to be able to do it with them in Alberta was delightful. They love to cook together and Kayla (one of the grandkids), who's 11, got on and asked questions. It was a really great experience for her. They used to play cooking shows at my house and I'd record them. They like to ham it up and to talk in the language of the cooking chefs."

After a quick trip to Lansdowne Centre to pick up the necessary items for the two recipes, Brodie arranged all the ingredients in order—and in separate bowls—on her kitchen countertop.

Then it was on to the art of preparation.

"I now have a greater appreciation for when I go to dim sum and see how every dumpling is made by hand," she says. "It's not easy. But Chef Denice was so open to questions and checked each of our dishes. She'd say things like, 'OK, let's see what your batter looks like. Ok, Christine, you need to add a little more water.' As a teacher I know what great instruction looks and sounds like and she really had it all together."

Brodie also appreciated learning to steam her turnip cake instead of cooking it in an oven. And it turned out better than any she's ever had.

"I couldn't believe it. I don't know if my grandkids loved it as much, but I certainly could eat turnip cake day and night," she says, adding she was looking forward to experimenting with some of the left-overs.

"The only time I ever cooked Chinese was several years ago. I decided to take a Chinese cooking class and made barbeque pork buns from scratch. But I love dim sum. I love everything about it, but I thought I could never do what those chefs in a dim sum restaurant can. I feel so good and would relish the opportunity to do this again."

An ardent "chef" in her own right, Brodie's interest in cooking really picked up when she began tuning into regularly to cooking shows—before they became enormously popular.

"I've always had a great interest in recipes," she says. "Watching the cooking shows, I've learned it's good to have all the ingredients measured ahead of time. Then you don't have to think about whether you have any of this or that."

She also never worries about having too much left over.

"I always prepare too much and use the leftovers to create something out of it. Or I'm taking some to my friends and letting them try it. The way I look at it, enjoy cooking. The worst that can happen is you've invented something new. So, never give up and always be creative."

The event was made possible through the support of Aspac Developments, which provided the filming venue, and Lansdowne Centre which provided the ingredients to all participants. Visit www.everythinggoesvirtual.com/virtualcharitycooking.html to learn how to cook the Chinese New Year dishes by clicking "Watch it again."

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