

*Cooking for*



CASA

**2026 Cookbook**



*Saturday, January 17, 2026*

## **Master of Ceremonies:**

*Mr. Brandon Bullard*

**5:00**

Doors Open

**5:30**

Program Begins

**6:00**

Serving Begins

**7:00**

Silent Auction Closes

**7:30**

Live Auction Begins

**8:00**

Chef & Silent Auction Winners Announced

## **ABOUT CASA**

The mission of CASA of Jefferson County is to draw from community resources to provide well trained volunteers who will advocate in our court system for a child who has been abused and neglected, provide needed information to the court and serve these children's best interest quickly and efficiently.

### **What is CASA?**

"CASA" is an acronym for "Court Appointed Special Advocates". CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children, to make sure they don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social system or languish in inappropriate group or foster homes. Volunteers stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer will be the one constant adult presence in their lives.

Independent research has demonstrated that children with a CASA volunteer are substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care and less likely to reenter care. Children with a CASA advocate report having higher levels of hope for their futures.

## **What is a CASA Volunteer?**

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer is a trained citizen (age 21 or over) who is appointed by a judge to represent the best interest of a child in court. Children helped by CASA volunteers include those for whom home placement is being determined in juvenile court. Most of the children are victims of abuse or neglect. A CASA volunteer provides a judge with a carefully researched background of the child to help the court make a sound decision about the children's future. Each home placement case is as unique as the child involved. The CASA volunteer helps determine if it is in a child's best interest to return home to his or her parents or guardians, stay in foster care, or be freed for permanent adoption. The CASA volunteer follows through on the case until it is permanently resolved.

## **HOW TO HELP:**

If you would like to do even more to help CASA of Jefferson County, please contact us. We need volunteers to serve as advocates for children, to do general volunteer work, and make cash and in-kind donations. We would love to come and speak to your church or civic group.

**CASA of Jefferson County**

**612 N. 12<sup>th</sup> St.**

**Mt. Vernon, IL 62864**

**Phone: 618-204-5453**

**[www.jeffcocasa.org](http://www.jeffcocasa.org)**

Cooking for CASA, is a unique fund-raising event benefiting CASA of Jefferson County. Formerly, the event only included male chefs, but after many requests, in 2025 we opened the event to women and teams. Money will be used to train and support advocates for children who are in the juvenile court system because of abuse or neglect.

Thank you to our sponsors, chefs, guests, and other supporters for making our 14<sup>th</sup> annual Cooking for CASA a success.

**We especially want to recognize these sponsors whose generosity and support made this even possible.**

# *Sous Chef Sponsors*

The logo for Peoples National Bank (PNB) features the letters "PNB" in a large, white, serif font. The letters are centered within a solid green rectangular background. This green rectangle is flanked by thin, vertical gold-colored bars on both the left and right sides.

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A professional headshot of Hope Williams, a woman with short brown hair, smiling and wearing a dark blazer over a white top, is positioned on the right side of the advertisement. The background features red diagonal stripes in the top-left and bottom-right corners.

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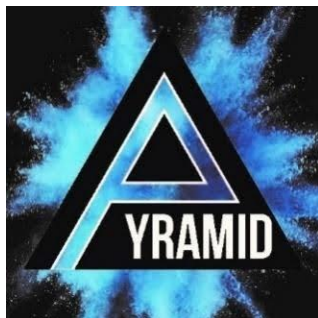


**Gary Hamerski**

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Since 1922



*A very Special  
Thank you*

To the following:

# *To Our Advocates*

Your dedication and commitment to children gives them the voice they need at the time they need it most. We cannot thank you enough for what you do!

Alexis

Amanda

Angie

Brenda

Dana

David

Dee

Diana

Fianna

Jamie

Jane

Jenny

Judy

Lauren

Libbey

Linda

Madison

Marietta

Patricia

Paul

Phyllis

Rob

Roberta

Tania

Whitney

## *The Advocate*

I promise to watch  
Each day and each night  
I know it's the key  
To reporting what's right

I'll observe close up  
I'll observe far away  
It really does matter  
Every single day

I'll report the good  
I'll report the bad  
I shall have no fear  
Even when it is sad

To report to the court  
The child's best interest  
And remember my duty  
Objective facts are simplest

So I took this oath  
The court to assist  
And I know in my heart  
The court won't dismiss it

For God is watching  
And He has a plan  
This is His work  
These lives are in your hands

*Written by Jo Beth Weber*

# *To our Board of Directors*

Cindy Draege - President  
Judy Heitmeyer – Vice President  
Desireé Stumpf – Secretary  
Melissa Bathon – Treasurer  
Leslie Baum  
Cyndy Mitchell  
Ross Rubenacker  
Judi Heitmeyer  
Andrea Baker  
Ryan Weeks

## *The Cooking For CASSA Committee*

Whitney Hodge, Cindy Draege, Leslie Baum, Ross  
Rubenacker, Judi Heitmeyer, Andrea Baker, Melissa Bathon  
and Ryan Weeks

*All the Chefs and Volunteers, without whom this night  
would not have been possible.*

## MEET OUR CHEFS

### **Lindsay Adams Greenwald (Best Ever Texas Sheet Cake)**

This is Lindsey Adams Greenwald's second year participating in the Cooking for CASA event. Lindsey graduated from Webber Township High School in 1998. She attended Rend Lake College for two years, and then went on to SIU-Carbondale, where she received a Masters of Social Work in 2003. She has worked in many different settings as a Social Worker, including community organizations, school systems, and foster care agencies. She opened Cornerstone Family Counseling in 2012 and is a Certified Trauma Therapist. She has the best work family and feels honored to work with the people she serves. Her clients currently range from age 9 to 79. Lindsey is married to the easy-going, laid-back, Dean Greenwald and is the mama of two amazing daughters, Baylee and Chloe – age 18 (Eek!)

### **Andrea Baker (Best Ever Texas Sheet Cake)**

Andrea began her real estate career in March 2021 with King City Property Brokers and became the new broker owner in July 2023.

Andrea has been in the healthcare profession for 20+ years in an administrative role. She also has a background in human resources which led her to pursue a career in real estate.

Andrea is a lifelong resident of Mt. Vernon and is very dedicated to being involved in the community.

Andrea is on the Jefferson County Development Corporation (JCDC) board, board member for CASA and Jefferson County CEO Mentor.

Andrea enjoys spending time with her family and friends, traveling and watching basketball games.

Fun fact: Andrea played 4 years of basketball at the collegiate level. She was inducted into the Webber Township High School Hall of Fame in 2022 for both basketball and softball. She then went on to play 2 years at Rend Lake College. Her 1996-97 team was inducted to the RLC Hall of Fame in 2023. She finished her career at University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, MO.

### **Travis Allen (Travis' Cinnamon Rolls)**

My name is Travis Allen, and I grew up in Jefferson County. I was fortunate enough to marry my high school sweetheart Angel Allen and we are blessed with a 15-year-old son named Jake. I have spent the majority of my career in law enforcement. I had the honor of serving Jefferson County as their Sheriff from 2014-2018. I received my Juris Doctor from the Southern Illinois University School of Law in May of 2023. I am currently working as a police officer for the city of Christopher.

### **Linda Anderson (Greens)**

Linda Anderson has been a CASA Advocate for five years and is very proud to volunteer for this organization. She, her husband Dale, and their children Quintin and Maye-Marie have been part of the Mt. Vernon community since the late 1970's, and have been active members of the First Presbyterian Church. When she's not with her CASA kid, you will probably find Linda swimming laps or mowing the yard. Now a retired nurse, she enjoys cooking healthy food for her family, friends,

and church community.

### **Sue Tomlin (Greens)**

This is Sue Tomlin's first year participating in Cooking for CASA, and she is excited to be here! A self-described "food enthusiast," she can often be found cooking for the free community meals offered at First Presbyterian Church, or for their annual Cookie Walk. She also loves team-cooking at home with her wonderful husband, Bob. The couple has lived in Mt. Vernon since 1980, and they have two very spoiled cats.

### **Jennifer Bass (Auntie Jenn's Chili)**

Jennifer Bass is participating in Cooking for CASA for the second time this year. Dr. Bass grew up near Elizabethtown, IL and graduated from Hardin County High School. After completing her undergraduate degree at Southeast Missouri State University and her Doctor of Optometry degree at Indiana University she came to work at ProVision Eyecare in Mt. Vernon. She has been a practicing optometrist for almost 24 years and a local business owner for 20 years. She and her husband, Jimmy, have been married for twenty one years and are very active in their church. They are very proud Auntie and Uncle to seven nieces and two grand nieces.

### **Chris Bernard (GRAVE-Y Yard Chicken in the Sand)**

Chris Bernard is a graduate of Mt. Vernon High School (1996), Rend Lake College (1998) and Southwest Baptist University (2000). In April 2001, he began working at Peoples National Bank as the Marketing Coordinator, which is still his current position.

Chris has served for many years on the Jefferson County

Chamber Board including being the JCCC President in 2022-23. Chris is a past Board member of CASA of Jefferson County. Honors received include Ambassador of the year (twice) and was inducted into the Mt. Vernon Township High School Hall of Fame in January of 2020.

Chris and his wife Audrey have been married since August 2002. Audrey is a Manager for Auto Owners Insurance in Mt. Vernon. Chris and Audrey have 2 children, Caitlyn (21) and Lucy (16). Chris and his family enjoy watching the Cardinals and Blues, outdoor activities and playing games. This is Chris's 4th year participating in Cooking for CASA.

### **Terri Bryant (Green Salad with Italian Dressing ala Terri)**

Terri Bryant began her legislative time in the Illinois House in 2014 after working 20 years at the Illinois Dept of Corrections. She is now serving in the Illinois Senate representing the 59th Senate District. Terri has been married to Rick since 1981. They have 2 children and 6 grandchildren.

### **Jeff Bullard (Pineapple Sheetcake)**

This is Sheriff Jeff Bullard's 8th year participating in Men Cooking for CASA. Jeff is a 1987 Webber Township High School graduate, before earning his bachelor's degree in criminal justice in 1991 from Southeast Missouri State University, and then his master's degree in criminal justice administration in 2017 from Missouri Baptist University. Jeff started his career in 1991 with the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office and went to the Mt. Vernon Police Department in 1997. He retired as the PDs Detective Captain and Assistant Team Commander for their High-Risk Team when he won the election for Jefferson County Sheriff in November of 2018. He

is currently serving his second term as Sheriff. He is married to his wife Jeannie and has 4 sons, Zack (32) & his wife Hyeri, Jeffrey Jr. (24), Dawson (24), and Will (22). Jeff previously served as a member of the CASA Board of Directors for 6 years.

### **Donna Burlison (Milky Way Brownies)**

This is Donna Kay Burlison's 2nd year participating in Cooking for CASA. Donna was born in McLeansboro, but moved to Mt. Vernon in sixth grade and later graduated from MVTHS in 1968. She spent 20 years at Vanex/PPG in the area of customer service. She is now semi-retired, working part time at Kingdom Seasonings on 9th and Broadway. She has been married to Jan Burlison, Sr. for 21+ years, and together they have four children, Jan Burlison, Sr., Darla Kay Oliver, Eric Oliver and Whitney (Oliver) Hodge. She is Treasurer on the Jefferson County Toys for Kids Board, a member of the local YMCA and a member of the Jefferson County HCE. She attends Waltonville Community Church. She loves to cook and bake and is a self-proclaimed "Health Nut".

### **Adam Colón (Caprese Salad Skewers)**

My name is Adam Colón, owner operator of Chef Adam's Food is Life food truck. We have been in business for 6 years. This year we are taking a break from food trucking but we will be back. I am the father to 7 beautiful kids and 2 bonus kids. I love cooking, of course. I enjoy playing video games and watching sports. Me and my wife, Jennifer, who is the owner of JHill photography, love helping out our community and helping people who need it most. I am also running for a county board

seat in March to do more to help our community

### **Kari Docherty (Grandma Cleo's Ugly Cake)**

Kari is a lifelong Mt. Vernon resident who truly believes in the power of community. She and her partner, Todd, share a busy blended family of five kids and four grandkids, which keeps life full, fun, and always interesting.

By day, Kari serves as the Professional Development Coordinator at Spero Family Services, drawing on 14 years as a classroom teacher and her work with the Regional Office of Education as a truancy officer and GED examiner. Her heart for the work has always centered on supporting children who have experienced trauma and helping the community better understand how to meet their needs.

Kari's passion for service extends beyond her career. She is a strong supporter of CASA, inspired by Todd's previous work with CASA advocating for children, and she proudly serves on the Executive Board of the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce, where she is President for the 2025–26 term. Whether professionally or personally, Kari sees the importance in showing up, giving back, and helping her community thrive.

### **Bryan Drew (Dubai Chocolate Strawberry Cups)**

This is Bryan Drew's first year participating in Cooking for CASA. Bryan graduated from Benton High School before earning his undergraduate degree and later graduating from law school. After completing his education, Bryan returned home to Benton, Illinois, where he founded Drew Law Group and has spent over 25 years practicing law and representing individuals, families, and small businesses across Illinois. Bryan and his wife, Christen, have four children and live in

Franklin County. The Drew family is actively involved in school, church, and community events. Bryan is currently running for Illinois Comptroller, bringing his legal background and long-standing commitment to accountability, transparency, and responsible financial oversight to the statewide race.

### **Jacklyn & KC Goldsberry (Traeger Pulled Pork Sliders with Broccoli Slaw)**

Meet Team J/K — Jacklyn and KC, partners in life and the kitchen for the past 14 years. Together, they've raised two amazing boys: Hayden, a college student at John A. Logan College along with playing guitar and working with anything electrical, Logan, who juggles theater, speech, and Youth and Government and many more

When they aren't busy supporting their kids' activities, Jacklyn and KC are always up for an adventure. They love road-tripping to small towns they've never visited, hunting for hidden local favorites, and unwinding together with a good crime TV binge (the more dramatic, the better).

By day, KC has spent the last 12 years with US Bank helping people turn "someday" into homeownership. Jacklyn works with Lincoln Financial, helping customers navigate short-term disability with patience and a whole lot of heart. By night, they're a team that thrives on teamwork, humor, and experimenting in the kitchen.

With years of partnership, a love of trying new things, and plenty of laughs along the way, Team J/K is ready to bring personality, passion, and just the right amount of chaos to the competition.

### **Justin & Beth Johnson (Italian Sausage Orzo)**

Justin and Beth Johnson have two great kids Kayleigh and Noah. Justin and Beth love outdoor activities and spending time with their kids and animals.

### **Kyle Keene & Kevin Sargent (French Onion Soup)**

This is team Ratatouilles (Kyle Keene aka Remy, Kevin Sargent aka Alfredo) first year cooking for CASA.

While Kyle is no stranger to CASA as a cook, this is Kevin's first year trying to learn how to cook from Kyle.

Kyle is a 25 yr retired veteran of the Mt. Vernon Fire Department and moved to Mt. Vernon in 2000. He and his wife Tanya reside in Mt. Vernon. They have three adult children Ashli, Traser and Jayden and grandchildren Urijah, Zada, Xander, Tripp, Cooper. Kyle loves to cook and enjoys being around friends and family.

Kevin is a lifelong resident of Jefferson County having been born and raised here. He too is retired from Mt. Vernon Fire Department having served 28 years. Kevin is married to his wife Jennifer and also has three adult children Cameron, Jordan and Jadyn and one granddaughter Harmoni. Kevin enjoys being outdoors cam'ing and spending time with family and friends.

### **Mike Klein (Hawaiian Meatballs)**

This is Mike Klein, accompanied by his sons Jackson (age 10) and Quentin (age 8). Mike was born and raised in Mt. Vernon, attending Summersville Grade School and graduating from Mt. Vernon Township High School in 2002. He attended the University of Illinois, graduating with a degree in Consumer Economics and Finance in 2006. After graduation, he moved

to St. Louis, MO, followed by St. Charles, MO where he met the love of his life Kristina. Mike and Kristina have two boys, Jackson and Quentin. They are members of the St. Mary's Parrish. Mike is also proud to be part of the Summersville School Board. He is one of the owners of Mt. Vernon TV & Appliance with locations in Mt. Vernon and Mattoon. He enjoys coaching his son's sports with the YMCA and Summersville, family time and travel with Kristina and the boys.

### **Eric Lyday (Parmesan Garlic Chicken Pasta)**

Eric is the Creative Arts Pastor at Central Christian Church. Has a beautiful wife named Adrienne and two kids, Blakely and Beau. He is a two time Golden Skillet winner in the soup and dessert categories and is looking to add a 3rd tonight next to his best pal Ross.

### **Emma Martin (Oreo Brownies)**

Emma Martin is a motivated and compassionate individual who graduated from Mount Vernon High School in 2023 and has since completed her Associate of Arts degree and Business Certificate at Rend Lake Community College. Throughout her academic journey, Emma demonstrated a strong commitment to learning while balancing meaningful work experience.

Emma is employed at Jagger's Doggie Daycare, where she plays an integral role in daily operations, including boarding and daycare services, and bathing and grooming support. Her genuine love for animals, particularly dogs, is evident in the care and attention she provides, ensuring each pet has a safe and positive experience.

Known for her strong work ethic and nurturing nature, Emma brings reliability, professionalism, and enthusiasm to everything she does. Outside of work and academics, she is an adventure seeker who enjoys new experiences that encourage personal growth and broaden her perspective. With a solid educational foundation and a passion for service, Emma is well positioned to continue making a positive impact in her community.

### **Eugene Martin (Smoked Cream Cheese)**

This is Eugene Martin's 3rd year participating in Men Cooking for CASA. Eugene graduated from MVTHS in 1988 and Rend Lake College in 1993. He started working at Continental Tire in 1994 and has been there for 31 years, including several positions, starting as a Mechanic to Maintenance Systems Coordinator.

Eugene has been married to Carol Martin for 20 years in February and has a daughter, Makayla, stepdaughter, Maranda, stepson, Tadd, and most importantly, 7 grandchildren.

Eugene's favorite hobby is fishing, anywhere and anytime. His logo is "Eat, Sleep and Fish."

### **Matt Molla (Smoked Cream Cheese)**

Matt Molla this is his 2nd year Cooking for CASA with Eugene Martin. Matt graduated from Herrin High School in 2002. In his 4 years in high school he did the play houses that were raffled off in the Marion Mall at Christmas time. Matt graduated from Rend Lake in 2004. In 2008 he joined Continental Tire.

## **Ellie McClelland & Stephanie House - Heart & Soul (English Tea Cake)**

Heart & Soul took home 3/5 trophies in their first ever competition! In October 2024, team members and best friends, Ellie McClelland and Stephanie House competed in the Southern Illinois Collaborative Kitchen's Secret Ingredient Competition Kitchen. Participants made an appetizer, entree and dessert with secret ingredients to raise money for their food insecurity initiative. These ladies walked away proudly with Best Entree, Best Overall Meal and Most Funds Raised. Ellie and Stephanie share a love for cooking, creating and empowering which is how they met at a meeting for the Centralia Business & Professional Women's Club. Before entering the ring herself, Ellie actually hosted several cooking competitions with her cottage food operation, Ellie's Place. Most notably are her annual Pie Festival Baking Off, and Gingerbread House Decorating. Stephanie graduated from Kaskaskia College before spending 20 years working her way up the culinary ladder from busier to kitchen manager. Her skills range from banquet to fine dining. Now Stephanie spends her time as a personal chef to her 11 year old daughter, Lily and very sophisticated friend Madelyn. In their collective free time, Ellie and Stephanie volunteer in their community and feed the people when and wherever they can.

With a sisterhood backing them and a lifetime spent in a variety of culinary settings — these two women are ready to bring the heat to Cooking for CASA this year!

## **Ryan McKee (Chocolate Love Affair)**

Ryan is the Branch Manager at Oliver and Associates, LLC, an

independent insurance agency in Mount Vernon and Carbondale. Ryan is married to his wife Amanda of 20 years and they have 3 children, Landon, Hayden, and Delaney. Ryan has lived in Mount Vernon since 2005 and was originally from Southern Indiana. Ryan enjoys umpiring baseball games and watching his kids play sports. In his spare time he enjoys cheering for the Indiana University football and basketball.

### **Karson Bumpus (Chocolate Love Affair)**

Karson is an Agent at Oliver and Associates, LLC, an independent insurance agency in Mount Vernon and Carbondale. Karson has lived in Mount Vernon his whole life and is a 2018 graduate of MVTSHS and an avid fan of the University of Texas Longhorns.

### **Jason Newell (Heartland Peanut Butter Cookies)**

This is Jason Alan Newell 4<sup>th</sup> time participant in Cooking for Casa. Jason Graduated from Waltonville High School in 1992 and later graduated from Southern Illinois University. Jason is an Executive Vice President at Community First Bank of the Heartland. He is married to Amy, and they have three adult children, Emma, Asa and Izzy. Jason and Amy live on the family farm in Waltonville where the family settled in 1870s.

### **Melinda Potter & Hope Carbonaro (Bacon Parm Crackers)**

Melinda Potter is the Executive Chef at Double Overtime Grill located in the Doubletree hotel. She has been a chef for 20 years and is skilled with her creativity and precision in creating amazing dishes. Melinda grew up in McLeansboro IL and has been a long time resident in Mt Vernon.

Hope Carbonaro has been practicing social work for 35 years

and is currently the Chief Program Officer at Caritas Family Solutions. Her culinary skills are limited, outside of cooking for her husband, Mike “Carbo” Carbonaro, which is no small feat! Hope grew up in nearby Altamont IL and has been residing in Mt Vernon for over 30 years.

Now, this friendship has blossomed into the dynamic duo united for the great cause of cooking for CASA!

### **Ross Rubenacker (Smoked Pulled Chicken w/ Alabama White BBQ Sauce)**

This is Ross Rubenacker's 11th year participating in Men Cooking for CASA. Ross graduated from MVTHS in 2008 before playing a year of golf at Rend Lake College and ultimately graduating from the University of Alabama (ROLL TIDE!) with a degree in Operations Management. After a brief stint in Houston, TX, Ross found an opportunity to bring him back home to Mt. Vernon, IL. He now works for Priority Power Management as their Sr. Director of Solar Development. He is married to the love of his life, Juli, and now has 2 kids, Nolan (6) and Rya (4). Ross is in his 11th year as a member of the CASA Board of Directors.

### **Joe Schmidt (Jambalaya)**

This is Joe Schmidt's 3<sup>rd</sup> year participating in Cooking for CASA. Joe was born and raised in Mt. Vernon, graduated St. Mary in 2014, graduated from MVTHS in 2018, and graduated from the University of Mississippi with a degree in Managerial Finance and Real Estate. Joe ultimately moved back to Mt. Vernon to get involved in the family business at Schmidt Chevrolet GMC where he is a Sales Consultant. Being a member of the Knights of Columbus at St. Mary and Elks

Lodge #819, he loves to donate his time and resources to the local community. Joe is an amateur golfer, enjoys riding through the woods on a side by side with a shotgun in hand, and gets very excited about college football.

### **Dave Severin (Dave's Cheese Ball)**

State Rep. Dave and Penny Severin reside in Benton. Dave and Penny have been married for 48 years. They have one married son and two grandsons. Dave is the current owner of All-Stars-n-Stitches in Benton and Graphics Galore in Marion specializing in trophy making, embroidery, laser engraving, and graphic arts. Dave started his first business in his garage, built a successful enterprise, and has employed many hard-working Southern Illinoisans throughout his 30 years as a small business owner/operator. Prior to taking office as State Representative, Dave served as the president of the Benton School Board for 20 years. As a member of the Illinois House of Representatives, Dave has sponsored legislation that would lower taxes, decrease regulation on businesses and individuals, and strengthen ethics laws to rid Illinois government of corruption.

### **Madison Shepard (Buffalo Chicken Dip Sliders)**

Madison Shepard is a graduate of Rend Lake College and is currently attending Southern Illinois University Carbondale, where she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management. She works as a Marketing Manager at Legence Bank. This is Madison's first year participating in the Cooking for CASA competition.

Outside of work and school, Madison is the proud dog mom of two pups, Trigger and Jessie, and is supported by the best

fiancé and family in the world, who encourages her in everything she does.

### **Steven & Renee Snow (Tuscan Tortellini)**

We have been married for 12 years. We share 6 kids (1 in Heaven) and 4 grandchildren (1 in Heaven). We are committed to growing a Christ-centered community and faithfully attend Central Christian Church. We love adventuring to museums, historical monuments, and symphonies.

### **Ryan Weeks (Party Wings)**

This is Ryan Weeks' first year participating in Cooking for CASA. Ryan graduated from Salem Community High School in 1995. Ryan went on to attend Kaskaskia College and Southwestern Illinois Police Academy. Ryan currently serves as a Captain for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. During his tenure at the Sheriff's Office, Ryan has served as a member of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office High Risk Team, ILEAS WMD SWAT Team, K9 handler, Patrol Captain, and School Resource Officer Captain. Ryan has been married to his wife, Jonna, for 23 years, and the two have a 10-year-old son, Ryder Weeks. This is Ryan's first year as a member of the CASA Board of Directors.

### **Chris Oglesby (Party Wings)**

Hi everyone, my name is Chris Oglesby. I'm a 2002 graduate of Mt. Vernon High School. I grew up in Texico and currently live in Bluford. I attended SIUE and graduated in 2008. After college, I worked for a Miller distributor, and I've since found my career at Mt. Vernon Dream Homes. I'm also blessed with a beautiful wife, Emily, and two wonderful daughters, Kimber

and Penny. Thank you all for being here and for supporting such a great cause.

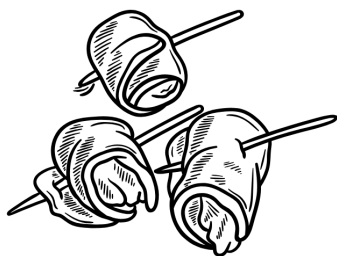
### **Jack, Ben & Tara Wilkey (Big Ben's Pulled Pork)**

This is Jack and Ben Wilkey's first year participating in Cooking for CASA. Jack has been participating in barbecue competitions throughout Southern Illinois for 15 years, winning various awards. Last year 5-year-old Ben began attending these competitions with Jack, entered into his first Kid's Q competition, and took home a 3<sup>rd</sup> place trophy. In addition to Ben and his twin brother Bray, Jack and his wife Tara have 5 adult children and 4 grandchildren who have brought love and joy into their lives. In addition to giving his all to his family, barbecuing, and his role as foreman for Lawn Perfection, Jack enjoys increasing his knowledge in several fields and has studied real estate, insurance, and earned his BA in accounting with a minor in finance. Jack and Ben's favorite hobby is spreading happiness and filling stomachs with their award-winning barbecue.

# Cooking for CASA 2026

## *Recipes*

# Appetizers & Sides



# **Dave's Cheese Ball**

Chef Dave Severin

All ingredients to taste:

- Philadelphia cream cheese
- Worcestershire sauce
- Onion flakes
- Sharp cheddar cheese
- Lemon juice

Rolled in chopped pecans

# Greens

Chefs Linda Anderson & Sue Tomlin

## Ingredients:

- 2 27-ounce cans Glory-brand mixed greens, liquid drained off \*
- 6 slices bacon (pork is best, but turkey-bacon can be substituted)
- 1 ¼ C chicken broth
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 T brown sugar, tightly packed
- ¼ C cider vinegar
- ½ t red pepper flakes

## Instructions:

Cook bacon in a large skillet until crisp. Remove bacon, reserve 3 T drippings in pan. Crumble bacon; set aside. Add onions to drippings in pan; cook over medium heat about 5 minutes, or until tender. Add the bacon and all the other ingredients except the greens. Cook for about two minutes, or until the sugar is dissolved. Add the greens and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes.

\*Also works for two bags of fresh, pre-washed greens, but needs to simmer for 90 minutes.

# Buffalo Chicken Dip Sliders

Chef Madison Shepard

## Ingredients:

- 1 lb raw boneless, skinless chicken
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup ranch dressing
- 1/2 cup Frank's Red Hot sauce
- 8 oz cream cheese
- 1 cup cheddar cheese

## Instructions:

Mix all ingredients together and warm. Serve on rolls.

# Bacon Parm Crackers

Chefs Melinda Potter & Hope Carbonaro

## Ingredients:

- 1 package bacon strips, cut in half
- 32 Club Crackers
- ½ cup freshly grated parmesan
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Ranch dressing, for dipping

## Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

Arrange crackers on a baking sheet and sprinkle with parmesan.

Tightly wrap each cracker with bacon and place seam side down, then top with more parmesan.

Bake until bacon is cooked through and bites are crispy, 45-48 minutes.

Season with pepper and serve with ranch for dipping.

# Caprese Salad Skewers

Chef Adam Colón

## Ingredients:

- Chicken breast
- Mozzarella cheese
- Cherry tomatoes
- Basil leaves
- Salt
- Pepper
- Garlic
- Basil
- Sea Salt
- Balsamic Glaze

## Instructions:

Season chicken with salt pepper garlic and basil

Cook chicken

Cut chicken into bite size pieces

On a tooth pick put mozzarella cheese, cherry tomato 1 pc of chicken 1 more pc of mozzarella and 1 basil leave sprinkle sea salt drizzle with balsamic glaze

# Hawaiian Meatballs

Chef Mike Klein

## Ingredients:

- 3 lbs. Meatballs
- 20 oz. Pineapple Chunks
- 2 cups BBQ Sauce
- 1/4 cup Soy Sauce
- 1/4 cup Apple Cider Vinegar
- 1/4 cup Brown Sugar
- 1 Tbsp. Ginger
- 3 gloves of Garlic

## Instructions:

Mix the BBQ sauce, soy sauce, apple cider vinegar, brown sugar, ginger and garlic in a bowl.

Put the meatballs, pineapple chunks and sauce in the slow cooker and stir.

Cook for 5 to 6 hours on low (Internal temperature of the meatballs should reach 165 degrees).

Serve warm as an appetizer or on rice.

# Soups & Chilis



# Auntie Jenn's Chili

Chef Jennifer Bass

## Ingredients:

- 1.5 – 2 lb ground beef
- 1 lg onion, chopped
- 2 bell peppers, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can pinto beans in mild chili sauce, slightly mashed if desired
- 2 cans diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (8 oz) can tomato sauce
- 2-3 TBSP tomato paste
- 32 oz beef broth
- Salt, pepper, smoked paprika and chili powder to taste

## Instructions:

In a large pot, sauté ground beef, onions, peppers and garlic seasoned with salt and pepper until meat is browned and cooked through. Drain and return to the pot.

Add remaining ingredients. Season to taste.

Simmer, stirring occasionally, for at least thirty minutes. One hour is ideal.

# Italian Sausage Orzo

Chefs Justin & Beth Johnson

## Ingredients:

- 16 ounces Italian sausage see note
- 1/2 medium onion chopped
- 3-4 cloves garlic minced
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes optional, or more to taste
- 1 cup uncooked orzo pasta
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup heavy/whipping cream
- 1/2 cup freshly grated parmesan
- 2 cups (packed) fresh baby spinach
- Salt & pepper to taste

## Instructions:

Add the sausage meat to a soup pot/Dutch oven. Over medium-high heat, cook it for 5 minutes.

Stir in the onions and continue cooking for another 5 minutes or so, until the sausage is nicely browned and the onions have softened.

Stir in the garlic, red pepper flakes, and orzo, and cook for 30 seconds.

Stir in the chicken broth and cream. Once it starts to bubble, continue cooking for 10 minutes, uncovered, stirring fairly often (or else the orzo may stick to the bottom of the pot). You will likely need to turn the heat down a bit (to medium or even medium-low). It should gently bubble vs. boil (you don't want the liquid to reduce too much before the pasta has cooked).

Take the pot off the heat, stir in the parmesan and spinach, and cover the pot for 3-5 minutes or until it has thickened up to your liking. Season with salt & pepper as needed and serve immediately.

# French Onion Soup

Chefs Kyle Keene & Kevin Sargent

## Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- over medium- low heat until butter melted
- Add and stir to coat
- 5 medium onions thinly sliced
- a pinch of dried thyme
- 1 to 1 1/2 tsp of salt
- 1/4 to 1/2 tsp black pepper

## Instructions:

stir occasionally and watch so as not to scorch the onions over medium heat. As soon as they start to brown (15 mins) reduce to Med- low and cook covered stirring more often until onions are a rich brown color (40 mins)

Stir in 2 tbs of dry sherry or cognac. Increase heat to high to cook stirring constantly until all liquor has cooked off

Add 3 1/2 cups Brown Beef Stock. Bring to boil, reduce heat to simmer partially covered for about 20 mins.

Season with Salt and pepper.

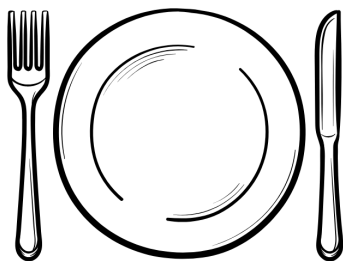
Place 8 ovenproof bowls or crocks on baking sheet, fill bowls and top each serving with 1-3 slices of toasted French Bread,

Sprinkle each bowl with 3 tbsp grated Gruyere cheese

Broil or bake at 450 until cheese is melted and starting to brown.

"Bon Appetit"!!

# Entrees



# GRAVE-Y Yard Chicken in the Sand

Chef Chris Bernard

## Ingredients:

- 4 Boneless Chicken Breasts
- 1 - 10.5 oz Can of Unsalted Cream of Chicken
- 2 - 0.87 oz packs Chicken Gravy Mix
- ½ Cup of Water or Chicken Stock
- Hot steamed rice

## Instructions:

Put Chicken Breast, Cream of Chicken, Gravy Mix and ½ Cup of Chicken Stock or Water in a crock pot on high for 6 Hours. Take Chicken out and Shred all. Put the chicken back in the crock pot for another hour. Cook 1 Cup of rice on the stove and add to the crock pot and stir all together. Allow an additional 30 minutes on low to let the rice soak up the chicken juice.

Enjoy!

# Big Ben's Pulled Pork

Chefs Jack, Ben & Tara Wilkey

## Ingredients:

- 7-9 lb Pork Butt Roast
- Sweet BBQ Rub of your choice
- Spicy BBQ Rub of your choice
- 1 c Apple Juice
- ½ Stick of Butter
- Honey
- 1 c Brown Sugar

## Instructions:

Score the fat cap of the pork butt with a knife. Do not cut the fat off. The fat protects the meat from the heat.

Rub the pork butt on all sides with your sweet and spicy rub.

Let the pork butt sit on the counter for 30-40 minutes. This allows the rub to sweat, drawing moisture to the surface of the meat to insure that the rub sticks.

Make sure your smoker is up to 275 degrees (pellet smoker 250 degrees). Once the rub is set and the smoker is ready. Place the pork fat side down and leave it alone until the internal temp of the meat is at 160 degrees.

Once the butt is at 160 degrees it is time to wrap it. Place two layers of aluminum foil on a table, making sure the foil is longer than the pork. Fold the sides up and add the cup of apple juice, half a stick of butter, and more rub sprinkled on top.

Drizzle the honey on the meat and a cup of brown sugar into the wrap.

Once everything is added wrap the foil over the pork tight. Make sure liquid cannot escape.

Place back on the smoker until the internal temp gets up to 205-210 degrees.

You will know that it's done when you stick your thermometer in and it goes in like butter.

When the pork butt is done take it out of the smoker and let it rest for 1-2hrs.

Then it is time to pull the meat. Pull the meat into small chunks instead of completely shredding it, this will keep more moisture in the meat.

While pulling the pork, discard the fat.

**DO NOT THROW AWAY THE LIQUID FROM THE FOIL WRAP.**

Once the meat is all pulled and the fat discarded, pour the wrap liquid over the meat and toss it.

No BBQ sauce needed!

# Tuscan Tortellini

Chefs Steven & Renee Snow

## Ingredients:

- 1 lb. Italian sausage (ground)
- 1 packet dry ranch mix
- 1 can original Rotel (undrained)
- 1/2 cup frozen chopped spinach
- 2 Tablespoons Italian seasoning
- 1/2 clove minced garlic
- 2 jars Alfredo sauce
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2 lb. bag refrigerated or frozen cheese tortellini

## Instructions:

In a large skillet, brown Italian sausage. Add Rotel, spinach, minced garlic, Italian seasoning and dry ranch mix, sauté for 3-5 minutes, stirring frequently. Reduce to low heat. Stir in Alfredo sauce and paprika. Simmer over low heat stirring often. Add tortellini and cook 5-10 minutes, until pasta is warm.

# Jambalaya

Chef Joe Schmidt

## Ingredients:

- 3 gallon pot, a lid, and the wooden spoon you spanked the kids with.
- 1 large Vidalia onion
- 1 large red bell pepper
- 1 large green bell pepper
- 5 celery stalks
- 8 garlic cloves
- 15 chicken thighs
- 1 lb andouille sausage
- 1 large bag of peeled, veined, and shelled shrimp
- 2 qts. chicken stock
- Louisiana Hot Sauce
- Your favorite Cajun seasoning (mine is Slap Ya Mama)
- Black pepper
- Parsley
- Long grain white rice

## Instructions:

Dice the Vidalia onion, red bell pepper, green bell pepper, celery, and you CAN dice the garlic cloves into very small pieces (I now prefer to use a garlic press later on). Set all of this aside.

Cube the chicken thighs and slice the andouille sausage into bite size pieces.

Brown, not cook, the andouille sausage on medium high to high heat and stir every minute. Remove sausage and set aside.

Brown, not cook, the chicken thighs in the andouille sausage grease on medium high to high heat and stir every minute. Remove and set aside.

Dump the leftover grease.

Cook the diced onion, red bell pepper, green bell pepper, and celery on medium high to high heat until softened and stir every minute (roughly 5 minutes).

Leaving the vegetables in the pot, add the diced garlic or press the garlic cloves into the pot, cooking and stirring for 1 minute.

Add the browned chicken thighs and andouille sausage back to the pot.

Add 2 qtrs. of chicken stock.

Cover the top with your favorite Cajun seasoning, 30 cracks of pepper on the smallest setting, around 10 dashes of parsley, and 10+ dashes of Louisiana Hot Sauce (depending on how spicy you want this).

Raise heat to high and bring this to a ROLLING boil.

Taste test the chicken stock and add more seasoning as needed.

Once boiling, add 2-2 ½ cups of long grain white rice.

Lower heat to a simmer, place lid on pot, and do not even think about removing the lid for 30 minutes. Don't do it.

During these 30 minutes, I like to cut my shrimp in half.

After these 30 minutes, you may now remove the lid.

Add shrimp to the pot and fluff with your wooden spoon.

Let this cook for another 5 minutes or until the shrimp has turned red.

Fluff your pot again.

Serve into bowls and I strongly suggest letting the bowls cool off for at least 10 minutes.

Hogs to the trough, chows on, it's time to eat! Add hot sauce if you want more spice.

# Smoked Pulled Chicken w/ Alabama White BBQ Sauce

Chef Ross Rubenacker

## Ingredients:

### Sauce:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 Tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 Tablespoon spicy brown mustard
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon prepared horseradish
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

### Smoked Pulled chicken:

- Boneless, Skinless Chicken Thighs
- Favorite BBQ Seasoning
- Apple Juice

## Instructions:

### Sauce:

Add all the ingredients to a bowl and whisk until smooth and well combined.

Transfer to a jar with a lid or a squeeze bottle.

### Chicken:

Trim excess fat off of chicken thighs and season both sides generously with your favorite BBQ seasoning. I used Pit Boss' Sweet Heat and McCormick's Applewood rubs.

Preheat smoker to 225 degrees Fahrenheit.

Place a meat thermometer into the thickest part of the chicken thigh.

Place on the smoker until it reaches an internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit.

Increase the smoker to 350 degrees Fahrenheit until the chicken reaches about 190 degrees Fahrenheit and then remove it from the smoker and let cool for about 20 minutes.

Shred the meat (I use a mixer). Once it is all shredded, I add a bit of apple juice to help add a bit of moisture.

Serve the chicken as is or on a bun and top with Alabama white BBQ sauce.

# Parmesan Garlic Chicken Pasta

Chef Eric Lyday

## Ingredients:

- Parmesan Garlic Sauce
- Boneless Chicken Breasts
- Cream Cheese
- Grated Parmesan Cheese
- Rotini Pasta
- Parsley
- Red Pepper Flakes

## Instructions:

Prepare Crockpot: Spray the inside of the crockpot with non-stick cooking spray.

Add Chicken Breasts: Place the chicken breasts in the bottom of the crockpot.

Cover With Sauce: Then pour the entire bottle of parmesan garlic sauce over the chicken.

Top With Cheese: Add the cream cheese and parmesan cheese on top of the chicken and sauce.

Slow Cook: Cover with the lid and cook on low for 5-6 hours or high for 3-4 hours.

Shred: Shred the chicken before serving and stir it to mix into the sauce.

Cook Pasta: Cook the pasta according to the package instructions.

Combine: Add the cooked pasta to the crockpot. Stir to combine and garnish with fresh parsley and red pepper flakes. Enjoy!

# Traeger Pulled Pork Sliders with Broccoli Slaw

Chefs Jacklyn & KC Goldsberry

## Ingredients:

### Pulled Pork:

- 1 (6-8 lb) bone-in pork butt
- ¼ cup Traeger Pork & Poultry Rub (or your favorite rub)
- 1 cup apple juice
- Traeger Sweet & Heat BBQ Sauce (for tossing)

### Zesty Broccoli Slaw:

- 1 (12 oz) bag packaged broccoli slaw mix
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp sugar (optional, for balance)
- Salt and black pepper to taste

### Assembly Ingredients:

- Pulled pork mixture
- Broccoli slaw
- Slider buns (Hawaiian sweet rolls are a popular choice)
- Optional toppings: dill pickles, extra BBQ sauce, or sliced pepper jack cheese

## Instructions:

**Prep the Pork:** Trim excess fat from the pork, leaving about 1/4 inch of the fat cap. Pat dry with paper towels and generously season all sides with the rub.

**Smoke:** Set your Traeger to 225°F (107°C) and preheat for 15 minutes. For optimal flavor, use the Super Smoke mode if available. Place the pork directly on the grill grates, fat-side down, and smoke for 3-4 hours.

**Braise (The "Texas Crutch"):** Transfer the pork to a disposable aluminum foil pan. Pour the apple juice into the pan. Cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil.

**Cook to Temp:** Increase the Traeger temperature to 275°F (135°C). Place the covered pan back on the grill and cook until an internal thermometer inserted into the thickest part (away from the bone) reads 205°F (96°C). This usually takes another 3-5 hours.

**Rest & Shred:** Remove the pork from the grill and let it rest, still covered, for at least 30-60 minutes. Discard the bone and any large pieces of fat. Use two forks or heat-resistant gloves to shred the meat.

**Sauce:** Toss the shredded pork with your favorite BBQ sauce until well coated.

**Prepare the slaw:**

**Whisk Dressing:** In a medium bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, apple cider vinegar, Dijon mustard, sugar, salt, and pepper.

**Combine Slaw:** Add the broccoli slaw mix to the dressing and toss thoroughly to coat.

**Chill:** Refrigerate the slaw until ready to serve, allowing the flavors to meld (at least 30 minutes).

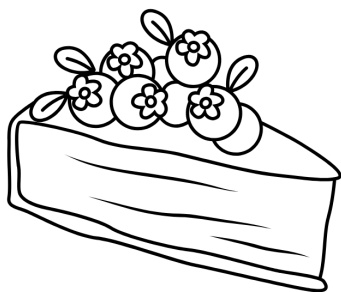
**Assemble:**

**Layer:** Pile a generous amount of pulled pork onto the bottom half of a slider bun.

**Top:** Add a scoop of the broccoli slaw on top of the pork.

**Finish:** Place the top bun on the slider and serve immediately. You can also brush the assembled sliders with garlic herb butter and bake briefly for a warm, cheesy version.

# Desserts



# Milky Way Brownies

Chef Donna Burlison

## Ingredients:

Brownies:

- 1 Box Aldi Baker's Corner Chewy Fudge Brownie Mix

Icing:

- 4 "Share Size" Milky Way Candy Bars
- 1 stick Unsalted Butter
- 2 c. Powdered Sugar
- 2 Tbsp. Almond Milk
- 2 tsp. Pure Vanilla

## Instructions:

Prepare brownies as directed on the box.

Melt candy and butter and let cool. Add powdered sugar, milk and vanilla. Beat until smooth and creamy. Spread on cooled brownies. Enjoy!

# Heartland Peanut Butter Cookies

Chef Jason Newell

## Ingredients:

- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 Egg

## Instructions:

Preheat Oven to 325 degrees

Combine the following ingredients in large bowl until well blended

Roll dough into 24 balls: place 4 inches apart on ungreased baking sheet. Flatten each ball with back of fork.

Bake in the preheated oven until lightly browned, about 20 minutes; do not overbake. Cool on baking sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer to wire rack to cool completely.

# Grandma Cleo's Ugly Cake

Chef Kari Docherty

## Ingredients:

### Cake:

- 3 cups all purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup cocoa
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 cups hot coffee
- 2/3 cup oil
- 2 TB vinegar
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 2 eggs

### Filling:

- 1/3 cup sugar
- 8 oz pkg softened cream cheese
- 1/2 tsp vanilla
- 1 egg
- 1 cup semi sweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup finely chopped nuts
- 1/4 cup sugar (to sprinkle on top before baking)

## Instructions:

Heat oven to 350. Grease and flour bottom half only of 9x13 pan. In a large bowl or stand mixer, blend all cake ingredients together until thoroughly mixed. Batter will be thin. Pour into the prepared pan. In small bowl cream 1/3 cup of sugar, cream cheese, 1/2 tsp of vanilla, and 1 egg until fluffy. Fold in chocolate chips and nuts. Spoon teaspoonfuls of filling evenly over batter. Sprinkle on 1/4 cup of sugar. Bake at 350 for 45-60 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool completely before serving.

# TRAVIS' CINNAMON ROLLS

Chef Travis Allen

## Ingredients:

### Dough:

- 1 cup of warm milk (105-110F)
- 1 tablespoon of instant dry yeast
- 2 tablespoons of white granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 3 tablespoons of salted butter (softened)
- 1 large egg
- 3 cups of all-purpose flour
- Filling
- ½ cup of melted butter
- 1 ¼ cups of brown sugar
- 2 ½ tablespoons of ground cinnamon

*Combine the brown sugar and cinnamon in a bowl prior to using*

- Secret Ingredient
- ½ - ¾ cup of heavy cream

### Icing:

- 4 cups of powdered sugar
- 4 tablespoons of butter (melted)
- 4 teaspoons of vanilla extract
- 8 tablespoons of whole milk or heavy cream

*Mix all these ingredients in the bowl of a stand mixer. Using a whisk attachment blend until smooth*

## Instructions:

Using a stand mixer, combine warm milk, sugar, salt, butter, egg, and yeast. Add in the all-purpose flour. Using a dough hook, set the mixer on low.

Once the mixture starts to form a dough, increase the mixer speed to

medium. The dough should begin to pull away from the sides of the mixer bowl. If the dough is still too tacky to pull away, you may add a little more flour. The dough should be soft but not overly sticky.

Grease a medium size bowl with olive or canola oil (I use the spray). Roll the ball of dough around in the bowl to coat the sides well. Cover with a towel and let rise for an hour (a little longer won't hurt)

Grease a 9x13 glass pan and set to the side

Remove the dough from the bowl and punch it down on a lightly floured, nonstick surface. Roll the dough out into a rectangle approximately 12"x18"

Brush the dough with the melted butter (it looks like a lot), then quickly sprinkle on your cinnamon and brown sugar (I mix them together in a bowl ahead of time)

Roll the dough into a log and slice into rolls. Place the sliced rolls into the greased glass pan and cover with a towel. Allow to rise one more hour.

After the rolls have risen, preheat your oven to 350 degrees. This is where the secret ingredient comes in. Pour the heavy cream over the rolls and place them in the oven for approximately 18-24 minutes. This time may vary, and you should keep a close eye on them. Once they start to lightly brown on top, remove them from the oven and immediately cover with icing. ENJOY!!

# Chocolate Thun-da

Chefs Lindsey Adams Greenwalt & Andrea Baker

## Ingredients:

### Cake:

- 1 cup water (240 ml)
- 1 cup butter (227 g)
- 3 Tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder (22.5 g)
- 2 cups all-purpose flour (240 g)
- 2 cups granulated sugar (400 g)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda (5 g)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (2.5 g)
- 1/2 cup sour cream (120 g)
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (5 ml)

### Frosting:

- 6 Tablespoons milk (90 ml)
- 1/2 cup butter (115 g)
- 3 3/4 cups powdered sugar (450 g)
- 3 Tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder (22.5 g)

### Equipment:

- 18×13 inch jelly roll pan (also called a half-sheet pan)
- Medium saucepan
- Large mixing bowls
- Whisk or spatula
- Electric hand mixer (optional, but helpful for extra smooth frosting)
- Measuring cups and spoons

**Instructions:**

**Prep Oven & Pan:** Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C).

Generously grease an 18×13 inch jelly roll pan. This ensures the cake releases easily.

**Boil Wet Cake Mix:** In a medium saucepan, combine the water, 1 cup butter, and 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder. Place over medium heat and bring the mixture to a rolling boil. Remove from heat immediately once boiling.

**Mix Dry Cake Ingredients:** In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, granulated sugar, baking soda, and salt until well combined.

**Mix Wet Cake Ingredients:** In a separate small bowl, whisk together the sour cream, large eggs, and vanilla extract.

**Combine Cake Batters:** Pour the sour cream and egg mixture into the dry flour mixture. Stir gently with a whisk or spatula until just combined. Avoid overmixing to keep the cake tender.

**Add Hot Chocolate Mix:** Carefully pour the hot chocolate mixture from the saucepan into the cake batter. Mix well until everything is fully incorporated and no lumps remain. The hot liquid helps activate the cocoa and baking soda, creating a rich flavor.

**Pour & Bake Cake:** Pour the runny batter into your prepared 18×13 inch pan. Use a spatula to spread it evenly into a thin layer. Bake in the preheated oven for 15-20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. My oven usually finishes this cake in about 15 minutes.

**Prepare Frosting (Mid-Bake):** When the cake is about halfway through its baking time, start the frosting. In a medium saucepan, combine the 6 tablespoons milk, 1/2 cup butter, and 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder. Bring this mixture to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally.

**Finish Frosting:** Remove the boiling frosting mixture from the heat. Add the powdered sugar into the saucepan. Beat with a whisk or an electric hand mixer until the frosting is smooth and lump-free. Work

quickly while it is warm.

**Frost Hot Cake:** Immediately pour the warm frosting over the warm, freshly baked cake. Use a spatula or the back of a spoon to spread it evenly across the entire surface. The warm cake absorbs some of the frosting, creating a truly decadent experience.

**Set & Serve:** Let the frosting set for about 10 minutes before slicing and serving. This allows the frosting to firm up slightly.

# Earle Grey Tea Cake with Tart Berry Jam & Swiss Meringue

Chefs Stephanie House & Ellie McClelland

## Ingredients:

### Cake:

- 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup cake flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp baking soda
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp salt
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 stick unsalted butter, soften
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup full fat sour cream
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup milk, steeped with tea
- 2 bags earle grey tea

### Jam:

*fruit can be fresh or frozen*

- 12 oz cranberries
- 6 oz dark black cherries, pitted
- 6 oz raspberries
- 2 oranges, zested and juiced
- 2 cups white sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 pack sure jell low sugar
- (1.75 oz pink box)

### Meringue:

- 5 egg whites
- 2 cups white sugar
- \*\*white vinegar for cleaning

### Equipment:

- 13 x 9 pan

- 1 or 2 pots (for meringue and jam)
- 3 bowls (jam, dry goods, meringue)
- mixer with paddle and whisk attachment, heat safe bowl
- parchment paper
- sieve
- measuring cups and spoons
- whisk
- zester

### **Instructions:**

Jam:

Zest and juice orange, set zest aside

Add juice, and fruit to medium sized sauce pan

Turn on medium low heat

Cook down fruit for ~15 minutes or until all cranberries have popped.

Stir this a lot!!

In a separate bowl combine quarter cup of sugar with packet of Sure  
Jell and set aside

Once fruit is cooked, run through a sieve to remove any seeds or  
skins (optional)

Return to medium high heat and add Sure Jell mixture

Bring to boil and stir constantly!!

Add remaining sugar and cook for one minute

Bring to boil and stir constantly!! Don't skip this step!!

Pull off heat, add zest and vanilla, stir.

Refrigerate to thicken.

Cake:

Steep tea and milk over low heat, be mindful of scorching the milk.

Set aside to cool

Preheat oven to 350F

Combine dry ingredients.

Cream butter and sugar together

Add egg whites and vanilla then beat on medium high speed until combined

Add in sour cream, beat until combined

Add in dry ingredients slowly until combined

Add in milk slowly while still mixing

Line 13 x 9 cake pan with parchment paper and pour batter into

Bake for 10-15 minutes

Allow to cool before assembly

Meringue:

Clean metal mixing bowl and attachments with vinegar

Add egg whites and sugar to bowl

Take another pot and place 2 inches of water in it and bring to a boil

Set mixing bowl with eggs and sugar on top of the simmering pot

This helps stabilize it

Whisk constantly until all sugar is dissolved

To check, carefully put finger into the bowl to touch the mixture then rub between fingers to feel if the sugar has dissolved. About 4-5 minutes

Place bowl back onto mixer and beat at full speed until STIFF peaks form

If runny, place into freezer to cool then return to mixer to beat

Place in piping bag or leave as is to spread

ASSEMBLY:

Take your cake and cut it in half to create two squares.

We find its easier to flip one square onto a different piece of parchment paper to assemble

You can put this into a smaller pan to help keep the form or leave free standing

Spread jam on one layer, as little or as much as you prefer!

Add second layer of cake

Pipe or spread meringue onto top layer

Optional: toast meringue with oven broiler or food torch

Chill before cutting for cleaner slices

We hope you enjoy this recipe! We started practice baking in November 2025 for this competition. This recipe is the definition of tried and true!

# Chocolate Love Affair

Chefs Ryan McKee & Karson Bumpus

## Ingredients:

- 1 box brownies, baked and cooled per instructions, cut into chunks
- 2 cups cold milk
- 1 (5.1 oz) box instant chocolate pudding mix
- 1 can (21 oz) cherry pie filling
- 1 large tub whipped topping
- Chocolate shavings or chunks (optional)

## Instructions:

Bake brownies per instructions on box, cool, and cut into chunks

Mix instant chocolate pudding with 2 cups of cold milk until thick

Assemble the dessert: in a large trifle dish or glass bowl, layer in this order: brownie chunks, chocolate pudding, whipped topping, and cherry pie filling. May garnish with cool whip and shaved chocolate or chocolate chunks for decorative

# Pineapple Sheet Cake

Chef Jeff Bullard

## Ingredients:

### CAKE:

- ¼ cup of oil
- 2 cups of flour
- 2 cups of sugar
- 2 beaten eggs
- 2 tablespoons of baking soda
- 1-20 ounce can of crushed pineapple
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla
- ½ cup of nuts

### TOPPING:

- 1-8 ounce package of cream cheese
- ½ stick of margarine
- 1 ¾ cups of powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon of vanilla
- ½ cup of nuts

## Instructions:

Mix cake ingredients together, spread on a greased cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes.

Mix topping ingredients together until smooth and spread onto the warm cake.

# Oreo Brownies

Chef Emma Martin

## Ingredients:

- Oreo Brownie Mix
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup vegetable oil
- 3 Tbs water
- 1 egg

## Instructions:

Heat oven to 325 degrees

Grease the bottom of a 9x9 pan.

Stir brownie mix, oil, water and egg in a medium bowl until well blended. Spread evenly in pan. Sprinkle the oreo pieces (from the brownie mix box) evenly over the brownie batter.

Bake for 31-34 minutes, until toothpick inserted 2 inches from the side of the pan comes out almost clean. Cool completely before serving.

# Dubai Chocolate Strawberry Cups

Chef Bryan Drew

## Ingredients:

### Strawberry Layer

- 1 pound fresh strawberries, hulled and finely diced
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

### Pistachio Cream

- ½ cup pistachio cream or pistachio butter
- ½ cup mascarpone cheese
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

### Chocolate Layer

- 6 ounces high-quality milk chocolate, chopped
- 1 tablespoon heavy cream

### Kataifi Crunch

- ¾ cup kataifi (shredded phyllo), chopped
- 1½ tablespoons unsalted butter

### Garnish

- Chopped pistachios
- Optional: edible gold dust or flakes

## Instructions:

Prepare the strawberries:

In a small bowl, toss the diced strawberries with sugar and lemon juice. Let sit for about 10 minutes to release their juices.

Make the pistachio cream:

In a medium bowl, whisk together the pistachio cream, mascarpone, heavy cream, powdered sugar, vanilla, and salt until smooth and

creamy. Refrigerate while preparing the other components.

Toast the kataifi:

Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add the chopped kataifi and cook, stirring frequently, until golden and crisp. Remove from heat and let cool completely.

Melt the chocolate:

Place the chocolate and heavy cream in a heatproof bowl. Melt gently using a double boiler or microwave in short intervals, stirring until smooth and glossy.

Assemble the cups:

Divide the strawberries evenly among 8 small dessert cups or glasses. Spoon or pipe the pistachio cream over the strawberries. Drizzle with melted chocolate.

Finish and serve:

Sprinkle with toasted kataifi and chopped pistachios. If desired, add a light dusting of edible gold just before serving.