

Claudia's Corner: Cooking with summer's fresh produce

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NEW PALTZ — Chef Cathy Vogt recently held a Summer Taco Cooking Party at Watergrasshill Bed and Breakfast in New Paltz. Attendees learned how to chop, pan sear, season and work with local ingredients to create a delicious meal. I participated in this hands-on cooking class. My task was to make 2 salsas, tomato-pepper and mango salsa. We all worked as teams and shared a delicious meal of Summer Squash and Basil Soup, Pan Seared Chili Lime Cod, Spicy Mushroom Walnut Taco filling, fruit salsa, guacamole, crunchy vegetable slaw. The food was fresh and flavorful.

Vogt is a professionally trained chef and culinary translator. She is dedicated to teaching people about health supportive foods and changing their relationship to cooking and nourishment. Her philosophy is that making time to cook healthy meals prepared with real ingredients, can be one of the most important uses of your time. What we take into our bodies can either offer life-giving nourishment or set us up for disease and ill health.

“When we lovingly make the space and time to cook the foods our bodies need, the result is always improved health. My approach is plant forward with a focus on quality ingredients. I recognize that we all have our own bio-individual needs and nourishment is not a one size fits all approach”, says Vogt.

In 1996, Vogt started her company, A Natural Chef. She currently offers personal chef services, cooks for small group retreats, teaches private and public cooking classes. She also offers personalized health coaching. In 2015, she published her first book, “Cultivating Joy in the Kitchen” to educate and inspire people to make cooking healthy foods a daily habit.

Find out more about what Chef Vogt is doing at ANaturalChef.com, get seasonal recipes and easy lifestyle tips. You will find delicious recipes to take advantage of fresh Farmer's Market finds like Tomato, Peach Curried Noodles and Crunchy

Apple Broccoli Salad.

Check the events page at Watergrasshillny.com for upcoming classes. They offer many workshops including hands-on cooking, Chef's Table demonstration dinners, Paint and Sips, and floral workshops. They also host private events such as showers, birthday, anniversary, holiday parties and rehearsal dinners. The B&B opened last June after owner, Alana Colucci, was inspired by a family trip to Ireland. This B&B features 4 Queen guest rooms with renovated en-suite bathrooms.

Salsa with variations

1 medium ripe tomato diced include juices

1-2 Tbsp jalapeno pepper minced

¼ cup red onion minced

2 Tbsp fresh cilantro chopped

1 T lime juice

1 T olive oil

Salt & pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in bowl, stir, refrigerate, adjust seasonings. Variations: Chopped colored peppers, raw or roasted. Chopped cucumbers. 1-2 tsp cumin powder. Substitute mango, grilled pineapple, strawberries, peaches or watermelon.

Notes from Salsa Queen (my nickname at the class): With salsa, anything goes. I never measure and whatever fresh ingredients are available will make a delicious salsa. This is now a regular dish for me. Happy Chopping!

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