

Dinner Party of Ten

2016 Christmas

With Chef Deb Karnes

and Master Assistant Chay Karnes



Once more, Christmas culinary wonderama unfolded for Dinner Party of Eight at the Karneses' abode – the fourteenth consecutive event.



Although this December's weather could not match last year's, it was still pleasant enough for the ten of us (Karnes, Adams, Monteverds, Notarnicolas, and Teators), with a thin layer of snow at evening's end to test our driving skills as we headed homeward.

Outdoor Christmas lights abounded, testimony to Chay's efforts. He even managed to have three live deer cavort with the lit ones at the driveway entrance. (Nice trick! How did you do that?) Another lit display on the road's edge must have tested the Karnesian supply of extension cords. And it was revealed later that Chay had done most of the interior decorating. Quite the new Martha Stewart Masculinity! Kalli greeted us at least as enthusiastically as last year before succumbing to Deb's threats. Perhaps, ten minutes



of expended energy was the trick. And Ken helped expend that energy!

Two prongs of the appetizer course were set. Deb had presented a tray of peppers of three colors along with a plate of cheese-onion mini-bowls.



And then Mark and Joyce opened their box full of goodies, taking a few minutes to spread out the riches: an assortment of olives, figs, blackberries & raspberries, cheeseballs of almonds and pimento covered with bacon & toasted pecans & blue cheese, and cheeseballs of cream cheese & craisins covered with toasted pecans. That was a tray!





Both Chay and Deb helped slake thirst. Chay poured wine from the Teator/Adams collection, while a pitcher of Winter Sangria, prepared by Deb K, attracted attention throughout the evening.

We ten chatted and discussed around the kitchen island in threes and fours and twos and sometimes ten, catching up on news, to be interrupted by the call to salad. Once again, a large bowl of Deb-creativity awaited: spinach, romaine, roasted pistachios, fresh pears, pomegranate seeds and shaved parmesan reggiano with a lemon honey vinaigrette



And a tasty basket of cheddar scones (the scones, not the basket), made by Deb, accompanied appetizer and entrée courses well.

Favors awaited—six inch round felt balls (stop snickering, Deb!) decorated in the holiday theme; and a cork concoction, a bear, or perhaps a dog, bearing small Christmas gifts. Each year is a surprise, Deb, of your creativity. (Or did Chay make them? ha)

The two masters of the house disappeared for a few minutes, only to reappear with the intermezzo—a lemon sorbet with a note of lime. Another pleasing cleanser and a worthy tradition.



The usual chatter and banter preceded the entrée course. Dinner for 10 (enough for 20), all of Deb's doing, with capable assistance from our Emergency Coordinator:

- ◆ Prime rib: ten pounds, ranging from medium rare to medium well, simply seasoned with salt and pepper with a horseradish sauce on the side
- ◆ Funeral potatoes: diced potatoes in a cream sauce, heavily topped with tasty bits of bacon
- ◆ Roasted winter vegetables (someone snuck in some of tasty “nasty little green things!”)
- ◆ Cranberry sauce

Although most of us had somewhat controlled ourselves at appetizer time, we were now wishing for one more belt buckle hole. (A certain long-traveling couple had already consumed a full breakfast and lunch earlier.)

Someone made the wise decision to gather in the living room for our gift exchange, where we played Bad Santa with a few thefts, the surprise being the growler. However, a sense of suspense, feigned interest, and veiled threats to

leave well enough alone is one of the highlights of the evening. Judy's exuberant promise to pilfer once again went unfulfilled.





By now, the brain had caught up with distended tummies, and we sat back, pleasantly moaning our satisfaction and appreciation.

More layers of conversation, and with the clock winding past eleven, exits were made and another

Christmas celebration was etched in the DP8 annals.

Several hours allows for dozens of topics. Given our monthly dates, most of the topics are continuations from a few months ago, or a few years ago, or even a decade and a half! The glow of the evening had suffused the topics so tightly that I will forbear a listing. I think I can safely speak for all: life is good, we appreciate each year even more (even you youngsters, Deb K! and now the Notars!), and we consider the flow of life with the hard-earned knowledge of years gone by. The only serious topic at the moment, beyond our usual, was the situation of one of our moms.

Enough time had passed, allowing the brain to think we had room for dessert. Back to the table where coffee and tea would accompany:

- ◆ a Montverdean-arranged Charlene-chocolate-cream pie, as smooth and silky as ever,



- ◆ a Deb K coconut cream pie, much fuller and richer than other pies of the same name, and
- ◆ a plate of Linzer-type cookies, with a cut-out star top layer.



Thank you, Deb and Chay, for such generosity and hospitality, traits we yearly anticipate and do not take for granted.

Goodbye 2016! We wish that 2017 be as kindly eventful and, when it is not, may we have the grace and strength to deal with whatever is thrown our way.