

2021 CHRISTMAS

*Dinner Party of Ten*

With Chef Deb Karnes

& Event Assistant Chay Karnes



The **eighteenth chapter** of DP8/10-Christmas@ Karnes unfolded on a pleasant week-before-Christmas evening. Everyone seemed upbeat about the light rain, just above freezing, since the morning forecast had called for a couple inches of snow, sleet, and mix. The gathering was made even more special after Covid precautions cancelled the 2020 dinner. What relief and joy to follow the sinuous curve to Karnes Heights!

Most years, as we have approached Pine Meadow Lane, the lights of neighboring houses have twinkled through the tree tops. This year, the first hint of lights came from the pine tree at road's beginning, festooned with blue lights. The surrounding trees and bushes that were knee high, if that, twenty years ago now obscured front yard lights as well as the house until we started up the driveway. Kalli seemed especially excited, dashing from room to room for the five minutes that all the strangers arrived.

Before food details ensue, it should be noted that, once again, **Deb K masterminded, with apt assistance from Chay, the entire dinner!** We were in awe, at her hard work, creativity, and culinary excellence! Words on paper can do little to show the full extent of our appreciation.

Back to the scene. Although there was ample sitting place outside the kitchen area, it was at the two counters we congregated. For 2021, the Quinns complemented the Karneses, Teators, Notarnicolas, and Monteverds.

The immediate center of attention were the **appetizers**:

- a veggie array: a plate of tri-colored peppers served in pepper "bowls" supplemented with celery sticks and baby carrots
- a Christmas-star bowl of grape tomatoes;
- a cheese ball of cream cheese with bacon and parmesan cheese, rolled in crushed pistachios and served with toasted flat bread crackers

This finger-picking accompanied an hour of chatting and catching up on news. One of the initial topics was Ken and Kriss telling their tale of painfully slow traffic in the Thanksgiving slog from Florida.

Shortly thereafter, quietly placed on the island was a plate of **"pot sticker" pinwheels**, a combo of ground pork and shrimp with green onions, sesame oil and garlic rolled into a pinwheel and served with an Asian sweet chili sesame soy dipping sauce.

More talk of the effects of Covid, unvaccinated friends, Christmas plans, winter plans, whereabouts of family and rest of DP16, mild December weather, aches and pains, priorities, activities that keep us busy, and more.





### Course 2

The appearance of a salad bowl promised the start of the next course. After seating, and accepting the dinner favor of gobs-of-millions **Powerball ticket**, we thought it wrong, for about ten seconds, to disturb this **salad of romaine**, topped or mixed with dried figs, dried apricots, raisins, mandarin oranges, feta cheese and pistachios, joined by a Christmas pitcher of champagne citrus vinaigrette.

### Course 3 – Intermezzo

a first for this fruit – Pineapple Sorbet – a silky, creamy concoction, as we dabbed spoon-tip-dabs onto our lips.

Soon thereafter, both Chay and Deb disappeared. We sat in anticipation of:

#### Course Four: lining the ten foot table

- a Giarusso-farm-raised ham, glazed with brown sugar honey garlic
- a Christmas tree bowl of cranberry-apple sauce, touched with Triple Sec
- corn bread/pudding – a moist mixture of tasty morsels and smoothness
- creamed spinach with a cheese smoothness
- baked Duchess potatoes with garlic and Gruyere cheese
- spoon rolls with honey butter

### Drinks:

A Sauvignon Blanc and Cab Franc from the Finger Lakes, and a Pinot Gris and Malbec from elsewhere, along with beer and soda slaked the thirsty throats.





As dinner settled, attention was turned to the array of wrapped gifts nestled between the fire place and TV. Promises to produce a **Santa-Thief Christmas gift exchange** were made, with Judy Adams on mind. However, a mismatch of evil intent and poor number placement kept a couple thefts out of range; Prime Thief drew #2, limiting her prospects; #10 could not improve upon the gift card; and the last chance for thievery, at the hands of #1, dissipated with satisfaction of the gift already in hand. For the record, gifts ranged from: tablet rest, accompanied by golf glasses & balls; Visa card; desk lamp and 10 LED bulbs; tower blender; a bin of charcuterie; wine rack; Bluetooth speaker; a basket of beer and snacks, an Amazon card, and solar lights. I am ashamed to say that our 700 years of life experience in the room tried to explain solar power (from the sun) and the need for backup batteries. What a hoot! Merry Christmas!

After gift-exchanging and fifteen more minutes of lazing and talking, we filtered back into the dining room to investigate Deb K's dessert creation this year.

**Dessert:**

- chocolate raspberry Swiss roll, a foot and a half, with chocolate ganache supporting fresh whipped cream and garnished with fresh raspberries (yum)
- cranberry swirl cheesecake - a combo of sweet and creamy, aided by a bowl of sugared tart cranberries (another yum)

Another half-hour. Half past ten was approaching. Dinner was done, with an extension of afterglow of story-



telling, reminiscing, and wishing well for the future. Before darkness could whisk us away, we hoped that 2021 might lead into a productive and worthy 2022. And if times are challenging, may we have the grace and strength and support to see our way ahead.

We humbly and gratefully accepted this generosity of one our culinary highlights of the year. **Thank you, Deb and Chay, for your efforts and such grand hospitality.**

**Merry Christmas to all!**

