

indulging your passion for food

PRIME OR SELECT? DRY RUB OR MARINADE?

How to grill the perfect Memorial Day steak

B4



table



From left, Diana Bucco St. Lifer, her sister, Lisa Bucco Picinich, and cousin, Jennifer Bucco Glick, right, as they prepare their grandmother's Meatball Stew. MARY FRANK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

FOOD BASKET

Sushi to make you smile

By Chris Jordan
@ChrisFHJordan

Presentation has much to do with the success of a sushi dish. Hence, Chef Reno Chen of Aji Sushi at 645 Speedwell Ave in Morris Plains has his work cut out for him.

"People take pictures with their cell phones (of his dishes) and sometimes they don't feel like eating it because it's so pretty," said Chen through a translator.

Aji Sushi has become the reliable spot with a certain flair over the last few years. Its rolls range from \$6.50 to \$15 and entrees span from \$11 (for a vegetarian roll) to \$27 for a sushi and sashimi combo.

They've kept up with the times without too much razzle-dazzle.

"In the old days there was no such fancy sushi and the chefs were very, very serious — they'd never joke around," said Aji co-owner Sharon Ng. "Now, the world has changed."

Aji Sushi is open seven days a week, has take-out and is BYOB. Call 973-292-4777, 973-292-4778 or visit www.ajisushinj.com to place an order, to make a reservation or for more information.

Early bird at Rod's

Rod's Steak and Seafood Grille on One Convent Road in Morris Township is offering an early two-course plus dessert prix fixe menu for \$25.

Entree selections include roast chicken, Rod's meatloaf, steamed 1 lb. lobster, Rod's 6 oz. tenderloin, open faced roasted turkey, imported penne pasta and shrimp, chicken cacciatore, the roast of the day and crispy seared scallops.

The special is served daily until 5:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Saturdays. Call 973-539-6666 or visit www.rodssteak.com for details.

Chand Palace wins award

Congratulations to the Chand Palace Indian restaurants of Parsippany and Piscataway, which was recently awarded the Best Taste nod at the Varli Food Festival in New York City. Master chef Sanjeev Kapoor made the call.

Chand Palace, a restaurant and banquet hall, has locations on 257 Littleton Road in Parsippany and 1296 Centennial Ave. Call 973-334-5444 for Parsippany and 732-465-1474 for Piscataway or visit www.chandpalace.com, which has info for both locales.

Blues and wine festival

They've got the blues — and the wine — at Natirar Park in Peapack-Gladstone.

It's the annual Garden State Wine Growers Association Blues and Wine Festival, noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 26 and Sunday, May 27. For the grape, there will be a sampling of more than 250 award-winning wines from 20-plus Jersey wineries. The music includes the Slackjaw Blues Band featuring Nasty Ned on Saturday and the Shade Tree Mechanics Band on Sunday.

Tickets are \$25 per person at the gate — the price includes a souvenir wine glass — and \$20 in advance via www.newjerseywines.com. New this year is the ability for attendees to purchase wines directly from Jersey wineries via the Internet or phone with the launch of direct shipping. A bill was signed into law recently allowing direct purchasing.

Natirar Park is located at 2 Main Street.

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COUSIN CUISINE

Bloggers inspired by family's love of Old World cooking



Chopped onions, parsley and eggs are added to the chopmeat mix for the meatballs. MARY FRANK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



A photo from the late 1940s of the cousins' fathers and their grandmother, Rosie. From left: Anthony Bucco, Jill's father; Jim Bucco, Diana and Lisa's father, and John Bucco, Jennifer's father. MARY FRANK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

By Lorraine Ash
@LorraineVAsh

On a Thursday morning, three Italian-American cousins added sauce made with San Marzano tomatoes to a large pot already sizzling with sautéed garlic and onion. They were on their way to re-creating their Grandma Rosie's meatball stew.

These Cousins in the Kitchen, who write the lively blog of the same name, are all about making meals. Even more so, though, they're about re-creating a ritual that Rosie Bucco, their Sicilian grandmother, began when they were girls sleeping over their grandparents' house in Cliffside Park.

At night, the two oldest cousins remember watching the roller coaster at Palisades Amusement Park from their bedroom window. On Sunday morning they'd awoken to the smell of the meatballs frying in a pan.

"She always allowed us to have a meatball before putting them into the gravy," recalled Diana Bucco St. Lifer of Boonton Township, whose white and terra-cotta kitchen was the gathering place for the day.

Later on Sundays, she recalled, Grandpa Mike, whose family hailed from Naples, went to Pedoto's Bakery in Fairview to buy 10 loaves of bread so everybody in the family could have an "elbow," or end piece.

Sharing their passion

In June 2011 the Cousins in the Kitchen launched their blog, a Facebook page, and YouTube channel to stay connected to their

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Lisa Bucco Picinich, right, holds bowls while cousin Jennifer Bucco Glick, spoons in meatballs. MARY FRANK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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