

## COOKING BY DESIGN: THE HANDS-ON CULINARY LEARNING EXPERIENCE

STORY & PHOTOS BY LIZ RUBIN

**S**URROUNDED BY THE MAJESTIC LIVE OAKS AND THE LUSH ROLLING HILLS OVERLOOKING HAMILTON POOL, NINE AUSTIN WOMEN GATHERED ON A RECENT MORNING TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE SUSHI, LAUGH, AND DINE ON A LUNCH OF ECLECTIC, HAND-MADE CUISINE AT COOKING BY DESIGN, A NEW PRIVATE COOKING SCHOOL IN BEE CAVE.

“Now it’s *your* turn!” proclaims Beth Pav, owner of the school, after a 45-minute demonstration on how to prepare perfect sushi rice, select the best ingredients available in local supermarkets, and roll fresh salmon sushi maki in her new culinary classroom.

The occasion was a hands-on cooking class called Sushi 101, created by executive chef Pav, who opens her cooking school this March in a brand new custom-built kitchen in her home in The Homestead, a subdivision of The Village of Bee Cave, located just west of the intersection of Highway 71 West and Ranch Road 620 North.

“This is the beginning of the dream,” says Pav in anticipation of the official grand opening of her cooking school – set for March 4 — after many years of planning. “I wanted to teach cooking in an environment of simplicity, comfort and ease, but to still

allow for serious learning, as anyone would at a professional culinary school.”

The cooking school will be an extension of her full service catering business that she started in Austin in 2000 when she moved to Texas from northern Virginia, which will now offer weekly recreational cooking classes for both adults and kids. Pav’s goal is “to give students something applicable in their everyday life, not something beyond their scope so when they go home their never going to use it.”

The construction for the school just wrapped up this January. Inside this 1,200 square foot building next to her home is a working kitchen, suitable for catering events for up to 150 guests. It is fully loaded with a six-burner/convection Wolf range and oven, a professionally stocked pantry, and a commercial grade, stainless steel True refrigerator and freezer. Outside the back entrance is a large grilling area and fresh herb garden. Downstairs is the dining room, where students can enjoy the results of their hard work in the kitchen with a spectacular hill country view. “Entering my kitchen is like walking into a working commercial kitchen with the warmth, comfort, and attributes of using your own kitchen,” said Pav. “You get the feel of working in a restaurant kitchen but the ease of feeling like you are really working in your own kitchen.”

The cooking school will host classes up to 15 students at a time, or eight for hands-on classes that last about two and

a half hours. Cooking by Design’s spring classes are all scheduled on Thursday evenings, so they can serve as dinner, drinks and entertainment, all very close to home for south Lake Travis residents. Pav hopes to capture the interest of parents, singles, and retirees, as well as kids looking for something new to learn other than the limited local after-school options of academics or sports. Children’s classes will begin in June for Kids Camp Cooking School.

“I have always wanted to offer something like this to give children the opportunity to learn how the kitchen operated in a safe, comfortable, and unthreatening environment, to have fun learning new and simple cooking techniques, and to offer an alternative to other summer “camp” opportunities.”

“There is definitely a need for something like this [in Lake Travis],” said Pav. “It’s a place with easy access after coming home from work. It’s an opportunity for something that is more central to our leisure environment.”

Class themes will include 30-Minute Meals, Flavors of the Mediterranean, Spanish Tapas, Entertaining 101, Girls Grilling 101, and French Bistro. Most will be one-session classes, but others will be part of a series that can build upon culinary themes from session to session.

“I’ve taught all over the country, but it’s different everywhere you go,” Pav said, referring to the diversity of interests in cui-



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