

## Kitchen Shrink: World foodies find upscale cooking classes in La Jolla

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By Catharine L. Kaufman  
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Whether you're a serious foodie or a kitchen neophyte wanting to take some fun, gourmet cooking classes with your spouse, some girlfriends, or your kids or co-workers, you need look no further than your own backyard. Gone are the jet-setting days of trekking to the south of France for a Cordon Bleu culinary experience.

La Jolla resident Jodi Abel, a self-taught chef and founder of LaJollaCooks4U, sees herself as "the Jewish Martha Stewart," a born entertainer who will provide you with a healthy, gourmet meal that you helped prepare from her organic garden. Any leftovers go home with you, along with a menu, recipes and great memories.

Jodi's culinary inspiration started marinating during her 50th birthday sojourn when her husband, Glenn, took her to Umbria, Italy, where she took a cooking class with Tia, another self-taught chef.

Tia operated Umbria Cooks 4 You in her modest home in the hills of Perugia, where visiting guests whipped up pizzas and other regional specialties, complemented by fresh produce from her sister Anna's nearby olive farm.

Jodi had an epiphany - that she could be the American version of Tia, teaching people to cook California cuisine in her home in the hills of La Jolla.

The vision quickly became a work in progress as the Abels began to build a Web site, design a logo, have aprons made, and buy linens, wine glasses and other equipment as they started gearing up for a proper cooking school.

Then another idea blossomed - to grow an organic garden on the top of Mount Soledad.

They planted citrus trees, grape vines, strawberry patches, zucchini, onions, tomatoes, peppers, chard and an herb garden reminiscent of Simon and Garfunkel's "parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme," along with basil, mint, oregano and lavender.

The organic garden is blooming except for the green beans and broccoli, which the brazen rabbits quickly devoured.

The chef/cum entrepreneur held a five-month cooking marathon in her test kitchen, where she invited four bona fide foodies to serve as her culinary mentors and critics.

By January 2007, Jodi was ready for prime time with 10 menus under her belt, a Web site and an inner bliss busting at the seams of her chef's jacket.

"It has become a real family affair," Jodi says. "Glenn is the webmeister, gardener and baker, our 15-year-old daughter, Aarin, is sous chef and our son Adam helps with the Internet exposure."

Jodi takes cooking classes in her travels so she can bring these recipes back to her kitchen in La Jolla. She recently added a South African smoked fish stack in a ginger cream broth to her repertoire.

Her goal is to provide wonderful, easy gourmet recipes for folks to replicate and enjoy at home. They prepare a six-course meal (with wine pairing) starting with soup and salad, a choice of beef, lamb or seafood for the main course with an accompanying vegetable, risotto or polenta, dessert and an after-dinner drink. After cooking for two hours, the pro tem chefs dine al fresco, relishing their own fresh creations while drinking up the fabulous views and sunsets of La Jolla.

Chef Jodi gets calls from all over the world from people interested in taking her cooking classes. She does team-building corporate events, special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries, and some cooking classes were even bought for a bride and groom as a wedding gift.

A sample menu and one of Jodi's recipes are below. You can also check out her Web site at [www.lajollacooks4U.com](http://www.lajollacooks4U.com). Queries are welcome at (858) 752-4980.

### LaJollaCooks4U Sample Menu

- Antipasti (Hors d'oeuvre)
- Calamari in Spicy Asian sauce
- Zucchini Carpaccio with Avocado

#### Primo (First)

- Mushroom Soup with Wine
- California Salad

#### Secondo (Second)

- Sauteed Veal Rib Eye in white Wine
- Mushroom and Asparagus Risotto

#### Dolci (Dessert)

- Chocolate Mascarpone Tart with Fruit

### Chef Jodi's Dijon Marinade

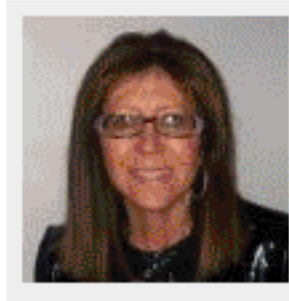
- 1 garlic clove
- 2 tablespoons of fresh rosemary
- 2 tablespoons of fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons of fresh Italian parsley
- 4 green onions
- 2 tablespoons of Dijon mustard
- 1/4 c. of olive oil
- 3 tablespoons of water

Using a small food processor, mince the garlic, then add the onions and fresh herbs. Add the mustard. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil. Add water and process all together.

Pour over chicken, fish or meat and let marinate overnight or for several hours. Grill meat or fish accordingly.



Jodi Abel  
Photo by: Courtesy



#### Catharine L. Kaufman

Columnist of Kitchen Shrink. If you'd like to chew the fat, talk turkey or beef about something, e-mail [kitchenshrink@san.rr.com](mailto:kitchenshrink@san.rr.com). Check out The Kitchen Shrink and company's healthy eating blog at [www.FreeRangeClub.blogspot.com](http://www.FreeRangeClub.blogspot.com).