



# THE ULTIMATE STRESS-FREE DINNER PARTY

Featuring Chef Betty Berrysmith

BY DEBORAH LIV JOHNSON • PHOTOS BY ETHAN KAMINSKY

**THE SETTING IS YOUR HOME** – guests arriving intermittently, candles lit, flowers well placed, music, and the aroma of something delicious happening in the kitchen. Once your guests are settled in, you realize the rest of the evening is yours to enjoy – without lifting a finger.

While some people are familiar with catered dinner parties and an on-site chef, many of us have never considered the possibility of hiring someone to create a magical evening in our home. In celebration of the New Year, it may be time to think out-of-the-box and explore your options for hosting an unforgettable gathering with family or friends.

## The Chef

La Quinta resident Chef Betty Berrysmith specializes in cooking for small group dinners, although she is adept at handling a 50-person buffet. Originally from Seattle, Washington, with another 30 years spent honing her craft in Los Angeles, Chef Berrysmith's parents hailed from Mississippi and Louisiana, influencing her cuisine with southern flavors and flair.

“Food, family and friends were always around in our home,” says Chef Berrysmith. “From a young age, I was interested in what was cooking in those large pots on the stove. I loved helping to cook meals and my parents encouraged me.”



**“All communities gather around food. Food and cooking are a love language – giving love and comfort to others,”** says Chef Betty Berrysmith.

While attending the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles, Chef Berrysmith's friends began asking her to cook for them, offering to pay her. As her cooking skills grew, she started looking for culinary schools, settling on the Los Angeles Trade Technical College Culinary Arts program (the oldest continually operating culinary program in the nation) where she could earn an associate degree and receive the same classic French cuisine training as the more expensive institutes.

“Once I earned my culinary degree, I realized that I was doing what I was meant to do,” relates Chef Berrysmith. “Cooking, food and community are so important to me. All communities gather around food. Food and cooking are a love language – giving love and comfort to others.”

HAIR/MAKEUP: CANDICE RODRIGUEZ



Above: Chef Berrysmith keeps a vegetable garden and also a raised garden for fresh herbs.

Left: Vegan Mushroom Risotto, made with vegetable stock, rice milk, vegan parmesan cheese, roasted Bella and shiitake mushrooms, topped with Sauteed Power Greens (Swiss Chard, Kale and Brussel Sprouts) and Seared Jumbo Wild Caught Shrimp with Tomato-Creole Sauce drizzle.



Above: Gluten-free Flourless Chocolate Cake.



Left: Arancini – Italian rice balls made with the risotto. When the risotto is cool it is formed into balls, floured, dipped in a vegan egg mixture, panko breadcrumbs and deep fried. Served with a rich tomato sauce. This version is vegan and can be made gluten free also.

**CaliSoul cuisine**

Known for her Southern-influenced fare, which she calls CaliSoul cuisine, Chef Berrysmith’s seafood, chicken and sausage gumbo won first place and a trip for two to New Orleans at a Los Angeles restaurant’s annual Mardi Gras gumbo cook-off.

“CaliSoul is food rooted in the Black, Southern traditions of my ancestors. Age-old recipes are expanded and reinvented using California fresh produce and ingredients,” notes Chef Berrysmith.

Her menu options include her award-winning gumbo, as well as a vegan roasted vegetable version; hickory smoked pulled pork, Cherrywood smoked turkey and chicken, grilled vegetables with fresh citrus-herb vinaigrette and spicy aioli; jambalaya (vegan, or seafood, chicken and sausage); sweet and smoky or ginger-tamari chicken

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wings; Louisiana style red beans and rice; black eyed pea hummus with rainbow vegetables; spiced maple sweet potato casserole; pan-seared jumbo Cajun shrimp and much more.

As part of her regular menu, she offers vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options and is keenly interested in developing more plant-based recipes.

Chef Berrysmith also creates a wide variety of specialty desserts, including buttermilk cake with spiced rum caramel glaze, bourbon pecan pie, lemon coconut chess bars, and Sky High coconut cake with pineapple filling.

### I still remember every bite

Recently, I had the good fortune to attend a dinner party for eight with Chef Berrysmith at the helm. In addition to a beautifully presented charcuterie board, the exceptionally delicious menu was as follows:

#### Amuse Bouche

Seared wild caught shrimp in tomato gravy, served on top of cheddar and smoked Gouda Carolina grits

#### Second Course

Baby gem salad greens with heirloom baby tomato halves, tossed with fresh herbs and plated with burrata, Kalamata olives, grilled artichoke hearts, dressed in Meyer lemon olive oil and vanilla fig balsamic vinegar

#### Third Course

Seared Chilean sea bass finished with truffle butter, lemon and microgreens garnish, served on top of wild mushroom risotto with Chef's choice of vegetables • Dinner rolls and butter

#### Fourth Course

Chef Betty's lemon tart with fresh berries and whipped cream garnish

### Here's to delicious dining – Happy New Year!

Assorted cookies from Chef Berrysmith, left to right: Cranberry-Macadamia Nut Jumbles, Ginger Shortbread and Oatmeal-Chocolate Chip with Pecans (also known as Neiman Marcus Cookies)



To book Chef Betty Berrysmith, call 323.228.3010,  
or email [bstable2@gmail.com](mailto:bstable2@gmail.com).

To view menu and catering options, visit  
[bstablecalisoul.com](http://bstablecalisoul.com)