



Everything Cleveland

## Mayfield Heights' Casa Dolce bakery and cafe tantalizes tastebuds in winter cooking classes

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By **Brittney Edelman, Sun News**

**MAYFIELD HEIGHTS** - *Casa Dolce, a bakery and cafe at 5732 Mayfield Road, offers monthly Sunday cooking classes throughout the fall and winter. Owner Margie Axelrod teaches technique instead of recipes - and how to enjoy a few glasses of wine at the same time. It's one sweet house, that casa dolce.*

*"Dolce" meaning "sweet" and "casa" - "house" in Italian.*

*Freshly fried pizza dough rolled in almost-spicy cinnamon and sugar.*

*Topped with homemade cold, cheek quenching ice cream.*

*Drizzled with liqueur sauteed spiced apples - like candy.*

*Take one bite and you can't stop until you slurp up every last bite of **Casa Dolce's** oh so good dessert.*

*That dish is just one of the dishes taught by Casa Dolce Owner Margie Axelrod and pastry chef Kyla Clark in their monthly Sunday cooking class.*

*Axelrod, Italian, bought Casa Dolce in Oct. 2007.*

*"Food is just a passion of mine. I just love it," Axelrod said.*

*"After taking cooking classes from Sergio Abramof, I knew I loved cooking. I was elated."*

*Axelrod's cooking classes are technique classes. If you come expecting to learn recipes you may be disappointed - or relieved.*

*With endless wine and laughter, her audience sits gathered around Axelrod's kitchen while she whips up classic Italian.*

*She starts with an appetizer, then moves onto a salad, then a main, a starch, a meat and finishes with dessert executed by Chef Clark.*

*The food in the Sunday Oct. 22 class lived up to the smell permeating the kitchen.*

*The Menu: to start, pizza frita - fried pizza dough, a simple tomato sauce made with crushed canned tomatoes, Tomato Magic brand, chopped garlic, olive oil, red chilies, and finished with freshly grated parmesan cheese and sliced basil.*

*The smell of parmesan and basil in the air.*

*Mouths salivating.*

*The room went quiet when the pizza frittatas were passed around.*

And this was not a quiet crowd.

With each bite, the snack got better and better.

The dough – filling but soft, light and crispy.

Axelrod did not measure one ingredient and it turned out absolutely *delizioso*!

What's next?

Fennel, pomegranate and parmesan salad: roasted and shaved fennel, raw mushrooms, pomegranate seeds, squeezed lemon, olive oil and salt and pepper.

"I love that Margie doesn't teach recipes," said David Pelleg, Moreland Hills resident.

"We learn techniques and the feel of cooking."

The wonderful winter salad was passed around and olive oil poached shrimp served with wild rice followed.

Then wild mushroom gnocchi, herb and lemon veal – and dessert.

Hungry yet?

Some members of Axelrod's audience have attended her class for more than four years. And for others, Oct. 21 was their first.

"Learning Margie's techniques gives you the freedom to cook whatever you want. No recipe. Just technique. It's really liberating" Jerry Fragapane, Cleveland Heights resident said.

Fragapane has been going to Axelrod's classes for over four years.

"People cooked for centuries before cook books. Just use your senses."

Axelrod provides tips throughout the class, such as how to add butter into a sizzling liquid with it turning chunky; chopping basil without bruising the leaves; to not use a non-stick pan when cooking veal - if you want to make a sauce, you want the veal to brown; and slice shrimp in half long-ways if you want them to curl when cooked.

"I'm not going to tell my family what I ate here today," South Euclid resident Linda White laughed.

"What I make won't compare."

It seemed as if all the people in the kitchen gathering around Axelrod were old friends.

It does not matter if it is your first class or 40th – when you're at Casa Dolce, you're family.

"Just come chill, relax, learn, have wine and have a good time," Axelrod said.

"Even if you do not learn anything, if you just enjoy a Sunday afternoon and connect with good people – that's good enough."

The next Casa Dolce cooking class is Nov. 18. Tickets are \$75.

Classes will run until the weather gets warm. The kitchen is too hot in the summer, Axelrod said.

If you take a class, go on an empty stomach. You will not leave hungry.

All ingredients are fresh and no fillers are used in any recipes.

Find more information about classes at on **Casa Dolce's website**.