

Personal Chef Makes Food From The Heart



Many careers preceded culinary business

BY PAM WITMER

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Tall sprigs of fresh rosemary in a vase of water grace the kitchen counter of Bonnie Lowrey's kitchen.

The air is filled with the scent of chicken browning in olive oil.

Her husband, George Lowrey, volunteer sous chef for day, has grated the Parmesan and put out the sun-dried tomato pesto, the quartered cooked artichoke hearts and roasted tomatoes for her to add to the chicken.

"This is one of the dishes I offer people," Bonnie Lowrey said. "It's something easy to reheat and it actually tastes better the next day."

Lowrey smiles as she cooks. She runs a sprig of rosemary between her fingers and smells the fragrant herb on her hand.

A moment later she rolls up fresh basil leaves and slices off tiny slivers that unfurl as ribbons of basil to season her Tuscan Chicken dish.

It's clear Lowrey loves to cook. And she loves to share her creations.

That's what led her to her third career in 2004 when she went to the Culinary Business Academy in Albuquerque, NM, and did her training to become a personal chef.

She returned to Bonita Springs and started Food From The Heart in October of 2004.

Trish Leonard, president-elect of the Zonta Club of Bonita Springs, raves about Lowrey's chicken soup



■ Bonnie Lowrey sprinkles grated parmesan cheese over her Tuscan Chicken dish as the final touch.

“Bonnie’s chicken soup tastes like no other,” Leonard said.

Lowrey said most people are unfamiliar with what a personal chef does. She said she has a mix of clients. Some hire her for a one-time event, like a New Year’s Eve party or a special family occasion.

But she has other clients who are working parents or busy seniors enjoying retirement.

For a base fee of \$375, Lowrey will prepare five entrees (four servings each) plus side dishes.

Lowrey and the client work out the menu, and go over any dietary requirements.

Her fee covers doing the menu planning, the shopping, cooking at the client’s home, cleanup and preparation of food for storage.

“For some people that amount of food last a month. Others go through it in two or three weeks.

Lowrey started out as a daily newspaper writer in Dayton, Ohio. She wrote about the police beat, suburban city halls, labor issues and some environmental reporting.

When she and George Lowrey married, she followed him to Washington, DC, where he was a Congressional aide.

She worked various jobs on Capital Hill, including work on the resolution trust corporation which bailed out the savings and loan industry.

But cooking was always a passion, Lowrey said.

“I enjoy what I do,” she said. “I am happy to help people.”

Her husband said he is happy to be the “sous sampler” when she is trying out recipes before cooking for clients.

He has several of her recipes he loves.

“One is her shrimp scampi in pesto sauce,” he said. “She could feed that to me 10 nights a week and I’d be happy.”

The Chef

Who: Bonnie Lowrey

What: Personal Chef (her business is called Food From the Heart).

Specialties: Shrimp scampi in pesto sauce, chicken noodle soup, baked brie with sun-dried tomatoes and chopped walnuts, lamb chops with reduced balsamic vinaigrette.

How it works: Lowrey meets with potential clients and discusses culinary preferences and dietary requirements. For a base fee of \$375, she prepares five entrees (four servings of each) and side dishes. She does all the shopping, menu planning, cooking on client’s premises and cleanup.

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