

Great Kitchens



and Great Food

Blowing past Bobby Lee & Marion Lawrence on their Honda Goldwing trike, you'd never guess they were masters in the kitchen. As students at the famed Culinary Institute of America, Bobby Lee & Marion quickly learned there would have to be a division of labor in the kitchen when they set out to build their culinary castle. Bobby Lee, the master of the main dish, and Marion, whose claim to fame is chocolates, breads and pastries, are a perfect match for all things food.

It should come to no surprise that when the Lawrences decided to make the move from Manhattan to Las Cruces, they wanted to build a home with an accommodating kitchen. The end result would be a spacious area interrupted

only by a large island in the center, which holds a variety of cookbooks and pictures underneath. Their commercial-grade cook top is also a gem. If you look closely, you'll notice restaurant-style heat lamps that were installed beneath the stainless hood to keep foods warm while others cooked. Underneath, roll out drawers serve two purposes: 1) Bobby Lee has quick access to pots and pans, and 2) it gives him a chance to show off his stunning collection of copper cookware. Just off the kitchen, an oversized pantry is home to a dual-layer wine cellar that currently holds about 300 bottles of wine. To keep wine fresh, the Lawrences use a nitrogen-infused wine keeper that proudly sits on their counter.



Macadamia-Crusted Salmon with Saffron Risotto is a Bobby Lee original. He says the key to concocting a great recipe is to use the freshest ingredients available and know how to pair flavors when you're cooking, although Bobby Lee admits a lot of his cooking is trial and error. "It's all about chemistry in the kitchen - what flavors compliment others," he explains. "A friend of mine once brought me some macadamia nuts and I decided to try and crust a salmon with

them. I just knew the sweet flavor of the nut would go well with the flavor of the salmon."

Using saffron in his risotto is something Bobby Lee says is both flavorful and attractive. "You only have to use a small amount of saffron to get a rich color in the risotto," he explained. It's a good thing, too. Saffron is the most expensive spice in the world at about \$300 for 10 grams. On a recent trip to France, the Lawrences stumbled on a bargain: a small tin of the spice that he picked up

BOBBY LEE'S MACADAMIA CRUSTED SALMON WITH SAFFRON RISOTTO

Risotto Ingredients:

- 12 oz. good Arborio Rice
- 4 c. heated stock (chicken or vegetable)
- 1 c. chopped onion
- 6-8 strands saffron
- 1/2 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 4 oz. dry white wine (optional)
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup grated cheese (Parmesan or Asiago)

In a medium, heavy-bottom saucepan, sauté the onion in butter until soft and golden in color. Add the rice and stir until well coated and translucent. You should begin to smell the toasted rice. Add the dry wine and cook until the wine is evaporated. Stir in 1 cup of the hot stock and simmer gently. Continue to add stock, 1 cup at a time, as the previous liquid is absorbed, stirring occasionally. When all the stock has been added, stir in the strands of saffron. Continue to cook for about 1/2 hour or until the rice is at the desired texture. Stir in the cheese; remove from heat and cover. Allow risotto to set 2 to 5 minutes before serving.

Salmon Ingredients:

- four 6-oz. center cut skinless salmon filets
- freshly ground pepper
- kosher salt as needed
- 4 oz. salted Macadamia nuts, coarsely ground
- olive oil as needed
- chives for garnish

Preheat a large skillet over medium heat. Add two tablespoons of butter and heat. Season the salmon all over with salt and pepper. When the butter's foaming subsides, place the salmon in the skillet and cook, turning only once, until well browned, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a baking sheet and allow salmon to cool slightly. Brush the salmon with olive oil and roll in the Macadamia nuts. Place the salmon back on the baking sheet and cook under the broiler until slightly pink on the inside and the crust is golden brown (about 10 minutes).



for \$40. Here in Las Cruces, locals can get saffron at International Delights for \$2.99 a gram.

Bobby Lee's daring approach to cooking is not exactly the same method followed by his wife. Marion says she leaves the cooking up to Bobby Lee, and keeps her experimentation strictly to sweets. According to Marion, "the secret is to use exact measurements. Don't try to deviate from a good recipe until you're comfortable with the process."

And it's obvious she's comfortable with that process in her new surroundings. Marion's Glazed Molasses Pecan Ginger Cake is a culmination of both her love for baking and her passion for a certain vibrant herb. "I love ginger," she boasts. "There are so many things you can do with ginger, and when you combine it with nuts and raisins, the possibilities are endless."

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