

E Food

Karen Krasne shares
Extraordinary Desserts
secrets in a new cookbook

sweet success

MARY JAMES • SPECIAL TO THE U-T

Great cakes out of a garage? Hard to believe, but that's how Karen Krasne started Extraordinary Desserts more than two decades ago.

"My dad had an extra refrigerator in the basement and a second range — a Wolf — in the garage," she said. "I started making cakes there and selling them to restaurants and other customers. Before long, the demand grew and there were buckets of mousse in his kitchen and a big Hobart mixer on the counter."

Those confections were inspired by patisseries in Paris, where Krasne honed her culinary skills at Cordon Bleu, and later evolved during her stint as pastry chef at an exclusive Cancun,

The white chocolate mousse component of the Ivoire Royale cake can be served as a satisfying dessert on its own. SEAN M. HAFFEY • U-T



RAY KACHATORIAN

Mexico, restaurant. Today, many are best-sellers at Extraordinary Desserts' two locations, one on Fifth Avenue opened in 1988 with help from her dad, who wanted to be able to cook dinner in his kitchen again.

The second restaurant, a Zen-inspired setting on the fringes of Little Italy, will be the setting for a festive Dessert Soiree and Book Signing on Thursday when Krasne unveils her first cookbook, "Extraordinary Cakes: Recipes for Bold and Sophisticated Desserts" (Rizzoli, \$37.50). (Details are at www.extraordinarydesserts.com.)

Filled with mouthwatering photos, the cookbook details recipes for 32 desserts, ranging from filled

SEE KRASNE • E3

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Karen Krasne

WHAT'S COOKING

A HEALTHY INCENTIVE

Fresh Healthy Vending, the San Diego-based vending machine company, has set a goal of replacing 2,000 old-school snack and candy vending machines with the company's healthier model.



To help meet the goal, the company is allocating \$100 for each referral that results in a replaced machine.

The new vending machines are starting to show up in schools, health clubs and businesses; the company reports that Fresh Healthy machines are currently in more than 600 locations around the country. The vending machines are stocked with such nutritious options as fresh fruits and vegetables, baked chips, soy milk, juices, tea, yogurt, bottled water and all-natural cereal bars.

For more information, go to freshandhealthy.org.

VEGGIE CHOICES

FUN, FARRO HELP SET RESTAURANTS' TONE

The former spices up the atmosphere; the latter dominates their vegetarian choices



The vegetarian dish Farro Sauté on the menu at Solace & the Moonlight Lounge in Encinitas. K.C. ALFRED • U-T

BETH WOOD • SPECIAL TO THE U-T

Fun may not be an actual ingredient in Matt Gordon's dishes, but it certainly factors into his culinary success. Both his new Solace & the Moonlight Lounge in Encinitas and North Park's Urban Solace have whimsical touches and an upbeat atmosphere.

"I believe the tone in the workplace translates to the guests in the dining room," said Gordon, who opened Urban Solace with his wife, Young-Mi, four years ago. "We do our best to make the job enjoyable."

The new Solace is located in the green-friendly complex called Pacific Station. The airy, two-story space accommodates indoor/outdoor dining, communal areas and artful lighting fixtures. As with Urban Solace, which features a silk-screen image of film star Will

Solace & the Moonlight Lounge

Address: 25 E. E St., Encinitas
Phone: (760) 753-2433
Online: eatatsolace.com

Ferrell as Ron Burgundy, Solace displays a smiling Jeff Bridges as the Big Lebowski. Both works are by local artist JFeather.

"It's been fun to watch people react to the Ferrell piece," Gordon explained, "So we asked Jason for Lebowski. You can see it from the street corner. It captures the spirit of wanting to make people laugh and doing our own thing."

Matt and Young-Mi Gordon, who oversees the beverage op-

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KRASNE • Her intricate desserts can include 'up to seven recipes in one'

FROM E1 strawberry cupcakes (Toute Fraises) loved by Krasne's daughter, Sahara, to her "over the top" Versailles (pictured on the book cover), a marriage of her and her husband Jamie Kiskis' favorite sweets. Organized by seasons, the recipes also include Krasne's sinful versions of classics like tiramisu, holiday yule log, strawberry shortcake and bread pudding (surprisingly easy to make with store-bought croissants), as well as jewel-toned fruit sauces to enhance each luscious slice.

Krasne admits that fans may be surprised to discover that her airy Blackberry Cheese Cake, fruity Blood Orange Ricotta Cake and other best-sellers are "up to seven recipes in one."

"Keep in mind that these cakes are like a well-made dress, sleek and pretty on the outside, but when you look inside, you discover all the tailoring that makes it look good," she says.

Take the chocoholics' favorite, the Viking. Its layers of sour cream chocolate cake, chocolate crème brûlée and chocolate Chantilly are wrapped in rum-spiked ganache and crushed almond pralines and crowned with chocolate curls. All were carefully chosen by Krasne to tantalize the eye and excite the palate.

"I think about how the fork goes in, from light to heavy," she says. "I want creamy, velvety textures of mousse and crème brûlée to contrast with the cake layers. And I wanted some crunch. The pralines really make this cake, adding toasty, roasty notes that cut the chocolate sweetness."

Signature fresh flower garnishes are "my Southern California take on French aesthetic with all its extra visual touches," says Krasne, who also was inspired by the lush flora of Hawaii, where she worked in a top bakery while attending college.

To make sure the cookbook recipes were doable outside a restaurant, she tested each up to nine times in her home kitchen and recruited "testers" among friends and family.

The biggest mistake by amateur cooks? "They would change the size of the pan required," Krasne says, "and that's a disaster, because they are

White Chocolate Sour Cream Mousse

This is a portion of the Ivoire Royale recipe from Karen Krasne's cookbook, "Extraordinary Cakes: Recipes for Bold and Sophisticated Desserts." The full Ivoire Royale recipe is online at uniontrib.com/cakes.

- 1 cup sour cream, room temperature
- 6.5 ounces (1 1/4 cups) good-quality white chocolate, chopped
- 1 1/4 cups heavy cream

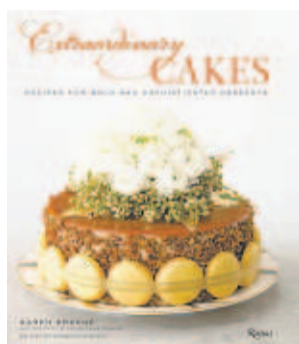
Place the sour cream in a mixing bowl and whisk quickly to loosen. If the sour cream is colder than room temperature, gently warm it in a microwave.

Place the chocolate in a medium heatproof mixing bowl.

Bring the heavy cream to a boil in a small, heavy saucepan over medium-high heat. Pour the hot cream over the white chocolate and let sit for a couple of minutes before whisking until smooth and fully combined.

Using a hand whisk, mix the sour cream into the white chocolate ganache in 2 additions. Cover with plastic wrap pressed directly on the surface of the White Chocolate Sour Cream Mousse and refrigerate overnight to set.

The White Chocolate Sour Cream Mousse can be made up to 2 days in advance and stored in the refrigerator, tightly covered, until ready to use. It can be used cold, directly from the refrigerator. When making the mousse by itself, it can be layered with berries and served in a glass.



Karen Krasne's new cookbook, "Extraordinary Cakes."

very specific to each cake and all of its components. Use a smaller pan and you'll have too much of everything."

Krasne includes detailed lists of equipment, Internet-friendly ingredient sources, flowers by season and techniques, including how to unmold a frozen cake with a hair dryer. But most important for success, she says, is "to focus. These are not recipes to make while you're feeding the kids."

Luckily for the time-challenged (or intimidated), many components of each cake can be served as desserts on their own. For example, in the berry-rich Ivoire Royale, the sour cream pound cake could be served with fresh berries and ice cream or glazed with lemon to enjoy with tea. The batter also could be shaped into cupcakes and filled with jam — "Just poke a hole in the center with your finger to create a cavity," Krasne says. Top the cupcakes with whipped

cream. Ivoire Royale's white chocolate sour cream mousse also can be layered in a glass with berries, or for a holiday touch, with the cranberry orange preserves used in the Blood Orange Ricotta Cake. Chocolate lovers can spoon this mousse on top of bittersweet chocolate mousse, borrowed from the Dame Chocolat cake recipe.

When all the pieces do come together in an extraordinary dessert, Krasne hopes home cooks will experience the gratification that convinced her to become a pastissiere.

"Back in Hawaii and Mexico, I saw how excited people get about dessert, how memorable a dessert can be," she says. "All these years, it's been a sweet reward to bring such joy to others."

Mary James is a San Diego freelance writer.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

Tips from Karen Krasne

- To make a cake in advance and keep it fresh, wrap the just-baked and cooled cake in several layers of plastic wrap and freeze. It will keep for several weeks.
- To avoid a lopsided cake, freeze the layered cake and filling in the cake ring before decorating. Remove from the freezer and add the final decorations as the cake is thawing.
- To enhance the flavor of chocolate-cream mixtures like mousses and ganaches, refrigerate overnight so that the flavors marry.
- Use toasted cake crumbs to add crunch and decorate the sides of cakes. Toast cake trimmings in a 350-degree oven for 10 to 20 minutes until dry. Crumble and store in an airtight container until needed.
- Baking times are approximate because ovens vary. Check for doneness starting three-quarters of the way through the baking time. Also invest in an oven thermometer.
- Before starting to bake, make sure you have all the needed ingredients. Measure to be certain you have the correct amounts as well. Also prepare the components in the order given.

Main events

"Taste of Opera" Cooking Classes: Chef Katherine Emmenegger from Great News Cooking School has created four cooking class menus inspired by the San Diego Opera's 2012 season: "Salome," "Moby-Dick," "Don Pasquale" and "The Barber of Seville." Sous chef and San Diego Opera Geisel Director of Education and Outreach Dr. Nicolas Reveles will entertain guests with facts and stories during meal preparations. The first class, "Salome," will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday at Great News Cooking School, 1788 Garnet Ave., San Diego. \$54. Space is limited. The three remaining classes will be held in November, December and January. Sign up for all four classes and receive a 10 percent discount. Reservations: great-news.com or (858) 270-1582.

Second annual OktoberWest: Chef Eugenio Martignago, who recently cooked at the James Beard House, will create seven authentic farm-to-table food-and-wine pairings, noon to 3 p.m. Saturday at Bistro West, 4960 Avenida Encinas, Carlsbad. \$50. Advance purchase required, seating is limited. Reservations: (760) 930-8008. Portion of the proceeds benefits Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Cooking Class: Chef Jenn Felmley will prepare a vegetarian menu, paired with a local Pacific Redwood Organic Pinot Noir wine, 3 to 6 p.m. Sunday at Sea Rock Bistro, 3382 30th St., San Diego. \$65. Reservations: (858) 212-9054.

Brew Masters Dinner: Chef Nick Brune and Black Market Brewing head brewer Ryan Brooks will serve a five-course, farm-fresh vegetarian or vegan menu paired with five craft beers from a Temecula brewer, 6 to 10 p.m. Tuesday at Local Habit, 3827 Fifth Ave., San Diego. \$65. Reservations: (619) 795-4770.

Eighth annual Wine Walk & Talk: Sample world-class cuisine, premium wines and creative artwork at more than 25 restaurants and 10 prominent galleries, 5 to 9 p.m. Oct. 20 along Herschel Street in La Jolla. Tickets are \$40 in advance, \$45 at the door. lajollabythesea.com or (619) 233-5008. Proceeds benefit La Jolla Village Merchants Association.

Oktoberfest: Take a culinary journey of Germany and experience new twists on traditional German favorites with chefs Bernard Guillas and Ron Oliver, 6 to 9 p.m. Oct. 20 at Cups La

Jolla, 7857 Girard Ave., San Diego. Their latest cookbook, "Flying Pans: Two Chefs, One World," will be available for purchase and signing after the class. \$65. Reservations: (858) 459-2877.

Happy Hour Specials: The Islands Restaurants, famous for their burgers and drinks, is offering a special happy hour menu at the bar (for San Diego guests only), 4 to 7 p.m. weekdays through Oct. 31. Guests can indulge in a variety of bites and beverages with mini burgers, Islands' fresh cut fries, cocktails and more, for under \$5. For a San Diego location near you, visit islandsrestaurants.com.

Wine tastings
Bacchus Wine Market & Tasting Room: "Wines From Spain and Portugal," 4 to 8:30 p.m. Friday and 2 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday at 647 G St., San Diego. \$15. (619) 236-0005.

San Diego Wine Co.: "90 Point and Higher Wines," 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday at 7080 Miramar Road, Suite 100, San Diego. \$10. (858) 586-9463.

Grape Connections: "Andrew Geofrey Vineyards," 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday at 1130 Scott St., San Diego. \$15. (619) 523-6441.

Cooking instruction
Alchemy of the Hearth: 960 Rancheros Drive, Suite L, San Marcos. Information: (760) 233-2433.

Center for a Healthy Lifestyle: 533 Lomas Santa Fe Drive, Solana Beach. Information: (858) 436-7502.

Charlie's Classic Cooking Classes: 1291 Simpson Way, Suite H, Escondido. Information: (858) 442-5252.

Cups Culinary: 7857 Girard Ave., La Jolla. Information: (858) 459-2877 or cupslj.com

Great News! Cooking School: 1788 Garnet Ave., Pacific Beach. Information: (858) 270-1582, ext. 3, or great-news.com.

RB Classic Cooking & Catering: 1291 Simpson Way, Suite H, Escondido. Information: (858) 964-8513.

Ro Z's Sweet Art Studio: 277 S. Rancho Santa Fe Road, San Marcos. Information: (760) 744-0447.

The Kitchen Studio: 5927 Steeplechase Road, Bonita. Information: (619) 507-7868.

Veg-Appeal: San Diego. Information: veg-appeal.com or (619) 263-2165.

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