



THE PERFECTIONIST: "He has such a nice presentation," Brenda Strom says about her husband's attention to detail, such as the circle of cookie-cutter stars he placed atop his award-winning Hawaiian vanilla custard pie.

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER GRIMES, TRIBUNE

SUCCESS: Pie is a winner

FROM PAGE D1

who bakes about 3,000 cookies around the holidays with Brenda, Jackie, and sons Jordan, 16, and Johnny, 14.

It was at the Arizona State Fair about 20 years ago where he decided to bake competitively.

"I said to my buddies, 'I can do that,'" says Strom, who entered his Swedish rye bread at the fair the following year. He earned a blue ribbon.

"After that I was hooked," says Strom, whose cheesecakes and pies have garnered wins at the fair for two decades.

"He likes to experiment," says Brenda of her husband, who decided to use white chocolate macadamia nut coffee creamer in his winning pie recipe.

Strom's wins have become a special source of pride for a lucky group of "taste testers" from Gilbert's Patterson Elementary School (where Brenda



works as a registered nurse): "They get to sample his latest creations to see if they are ready for competition.

"When Brenda says there's something in the lounge for you to taste, word spreads fast around the campus. We all flock over right away," says Diane Walker, a music teacher at the school. "We were so excited for him (on his win). It's fun to know we had a small part in it."

CONTACT WRITER: (480) 898-6575 or

janovsky@evtrib.com

CUISINE SCENE

10 events to inspire the cook
— or eater — in you

QUICK ITALIAN: Learn to make quick Italian-inspired dishes 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. today at AndyFood Culinary Studio, 7000 E. Shea Blvd., Suite 1740, Scottsdale. \$65 per person. Reservation required. (480) 951-2400 or www.andyfood.com.

RESERVE WINE: Sample wines 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. today at Arizona Wine Co., 2515 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale. \$10. (480) 423-9305 or www.azwineco.com.

SINGLES NIGHT: Learn to make gourmet dishes for one person while meeting other singles 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Thursday at Classic Cooking, 10411 E. McDowell Mountain Ranch Road, Scottsdale. \$55. (480) 502-0177 or www.classiccooking.net.

DELI DINNER: Learn to assemble quick meals using meats and cheeses 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Thursday at Simply Impressive Cooking School, 3345 E. Downing St., Mesa. \$58. Reservation required. (480) 654-1981 or www.simplyimpressive.com.

DINING BENEFIT: Try gourmet food and wine prepared by 30 of Arizona's top chefs at Flavors of Phoenix, a charity dining event to benefit the Liver Foundation, starting at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Westin Kierland Resort and Spa, 6902 E. Greenway Parkway, Phoenix. \$300. (602) 953-1800.

FOUNTAIN HILLS FARMERS MARKET: Buy chemical- and pesticide-free produce at a farmers market 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday on the Avenue of the Fountains, Fountain Hills. (480) 585-8639.

FRENCH PASTRIES: Learn to make fancy French desserts 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday at Kitchen Classics, 4041 E. Thomas Road, Phoenix. \$20. Reservations required. (602) 954-8141 or www.kitchenclassics.com.

FARMERS MARKET: Buy local produce, breads and pastries 9 a.m. to noon Friday at the Mesa Community Farmers Market at the Mesa Community Center, 260 N. Center St. Free. (623) 848-1234.

WINE TASTING: Sample a selection of everyday value wines 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Friday at Epicurean Wine Service, 7101 E. Thunderbird Road, Phoenix. \$12. Reservation required. (480) 998-7800 or www.epicureanwine.com.

PIZZA PASSION: Learn to make delicious pizza at home 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday at Sweet Basil Gourmetware and Cooking School, 10749 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale. \$50. Reservation required. (480) 596-5628 or www.sweetbasilgourmet.com.