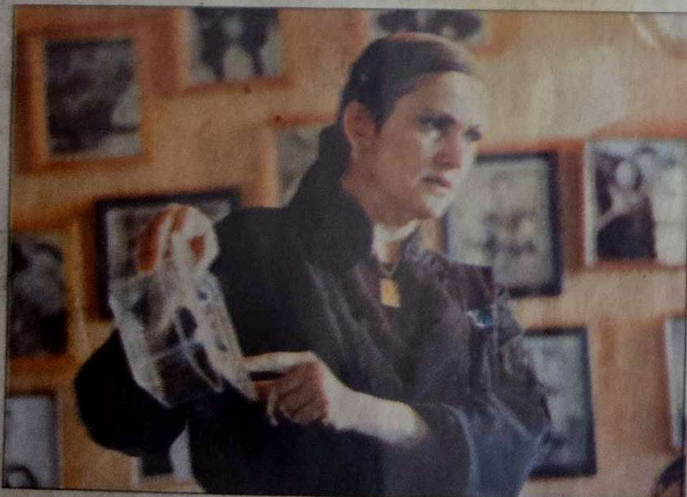


FOOD SAFETY



EMMA CAUMONT, chef and co-owner of Celebrity's Cafe in Dublin, demonstrates the importance of sanitizing kitchen utensils during a cooking class Saturday that focused on food safety. Caumont offers the classes to the public every Saturday. MICHAEL LUCIA — Staff photos



CAUMONT ILLUSTRATES the importance of safe food storage and bacteria that can live in uncooked vegetables at cooking class. Caumont, the grand-niece of culinary great Victor "Trader Vic" Bergeron, covers everything from cooking Italian to cooking on a budget in her weekly classes, which are open to the public.



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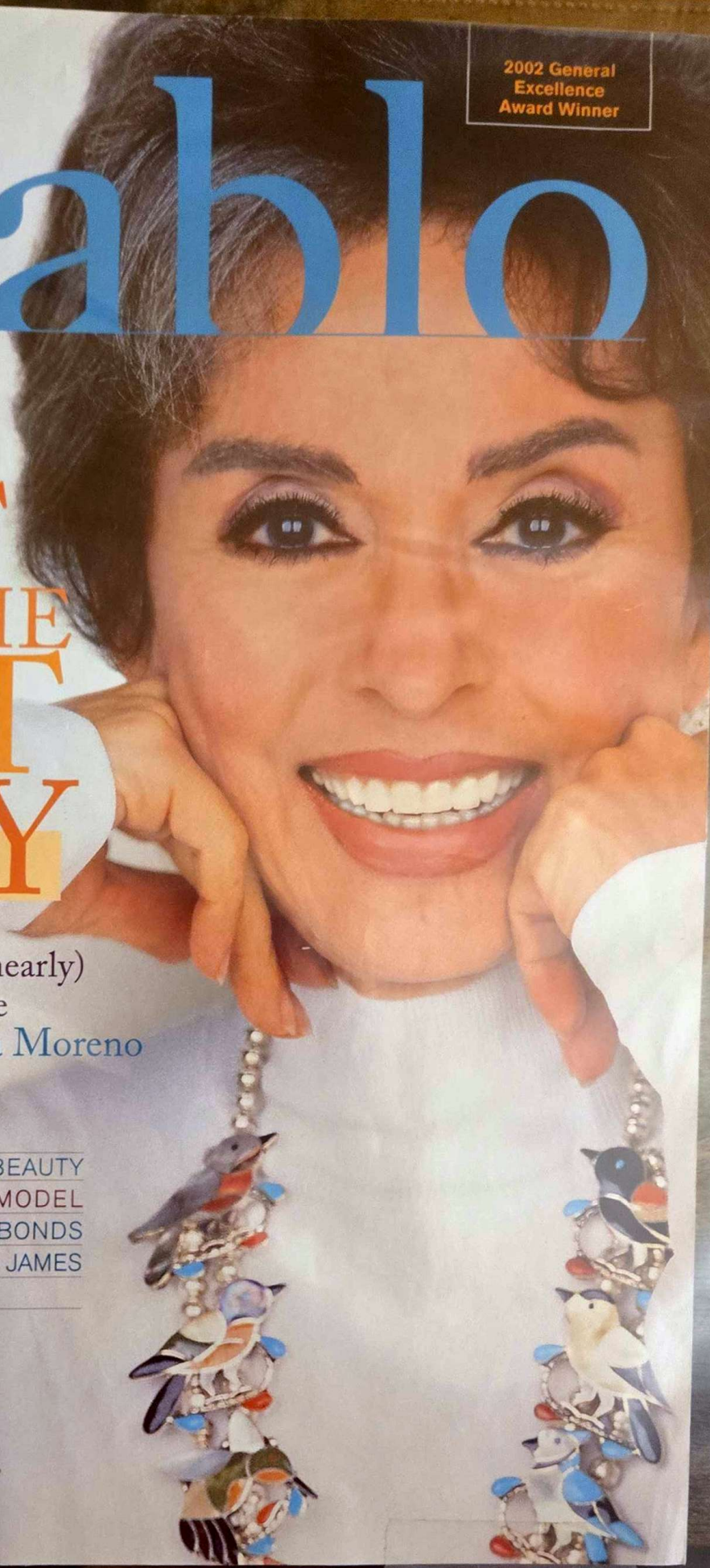
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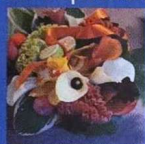
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CELEBRITY WORSHIP



Sometimes the best things in life are the most unexpected. Take Celebrity's Café, for instance. Owned since last August by head chef Emma Caumont and general manager David Savell, the health-conscious, international café is located in an unlikely spot: a Dublin strip mall.

While its location may be humble, its roots are anything but. Inspiration for the café came in part from Caumont's eccentric great-uncle, restaurant legend Victor "Trader Vic" Bergeron, who opened his first pub in Oakland in 1932. The restaurateurs corresponded about recipes and life—Trader Vic once sent Caumont plans for a pyramid he built in his backyard.

Bergeron's influence is seen everywhere from the Celebrity's menu, to its serving ware, to the entertainment. Savell regularly books music, poetry, and comedy acts to perform on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. Caumont, a classically trained pianist and singer, often performs during the Thursday open mike. Like her Uncle Vic, she obviously knows how to have a good time.

Whether ordering sandwiches to go, or lounging over a plate of escargot, customers will likely feel the same. There are books of poetry resting on each table and a library of cookbooks and dried herbs that patrons can sniff through. With so much to discover, it's easy to overlook the walls packed with photos of, you guessed it, celebrities.

Celebrity's Café, 6694-Z Amador Plaza Rd., Dublin. (925) 803-9855, www.celebritycafe.tv.

— Priya Giri

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Trader Vic relative dishes out some culinary secrets

Celebrity's Cafe co-owner teaches interactive cooking class at restaurant
By Brooke Bryant, STAFF WRITER

DUBLIN -- On Saturdays, chef Emma Caumont leaves the kitchen behind and steps onto the stage.

The co-owner of Celebrity's Cafe in Dublin offers cooking classes each weekend, demystifying the basics of her culinary creations. Her venue: the stage in the corner of the cafe, usually reserved for the musical talent.

Food, Caumont says, "is kind of a family thing."

She is the grand-niece of Victor Bergeron, famous for the chain of Trader Vic restaurants that got its start in Oakland and who many hail as the original architect of the mai tai.

But Caumont's trademark low-fat, no-sodium style is a marked departure from the Tiki-themed Polynesian restaurants that her uncle propagated.

In her interactive classes, where everybody goes home with some food, she shows her students how to make meals out of what's on hand, how to master the art of Italian or Middle Eastern cuisine, or how to make quick and creative meals.

"My goal is for them not to have to look at a recipe, but look at what they have around," she says. Many would-be cooks are put off by the perceived complexity -- Caumont aims to show them they can tackle more in the kitchen than just the microwave, with a few fundamentals under their belts.

This Saturday's class is called "ABC of Food Safety & Handling" -- not the most sexy of subjects, she admits, but one of the most important aspects of cooking.

Millions contract food poisoning each year, and most times it happens at home, she said. That's because people don't know how to handle their food properly: Meat is stored near vegetables, or the refrigerator temperature dips too low, or the amateur cook fails to clean his chopping boards when switching from, say, raw chicken to salad stuff.

Another common blunder is pack-ing the fridge so full of food that the air doesn't circulate, so one side will be too cold, while the other gets perilously warm. It's

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French chef teaches cooking in her home

BY COTY DOLORES MIRANDA
AFN Contributor

There's a petite touch of Paris in Ahwatukee, and area residents are being invited to share in it.

Paris-born Emma Caumont and her husband Ron Rocco own and operate the newly-established Phoenix Oasis Private Cooking School in their Ahwatukee home.

With their landscaped Nighthawk Way home boasting more than 200 plants and the cascading waterfall spilling into their pool augmented by their panterrace view, it is an oasis — and the emphasis is on the wonders that occur within the couple's kitchen.

The Phoenician Oasis classes are diverse, ranging from breadmaking to vegan to French immersion and a host of workshops like Culinary Classics and more that include instruction on topics like proper knife techniques and nutrition science.

Classes can be taught in either English or French.

With a delicious French accent, Caumont is the main instructor — though Rocco laughs that in their nearly four of marriage, "She's taught me to be sous chef."

These aren't new ventures for Caumont. As an award-winning professional chef in the San Francisco Bay Area, she owned two businesses — Slim Chef, a low-fat, low-sodium, low-sugar catering company; and the Celebrity Cafe with international cuisine and live music and where she also conducted classes including food safety.

Her Tri-Valley Northern California first place awards were for dishes such as Jamaican jerk chicken with picante mango sauce, salmon mousse and a raspberry pork roast.

She sold her two businesses before moving to Arizona "for a quieter life" and met her future husband, who in 1994 started a business with the prophetic name, Accent Mortgage.

"Because I came from a customer service environment, I love the interaction with those who come to our classes," said Rocco who purchased a home in Mountain Park Ranch in 1986.

Caumont said the Phoenician Oasis



Paris-born Emma Caumont and her husband Ron Rocco have opened a cooking school in their Ahwatukee home. (Special to AFN)

classes, both in groups and as business team-building sessions, have been successful. She recently took a breather to sit in her plant-filled enclosed patio and share her fascinating tale of her early introduction to the culinary world through her grandmother and a great uncle.

Her story in Paris with her grandmother, Marguerite Caumont.

"My grandmother owned a hostelry in Paris for international college-level students who were referred by the Alliance Francaise," she said of the agency that teaches French culture and language.

She said every summer her grandmother's housekeeper would go on holiday, and as soon as Emma turned 12, she would rush to Paris to help.

"I looked forward to my summertime each year. It was a fun environment, yet it was challenging. We prepared breakfast and dinner every day. My grandmother never paid me, and I never thought of getting paid either. She worked very hard, and ran a tight hostelry and kept her young guests in check," she chuckled.

"We were very close and laughed a lot together. Those positive experiences naturally led me to my culinary studies a few years later. She taught me ancestral recipes that I never forgot, and in fact I still use, sharing them in my cooking classes."

Caumont and her family moved from Paris to Toulouse when she was 11 when

her father, a space engineer, followed his company to the aerospace hub of Europe.

Her father's family also owned a 14-bedroom 'manor house' and 200-plus acre property in the Pyrenees for centuries. She said her family would often holiday there, and one of the regular family visitors would further influence her culinary career.

"My grand-uncle, Victor Bergeron, would come occasionally to visit us at our family manor in Izaux. He took notice that the little girl — me, was always keeping busy in the kitchens. He gave me advice I never forgot:

'Go to culinary school.' I never forgot his words, and followed his advice, and today, I have my own small cooking school. He'd be proud," she said.

Toulouse was where she first attended culinary school.

The uncle giving her the advice was Victor J. Bergeron of the venerable Trader Vic's restaurant chain created in the mid-30s using his nickname.

"He was very special because at the age of 5, one leg was amputated below the knee. But he persevered even after multiple bankruptcies until he came up with the tiki bar, mai tai, Polynesian menu, etc.," said Caumont.

Caumont had an early start in the kitchen — partly because of her own dietary desires.

"When I was 3, I stopped eating my mom's food. My parents took me to a psychologist to figure out why I didn't want to eat. He told them, 'A child doesn't let herself starve to death, let her eat what she wants to eat.' I started eating things I liked: veggies, yogurt, cheese, nuts and fruits and completely eliminated meat and chicken," she recalled.

"At age 5, I was tall enough to reach my mom's cook stove and I told her, 'Mom, I want to cook my food now.' I never stopped, and actually started to cook on a regular basis for the family. I developed at an early age my own preferences of food,"

she continued.

I've always preferred vegetarian-based food, and my family preferred meat-based food, yet I had no issue cooking what they liked. I now had my own options and cooked for them and for me."

Her vegan classes have proved popular, as are her French Immersion classes that include ancestral recipes on how to make things like mayonnaise, crepes and French sauces.

"In some classes I show how a crepe batter can be transformed into pancake batter then transformed into a cake without a recipe," she said. "Moreover, everything I teach is made by hand without modern instruments. All becomes simpler, healthier, a lot cheaper and much more fun."

She and Rocco are very much forward-looking.

"We're all about leaving a positive impact in our community when it comes to remembering to connect to one another," she said. "Create real experience, make connections, enjoy each other's company, make something together, be active, be present."

"Our digital world is disabling our human connection. Our pre-packaged food is disabling our learning abilities to make homemade food. Our simple classes are meant to be a tool to help people reconnect and learn the basics in a kitchen."

Phoenician Oasis also offers team building classes.

"There's no better place to get to know people or find new common ground than in a kitchen. In the corporate world, HR faces daily struggles to help employees get along, improve productivity, improve communication, etc. Our kitchen setting and classes help fill the need for this human touch lost in busy offices," said Caumont.

Those events are scheduled and booked upon request.

The Phoenician Oasis is available for all ages, and events can be scheduled online.

"My youngest student was 10," she said. "I have men and women signing up for our classes. They cook together while sipping wine and savoring appetizers. There are lots of bookings being done to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, small family gatherings."

Information: PhoenicianOasis.com

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