

# Getting comfortable in the kitchen

Local chef shares her love of food by teaching classes at Clark College



Lasher demonstrates the proper technique for mixing olive oil into salad dressing.



Chef Karen Lasher teaches a class on French cooking to students at Clark College at Columbia Tech Center.



“These classes are really about instilling confidence and getting people excited about cooking. To many, it’s a chore. I love opening people up to cooking as a creative, fulfilling process.”

— Karen Lasher

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about upcoming classes or events Karen Lasher is offering, visit [www.nourishkitchen.net](http://www.nourishkitchen.net). To sign up for cooking classes at Clark College Columbia Tech Center, visit [cce.clark.edu](http://cce.clark.edu).

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
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Nothing strikes fear into the hearts of some people like the thought of preparing a meal from scratch.

Local chef Karen Lasher is hoping to remove some of that anxiety by offering classes aimed at taking the trepidation out of cooking.

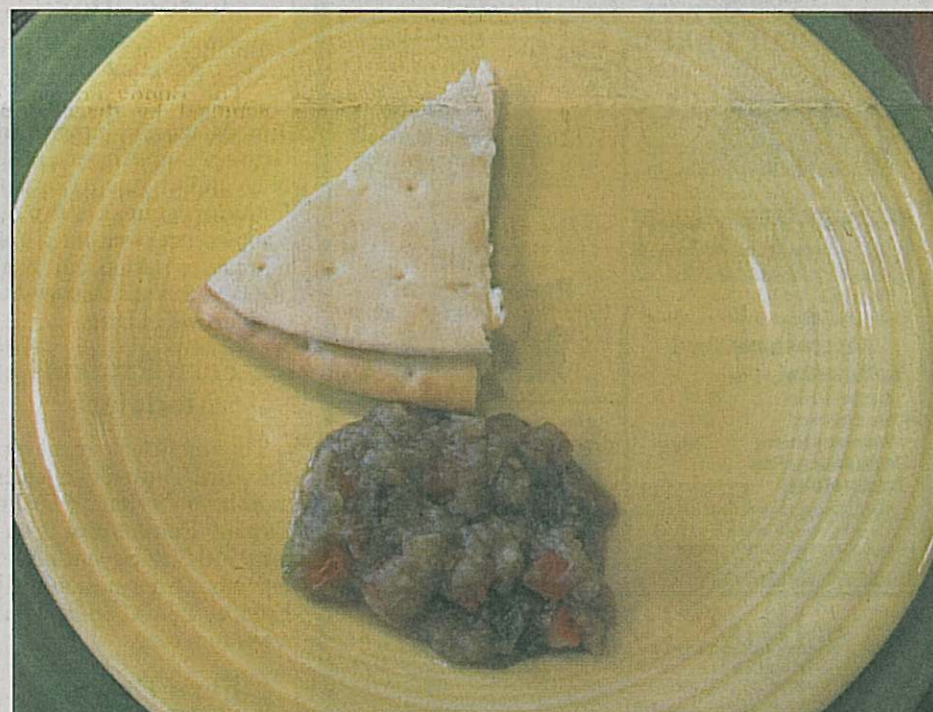
“I just love teaching,” said Lasher, a Camas resident who works as personal chef at the PeaceHealth Corporate Cafe in East Vancouver.

Lasher, former owner of Around the Table restaurant in Camas, has taught everything from kids cooking classes to gourmet meal preparation for adults.

Last Thursday, a tantalizing mix of aromas filled the lobby of Clark College at Columbia Tech Center, where Lasher was teaching a class on French cooking.

“French bistro food is not difficult to prepare, and is earthy but elegant,” Lasher said. “These classes are really about instilling confidence and getting people excited about cooking. To many, it’s a chore. I love opening people up to cooking as a creative, fulfilling process.”

During the class, called “An



Sesame eggplant salsa was one of the appetizers prepared and served during the “Evening in Provence.”

Evening in Provence,” Lasher prepared and served sesame eggplant salsa on flatbread, a provencal onion tart, fennel salad, pork tenderloin with fig sauce and an olive oil cake with rhubarb compote.

She gathered much of her inspiration from a trip to France, taken with her husband to celebrate their 10-year anniversary.

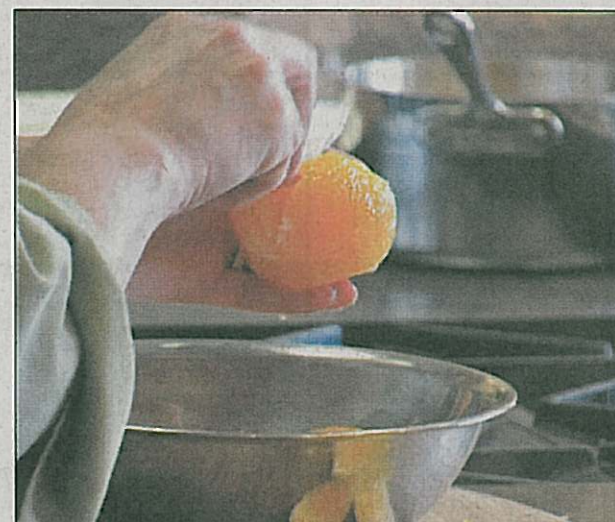
“My favorite part was going to the markets every day,” she said. “They don’t have just an olive bar like we do in the stores here, but rows and rows of olives.”

In between courses, Lasher described how she gets involved in the creative process of cooking.

“Sometimes with cooking we rely too much on recipes or instructions,” she said. “But really, how you learn to be a great cook is by trying new things. We eat with our eyes first, then our nose, then our mouths.”

Shirley Martin of Camas decided to take the class because she loves French food and travel.

“And I’m retired now so I have the time to do this,” she said. “This class is like a little bit of travel



Oranges are one of the ingredients in the provencal fennel salad. It also includes kalamata olives, sliced sweet onion and finely sliced fennel.

close to home.”

Tracy Reilly Kelly is the program manager for corporate and continuing education at the Clark College Tech Center campus.

“The one thing that is wonderful about the classes Karen is teaching is that not only is cooking fun and healthful, but she is a big advocate of using local ingredients,” she said. “Karen’s artistry and the way she shows a love of French food highlights the importance of essential ingredients for wonderful

tastes and flavors.”

Kelly said the tech center campus offers several kinds of cooking classes. Some of the summer courses include youth cooking for sports nutrition, preparing gluten-free desserts, making basic pasta and chicken dishes, and redefining fast food.

“I just love when you expose people to great cooking and they get so excited,” Lasher said. “I just like that, seeing people get excited and feeling comfortable in the kitchen.”



Lasher puts caramelized onions on top of pizza dough. She refers to the onions as “caramelized gold,” saying, “They make everything taste better.”