



Basant Paradis, the owner of Cake Concoctions, takes cookies from the oven during a summer camp for kids, which teaches them the science of baking, on Monday at the shop in Bangor.

Chemistry of baking

Children learn the science of cooking at Bangor summer camp

BY SHELBY HARTIN
BDN STAFF

With a crowd around a whirring 6-quart stand mixer, the kind people have at home, Basant Paradis scooped shortening. She was making a batch of buttercream.

But it wasn't a home cook making cupcakes for her children. No, Paradis, owner of Cake Concoctions in downtown Bangor was teaching a class of children ages 8 to 11 as part of a science summer camp at her bakery. After all, baking is more chemistry than art.

"We're gonna whip this right up, just like we did with our batter before," Paradis told the children, who each wore a Cake Concoctions apron.

"Do oil and water mix?" Paradis asked the children. "They don't, do they?"

And that's where the lessons come in. After the children all responded by shaking their heads no, they watched her add water to the mixing, along with butter flavor, vanilla extract and powdered sugar. Paradis explained the process of emulsification to them — the process by which the oily shortening and water can actually be mixed into a smooth frosting. The secret? Adding them slowly to each other and constantly stirring them.

"We use 21 pounds of sugar to make a big batch of this [for the bakery]," Paradis said, motioning over to a large mixer in the corner.

They all looked at her, their mouths



Children mix chocolate chips into cookie dough during a summer camp, aimed to teach kids the science of baking, on Monday at Cake Concoctions in Bangor.

agape. That's a lot more than a home cook — or the campers — would make.

Paradis started the Science Behind Baking Summer Camp this summer. She teaches children about the chemistry behind creating their favorite baked goods, while also having them cook with her.

On July 18, during the first camp session, the children baked three different kinds of chocolate chip cookies — cakey, soft and chewy, and thin and crispy.

"I showed the kids the differences between them and how we can adjust the recipe to get the type of cookie that they like. ... The fun thing about it too is all of that has to do with chemistry — how you're mixing things, the order you mix them, at what temperature you cook them, how long you

cook them. So we talked a lot about that on Monday," Paradis said.

The camp's second session, this time for children ages 12 to 15, is this week. Future sessions, including nearly planned August weeks, are in the works. The camp costs \$165, and much to Paradis' delight, it has a waiting list.

"I'm a chemist. I used to do fun science experiments with kids when I taught chemistry," Paradis said.

She arranged for the children to learn about how salt conducts electricity by using her own pickle contraption, and sprinkled in other experiments throughout the week, always trying to relate them back to baking.

See Camp, Page C2

Make shrimp dip for guests

Spontaneous entertaining is fun, but it can catch you with your appetizers down. A while ago, I figured I had the bases covered if I kept some Kalamata olives, toasted almonds and cream cheese on hand. I could always make little balls of cream cheese and roll them in cracked pepper or flatten them with a dollop of chutney on top or blend in chives, parsley and garlic, add a few crackers to the plate — that usually worked just fine.

Then Sharon Frost from Calais obliged me with this shrimp dip. "This is an old favorite I've been making for years," she wrote. "Quick, easy and tasty." And it is. It's made from ingredients we are likely to have on hand, such as mayonnaise, cream cheese, horseradish, chili sauce and lemon juice or lemons to squeeze. Just make sure you also have a small can of shrimp in the pantry, which is itself pretty handy stuff. Just the other day I saw tiny shrimp added to deviled egg filling and thought how delicious that would be.



SANDY OLIVER
TASTE BUDS



SANDY OLIVER

Shrimp Dip.

Shrimp Dip

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons horseradish, or more to taste
- 2 teaspoons chili sauce, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 can tiny shrimp, drained

Combine the cream cheese, mayonnaise, chili sauce and lemon juice.

Fold in the shrimp to mix evenly. Chill and serve.

I didn't have chili sauce, but I sprinkled in some chili powder; if I had cocktail sauce, I would have used that. I also doubled up on the horseradish because we like it very much. Canned shrimp — and

See Oliver, Page C2



Dirk Yeaton, the new head chef of Pig + Poet, stands in front of a sign for the restaurant and Whitehall recently in Camden.

New chef wins fans at Camden's Pig + Poet

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

CAMDEN — It takes some grit and knowhow to follow in the footsteps of the sexiest chef alive. But Dirk Yeaton, a compact culinary powerhouse who trained in the Army, is meeting and exceeding that challenge at the Pig + Poet.

"I don't want to serve a meal where I have a certain number of perfectly configured dots in a constellation

around a plate with a flower petal and half a quail egg," said the new chef at Whitehall's flagship restaurant. "I want you to look at a plate and say, 'Jesus, that's beautiful,' take a bite and say, 'Aw, man, that's so good. My mouth is doing a happy dance.'"

Settling into the executive chef position at the 1-year-old seasonal restaurant Pig + Poet at Whitehall, Yeaton has one thing on his mind: flavor.

See Yeaton, Page C2

Why is it so hard to make friends as adults?

On a recent evening, just before the sky began transforming into shades of reds, oranges, purples and pinks, my kids and I stopped at Broadway Park so they could play. It was the end of a busy week and the end of a night spent enjoying theatre outdoors — "A Comedy of Errors" at Indian Trail Park in Brewer, to be specific. A little time at the park seemed like just the right way to end the day.

While I got cozy with a new book on a bench, my kids ran off to climb, swing, slide and play. Here in Bangor, we're lucky to have so many public parks. I've lived in places where all the parks were ancient and in places where there was only one playground or two. But here, there are playgrounds and parks everywhere — so many places to enjoy.

It wasn't long before my daughter was immersed in a game of tag with other kids there, running with her infectious giggles and



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Cinnamon Zucchini Bread.

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laughs trailing behind her. She can make friends anywhere. It's really admirable.

My daughter, at 8, is fearless and unafraid to just start playing with kids she has just met. She's free

from the worries and concerns of adulthood. Young or old, she warms up to situations fast and talks to whoever is there.

At 36, I find making friends to be among life's more challenging tasks. But I could learn a thing or two from my daughter, about jumping in feet first, not being afraid to just join in whatever's happening.

She's pretty awesome.

Why is making friends so different as an adult? Are we so confined by thoughts and worries and concerns that we can't just let go and find friendship everywhere? Or are we just more selective, looking only for those folks who'll understand our hearts and fill our souls — assuming we do the same for them? I've found that the friends I've made as an adult fall almost exclusively into the second category.

And the folks I've met who don't just don't become friends. And that's OK. Not everyone is meant to be bosom buddies.

Uh, just point me to the kitchen and I'll be fine. And maybe I'll sway a few folks into friendship with something yummy — like this bread.

When my mother arrived a few weeks ago for a week-

See Zucchini, Page C2