

Seelbach chef puts together a safari menu for gala

Kirby Adams, The Courier-Journal 4:23 p.m. EDT April 29, 2014



(Photo: Michael Clevenger/The Courier-Journal)

When Matt Durham, executive chef at the Seelbach Hilton, was asked to create an African safari-inspired menu for a Derby Eve party, he turned to the same place you or I might, the Internet.

"I cooked for a few years at a resort in the Caribbean, so I had an idea of the type of spices I needed to look for," Durham said.

Using saffron, nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger and cloves, plus foods like sweet potatoes, black beans, yogurt and pineapple, Durham began creating a variety of options to offer to Carolyn Embry and her team for a tasting that would determine the menu for Friday night's American Lung Association's Safari Soiree.

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"This is one evening that is not a celebrity event. However, we spare no expense on wonderful food in a beautiful venue for our guests," Embry said.

"Every year the Lung Association comes to me with a new theme, and I get to create a menu to complement it," Durham said.

This is the 20th year for the Derby Eve event, which raises money for the American Lung Association.

The challenge

Finding exotic ingredients can be challenging in Louisville. Durham says he decided to create his menu around ingredients he knew he could easily find in the city. His top pick for stores that carry more unusual and exotic foods and spices: Patel Brothers on South Hurstbourne Parkway. "It's a great store with a terrific variety of foods from around the world," Durham said.

Another tip from the chef: For the best-tasting dishes, he always tries to buy the highest-quality ingredients. Durham said when he's cooking at home, he gets produce and meats from Paul's Fruit Market and Kingsley Meats.

As for his moderately exotic menu for the Friday gala, Durham said: "Over the past four or five years, I have really started to notice diners becoming more adventurous with their cuisine," adding that he feels certain the guests at the Safari Soiree will enjoy a little wilder side to fine dining this Derby Eve.

The American Lung Association's Derby Eve Safari Soiree

When: 8 p.m. Friday in the Medallion Ballroom at the Seelbach Hilton, 500 S. Fourth St.

Details: Dinner and dancing with music provided by Burning Las Vegas.

Tickets: \$300. Call (502) 363-2652 or go online to derbyvegala.org (tickets purchases through today)

Where chef Matt Durham likes to shop

For meats and produce:

Kingsley Meats

Address: 2701 Taylorsville Road

Phone: (502) 459-7585. For hours, kingsleycatering.com

Paul's Fruit Market

Address: 3704 Taylorsville Road

Phone: (502) 456-4750. For more locations and hours, paulsfruit.com

For ethnic cooking supplies:

Patel Brothers Grocery

Address: 1850 S. Hurstbourne Parkway No. 134

Phone: (502) 499-9791

Hours: Call for hours

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