

A Ring Ding wing-ding

The elite meet for sweets at Lisa G.'s annual dessert blowout

BY CELIA MCGEE
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Every year, for the past eight years, the sugar freaks come out at night for Lisa G. That's when the hyper-chatty WOR radio personality throws her annual dessert extravaganza, giving some 100 of her close friends and almost as many perfect strangers license to indulge in an orgy of sweets.

"Don't you know chocolate is an aphrodisiac?" asks Darren Broderson, as he and wife Beth Sollender help Lisa welcome yet another guest to the self-titled "empress of entertainment's" one-bedroom apartment on Manhattan's far upper East Side.

For Lisa, it's more of a social treat. Clad in a skimpy gold lamé halter top and relentless smile last Saturday night, she excitedly greeted Les Haller restaurant's Anthony Bourdain.

One of the evening's six celebrity chefs and a best-selling author ("Kitchen Confidential"), he was on his virgin voyage to the Lisa G. (as in Glasberg) experience. Luckily, he casts an approving glance over the lesser mortals toasting his Chocolate Ginger Spice Cake with their flutes of Taittinger Champagne.

The annual party started out "as a way to celebrate my friends," Lisa says. "A bunch of us just got together with desserts we baked. It grew in popularity, and I couldn't bake for so many people. But I had apprenticed with different chefs, and I said to them, 'Let me showcase your talents.' I used to bake 15 desserts — now I do one and let them show off."

This time, Lisa has made her Chocolate Chip Cookie Squares. Wayne Brachman, of Tapika, sent Gourmet Oreo Cookies and Gourmet Ring Dings. Alfred Stephens (Mesa Grill) sent creme and apple-filled doughnuts. George McKurdy (Heartbeat and Icon) sent Citrus Mousse, Le Cirque 2000's Patrice Caillot sent creme brulee, and the 21 Club's Eric Blaubeerg sent fresh-fruit tartlets, mini-eclairs and several other "European Finger Desserts."

Lisa's pastry skills are also not lost on her co-workers.

"She would bring things she

baked to the office occasionally," says Heather Cohen, a producer for the "Joan Hamburg Show," who used to work down the hall from Lisa at WCBS. "We all work so many hours, and she was still able to make those desserts. Everyone really appreciated it."

For those who marvel at Lisa's birdlike figure, her secret can now be revealed. "I just sample," she says. "I take one bite of any dessert." She must be telling the truth: Here she comes with a scary-looking knife in hand, to cut bite-size pieces for anyone interested in such diet tips.

Beth confirms. "When I go out to dinner with Lisa, she only orders desserts," she says. "She goes right to them on the menu."

Broadcast shrink Dr. Joy Browne is in the crowd, but doesn't have time to analyze the deep-seated psychological origins of Lisa's singular sweet tooth. "I'm leaving," she says over the din of mingling and music. "I have to do the 'Today Show' at 8 a.m. tomorrow, and I'm losing my voice."

But Connie Stuart isn't about to go anytime soon. She won the prize for the most persuasive E-mail from a WOR listener, about getting invited to the dessert bash. It was what she wanted for her 38th birthday, she had explained in her message to Lisa, and here she was, husband Andrew in tow from Wyckoff, N.J.

Does she listen to WOR every day? "I do," she says, "and my parents had the radio tuned to WOR when I was growing up."

Connie's standing on the side of the room with Eric Blaubeerg's shiny fruit confections, but she's eyeing the more sinful-looking chocolate assortments across the way. "I started with that tray," she says, pointing to a spread of Blaubeerg's tiny blueberry and strawberry tarts.

"But I'm

working my way over to those Ring Dings!"

Citrus Mousse

Serves 6

From pastry chef George McKurdy of Heartbeat and Icon at W New York Hotels.

FOR THE MOUSSE:

- 2 whole eggs
- 3 egg yolks
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons orange juice
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons granular sugar
- 8 tablespoons butter, cut into small cubes
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon confectioner's sugar
- 3 Meyer lemons or 2 navel oranges, skin removed and cut into segments, for garnish (do not substitute regular lemons, they are too sour)

Seeds from 1 pomegranate, for garnish

FOR THE BERRY COULIS:

- 1 cup raspberries
- 1/4 cup sugar

In a bowl, mix the eggs, egg yolks, citrus juices and granular sugar, whisking together until well mixed.

Place the mixing bowl on top of a double boiler and cook the citrus-egg mixture, stirring constantly until it is thick. Keep stirring to avoid scrambling the eggs. Remove mixing bowl from double boiler when mixture becomes thick and custard-like.

Whisk in the butter until it is incorporated in the mixture. Strain through a fine sieve into a clean bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and chill for 2 to 3 hours or overnight.

In a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed, whip the heavy cream with the confectioner's sugar until it forms soft peaks. Gently fold the thickened citrus mixture into the whipped cream. Pour into ramekins and freeze until the mousse is set firm, about 5 hours.

Meanwhile, make the berry coulis: In a small pot, combine the raspberries with the quarter cup of sugar. Cook over a low flame until the raspberries are soft. Puree the cooked mixture in a blender, strain and chill.

To serve, garnish each serving with lemon or orange segments sprinkled with pomegranate seeds. Serve berry coulis on the side.

Chocolate Sandwich Cookies With Vanilla-Cream Filling

Makes about 36 sandwich cookies

From Wayne Harley Brachman, executive pastry chef at Tapika and author of "Retro Desserts" (William Morrow, \$27)

FOR THE CHOCOLATE WAFERS:

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup unsweetened Dutch-processed cocoa
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons (1 1/4 sticks) unsalted butter at room temperature
- 1 large egg

FOR THE VANILLA-CREAM FILLING:

- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter at room temperature
- 1/4 cup vegetable shortening
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

Set 2 racks in the middle and upper third of the oven and preheat to 375 degrees.

Make the chocolate wafers: In the bowl of an electric mixer, thoroughly mix together the flour, cocoa, baking soda, baking powder, salt and sugar. With the mixer on low speed, add the butter, then the egg. Beat until the dough is thoroughly blended and massed together.

Drop rounded teaspoons of batter onto nonstick or parchment-lined cookie sheets at 2-inch intervals. With moistened fingers, round out the cookies and flatten them a little. Bake for 9 minutes, turning the pans once for even baking, until the cookies are set. Place cookie sheets on a rack to cool.

Make the vanilla-cream filling: Put the butter and shortening in a mixing bowl and, at low speed, gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar and vanilla, until blended. Turn the mixer up to high speed and beat for 2 or 3 minutes more, until fluffy.

To assemble: With a pastry bag fitted with a 1/2-inch tip, pipe teaspoon-size blobs of filling onto the tops of half the cookies. With the smooth bottoms of the cookies facing up, place the remaining cookies on top of the filling and lightly press to form sandwiches.



DEBRA ROTHENBERG

Hi, SUGAR Lisa G. tempts guests with citrus mousse (l.) and gourmet Ring Dings at her annual dessert party.