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Business

Cooking school focuses on natural, simple foods

Classes feature vegetarian and organic dishes

by Anne Fitten Glenn, CITIZEN-TIMES CORRESPONDENT
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WEAVERVILLE - Lenore Baum truly believes that eating well helps people feel their best. She espouses this belief through teaching people to prepare and cook healthy, organic, vegetarian food. She calls her business Lenore's Natural Cuisine, and she started offering her cooking classes in September.

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"My passion is teaching natural, wholesome and flavorful cooking to create and maintain health," said Baum, 61.

Baum and her husband, Joe, moved to Weaverville in 2004 to build their "dream" house, which contains their "dream" teaching kitchen. The Baums met when Joe took one of Lenore's cooking classes in Phoenix years ago. The house is a contemporary, Asian-designed home on 17 acres.

Part of the cooking school's appeal is the simple, open kitchen design with floor-to-ceiling windows that seem to bring the outdoors inside. "The setting gives people a reprieve from the stresses of their lives," Baum said.

Before starting her school here in September, Baum ran cooking schools in Michigan and Arizona. She started cooking 20 years ago, when friends praised her soups and talked her into selling them from two freezers in her backyard. Baum eventually self-published two cookbooks of her recipes.

After stints studying at the Kushi Institute in Boston and the Vega Institute in California, Baum turned to teaching her recipes and culinary tips. She now boasts 97 different cooking classes, from Luscious New Soups to Speedy Seitan to Winter Dinner Delight.

Baum's students become acolytes who offer high praise for the changes that her classes have had on their lives.

Joan Russell, 62, was diagnosed with Type II diabetes two years ago. She began taking drugs to control the disease, but she said they weren't particularly effective, and she disliked taking them. Russell started an intense daily exercise routine, but she still couldn't reduce her blood sugar levels. She decided the next step was to change the way she cooked and ate, so she signed up for Baum's Vegetarian Class Series and adopted an organic diet.

Now, six months later, Russell says her blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol are all in the normal to

excellent range.

"I now have no signs of diabetes," said Russell, owner of Russell Properties. "I'm amazed. Even my doctor is amazed."

Russell, who is of Penobscot Indian heritage, said she believes that she needed to "start eating like her ancestors" and, most importantly, "keep preservatives and chemicals out of my body."

Another of Baum's students, Jeffrey Whitridge, said: "If you really want to change and improve how you eat, the series classes are a great opportunity."

Baum offers a regular e-newsletter and schedules of classes on her Web site: www.lenoresnaturals.com.



credit: JOHN FLETCHER, JFLETCHER@CITIZEN-TIMES.CO

Lenore Baum teaches organic cooking classes out of her Ox Creek home. Baum studied at the Kushi Institute in Boston and the Vega Institute in California and now teaches her own recipes and culinary tips. She offers 97 different cooking classes, from Luscious New Soups to Speedy Seitan to Winter Dinner Delight.

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About the business

What: Lenore's Natural Cuisine, vegetarian cooking classes.

Where: At Lenore's home in Weaverville. 645-1412, www.lenoresnatural.com.

Who: Lenore Baum, M.A., and three assistants.

Cost: \$45 per class, \$175 for the four-class series. Classes are held on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Schedule: Vegetarian Cooking Series: Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24. Winter Dinner Delight, March 17. Speedy Seitan, March 24.

Quote: "Lenore teaches a whole way of living that comes from a basic respect for what you put into your body," said Joan Russell. "I am 300 times healthier today than I was six months ago."

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