

By Rachel Sapin

“Art will always be my first love,” says Sibilla Dengs, art historian and owner of artcafé26 in New Town. It was Sibilla’s love of art that helped make her dreams of having a café-gallery space in Williamsburg a reality.

“While doing a charity art auction at one of the top restaurants in Aachen, Germany, I did a lot of work with the television show ‘Top Chef,’” Sibilla says. “I explained to them what I wanted to do, and they said to me, ‘Why don’t you bring our junior chefs over from Europe so that they can experience the United States?’”

Not only did ‘Top Chef’ help Sibilla bring European chefs to artcafé26, the television show also introduced her to award winning German chef, author, and artist Franz Lauter. After training with Lauter for a few months, Sibilla learned the necessary culinary skills to create the unmatched assortment of European delicacies offered at artcafé26.

It’s difficult for Sibilla and her family, living in Williamsburg, to recreate the Christmases she remembers growing up in the Romanesque city of Aachen, Germany, but they come pretty close. In the European tradition, Sibilla and her family wait until Christmas Eve to do just about everything.

“We wait until Christmas Eve to decorate the tree, and then the whole

family decorates it,” she says. “You get out your collection of ornaments, and you talk about the memories that come with them. Then you go to church, you have dinner, and after dinner you open the Christmas presents.”

For Christmas Eve dinner, Sibilla relaxes while her husband cooks the holiday meal. “We have a recipe that is a stuffed turkey with a secret family ingredient that has been in our family for over 40 years,” she reveals.

While she doesn’t share that special family recipe for you to try at home, she does share another recipe that is among her favorites that you can serve to

friends and family during the holidays. NDN



## Apple Chestnut Soup

Sibilla recommends an Apple Chestnut Soup for a delicious and simple holiday meal. “It’s a classical holiday soup,” she notes. “Chestnuts mean winter time, apples are in season, and it’s wonderful winter comfort food.” For Sibilla, the holidays are all about enjoying life’s little comforts and taking the time to reconnect with friends and family. “Sitting back and enjoying friends and family on a free afternoon, having dessert, homemade pralines, counting your blessings that you are healthy, that you have people you love around you, that accept you as you are: that is for me, Christmas,” she says with a smile.

### INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz. of Chestnuts
- 8 oz. of Apple
- 2 Shallots
- 400 Milliliters (13.5 oz.) of Vegetable Broth
- 3 Tablespoons of Olive Oil
- 250 Milliliters (8.5 oz.) of Heavy Whipping Cream
- 1 Teaspoon of Lemongrass

### RECIPE

Boil 8 ounces of peeled chestnuts. Chop 8 ounces of a type of apple that is not too sweet. Chop 2 shallots. Briefly fry boiled chestnuts, chopped apple, and chopped shallots in 3 tablespoons of olive oil. After frying them, add the chestnuts, apple, and shallots to 400 milliliters of vegetable broth. Let the broth boil (with above ingredients) for 2 to 3 minutes. Add 250 milliliters of heavy whipping cream to broth, again bringing contents to a boil. Once contents reach a boil, take pan off the stove. Let the contents cool down, and pour them into blender and blend. Pour contents into a bowl and reheat if necessary before serving. Finely chop 1 teaspoon of lemongrass. Sprinkle finely chopped lemongrass on soup and serve seasoned with salt and pepper. ■