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CORTES ISLAND

From field to kitchen—fresh is best

Hollyhock chefs passionate about sharing and educating



A CUISINE PARADISE: Hollyhock welcomes those who are seeking to improve their way of life.

Photo courtesy of Hollyhock

Submitted by Heather Russell

Cherry blossoms are bursting, daffodils are sprouting, and the bees are buzzing. Spring is here!

Now is the time to start thinking about the delicious and lovely foods you want to produce this year to create healthy, local, vibrant meals for yourself, family and friends.

In these busy times, we have turned away from understanding the journey of our food, from the field to our kitchens, and have turned to quick, processed alternatives. It is time to reconnect with the life force behind our food by learning how to prepare meals from local gardens, orchards and seas.

"Cooking delicious and inspired meals can be an incredible creative outlet that is both nourishing and nurturing," said Rebeka Carpenter, lead team chef at Hollyhock. "Your daily diet can impact your energy, mood and overall health."

Hollyhock, Canada's leading educational retreat centre on Cortes Island, has an organic garden that is not just beautiful, but also functional. The French-intensive style garden supplies vegetables, herbs, fruit and flowers to the Hollyhock kitchen, gracing guests' tables with food that is nourished with care every step of the way.

"The fresher the produce, the better the dish. The more local the ingredients the better they'll be," Heidi Lescanec said. "At Hollyhock you can walk in the garden and see the lettuce you are going to be eating that night for dinner."

Sharing the wealth

It's in Hollyhock's kitchen where best practices come together and their on-site chefs want to share their knowledge with cooks of all skill levels.

Rebeka Carpenter and Heidi Lescanec will help explore how to bring passion and creativity back into the kitchen with the Passionate Cook program at Hollyhock, on May 6 - 10, August 27, September 1 and October 6 - 10, 2010. Using the organically-inspired Hollyhock kitchen as the palate, participants will explore and prepare West Coast and internationally inspired meals.

Lescanec will also be running a Cooking Fresh from the Field workshop in Vancouver, from March 26 - 27, 2010.

The not-for-profit Hollyhock, Canada's leading educational retreat centre, exists to inspire, nourish and support people who are making the world better. Topics include: leadership, health and wellness, professional development, social change, arts and culture and other areas of interest.

For more information and workshop registration, please go to www.hollyhock.ca or phone 1-800-933-6339 or 250-935-6576.

About the chefs:

Rebeka Carpenter, a resident of Cortes Island, leads the kitchen team at Hollyhock. She has a passion for baking, as well as preparing locally-grown fresh food and seafood, particularly shellfish from Manson's Lagoon on Cortes Island.

Heidi Lescanec, a resident of Vancouver, is a naturopathic doctor and talented cook and teacher who brings her diverse culinary experience and knowledge of food as medicine to the kitchen with zest. Heidi is passionate about good food, nutrition and the art of creating nourishing and beautiful meals. She has cooked at backcountry lodges, retreat centers, the movie industry and at Hollyhock on Cortes.

Vancouver Island key contacts



Be sure to visit Nanaimo, BC



Nestled between the ocean and the mountains, Nanaimo offers residents and visitors a diverse range of recreational opportunities, fine dining, shopping, and arts and culture. Be sure to visit the historic downtown and go for a stroll along the Harbourside promenade. Nanaimo also has a vibrant social and cultural life. We host an

800 seat Performing Arts Theatre, a large, a brand new state-of-the-art conference centre, and we are known as the Island's "shopping mecca" since we offer not only name-brand stores but also one-of-a-kind art and clothing galleries, pottery and hand-made jewellery. We look forward to seeing you soon in Nanaimo - one of the most desirable, liveable small cities in North America!

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