



Colorful table setting



Lulu's dining room aglow with a Moroccan ambiance

For fashion knit wit Lulu Tan-Gan, a casual and intimate gathering with family and close friends is the perfect recipe for a truly memorable birthday celebration. Bubbly Lulu welcomed her guests to her spacious and airy abode, leading them to a cocktail area where a team of men clad in *djellaba* (Moroccan costume) awaited with a fine offering of wines and refreshments.

Starting off your party with cocktails is always a clever idea. Guests are able to mingle with each other, engage in conversation, and to allow the early birds to at least contain hunger while waiting for latecomers. Lulu made use of her front yard as cocktail area. The standout was a *brunch*-dipping station with roti and pita bread—a teaser for the Moroccan banquet masterfully prepared by Chef Gwendolyn Ozamis. Because of Lulu's penchant for detail she requested that the pita bread be served warm—so beside the dipping station was a grill with a chef who ensured the bread was perfectly warmed. Soothing music was provided by a trio of musicians performing from the second floor loggia—a clever position to maximize audibility throughout the entire party area.

In the backyard the surprise of the evening waited: a sumptuous Moroccan buffet. There were square tables enough for groups of twelve, all draped in white, with a metallic table runner, red lacquered chargers, and a beautiful arrangement of tropical blooms. Our *fashionista* host tied each napkin with colorful furry balls, and knitted ribbons.

The Moroccan fare and its delicate flavors had guests coming back for more. Spread out on the buffet was a fresh green salad—a feast of color with fresh capsicums, cherry tomatoes, black olives, and the dressing was a light and flavorful concoction of lemon, coriander, and parsley vinaigrette. For the main course, a roasted lamb leg. The chicken with apricot and almonds was also a delightful and unexpected combination. Delicious fish fillets had preserved lemons and herbs, and the couscous with tomato and saffron-flavored vegetables was a definite crowd favorite. In keeping with tradition, the “long life” noodle dish came in a mélange of clams and bathed in pesto sauce.

Dessert was served in a separate buffet. The favorite among the already mind-boggling display of sweets was a bowl with a fluffy cloud of whipped cream infused with vanilla mixed with pistachios, and golden sultanas surrounded by mini-honey glazed crepes.

Of course, no birthday party would be complete without the ceremonial cake and so a huge one—with a multitude of candles at that—was carried out. I'm sure the number of candles did not represent age but rather to reward our birthday girl with more than one chance to make a wish. And our wish for Lulu? May all her wishes come true!MS



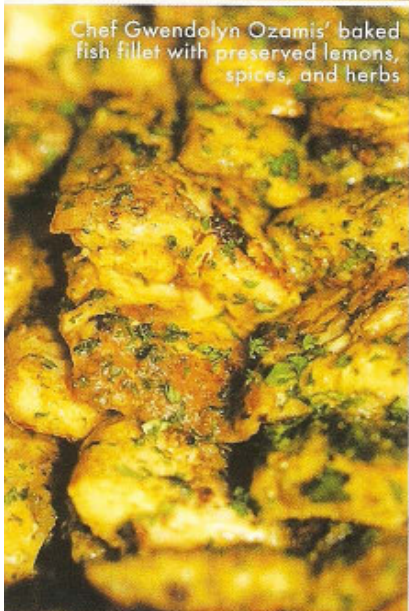
Birthday girl Lulu ready to blow out her candles



Couscous with tomato and saffron flavored vegetables



Roast leg of lamb with green beans and potatoes



Chef Gwendolyn Ozamis' baked fish fillet with preserved lemons, spices, and herbs



Guests enjoying dinner in a Moroccan al fresco setting

THE ELEMENTS

The Event:
Birthday party of Lulu Tan Gan

The Venue:
Lulu's residence in Ayala Alabang

The Theme:
A Moroccan-inspired dinner in the garden

The Guest List:
Family and close friends

The Table Setting:
Dinner tables were draped in white with a metallic table runner and red lacquered chairs. Each napkin was tied with colorful furry balls and knitted ruffled ribbons

The Centerpiece:
Bountiful arrangement of tropical blooms in each table

The Menu:
Starters:
Hummus dipping station with roti and pita bread

Main course:
Fresh green salad with fresh capsicums, cherry tomatoes, black olives served with lemon, coriander, and parsley vinaigrette
Roasted leg of lamb
Chicken with apricot and almonds
Fish fillet in preserved lemons and herbs
Couscous with tomato and saffron-flavored vegetables
"Long life" noodle dish took form in a mélange of clams bathed in pesto sauce

Desserts:
Bowl of fluffy, whipped cream infused with vanilla mixed with pistachios, and golden sultana surrounded by mini honey-glazed crepes
Traditional birthday cake

Hummus bib tabine

Ingredients:
1 kilogram dried chickpeas
100 grams tabine paste
100 grams garlic (fresh, peeled)
30 grams lemon salt
30 grams sea salt
25 grams ground white pepper
100 milliliters iced water
100 milliliters extra virgin olive oil

Procedure:
Soak chickpeas in water overnight. Change soaking water, and boil chickpeas till soft. Cool and strain. Place all ingredients (except olive oil) in food processor and pulse till smooth. Place hummus mixture in a serving bowl. Make indentions on top and pour the olive oil. Serve as a dip for pita bread wedges.

Recipe by Chef Gwendolyn Ozamis, O Cuisine Connoisseur (807-3215)