

Homemakers learn to create vegetable centerpiece at Holiday Program

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LEBANON — Luscious, fresh food and attractive decorations help put holiday guests in a festive mood and make them feel special.

To help Lebanon County hostesses with their holiday entertaining plans, caterer and foods instructor Carol Soller shared a few of her creative ideas during the county's annual Homemaker's

Holiday Program held last week at the Prescott Fire Hall.

Soller showed the women how to prepare an edible centerpiece using a variety of fresh vegetables carefully cut and combined to form colorful, tasty flowers.

To start her bouquet, which doubles as a centerpiece and hors d'oeuvres, Soller selected a hollowed out pumpkin as the base

for her vegetable arrangement. However, she advised, baskets, flower pots (only new and very clean ones), coffee and tea pots, and other containers can also be used.

Assembling the proper tools is essential for success, she noted. You will need a large knife, a paring knife, scissors, melon baller, lemon zester, a potato or vegetable peeler and skewers. All of these items are available at kitchen supply stores, she said.

Soller selected radishes as the first vegetable to include in her bouquet. To make a radish rose, she cut the top and bottom off a clean radish, then made small slices between the pulp and skin to make petals. When soaked in cold water for about 45 minutes, the petals open up or "bloom."

Using the lemon zester, Soller made stripes on another radish to create "something that looks like a little Christmas candy."

"I want you to feel you can tackle this, because you can," she assured her intrigued audience. "You can always eat your mistakes."

Soller continued making a variety of flowers from the radishes, which she stuck on wooden skewers and placed in her pumpkin filled with kale. The skewers can be cut in half, but Soller advised using only the prefinished ends in the vegetables, since the broken ends can splinter.

Scallion flowers were added to lend a scent to the bouquet. "This way it smells good too," Soller claimed.

Turnips can also be transformed



Caterer and foods instructor Carol Soller demonstrates how to create a flower from a radish at the Lebanon County Homemakers Holiday Program.

into flowers with a few skillful cuts by experienced hands. Soller showed how to make those slices, but suggested the women practice before the night of the party. The turnip flowers can be placed in food dye for a few minutes to give the bouquet a little extra color.

For less skilled hostesses, Soller suggested making thin horizontal slices of turnip and cutting out shapes with cookie cutters. Put a carrot on the skewer, add the turnip flower cut with the cookie cutter and top with a cherry tomato for a colorful flower.

Soller continued to create more and more flowers to add to her bouquet, using zucchini, tomatoes, cucumbers, and carrots.

She added some green beans and hot peppers on skewers to add interest to the bouquet, advising that plenty of liquid be served with the hot peppers.

Cucumber cups — made by hollowing out ends of cucumbers — can be filled with ham or chicken salad or vegetable dip and placed near the vegetable bouquet.

For a finishing touch, Soller added a colorful butterfly made from a turnip and dyed pink.



The completed vegetable bouquet makes a pretty, edible centerpiece that will surely be a conversation piece as well.



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