Delancey Street President Mimi Silbert, left, shows off one of the pies that Brad Allen, below, and the crew at the Delancey Street Restaurant are perfecting for Thanksgiving. Pie crust "leaves," bottom, make an easy "top crust."

Food-centered holiday feeds the spirit, too

Delancey Street
Thanksgiving

By Lynnette Evans

by Lynnette Evans

“Thanksgiving is an important holiday for us,” says Mimi Silbert, president of the Delancey Street Foundation here in The City. “We close for Thanksgiving Day,” she says, gesturing around the green-and-copper interior of the Delancey Street Restaurant on The Embarcadero, where residents of the stabilization community cook and eat together — and learn to deal with the public.
Closed the place may be next Thursday, but it won’t be deserted. With 500 residents who take their meals in a dining room above the restaurant, “We cook turkey after turkey after turkey,” Silbert says. And, with community members from every part of the country and many cultures, “We do every ethnic group’s family recipes. We do three stuffings: an Italian stuffing with sausage and spinach, a Southern cornbread one and the traditional sage one. It’s a wonderful holiday for us.”

Silbert explains the thinking behind Delancey Street’s restaurant program and why Thanksgiving is such an important occasion. “In prison, you get a little bag of rains on Thanksgiving.” she says. That’s the only way to tell the day is different from other days, she says, and that’s also the Thanksgiving tradition known well by Delancey Street residents.

Thanksgiving may be special, but it’s not the only time food brings residents together.

“We eat a candlelight dinner every night; we get dressed for dinner, with ties and everything, and the newest residents serve. We take the meals very seriously,” says Silbert, who grew up in an extended family where grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins gathered daily around the kitchen table. “Most of our residents have never known the joys of eating around a family table.”

The restaurant, which, at 10 years, qualifies as a South of Market pioneer, “trains people for a skill they [see Thanksgiving, Page 3].

Pumpkin Pie

To make crust: Combine dry ingredients in a bowl. Cut in lard and shortening until the texture of coarse crumbs. Combine the beaten egg, vinegar and water and add to the flour mixture, a tablespoon at a time, mixing gently with a fork to form a soft dough. Chill 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 200°. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured board and line a 9-inch pie pan with pastry. Trim and flute the edges.

To make filling: Combine all ingredients except the egg whites and whipped cream in a large bowl. Mix thoroughly. Beat the egg whites until stiff but not dry. Fold into the filling mixture. Pour into the pastry shell and bake until a toothpick inserted halfway between the center and edges of the pie comes out clean, about 50 minutes. Let cool on a wire rack. Serve with sweetened whipped cream.
**THANKSGIVING from 1**

**Food-focused holiday feeds the spirit, too**

Food-focused holidays are in the spirit of giving. The San Francisco Examiner provides a special Thanksgiving issue to help you prepare for this traditional American feast. Here are the recipes and tips featured:

**Delancey Street pie brigade, clockwise from left, Brad Allen, Todd Terwey, Josh Lefer, Vinny Polkari, Shane Street, Artis Scott and Delancey Street President Mimi Silbert.**

**Butternut Apple Bisque with Maple**

- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 leeks, rinsed and chopped
- 1 tablespoon minced shallots
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1 cup white wine
- 1/2 cup pure organic dark maple syrup
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 4 bay leaves
- 2 pounds butternut squash, diced
- 1 Granny Smith apple, unpeeled but cored and diced
- 1 cup organic apple cider
- 1 gallon chicken stock
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour

**Oyster Cornbread Stuffing**

- 10 cups crumbled unsweetened cornbread
- 50 small oysters, shucked and halved, liquid saved
- 1 cup diced green bell pepper
- 3 cups homemade chicken or turkey stock
- 4 oasons of (1) stick) sweet butter
- 1/2 pound Applewood-smoked bacon, 1/4-inch dice
- 2 tablespoons fresh minced sage
- 1/2 cup minced scallions
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Sauté bacon over medium-high heat until completely browned. Add butter and bell peppers and sweat for 4 to 5 minutes. Add oysters and sauté until done. Add scallions, herbs and pepper. Toss and remove from heat.

**Italian Rice, Sausage and Spinach Dressing**

- 1 pound hot Italian sausage links
- 1 cup chopped fresh spinach, carefully cleaned
- 6 cups cooked rice
- 1 cup shelled pine nuts
- 1 cup diced fresh fennel bulb
- 1 cup diced yellow onion

**Meatless Chestnut Souffle**

Yields 9-12 by 2-inch casserole

- 12 cups sourdough baguette
- 1 cup diced yellow onion
- 1 cup diced celery
- 1 cup sliced medium white or brown mushrooms
- 2 ounces minced porcini mushrooms
- 12 ounces sweet butter (3 sticks)
- 1/2 cup vegetable shortening, such as Crisco
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

**PECAN PIE**

10-inch pie

**CRUST:**
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup vegetable shortening, such as Crisco
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

**FILLING:**
- 5 extra large eggs
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 1 1/4 cups light Karo syrup
- 1/4 cups unsulfured molasses
- 2 teaspoons pure bourbon vanilla (see note)
- 5 tablespoons melted sweet butter
- 1 1/4 cups chopped pecans
- 1 cup pecan halves

**To make crust:** Combine dry ingredients in a bowl. Cut in shortening with a fork until it sticks together. Mix in milk, kneading with hands until just combined. Form into a ball and chill for 1 hour.

Roll out 12-inch round of dough 1/8-inch thick. Place into 10-inch glass pie dish. Cut off excess dough and pinch into edge with fingers.

**To make filling:** Whip eggs thoroughly. Add molasses, Karo syrup, brown sugar, vanilla, and butter. Add chopped pecans, combining all thoroughly.

Pour filling into pie shell and arrange pecan halves over top. Bake in preheated 425° oven for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 300° and bake an additional 50 minutes. Cool.

Note: Delancey Street uses Messey's Madagascar Pure Bourbon Vanilla Extract.