

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."



EXAMINER PHOTOS BY KIM KOMENICH

Food-centered
holiday feeds
the spirit, too

DELANCEY STREET THANKSGIVING

BY LYNETTE EVANS
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"**T**HANKSGIVING 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 rehabilitation community cook and wait tables — 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 nuts 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

10-INCH PIE CRUST:
2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
½ cup cold lard
¼ cup cold, solid vegetable shortening
1 egg, lightly beaten
1½ teaspoons red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons cold water
2 teaspoons granulated sugar
½ teaspoon salt

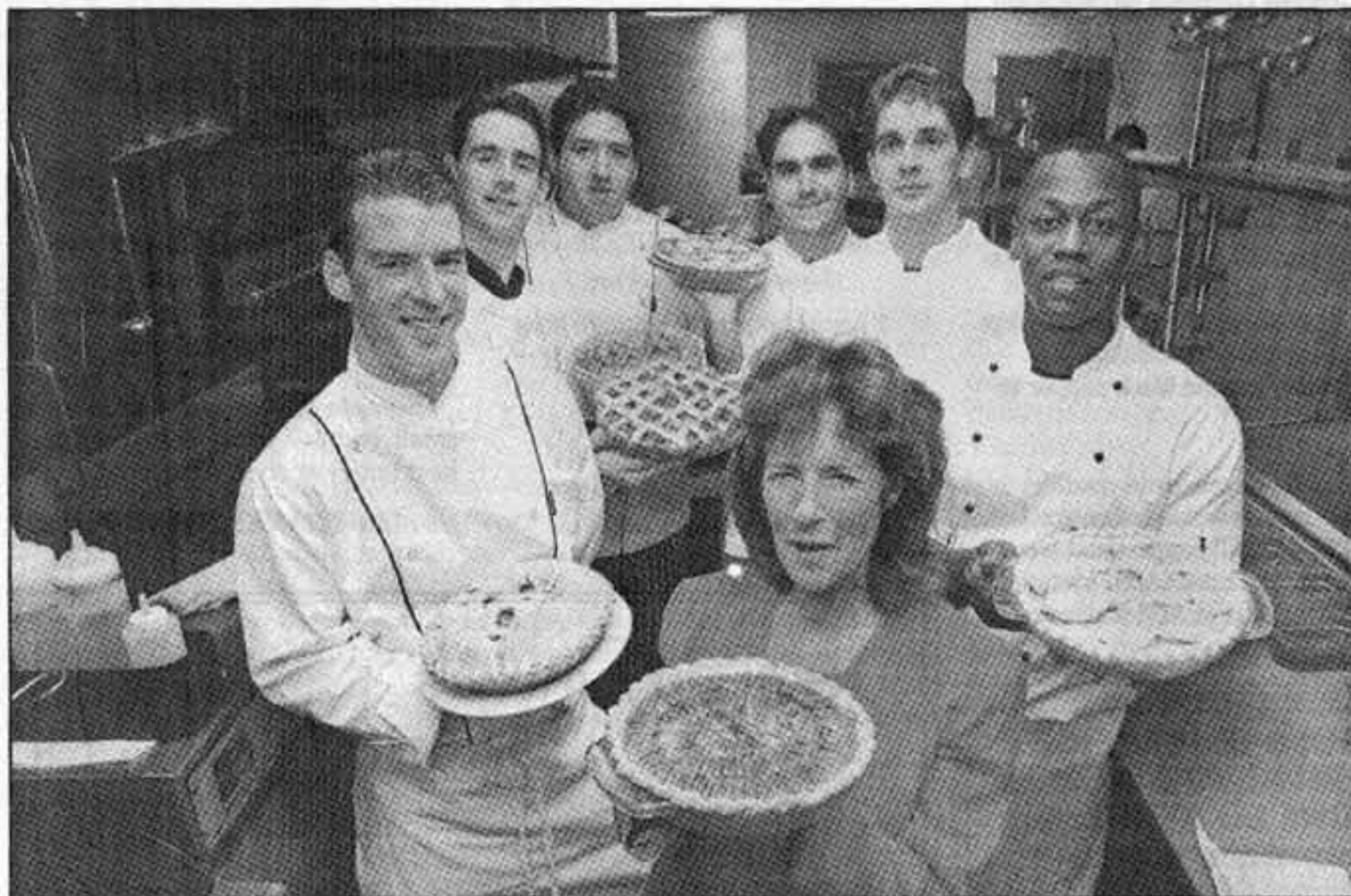
FILLING:
1½ cups pumpkin purée
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
½ cup sugar
¼ cup maple syrup
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
3 eggs, separated
½ cup milk
¼ cup cream
Sweetened whipped cream for topping

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 350°. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured board and line a 10-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 edge of the pie comes out clean, about 50 minutes. Let cool on a wire rack. Serve with sweetened whipped cream.

SPECIAL THANKSGIVING ISSUE



EXAMINER/KIM KOMENICH

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

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Food-focused holiday feeds the spirit, too

can get hired in, but also works for the kinds of things I'm trying to teach our people: people interaction; gracious, homey interaction." Silbert thinks this interaction — which doesn't automatically happen in every vocational training course — gives the restaurant an edge over other programs, such as computer training.

"We try to teach graciousness to people who are angry," she says, noting with delight that the Zagat restaurant survey has called Delancey Street The City's friendliest restaurant.

The back of the menu describes the restaurant's mission — "a training school of the Delancey Street Foundation, the country's largest and most acclaimed self-help residential organization for people who have hit bottom to completely rebuild their lives" — and Silbert notes, "It turns out to be a wonderful

education for the public as well."

First-time customers are picturing someone very different when they think of ex-cons, she says, and some say, "but not you?" to the well-mannered person waiting on them, who nods in the affirmative.

"Delancey Street people are the antithesis of attitude," she says. "Those are the things that, to me, I'm most thankful for. In the end, it's pretty much a family restaurant, although people (customers) can be upscale and, it turns out, we serve good food."

As the menu notes, the food served in the restaurant is the food Delancey Street people know. The menu combines foods from residents' ethnic or regional backgrounds with traditional American cuisine, and many of the recipes have been handed down within the family. Silbert points to framed photographs

on the dining room walls, a series of portraits and snapshots like those found in many homes, of relatives and friends who have influenced the restaurant, its people and its cooking.

"The matzoh ball chicken soup we make is my Mom's recipe," she says, and the chocolate sundae is that of her late father, a pharmacist who operated a soda fountain — where Silbert worked as a teenage soda jerk — along with his pharmacy. "The potstickers we serve are the Fung family recipe," she says, pointing to another portrait. And to a third, that of a Delancey Street vice president from Puerto Rico: "Our Caribbean specialties go back to his family."

Silbert's own extended family, gathering for tea around the samovar, prompted her to include 42

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SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

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teas on the restaurant menu.

"On Thanksgiving, when we're not working in the restaurant, we give thanks for our restaurant because it's given all the people who work in it the feeling they belong in a society they never thought they would."

Here are some of Delancey Street Restaurant's favorite Thanksgiving recipes.

BUTTERNUT APPLE BISQUE WITH MAPLE
16 to 18 servings

- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 leeks, rinsed and chopped
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger
- 1 cup minced shallots
- ½ cup butter
- 2 Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1 cup white wine
- 1½ cups pure organic dark maple syrup
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- ½ 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
- ½ cup all-purpose flour

Melt butter and sauté shallots, onions and leeks in a soup pot until tender. Add the squash, apple and potatoes and sauté until tender. Add the flour and stir until the flour has cooked briefly with the vegetables. Add the white wine and reduce by two-thirds. Add the maple syrup, apple cider and spices and reduce by almost half. Add the chicken stock and simmer the soup until the squash is fully cooked. Remove the bay leaves and put the soup and yogurt into a food processor and purée. If necessary, adjust thickness with heavy cream and season with a little salt and white pepper.

OYSTER CORNBREAD STUFFING

Dresses a 24-pound bird

- 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 ounces (1 stick) sweet butter
- ½ pound Applewood-smoked bacon, ¼-inch dice
- 2 tablespoons fresh minced sage
- ½ 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.

In a large mixing bowl, combine cornbread, stock, oyster liquid and oyster mixture. Allow to cool thoroughly before stuffing bird.

ITALIAN RICE, SAUSAGE AND SPINACH DRESSING

Dresses a 24-pound bird

- 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

- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 1 cup sliced crimini mushrooms
- 3 ounces minced porcini mushrooms
- 4 ounces (1 stick) sweet butter
- 2 tablespoons fresh minced oregano
- 3 tablespoons minced Italian parsley
- 2 tablespoons fresh minced basil
- ½ cup diced green onion
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Squeeze sausage out of links into small chunks. Sauté over medium heat until just done. Add butter, pine

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nuts, fennel and yellow onion. Sauté until onion is translucent, about 6 minutes. Add garlic, spinach and both mushrooms and sauté an additional 4 minutes.

Add green onion, herbs, salt and pepper and toss. Add rice, mix well and remove from heat. Cool completely before stuffing bird.

MEATLESS CHESTNUT SOURDOUGH STUFFING
Yields 9- by 12- by 2-inch casserole

- 12 cups sourdough baguette croutons
- 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) or olive oil for vegan stuffing
- 1 quart homemade vegetable stock
- 2 tablespoons fresh minced sage
- 3 tablespoons minced Italian parsley
- ½ cup minced scallions
- 1 pound fresh chestnuts
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Cut an X across top of each chestnut with serrated knife and roast in 350° oven for 10 to 12 minutes. Peel shells from nuts as soon as they are cool enough to handle, and slice. Set aside. Sauté onions and celery in butter until onions are translucent.

Add both mushrooms and sauté an additional 5 minutes. Add scallions, herbs and sliced chestnuts. Toss. Add stock, salt and pepper. Remove from heat. Toss in large mixing bowl with croutons.

Lightly pack in ungreased 9- by 12- by 2-inch casserole and bake, loosely covered with aluminum foil, in 350° oven for 20 minutes. Remove foil and continue to bake until crust

is a deep golden brown.

PECAN PIE
10-inch pie

- CRUST:**
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
 - ⅓ cup vegetable shortening, such as Crisco
 - ½ cup whole milk
 - 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
 - ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- FILLING:**
- 5 extra large eggs
 - 1 cup dark brown sugar
 - 1¼ cups light Karo syrup

- 1¼ cups unsulfured molasses
- 2 teaspoons pure bourbon vanilla (see note)
- 5 tablespoons melted sweet butter
- 1¼ 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 ⅛-inch thick. Place into 10-inch

glass pie dish. Cut off excess dough and pinch pattern into edge with fingers.

To make filling: Whip eggs thoroughly. Add molasses, Karo syrup, dark 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 Massey's Madagascar Pure Bourbon Vanilla Extract.