



Holidays ON THE HORIZON

*By Amanda
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FESTIVE PLANS ARE IN
THE MAKING TO HELP
RESTAURANTS LIGHT THE
SEASON WITH SALES
AND CELEBRATIONS.

'Tis the season! Time to kick into high gear and start seriously planning for the holidays. To some extent, tradition always resonates, but creative add-ons can introduce new sparkle. Restaurants from the Big Apple to Iowa to Florida share what they're doing beyond the usual turkey dinner and hot, cinnamon cocktails.

Catered To-Go

Kapnos Taverna

MIKE ISABELLA CONCEPTS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR A GREEK-INSPIRED holiday table, two of Chef Mike Isabella's restaurants—

Kapnos in Washington, D.C., and Kapnos Taverna in Arlington, Virginia—are offering catered meals for pickup.

Meats—roasted or rotisserie—including whole animals such as chickens and turkeys plus lamb shoulder and pork shoulder, are on the menu,

as well as sides with a Greek flair and desserts such as Apple and Pear Pie and Sweet Potato Cheesecake. The restaurants also offer traditional Greek spreads like *taramasalata* and *tyrokaf-tari*. "We started this because we're always thinking about how to gener-

SEASONAL MENUS



ate revenue and offer something no one else offers," says Isabella.

Between the two restaurants, there are around 140 holiday orders, for, on average, eight people. A typical order includes meat with eight to 10 sides.

The great benefit of these meals is that they're earning the restaurants money while employees are home for the holidays. "We open the restaurants for pickup, then our staff go home," Isabella says. And the profit margins are good, too, he explains, "since you save money by not seating in the restaurant."

The tricky part is when to cook the catered meals: The restaurants start a day out and run the spits and cook the sides before service, then again after service. The Kapnos restaurants start advertising the catered meals after Halloween. They contact guests who've ordered catered holiday meals in the past, then send out press releases, email blasts, and social media posts.

Friendsgiving Celebrations

Marlene's @ Sevastopol Station

DES MOINES, IOWA

NO ONE WILL BE LONELY this holiday season at Marlene's @ Sevastopol Station—that's because the

restaurant is planning to host a Friendsgiving event for the first time. "There are a lot of single people and couples who are looking to get together," says owner Kim Carstens.

The restaurant is informally surveying its regulars to gauge interest in the Friendsgiving, collecting feedback that will help them determine when to hold the event, what type of food to serve, and how many events to hold. A single event could include up to 42 people.

For the food, Carstens is thinking about offering something a little untraditional, but not too far off the beaten path. In the running are herb roasted turkey and a ham with tart cherry sauce. With a mashed potato side, she'd like to serve a selection of butters such as herb butter, blue cheese butter, and tarragon butter—so guests "can jazz it up themselves."

For the finale, the chef is contemplating desserts like a skillet apple pie with bourbon and a double chocolate cake. Cocktails will also have a seasonal flair and be celebratory, such as The Sevastopol Sparkler, which is prosecco with Chambord, garnished with a raspberry.

The Friendsgiving will have a prix fixe menu that includes finger foods, the meal, and drinks. Carstens plans to expand her marketing through

social media and signage within the restaurant, as well as by alerting the local newspaper's food editor. "Yes, this will produce revenue, but at the same time it will bring a lot of people together," Carstens says. "And it can be a great way to build new guests if one couple invites another."

Réveillon Dinners

Roux

TAMPA, FLORIDA



ON CHRISTMAS EVE, guests will gather at fine-dining venue Roux for a Réveillon dinner. This celebratory meal originated in France and is traditionally served after midnight mass. "Everyone ate and ate until they couldn't eat any more, then did their Christmas reveling," explains executive chef James Williams.

This will be the second year Réveillon is held at Roux. The meal will consist of six courses, all with a Creole flair—an amuse-bouche, a soup, a salad, two entrées, and a dessert. Traditionally the food is sumptuous: veal and game meats, lobster, escargot, and the like, and a bûche de Noël, or yule log. Last year, the menu included soft-shell crab and quail.

Williams will "push the boat out" for this year's dinner, trying new dishes and more upscale food than usual. "We'll offer some foods people won't have had before and won't have again," he says. The prix fixe event costs \$55 per person, or \$100 with paired half-pours of wine accompanying each course.