

C MAGAZINE



A FRESHLY BAKED CHOCOLATE SOUFFLÉ.

Class Act

Celebrity chef Alex Hitz teaches a Los Angeles cooking club his secrets to perfecting the ultimate holiday feast.

Celebrity chef and author Alex Hitz has taught legions of fans to cook with his legendary book, *My Beverly Hills Kitchen*. But when he accepted an invitation from friend and fellow Angeleno Kim Uzielli to instruct a cooking club of kitchen-savvy friends on how to prepare a holiday feast, Hitz was faced with the challenge of teaching his very first class. “Kim called me and asked, ‘Would you ever do this?’” recalls Hitz in his distinctive Southern drawl. “Usually when I cook, it’s for a charity raising zillions of dollars, or for a big event. But I wanted to do this because it sounded fun, and I’d never done it before.”

And so Hitz and Uzielli put their heads together and laid plans to re-create his signature “bulletproof” holiday menu. “That’s the Christmassy menu I grew up on,” says Hitz, whose childhood was spent between Atlanta and France. “It’s an easy one that’s luxurious and special.”

“Our goal is to spend time catching up with each other

while enjoying a fabulous meal and hopefully honing our culinary skills,” notes Sheila Walker, founder of the five-year-old cooking club, which brings together a group of local friends. Meeting every month, it was Uzielli’s turn to open up her Beverly Hills home. “I was so excited to team up with Alex after watching his culinary career unfold over the last five years. I’ve gone to his home many times, and I’m always so impressed with his skills as a host,” says Uzielli, who first met Hitz at her husband Alessandro Uzielli’s local restaurant, La Dolce Vita. “We bonded because he cooks all the food himself for his parties, and I do the same thing at my Christmas parties.”

Drawing from his Southern-meets-French cuisine cookbook, Hitz envisioned a four-course feast including his signature hot soup, reimagined as a lobster bisque, and a roast tenderloin of beef, topped with a horseradish sauce. Recipes in one hand and wine glasses in another, 11 attendees gathered in Uzielli’s kitchen for the tutorial, which culminated in Hitz’s chocolate soufflé. With prep work taken care of prior to arrivals, Hitz whipped up his holiday extravaganza in an hour and a half, and served dinner on time. Guests including Shelley Litvak and Jennifer Nordstrom took their seats in Uzielli’s festive dining room, which she had decorated earlier that day using white hydrangeas and red gooseberries—a trick Uzielli learned during her early days working at a flower shop.

Marveling over the seemingly effortless feast, the friends exchanged strategies for their own

forthcoming Christmas dinner menus before bidding adieu with signed copies of Hitz's book. Says Uzielli, "The highlight of the night was having fun with these great girls who have been with the group for such a long time, and having my daughters say, 'Mommy, we heard you laughing all night! When did you go to bed?'"

Written and edited by Lesley McKenzie.

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