

Chef Todd Richards, Rolling Bones BBQ

What are some of your favorite holiday treats?

I love eggnog. It is what I look forward to the most. The cream, the nutmeg, the bourbon. How can you go wrong with that?

What are some of your most popular dishes during the holiday season?

It has to be dishes with potatoes. Sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, au gratin potatoes...people can't live without potatoes this time of year.

Are there any seasonal items that you are adding to the menu this year?

We of course will have turkey. We will add items such as smoked chestnuts, smoked prime rib and other holiday favorites.

What are some great small bites that you would recommend for a holiday party?

Simple, simple, simple items are a must. However, they must be executed flawlessly. I always think of items we had as a child for the holidays. My mom would make waffles for holiday brunch, so I do I waffle crème brulee with maple ice cream.

What is a great holiday gift for a chef?

A vacation...

For more information visit www.rollingbonesbbq.com.

Kevin Maxey, Chef de Cuisine, Craft Atlanta



Chef Kevin Maxey

What are some of your personal favorite holiday dishes?

I love the holiday meal my dad's mom would cook...home-made cornbread stuffing, BLT salad and country coconut pie. For myself, I always make classic homemade lasagna for Christmas Eve, and traditional favorites like roasted ham.

Are there any seasonal items that you are adding to the menu this year?

This year we are adding roasted wild boar, roasted venison saddle, chestnuts, black truffle and porcini mushrooms.

What is a great holiday gift for a chef?

Anything from Korin Knife Company, a Japanese Importer of steel knives. There is a brand called Togiharu. The Korin Togiharu line of Japanese style knives is a high-quality line meant for chefs and serious cooks. I bought them as a gift to myself and to the sous chefs in the restaurant last year.

For more information visit www.craftrestaurant.com.

Executive Chef Jim Holycross, McCray's Restaurant

What are some of your most popular dishes during the holiday season?

Our best seller during the holidays is our Applewood Smoked Bacon Wrapped Pork Tenderloin served with macaroni & cheese and green beans. We also run holiday specials throughout November and December including roasted turkey, mashed potatoes, steamed broccoli, roasted yams and cranberry-glazed turkey.

What are some great small bites that you would recommend for a holiday party?

The most ordered appetizer for holiday parties (and really all of our parties) is our house-made gorgonzola potato chips (a basket of homemade chips topped with creamy gorgonzola, green onion, bacon and roma tomatoes). Other popular starters include bruschetta, roasted red pepper hummus, steamed mussels in a fresh garlic sauce, mini meatballs or a simple shrimp cocktail.

What is a great holiday gift for a chef?

A new hand mixer! These things are magic tools for the kitchen.

For more information visit www.mccraystavern.com.

Antonio Daza and Liz Chester, Founder and President of Daza Dance

How do you celebrate the holidays at Daza Dance?

Our November 15th show features a performance by our teachers, sort of like "Dancing with the Stars." December 19th is our holiday party and is open to anyone who wants to come and dance. Our New Year's Eve party is our biggest party of the year. It is black tie and has a huge balloon drop. Last year we had over 700 balloons. The studio is also beautifully decorated by Tony Brewer, who does all of our events.

What are some gift packages that you are offering this season?

We offer gift certificates for private lessons, and we can tailor it to what people are looking for. If you are looking for a great workout, we offer belly dancing, Pilates and a Latin workout.

We are also introducing corporate packages this year. This is a fun and unique gift to give to your employees. Our goal is to make it part of employee benefits programs.

Who would benefit from the gift of dance this year?

If your New Year's resolution is to get back into shape, this is much more enjoyable than a gym membership. The New Year is about new beginnings, and this is the time to start dancing! Dancing affects the mind, body and spirit. Not only is it great exercise, it is also great for the self-esteem. We have the opportunity to watch people's lives change.

For more information, visit www.dazadanceatlanta.com.

Donna Kain, President of Private and Entrepreneurial Banking, The Buckhead Community Bank

Most readers know you as a financial expert, but they may not know that you are also a savvy shopper. What are some of your favorite places in Atlanta to find fashionable gifts at a reasonable price?

In Buckhead, I love *Just The Thing* for girlfriend gifts. Other favorites include Limetree, Festivity, Tennille & Co., Peridot and Boxwoods. One of my all-time favorite places for a unique and impressive gift is H. G. Robertson's Fine Silver because you will find some very well priced items that you won't find anywhere else.

What are some fun gifts for kids that won't break the bank?

When they are little, they love everything for a day or two, so there is no need to spend a lot of money. I like to buy fun books for kids, and Marshalls and TJ Maxx always seem to have a good assortment. When they are older, I find that Visa or Amex gift cards are perfect. Right amount, right size and exactly what they wanted all along. I am a believer in getting what they want rather than wasting money on something they are not going to wear or use.

Where do you find the best hostess gifts at a reasonable price?

I have a hostess gift closet that I try to keep supplied with a variety of items. I usually find these at places like Marshalls and TJ Maxx. I also like to shop at boutiques, and you would be surprised at what you can find at a reasonable price. I have this beautiful linen guest towel with a rhinestone initial on it that I bought for a close friend, so the next time I am at her house for dinner, I already have the gift! I only paid \$5 for it, and she will never know. But if she did, she would be so proud of my bargain shopping!

What is the best way to budget your holiday spending?

By all means pay cash! If you buy on credit, spend only what you can pay off within a month. If you can't pay it off that quickly, then don't stretch it out any longer than three months (and of course that depends on what your interest rate is on your credit card). Another way to budget with friends and family is to have an agreement that you are not doing the all out blowout thing with gifts this year. Agree to not gift at all or get creative and challenge everyone to come up with something fun, inspiring and inexpensive. Setting dollar limits is kind of tacky, and someone always ends up with a gift that goes in the "what the???" pile.

Donna Kain can be reached at dkain@buckheadcommunitybank.com.