

# Eat California style

The colonists were weary on that hot morning of September 4, 1781, but the hearts of these travelers beat with excitement as they neared their new home in the valley. Their long journey from Mexico over land and sea had taken seven months, and now, at last, they were settling in the town they would call "La Reyna de Los Angeles" — Queen of the Angels.

The founders of what we now call Los Angeles were Indian, Spanish and Black. Though they were of different races, they were all men of the land and men of vision. They had brought their wives and children to start new lives here on this lonely but promising expanse of land where grapes and roses grew wild by the river.

The history of Black cooking spans the history of California. In the pre-Gold Rush years, Blacks worked as cooks and servants to white military officers and businessmen. When "gold fever" hit in 1848, Blacks, both free men and slaves, headed for the Mother Lode country from all across the nation. By 1850, most Blacks in California were concentrated in the northern parts of the state and worked the mines and cooked for mining camps. By the end of the gold craze, many Blacks had successful trades and businesses in the food and service fields.

Whether it's a casual buffet or barbecue or an elegant dinner party, good cooking can be enjoyed at home in Los Angeles. An expert on party foods is Milton Williams, a successful caterer. In the foodservice business for more than thirty years, Williams has catered parties for such people as Paul McCartney and Mitzi Gaynor and for charitable causes such as Danny Thomas' St. Jude Hospital. Williams is a confident, easy-going man who reflects the relaxed Los Angeles lifestyle. As Williams talked about his catering business, we sampled two dishes that he likes to prepare at home: a light delicious noodle soufflé and a colorful apricot chicken.

"I'm very grateful," Williams said of his career. "I've been blessed with something I enjoy doing." As a boy he would help his mother with the cooking in their home on the east side of Los Angeles. He worked as a houseboy before he was given the chance to cater a party in 1953 for actor Edward G. Robinson. His reputation for outstanding catering has grown to where a Milton Williams-catered event is now an experience rivaling a Hollywood movie premiere.

"I did a party where the theme was a night in the Orient," Williams said. "We had kites flying and everything was made to look like a street in China. People in costume prepared every type of Oriental food right there on the spot. Rickshaws brought guests to the door from the parking area and there was a forty-eight-foot dragon with smoke from dry ice coming out of its mouth. It was just fabulous."

It would be understandable if catering such elaborate parties all over the world, plus supervising a large staff would make Williams nervous at times. However, Williams remains calm through even the most hectic projects. "I don't get uptight about anything," he says, relaxing in his lovely Hollywood Hills home. "I can't say that catering isn't hard work, but some-times you can invite pressure." His book, *The Party Book* (Doubleday, 1981), offers advice to nervous hosts and hostesses on how to entertain successfully.

### APRICOT BAKED CHICKEN

- 4 chicken breasts, split, boned
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 1 cup chopped green pepper
- 1/4 cup dried apricot halves
- 1 8-1/4-oz. can pineapple chunks, drained
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 2 tablespoons worcestershire sauce

Coat chicken with combined flour and seasonings. Brown on all sides in margarine. Place in 12 x 8-inch baking dish. Add remaining ingredients to skillet; simmer 15 minutes. Spoon sauce mixture over chicken. Bake at 325°, 45 minutes. Garnish with toasted pine nuts and chopped chives. Makes 8 servings.

**CREAMY NOODLE SOUFFLE**  
1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened

- 1/2 cup margarine
- 1 cup sour cream
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1-1/2 cups (3 ozs.) fine noodles, cooked, drained

Combine cream cheese and margarine, mixing at medium speed on electric mixer until well blended. Add sour cream, eggs, sugar, juice and salt; mix well. Fold in noodles; pour into 5-cup soufflé dish. Bake at 325°, 1 hour and 30 minutes. Makes 8 servings.  
Variation: Substitute 1-1/2-qt. soufflé dish for 5-cup soufflé dish. Bake at 325°, 1 hour and 20 minutes.




Offer Apricot Baked Chicken as a tangy entree for guests and family alike. It gets its spice from barbecue sauce along with apricots and pineapple chunks. As a contrasting, yet complementary, side dish present the elegant soufflé for a deliciously rich treat.

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