

Inn-credible Black Bear breakfast



Publisher's note: *This is reprinted with permission from the January 2006 issue of the Tahoe Mountain News. The Black Bear Inn now has a cookbook for purchase full of breakfast recipes.*

By Kathryn Reed

Living in Tahoe provides for some spectacular weekends – like the one just before the holidays arrived. How can you beat 10 bucks to ski at Kirkwood without crowds and on snow that was in stellar condition because of the bitter cold temps? Two days later I'm wolfing down the best breakfast I've had on the South Shore, wishing I had it before my day on the slopes.

That's one thing Kevin Chandler and Jerry Birdwell, owners of the Black Bear Inn on Ski Run Boulevard, take into account when they whip up one-of-a-kind concoctions in their kitchen – what will stay with skiers and boarders as they schuss through mounds of powder?

As delicious as breakfast was this particular Sunday morning, it's a shame you have to be a guest at the bed and breakfast (or write a food column) to be able to experience it. I spent a little more than an hour watching them create a breakfast that I've never seen here before.

They arrive in the kitchen about 6 each morning. Each is wearing a white chef coat with his name stitched beneath the Black Bear emblem. Breakfast is served to guests from 8:30 to 9:30am. Those staying in the cabins have the option of breakfast being delivered to them. People in the lodge eat at one of the downstairs tables.

The way they work in tandem it's hard to know they've never had any formal culinary training. They've learned on the job since opening the inn March 5, 1999. The commercial kitchen has one sink just for hand washing, one for food washing, one for dish washing. Pans hang over the island. Bins of utensils (more whisks and spatulas than most people would know what to do with) sit above the gas range.

Each day of the week something different is served so their guests (the inn has 10 rooms, each accommodating two people) don't ever indulge in the same dish twice. They graciously accommodate any dietary restrictions or food allergies.

On this particular morning eggs Benedict is being whipped up. Birdwell's special orange hollandaise sauce is like none I've had. The coffee cake is so moist. Chandler assembled a topping for his baked tomato that the party of seven next to me raved about. This was something I would have never thought of for breakfast, but turned out to be a perfect complement to rest of the meal. The fourth item was a poached pear that melted in my mouth.

If you can't take a vacation in Tahoe and stay at the Black Bear Inn, here is one recipe to make you feel like you're there.

Jer's Pears

10 Bartlett Pears

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound butter

$\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 Cup brown sugar

2 tsp vanilla

2 tsp cinnamon

Brandy to taste (optional)

Peel pears. Thinly slice bottom off so pear will sit upright in pan. Use melon baller to core pears.

In skillet, add all ingredients except pears until butter is melted and everything is mixed together. Pour some of the mixture inside each pear. Pour the rest on the outside of each pear.

Bake at 350 degrees for one hour.

The thing about these pears is that not only do they make for an unusual breakfast item, but they would be ideal with any meal of the day. And just think what they'd be like with a scoop of rich vanilla ice cream for dessert.

For more information about the inn, go to www.tahoebblackbear.com.