

What's for Dinner?

Putting meals on wheels for the over-cooked set



Nancy Parker puts the joy back in cooking by offering a do-it-yourself way to serve up dinner.



by Libby Boren McMillan

The age-old question “What’s for dinner?” is often a dreaded moment in the lives of singles, harried moms, and working couples—anyone less than thrilled about the hours it takes to shop and store a month’s food, much less cook the meals and clean up afterward. It’s a grind that takes the joy out of cooking for many people.

Enter Nancy Parker and Super Suppers. This fantastic franchise idea gives Lee County residents three fun and easy ways to have gourmet dinners at home with hardly any work.

Those who are short on time can pop in to Super Suppers, head straight for the Grab ‘n’ Go freezer, and choose from eight to twelve tasty “home-cooked” frozen entrees and side dishes. If you don’t have a hot/cold bag in your car, the store sells insulated coolers. The affordable Grab ‘n’ Go choices are from that month’s Super Suppers menu. “The favorites are ravioli,” says Parker,

“and also ribs, and the pesto chicken, which we held over this month.”

The second way to enjoy Super Suppers is to stop in when you have a little free time (and it doesn’t take much!). The studio kitchen is set up with a commercial prep station for each of the different entrees featured that month. Super Suppers has done all the work, so customers can just stop at a station, follow the easy directions on the posted recipe, and assemble all the pre-prepped ingredients into large plastic bags. Super Suppers already has sticky labels printed, each with the name of the dish, as well as thawing and cooking instructions. Throw a label on your entrée, and move on to the next station.

What would normally take many hours of driving, shopping, loading, unloading, rinsing, storing, planning, and chopping is magically transformed into about a five-minute process per entrée. “For six to twelve entrées, it saves fifteen to thirty hours,” says Parker,

“and the cost per serving is about four dollars when you assemble the entrée yourself.” That’s a business model that’s hard to ignore in today’s busy world.

The third way to take advantage of Super Suppers is the one creating all the buzz. Call ahead and book your own private evening with friends. Super Suppers is set up to help a customer e-mail their friends, so everyone can pre-select the entrees they want to prepare. The evening of the party, guests can bring a bottle of wine if they like and make a special event out of preparing a month’s worth of entrees for themselves or their family.

Nancy Parker owned a local travel business for 20 years before selling it and taking a year off to figure out her next move. Was she a foodie before she bought the business?

“No,” she says emphatically, then laughs. “But I am now! I had four kids, I always worked.” The charming Parker, in her previous life, was symbolic of the



Customers save hours of cooking by assembling pre-prepped meals and carrying them home in plastic bags.

patrons who rely on her now.

Menus are changed monthly, and Parker is able to substitute four regional specialties as she pleases. “You can also place your order and pay online,” she says of specialty orders. Some of the entrée choices can do double-duty as hors d’oeuvres. “We also have a breakfast entrée once in a while,” she says, “like baked praline French toast.” There are also side dishes available in the freezer, such as the broccoli with sesame sauce that was a side option for the chicken satay in July.

Anchoring the studio kitchen at Super Suppers is a large “braided bread station,” says Parker. “We always have a braided bread option that might have kielbasa in it, or chicken and cheddar—more like an entree. Sometimes it’s pizza, or turkey and Swiss.”

Parker got the idea for the business when visiting a friend in her home state of Michigan. “I made dinners for my parents,” she says of her introduction to the concept. Today there are 200 franchises nationwide, but Parker’s is the first in Southwest Florida.

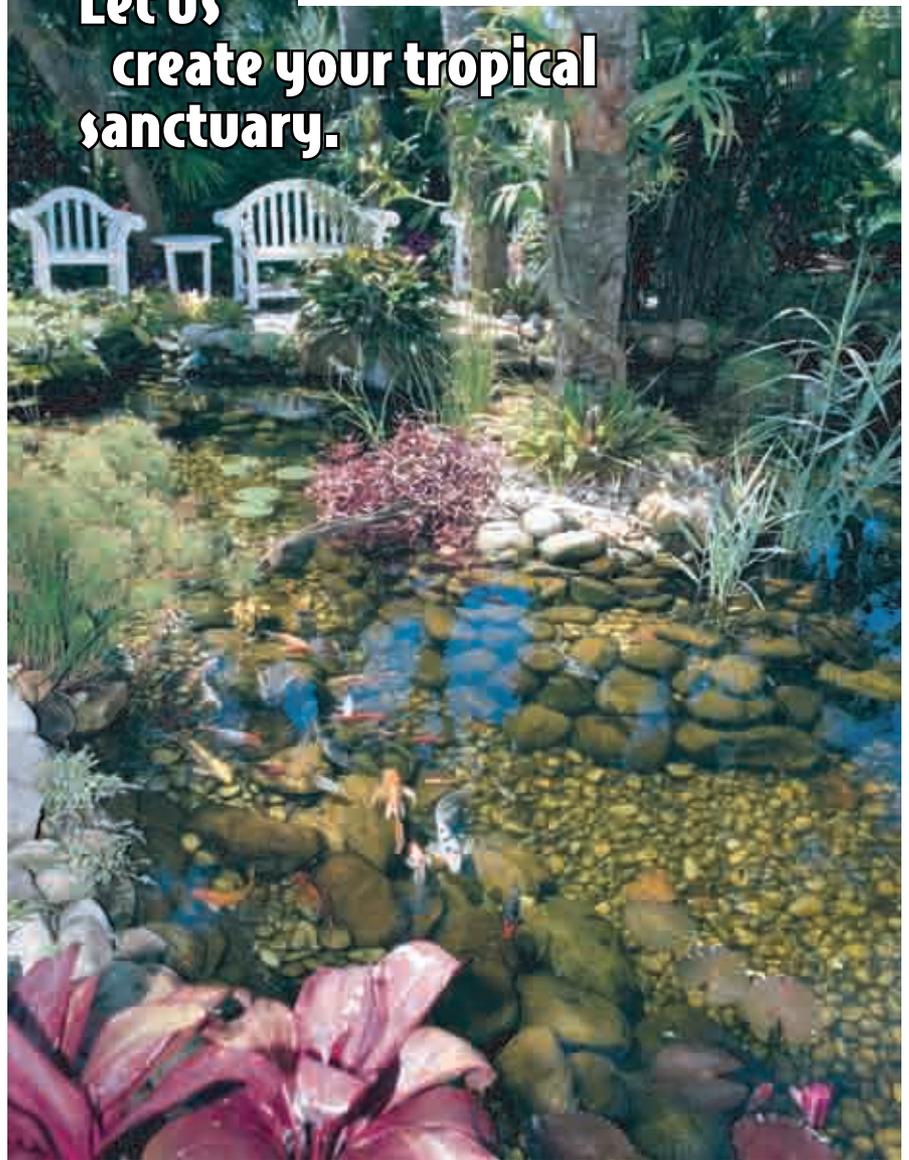
So the next time you’re feeling harried and you know that awful question is just around the corner, remember, so is Super Suppers. The sign above the business door says it all, “Your answer to...‘What’s for dinner?’”

Super Suppers, 13401 Summerlin Road, Fort Myers, 33919 (across from Edison College), 239-489-3733, www.supersuppers.com.

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