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# Markville holiday workshops a hit

BY BRUCE STAPLEY  
Correspondent

It's party invitations, profiteroles and present wrapping as Anne Kennedy sets up shop at the Markville Shopping Centre.

Kennedy, the host of CTV's Homestyle program, is concluding her series of free holiday season workshops at the Holiday Lodge, located in the mall's upper level in the space formerly occupied by Eatons.

Since Nov. 20, the specially constructed 1,200-square-foot log structure has housed a variety of guest speakers demonstrating skills including gift wrapping, holiday decorating and specialty holiday food preparations.

Mall patrons have been shown how to make their own gift wrapping paper, cards and centrepieces, while also getting to sample seafood treats such as ginger marinated shrimp.

If the workshops held to date in the mall's Holiday Lodge are any indication, all seats will be full for the six remaining sessions beginning Wednesday.

"It's been a huge success," says Scott Harris, marketing director. "The response has been phenomenal."

The workshops, which have been delivered to capacity audiences, are part



Merla McMenomy, left, and Anne Kennedy whip up some holiday treats for workshop participants.

of the mall's efforts to offer something different to people of Markham and the surrounding area. A survey of area residents to determine what people want from a shopping centre produced very specific results, said Harris.

"They weren't as interested in valet parking as they were in educational workshops," said Harris.

"This is a first for shopping centres. Malls have always done workshops and seminars, but they're usually product demos." That, plus the limited audience and the 20-minute duration of each session, has made the idea a hit.

"Rather than have 200 people, like other malls have at their workshops, we have bookings for just 25 people at each one of ours. That way, everyone gets to ask questions and sample what's being made. It's worked out well."

Special guests at the Holiday Lodge sessions have included Ali Sattari, chef at Unionville's La Grotta on Main. Sattari shared some of his trade secrets as he prepared such appetizing hors d'oeuvres as puff pastries with ricotta cheese and spinach.

According to Sattari, the audience was more than receptive.

"It was fantastic. I made enough for 35 people and it was all gone. They loved it."

Mariello Lambert is the guest speaker when the series resumes Wednesday, Dec. 15 at 7 p.m. with Gift Wrapping with the Best. Lambert will demonstrate how wrapping paper, Christmas cards and party invitations can be made at home.

Artist/designer Martha Johnson shares ideas on how to make centrepieces and napkin rings for New Year's Eve Thursday evening.

Friday evening it's Merla McMenomy, owner of The Art of Cooking School, preparing holiday party hors d'oeuvres.

Saturday is food day as the three workshops scheduled between noon and 4 p.m. will see McMenomy return to create holiday seafood treats, cream puffs with ice cream and chocolate sauce and other delicacies.

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