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Long Beach Chef Leans On Cannabis As Key Ingredient

By Amy Orr
Contributor
Apr 16, 2021



Chef Amanda Jackson is making her own way in the foodie world.

—Photo courtesy Amanda Jackson

For years, 420 has been associated with marijuana. Many claim the numerical significance started in the 1970s, when a group of San Rafael teens held after-school meetings at 4:20 P.M. to smoke pot. Although some dismiss this explanation as urban legend, the code has gained universal recognition. As a result, many people view April 20 (4/20) as a day for cannabis celebration.



In Long Beach, Chef Amanda Jackson sees marijuana as an herb that can boost the flavor profile and potency of many dishes. In addition to running a catering company (Chef Amanda & Co) with a wide assortment of marijuana-free dishes, Jackson also hosts an array of online cannabis cooking classes.

“People call me the ‘Weed Fairy,’” Jackson said. “It’s something I love in lots of different forms. When weed is added to comfort food, it becomes a modern kind of fun. My Zoom classes are popular with people who are home and comfortable and ready to enjoy life.”



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Despite being born on 4/20, Jackson said she did not smoke weed at an early age; however, she did learn how to handle food when she was young. She started cooking on the line of a Georgia wing shack at the age of 17. Later, she joined the culinary program at Johnson & Wales University and gained “Back of House” experience in the kitchens of various southern restaurants.

In 2017, she moved to California and became a personal chef for private clients like Heather and Terry Dubrow and Jackie Aina. She also spent some time working with Andrea Drummer, chef and co-owner of the Original Cannabis Café.

Confident in her own creativity and culinary skills, Jackson decided to follow her own path in Long Beach. She now offers catered meals and cooking classes through Chef Amanda & Co. As her recipes gained popularity, she began making plans for a cookbook.

“I’m a storyteller,” Jackson said, “and food is a great way to tell stories. It’s the perfect vehicle for conversation.”



Jackson's skills, and her ebullient personality, caught the eye of Hollywood producers. Netflix asked her to appear on its first episode of "Cooked with Cannabis," which aired on 4/20/20. Jackson started the show with grilled sweet corn gazpacho, made with THC-infused olive oil and topped with a wisp of cannabis smoke. Her Piri Piri lamb chops, served with "dream queen" butter polenta, were followed by a mango peach crumble, made with CBD honey and topped with THC-infused whiskey whipped cream. The Netflix judges called Jackson's food absolute sunshine.

Recently, HBO taped a segment with Jackson for "Our Stories to Tell." The release date for this footage has not been set.

Although Jackson said she is flattered by the media attention, her focus is on food and its story. Whether she's teaching a course on palette decolonization for the City College of San Francisco, hosting a professional session on www.lbfoodandbeverage.org, or giving online cannabis cooking instruction to a small group, she is passionate about the intersection between food and culture.

Jackson said she sees dishes as beautiful and meaningful, both with and without cannabis. But she also believes that a proper understanding and treatment of marijuana is essential.

"Weed is not illicit or unsafe when it's handled responsibly," Jackson said.

To book a cannabis class, order a traditional gourmet meal, or peruse Chef Amanda Jackson's personal recipes, go to www.chefamanda.co.

