



[Sun-Sentinel](#), July 2, 2009

## What's Cooking: Christine Najac makes potato salad and dip for Fourth of July



[CHRISTINE NAJAC OF BOCA RATON WITH HER BLUE CHEESE POTATO SALAD AND RANCH DRESSING DIP WITH LOTS OF VEGGIES.](#) (CARLINE JEAN, SUN SENTINEL / JULY 2, 2009)

BY DEBORAH S. HARTZ-SEELEY FOOD EDITOR

Christine Najac has always been a party girl. Well, as much as a young girl going to an all-girl's Catholic high school in Wakefield, R.I., can be. And all her parties were to entertain her girlfriends, of course. Think Christmas parties, May Day festivities and fundraisers.

"Everything I did revolved around food," says Najac who now lives in Boca Raton.

When it was time to go to college, she decided to attend Johnson and Wales University in Providence to get a degree in hospitality management. But after graduation, she found that working in the restaurant and hotel industry is "a tough life." Knowing no one, she moved to Delray Beach in 1989 where she started waiting tables and running her own small boutique catering business. "I didn't just plan dinners but experiences. I loved it. It never felt like work. Or maybe it was work, and I loved it," she says.

But when she realized she'd either have to find some money to invest and take it to the next level or quit, she decided to quit. That's when she became an event planner for a law firm and then moved on to other marketing positions. "But something kept calling me back to food," she says.

In 2004, she put a marketing plan together and started her own Internet-based bakery called Really Good Cookies. Her signature product is a chocolate chip cookie topped with caramel and semi-sweet chocolate and garnished with walnuts. She's also started offering entertaining seminars. Many of the things she learned as a caterer and what she teaches at her seminars she puts into practice at her own parties, which she hosts every couple of months for no more than 25 people. She doesn't try to serve sit-down meals but always hosts buffets. "I gravitate toward simple elegance, yet always have the underlying theme of South Florida in mind," she says knowing that many of her ideas will work perfectly for your Fourth of July celebrations. Her tables are decorated with hibiscus, seashells, ratan, burlap, candles and bits of wood. "I give the table a breezy feel with a lot of natural resources," she says. For example, she might fill a clay flowerpot with shells and use it to hold candles. To help her prep her parties, she tends a garden on the grounds of her condo building. Here she can clip palm leaves, grasses, ixora blossoms and hibiscus to use on her table. When it comes to the menu, she serves lots of dips such as her Ranch Dressing Dip that's perfect with cut vegetables. The Blue Cheese Potato Salad recipe she offers here is a favorite from her catering days. "Everything I do is homemade with a 'Wow' factor," she says. "You can purchase potato salad so what you make at home should be different and exotic." She uses red potatoes for color and adds wine and blue cheese for that special touch. Another tip: If friends volunteer to bring food, let them. "Everyone has something special they do well. Let them bring that dish," she suggests. If the item comes with a recipe, your guests not only get to eat good things at the party but also leave with good things to cook. When the party is over, Najac sends her guests home with a cup of brewed coffee and one of her signature cookies, of course.

