

# NEW YORK POST

## IT'S A HOLIDAY, WHY GO OUT, LET'S ORDER IN?

By CATHERINE CURAN

*December 23, 2007* -- It's rare to see kids clamoring for green beans, but the ones that Laura Memisha served on Thanksgiving were so delicious her 13-year-old nephew requested them for Christmas Eve dinner.

The string beans almondine aren't from Memisha's kitchen, though. They'll be cooked and delivered hot to her door, along with pasta, seafood and potatoes, by Italian specialty food market lavarone Bros.' Wantagh, L.I., store.

Memisha is part of a growing group who are shelving their roasting pans this Christmas to enjoy gourmet food from the likes of lavarone and Zabar's.

The cost is less than a comparable restaurant meal, and the labor saved lets hosts spend time with family - instead of at the stove - and still dish up a delectable dinner.

"I spent \$449 plus \$140 on extras, and believe me it's worth \$600 to have it all done," said Memisha, a 42-year-old mother of two who lives in Wantagh and works full-time job as a real estate agent. "I always cooked myself, but this is as good as home cooking."

In its second year of selling Christmas dinners, lavarone has doubled the volume to 200 at its Wantagh store alone. The firm, which has four stores in Long Island and Queens, also introduced a \$299 New Year's Eve cocktail party package in response to requests.

Manhattanites are flocking to Upper West Side food market Zabar's for home-style Christmas dinner packages that average \$200 to \$300.

Volume is up 25 percent over 2006, with lots of orders for foie gras and blackened filet mignon, said Zabar's caterer Andrea Watman.