

MONDAY, JULY 5, 1993

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CHEF LARRY JANES

Children learn a lot helping you in kitchen

In a self-professed cookbook freak. I have books on Russian cooking, South African cuisine, ice cream, holiday cooking, creative appetizers and a whole slew of children's cookbooks. When it comes to cooking alongside children, I have come to realize that the old Betty Crocker cookbook that taught us how to turn French toast into smiley faces with blueberries and bananas just doesn't cut mustard. Have you ever watched a child paging through a cookbook to find the perfect accompaniment to fish sticks?

Learning by doing

Children learn by doing, and even though you might not think they're learning anything by opening a can of spaghetti, they are. They learn how to choose right pot to fit the burner, kitchen and fire safety, how to use utensils, and recycle by cooking just one little can of spaghetti! Children can learn a lot helping in the kitchen. You might not realize it, but you incorporate math into cooking every time you count eggs for a cake. Too simple, you say? How about a lesson in fractions every time you mix one-quarter cup of sugar into three-quarters of a cup of flour?

Science lessons

The simple art of making bread can be a lesson in doubling (in bulk, as the dough rises). Spooning of dough, there's a lesson to be learned about how yeast interacts with flour and warm liquids to create a gas that causes the dough to rise.

A microwave oven and bag of popcorn can be the impetus to a whole lesson on how microwave energy works. Energy can be explored by explaining the difference between gas and electric stoves, microwave ovens and even incorporating propane grills and gas-fired camp stoves.

A personal favorite of mine is exploring the geographical aspects of cooking. What foods grow best where and why? Can anyone explain why the French call it a crepe, the Poles call it a polichinka, the Chinese call it an egg roll wrapper and the Greeks call it phyllo?

It might be a little thicker or thinner, and they all start with flour and a liquid and all end up getting rolled around some sort of food. They all, in essence, do the same thing and come from the same source.

My kids don't realize it, but they also learn a very important lesson in sanitation and food safety when they cook. This goes far beyond a simple hand washing.

The Jones Gang have found bugs in flour and seen the results of what happens when a little sugar is inadvertently spilled on the kitchen floor. What treasures lurk behind the stove or refrigerator and why is it necessary to pull them out every now and then to do a basic cleaning? Have you ever thought about what happens to a soggy dish towel when you leave it in the sink after an overnight excursion to Cedar Point?

Grocery shopping

These are just a few of the things that my kids learn when they're home during the summer helping me cook. I would bet that if you ask any parent who has ever taken a kid to the grocery store if the trip was educational, they would laugh in your face. Between the questions of "can I have?" and the "I want's," I send the children off searching for frozen grape juice and refried beans all the while knowing that I'm teaching them reading skills.

My soon-to-be-a-fourth-grader adores the game we play about finding out costs comparison shopping between brands. She thinks it's funny. I think it's great that I'm saving money. My second-grader reads coupons and makes up the shopping lists. Even if "bread" is spelled without an "n," he's learning something.

Most important, I think my kids are getting some sort of understanding about just how much money it costs to go grocery shopping these days and why I get upset when the peanut butter is left uncovered or when the milk is left out of the refrigerator.

I think my outlook on getting kids involved in the kitchen is a little different than that of Betty Crocker. Anyone who has ever seen my kids knows that they love to eat as much as I do but instead of making smiley faces on French toast to make it fun to eat, my kids are learning those little lessons in life that will allow them to be self-sufficient as the years go by.

What it all boils down to folks is that if you get kids involved in the cooking process as a whole, they will learn to try different things simply because they're involved in the process.

My kids get so excited when they make a batch of tacos as they did when they learned how to tie their shoes. My only wish is that if you have kids, you will instill in them the importance of food and cooking. Bon Appetit!

See Larry Janes' family-tested recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1836.



Mixing Muesli: Deborah Schaffa, 4 mixes up a batch of Muesli, a healthy blend of oats, fruit, milk, honey and nuts at the Oakland Steiner School in Bloomfield Township.

SMART SNACKERS MUNCH ON NUTRITIOUS NIBBLES

■ Kick the junk food habit and develop a plan to snack smart. Substitute dried and fresh fruit, pretzels, popcorn and juice for candy, chips and pop.

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER



There's nothing wrong with snacking. What's wrong are our choices — candy, cookies and ice cream. According to research conducted by Quaker Oats Co., Americans spend more than \$31 billion on snack food compared to just over \$16 billion on fruit. Candy takes the largest share of the snack food market (25.4 percent) with cookies and crackers coming in second (23.6 percent).

Snacks account for 18 percent of the day's total calories and 16 percent of the day's total fat intake for children. For active, growing teens, snacks can account for up to one-fourth of the day's total calories.

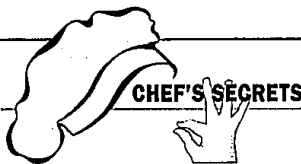
Don't let your kids take a summer vacation from good nutrition, take advantage of the bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables to develop a snack smart plan.

Lisa Kay Allen noticed a big difference in her son, Andrew, 6½, a student at Oakland Steiner School in Bloomfield Township, when she substituted dried fruits and fruit juice for candy and pop. "He's a calmer, happier boy," she said. "Give him a candy bar and he'll get real hyper."

Making the switch to more natural foods wasn't hard. "More grocery stores have healthy food sections," she said. "I find everything I need at the L & L Spartan Store at Adams and Wattles in Rochester Hills," she said.

Parents of children attending the

See SMART, 2B



CHEF'S SECRETS

Down-to-earth chef likes food that's real



Summer salad: Bonnie Fishman of Bonnie's Patisserie invented this colorful chicken orange salad recipe.

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

You won't find any bottles of lemon juice or cans of apples on the shelves in the kitchen at Bonnie's Patisserie, 29229 Northwestern Highway, Southfield. Owner Bonnie Fishman is appalled by processed foods.

"I'm just really down to earth. I have old-fashioned values. I like food that's real. I've not cut any corners in 13 years. We bone our own turkeys, make our own stock, juice lemons, peel our own apples and garlic," Fishman said. "We buy direct and use the freshest, finest ingredients."

Trained at Cordon Bleu Cookery School in London, England, Fishman, who studied anthropology in college, has developed a successful business doing what she likes best: cooking and teaching others how to cook.

She packs a lot into her oasis on busy Northwestern Highway. It's not a big place. There are 16 seats inside and 12 outside, but the atmosphere is friendly and relaxing. Bonnie's borders a tree-lined, natural spring-fed brook. You can hear the stream babbling over the din of cars.

Customers come for the fresh, homemade soups, salads and sandwiches plus daily specials like Chicken Orange Salad, Szechwan Beef and Wild Rice and Turkey Salad, pastries, tarts, cookies and cakes.

Fishman offers custom-catering and teaches cooking classes from mid-September to mid-May. "We do an amazing variety in a small place, and we have high standards," she said.

There's a mirror above the kitchen window so students in her cooking classes can see exactly what she's doing. "I've been teaching for 15 years," she said. "I learn from my students and my students learn from me. The nicest compliment I ever received was, 'You inspired me to cook again.'"

Her classes are informal and there's something

for everyone. One class might be on low-fat cooking, another on chicken. "I test all my recipes," she said. "I get ideas usually when I'm driving. I'm like a chemist. I know what will work and what won't."

Who taught you how to cook? "My mom. She was an excellent cook; she was really before her time. Carolyn Haskin (former executive chef of the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham) was a great source of inspiration. She's a remarkable talent. She's not a snob. I met her at the Money Tree (in Detroit)."

Family. Fishman lives in West Bloomfield. She is married to Robert Kotai and they have two children, Ben, 11, and Hanna, 6. Like her mother, Fishman said she involves her children in cooking. "Ben can cook any breakfast. My daughter has helped me since she was 2. Young children can scrub vegetables and shuck corn. When did you decide to open your own business?"

"I cooked in high school, but everyone went to college so I did too. I studied anthropology because I liked it and worked at food places. After my junior year, I went to London and loved it. In the fall of my senior year, I went to Cordon Bleu. On the plane on the way home from Europe, I wrote in my journal, 'small pastry shop like in France.' I wanted to enter too." Fishman worked at a variety of restaurants and was general manager of the Money Tree in Detroit. She moved to the Bay area of California to sharpen her baking skills and moved back to the Detroit area after a year and a half. She was 27 when she opened Bonnie's.

Bonnie's will be closed Monday-Tuesday, July 5-6, for summer vacation. She will reopen Wednesday, July 7. Call 367-4540.

See recipe inside. To recommend a chef to be featured in this column, call Keely Wygonik, Observer & Eccentric Taste/Entertainment Editor, 953-2105 or fax 691-7279.