



Herbs and spices add zest to some everyday recipes

By LORAIN McCLISH

Cookies that taste like roses, herbs to give that little zip to mediocre dishes, and love potions which have been making people say yes for centuries, is business-as-usual for Caroline Jamison.

"Get yourself hooked on a pastry tube if you want to turn out a beautiful table," she told guests at the sold-out luncheon in Farmington Community Center.

"Don't attempt to make rice in large batches," it will never fluff up for you," she continued while her audience was sampling cream vichyssoise, creole quiche, and gourmet bubble and squeak, all dressed up with herbs and spices.

The woman who has gotten to be known as "the herb lady" finds art, history, medicinal powers, fragrance and the added oomph to cookery in the herb and spice lore she shares with others.

All of those aspects are included in her current class at the center, called "Magic of Herbs."

Her luncheon-demonstration was part of the center's Entertaining With a Flair series featuring local culinary artists.

FOR THOSE who are not acquainted with what herbs and spices can do for a dish, Mrs. Jamison suggests taking a couple of chicken breasts and sizzling them in butter with some tarragon "just long enough until they lose their pink."

She says the test is a good convincer, and we pass along a few more of her suggestions:

- Curry should be strong; there is no reason to use it otherwise. But other than that, follow the recipe directions carefully because herbs and spices are meant to enhance the natural food flavor, not drown it out.

- Saffron is the most expensive herb in the world because it is produced in such small amounts. But don't fool around trying to grow it yourself; too

much of it grown in this area is poisonous.

- Wash fresh herbs with warm, not hot, water. Heat will destroy the taste.

- Some pretty powerful medicine is made with the tonka bean, so bypass it for foods. Use it instead to string on a necklace, or in a pomander for fragrance.

- Use coarse or kosher salt (without iodine) to salt your fresh herbs.

To enhance the flavor of homemade soup, determine which fresh herbs and spices you want to use, then encase them in a cheese cloth bag tied with string to cook along with the soup ingredients. Your soup will look prettier without all of the herbs leaves and stems floating in it.

- Store all of your herbs and spices away from heat, light, and moisture and they will lose all of their color and all of their oils.

- Use the sniff test for any herb or spice you suspect may have been sitting on the shelf too long. If the aroma is still strong, it is OK.

- Substitute tobacco for pepper next time you have occasion to use it. It spreads better throughout a casserole, for example, and will add a slightly different taste, though still do the same job.

- Do a good job in crumbling your dried herbs. The more oil glands you break, the more flavor you will have.

- The next time you use a recipe that calls for chicken broth and you don't have an extra chicken handy or the time to boil one, substitute a double strength mixture of Herb Ox Instant Broth.

- Garlic is the handiest aphrodisiac to use on a man. Juniper berries comes

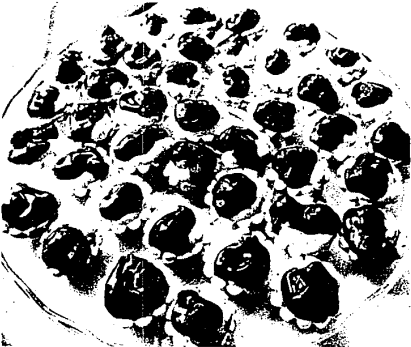
highly recommended for use on a woman.

MRS. JAMISON had three suggestions for those who want to read more about herbs and spices.

She recommends "Food for Lovers," by Almut Elgett, MacFadden Publishers; "How to Grow Herbs for Gourmet Cooking," by Fredrick Anderson, Meredith Press; and "Aphrodisiacs in Your Garden," by Charles Connell, Taplinger Publishing Co.

Entertaining With a Flair series continues Wednesday, Feb. 28, when Kay Dendler will share her secrets in a session called "Party Fare."

The program will begin at 1 p.m. Reservations, at \$5 each, are being taken now by calling the center at 477-8404.



Shells for the cherry tarts (at left) were made with Caroline Jamison's own recipe for basic pastry. The vanilla pudding which filled the shell as well as the cherry pie topping were both laced with a tinge of cinnamon to give an extra zip to the taste buds. The recipe for Mrs. Jamison's Herbed Cheese Spread, which was used to fill the mushroom cap appetizers at right, is given below. Guests at the luncheon took home about a dozen recipes, mostly of everyday foods, which can be perked up with herbs and spices.



Guests became believers after sampling a smorgasbord that ran from appetizers to desserts, prepared by Caroline Jamison, for her session on "Taste What Herbs and Spices Can Do."



Some recipes from the spice kitchen

Caroline Jamison passes along some of her herb-tasting recipes:

PARMESAN PASTRY

1 cup butter
1 teaspoon salt
3 cups flour
Parmesan cheese
paprika

Combine butter, salt and flour. Cut into fine meal and mix in a scant one-half cup cold water with fork. Gather into roll, cover and chill. Pastry will be very malleable. Roll out and cut into shapes, then cover with parmesan cheese and dust with paprika (instead of flour). Bake at 450 degrees for 10 minutes.

CREAM VICHYSOISE

4 leeks, finely chopped
1 onion, finely chopped
2 tablespoons butter
5 potatoes, peeled and finely sliced
4 cups of chicken broth
5 cups light cream

Saute leeks and onion in butter. Add potatoes and chicken broth. Cover pan and boil gently for 40 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in light cream. Serve hot or cold with chives on top. Yield is 12 cups.

HERBED CHEESE SPREAD

8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature

1 small clove fresh pressed garlic
1 heaping teaspoon fresh finely minced parsley

1 teaspoon fresh minced majoram
Mix well and allow to blend for at least an hour before serving, or chill to serve later. Serve on crackers or in fresh raw mushroom caps. Yield is 1 cup.

HOT CURRIED TOMATO PUNCH

Pour 2 cups chicken broth into large pan and add 2 teaspoons mild curry powder. Stir and bring to simmer to develop the curry flavor. Add 46 oz. can of tomato juice. Bring to simmer again, and serve. Yield is 62 oz.

DILL CREAMED POTATOES

4 or 5 lbs. of boiled, peeled potatoes
4 oz. butter
2 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 1/2 cup of Half and Half cream
2 teaspoons fresh dill weed

Dice potatoes into a two-quart baking dish.

In saucepan, melt butter, stir in flour, salt and when smooth, add Half and Half. Add dill weed and cook to thicken sauce. Pour over potatoes. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour. Yield is 12-15 servings. This dish can be frozen.



Caroline Jamison (at left) gets an assist from Sharon Zamczyk, a member of Farmington Community Center staff, lending out cream vichyssoise during an Entertaining With a Flair session. The series,

which brings culinary artists to the center for lunch and food preparation demonstrations, is new this season and has been a success.

Party fare is next in series for the hostess

Kay Dendler, who started her career in preparing beautiful food when viewing a magnificent display at a church picnic, continues "Entertaining With a Flair" series at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 28, in Farmington Community Center.

She calls her session "Simply With a Flair" and zeros in on party fare and concentrates on tea sandwiches and hors d'oeuvres. She adds that her recipes are applicable whether the cook is a hostess for a few friends at

bridge, a graduation party or a wedding.

Mrs. Dendler's luncheon and demonstration is the fourth in the series which features culinary artists in the Detroit area. Each brings his or her own expertise to share with the guests.

All guests are invited to bring home printed recipes to duplicate.

The key to Mrs. Dendler's success is the finger foods that are delicious, simple to make, and look smashing on the table.

"I will serve a great salmon mousse and demonstrate how to make pinwheel and checkerboard sandwiches," she said. "People are always intrigued with this technique."

HER INITIAL interest in food, she relates, began on a sad note. She is one of nine children, raised in an impoverished area in West Virginia. The family's fare was all home-grown,

and until she was 18 years of age ate "mainly potatoes, beans and cornbread."

She continued, "There was never too much meat and we were borderline vegetarians, you might say."

But "a whole new world of food opened up" at a church picnic where "there was an array of different food so beautifully prepared I was amazed."

For a long while she was a volunteer, experimenting, planning, and preparing

church dinners, catered affairs, weddings, private dinner parties and special menus.

Mrs. Dendler has been in and around the food business since 1948 and says she has picked up tips from everyone she's worked with, notably a chef at Kingley Inn many years ago.

"He provided me with a multitude of tips and I've filed away all of his ideas," she said.

Her collection of ideas runs now to

the "drawers full," and she is always on the lookout for more.

An individual series ticket is \$5, and available by calling the center at 477-8404. Early reservations are suggested, because all previous sessions in the series have been sold out.

The series closes with "Italian Brunch" on Wednesday March 4 with Geri Rinschler, whose specialties, Italian-style, are shrimp scampi and tortia de ricotta.