

Keeping Pace with food

Too bad. Here we are, winding down 1986 and you probably didn't even realize that the "in" food trend was regional Thai and Vietnamese cuisine. For that matter, did you really care that the "hot" culinary topic for 1985 was Tex-Mex with a sampling of Dim Sum? Where were you in 1984 when the Olympics started the Yugoslavian and Russian food binges?

Now, this isn't to say that if you missed the boat on this year's Thai and Vietnamese cuisine that you still can't enjoy such Far Eastern delicacies as Xi Hu Yu (a Thai version of boiled fish) or Ru Yi Rou Wan, the Vietnamese answer to lucky meat balls. I mean, let's face it, "Miami Vice" is still the show to watch but check out "L.A. Law!"

So what's hot and what's not for '87?

Well, keeping in the tradition of "high tea" that you can see emerging all around the Metro area hotels and restaurants, believe it or not, this will usher in the era of British cuisine. Now the British have never really been known for anything much more than fish and chips and steak and kidney pie, but after visiting a few of the great Windsor British eateries and discovering the latest hot spot, in Belleville yet, the lean toward the cockneyed will surely be taking over the minds and the menus of the great chefs of Detroit.

If you have yet to sit back and enjoy "tea and crumpets" at the Hotel St. Regis, put it on your list of places to be and be seen. Everyone who's anyone in the Motor City knows that tea time at the Regis is where it's happening. Even the "hot to trot" downtown party crowd hits the tea and then makes the rounds of the watering holes.

Here's a hot little tip Molly Abraham hasn't even discovered yet: if you're looking for authentic British cooking, try the just-opened English Derby restaurant just east of beautiful downtown Belleville on the Huron River drive.

It's cafeteria style, but guaranteed to have the best Friday-night fish cakes with a white sauce that you've ever tasted. This guy is doing so well that he's closed on Saturdays and Sundays (to work on his catering, or so he says). This is the place to go for a cheap date. They don't serve liquor (yet) and fish cakes are only \$1.35 each. (Two was more than enough to fill me.)

You probably won't find any steak and kidney here, but you can catch that at Ye Old Steak House in Windsor.

Of course, with British cuisine being the culinary trend, the invitation to Indian cuisine can't be that far behind. Let's face it, with the colonization, along with Andy and Sarah's wedding, this is the year!

The Raja Rani restaurant in Ann Arbor has been dishing up great Indian cuisine for many years and they were content to sit back and do what they did best, without much hoopla and

Chef Larry Jones



photo by BILL BRESLER

It may be hard to pronounce, but this Indian delight of Gajar-Ka-Halva carrot cake is easy to swallow.

banner-waving. Sorry to see that end.

With the trend leaning to curries, dals, chutneys and ghee, watch the local kitchens start flipping around Indian terminologies and make these unknowns as popular as salsa, dim sum and racelette.

Making a definitive charge for the finish line is something new from the Spanish called "tapas." Look for these interesting appetizers in the form of empaniadas and "pop in your mouth" tasty little tidbits that will probably turn into the culinary rage of '88.

The culinary rage that will soon (if it hasn't already begun) sweep the major dining establishments in the metro area will be the increased use of fresh herbs, not necessarily to mask the flavors of the food but to subtly compliment.

Watch for the tanginess to withdraw, especially with mustard sauces that have a tendency to cover up plain old chicken and look for an emergence of simple herbs, not in heavy

cream sauces, but singularly positioned to add a flavor of distinction. Herb marinades will be the rage. Fresh mint and tarragon will be as valuable as Beluga caviar. Anglehair pasta will sing triumphant with bits of basil, rosemary, fresh sage and pine nuts.

You will continue to see the emergence of specialty game, fowl and seafood never before afforded to the taste of metro Detroiters. Roast loin of lion, fresh bluefin tuna, squab (otherwise known as the pigeons of Plymouth) with sprinklings of rattlesnake meat for the truly adventurous. By the way, bring the American Express or a big wad of 20s.

Although way overdone and always served mushy, pasta will still be prevalent on most menus. Restaurateurs keep it going because they make lots of money by serving it.

Caterers will truly shine in '87, doing everything from intimate and romantic dinners for two (starting at \$100) all the way up to catered sit-down affairs for the multitudes, with prices ranging from \$6 per plate for the best stuffed cabbage (Mrs. Wiesniewski's) all the way to escargot en phyllo from Tom MacKinnon in Northville — the caterer in western Wayne County (prices by request). Rick Halberg from RIK's Custom catering in Birmingham has the northern 'burbs covered, and I'm hearing great raves from the east sides who are successful in contracting Cafe du Chat to handle all the Pointe parties. Of course, when dealing with these guys, be prepared to have your socks blown off, not only in quality and presentation, but ditto for their pricing. (Remember the old adage — "If you gotta ask, you can't afford!")

1987 promises to be the year of the unusual, unforgettable and for the unpretentious. Bon appetit!

GAJAR-KA-HALVA! (ever try halva? you'll love this Indian version!)

- 4 cups milk
- 2 lbs. carrots, peeled and grated
- 2 cardamom pods
- 10 tablespoons oil or ghee
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon raisins
- 1 tablespoon slivered almonds
- 1 cup heavy cream, (optional)

Place the milk, grated carrots and cardamom pods in a heavy-bottomed pot. Bring to a boil, lower heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally until no liquid is left. (about 20-30 minutes) Add the oil, turn down the heat slightly and start frying the carrot mixture stirring all the time. Continue until the carrots turn a reddish brown. This may take 30 minutes. Add sugar, raisins and almonds. Allow to cool. Cover and refrigerate until ready to eat. To serve, it can be warmed or chilled and usually is served in India with cream.