

Mustards vary from hot to mild

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For instance, is a whole grain mustard that contains honey, tangerine, oranges, pineapple, white wine and wine vinegar. La Delicate would be a delicious addition to chicken, Jonathan said.

"Standard recipes can be made exciting and interesting by using a different type of mustard," he said.

Instead of adding basic yellow mustard to potato salad, substitute a German beer mustard or a Russian sweet-style mustard. Spread a little authentic, brown stadium mustard on a biting, Cajun mustard on a hot dog. Dip a chunk of cheese in a honey mustard.

Plain sandwiches may be spiced up with creole mustard, one of the biggest-selling mustards at the Bottle and Basket, 190 N. Hunter in Birmingham. Creole, a sharp, brown, grainy mustard, contains mustard and vinegar, which Berrie Cole, deli manager, highly recommends on almost any kind of cold cut.

Mustard's smorgasbord of ingredients gives each one a slightly different taste: sweet, spicy, tangy, hot or sharp. The condiment is produced in cities across the United States from New York to New Orleans and in most European countries. Some of these overlooked mustards include an Arizona sage mustard, sharp Bavarian and sweet-and-tangy English

pub-style.

Jonathan said that about half of the Merchant of Vine's mustards are domestic and the other half imported.

"The domestic producers have really expanded their mustard horizons," he said.

THE MUSTARD PLANT grows profusely across the United States. It's a rapidly spreading plant not recommended for herb gardens.

Mustard is often considered a pesky weed by farmers. It's heavily cultivated for its seed in Santa Barbara County, Calif., and in several Western states. It thrives in cold, cool and temperate climates.

Mustard plants come in many varieties, ranging in height from 18 inches to four or five feet. The leaves are fuzzy and varied in color from yellowish to dark green. The pungent seeds originate from clusters of bright yellow flowers, each of which looks like a miniature cross. Powdered mustard seeds range in color from a dark yellow to olive brown.

Mustard not only adds zest to any meat but holds medicinal purposes as well. Oil extracted from the mustard seed is used to make soap. A paste made from powdered seed can be used in a plaster applied to the skin to relieve pain.

Send your recipe for turkey stuffing

Recipes have started arriving from readers, in answer to our request for favorite recipes for turkey stuffing.

Every one who's submitted a recipe, so far, has quite a special way of making stuffing — with some interesting ingredients. We'll print as many of the recipes as possible during November.

But, if you haven't sent in your recipe yet, please do. Mail to: Taste,

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, P.O. Box 3503, Birmingham 48012.

One reader noted her recipe had been in the family for many years. We welcome traditional, family recipes, but you may submit a new creation, if you prefer.

And, all the recipes received have been from women. Come on, fellas, you can get in the act, too. Send us your recipe. We know you're out there cooking.

Mucky Duck more than a name

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"You can put it in a glaze and put it on ham or spread it on salmon steaks or pork chops."

It adds zip to quiche when spread on the bottom of a quiche crust and is excellent when mixed with sour cream and lemon juice and served over vegetables. It can be added to oil and vinegar dressing to bring tang to a garden salad. Mucky Duck also lends itself to sauces, Marshall said.

Marshall is working on a cookbook containing her favorite Mucky Duck

recipes.

"I love to cook so it just flows naturally to tell people about all the wonderful ways to use it."

MARTY FIGLEY, 55, of Birmingham also enjoys making her own mustard but has yet to make her hobby a business.

"I enjoy making mustard," she said. "My recipe is from a friend of mine and it's fantastic."

Figley, an active member of the Herb Society of America, began making her mustard more than five

years ago before so many different types of mustards were on the marketplace.

Figley said her smooth mustard is an unusual blend of spicy hot and sweet hot, and goes with about everything.

It's a mustard powder but it also contains four herbs and no salt or preservatives, she said.

Figley wasn't ready to divulge her mustard recipe, but she did share a mustard sauce she and her family love. "It's excellent with ham, lamb and on cheese," she said.

MUSTARD SAUCE

4 tablespoons dry mustard
2 tablespoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt (optional)
2 eggs well beaten
4 tablespoons vinegar
2 tablespoons cold water
1 tablespoon butter
1 cup heavy whipping cream

Mix first six ingredients together on top of a double boiler in order given. Cook over hot water until it just begins to thicken and no longer. Remove from heat and stir in butter. Cool. Fold whipped cream lightly into cooked sauce.

Least tender cuts best for microwave

AP — Microwave-cooked meats can be timesaving, attractive and flavorful.

Just match the right cut of meat with the right micro-cooking technique to get tender, juicy results every time, says Better Homes and Gardens Step-by-Step Microwave Cook Book.

The best meats to micro-cook are the less tender beef cuts, such as chuck pot roasts, stew meat or rolled tripe roasts. Small cuts of lamb, pork and ham also work well, as do some sausages, ground meats and bacon. Large pieces (over 3 lbs.) and cuts that are usually broiled cook best conventionally.

When selecting meat to cook in the microwave, choose pieces that are even in shape, size and thickness. When pieces are not the same thickness, the thinner, less dense parts cook faster. Trim off thick areas or fork under thin portions.

It's a good idea to trim off any fat, because it attracts microwaves and may cause meat near it to overcook. Bones have the opposite effect: they shield microwaves. Meat near large bones may cook slower. Prevent the meat from undercooking by removing large bones or turning the meat over.

In meat micro-cooking, the highest power setting isn't necessarily the best. High power works well for ground meats, bacon, sausages and small cuts of ham and lamb. Other cuts of beef and pork, though, are more tender and evenly done if cooked on lower power levels.

Lower power levels also come in handy for thawing meats. The medium-low or defrost settings will defrost meats quickly.

When it comes to covering up meats, follow these guidelines: Cover most meats loosely with waxed paper during cooking to prevent splattering. One exception to this rule is pork. It should be tightly covered with plastic wrap or a lid so it cooks evenly to the well-done stage. Cover high-fat meats, such as bacon or sausages with microwave-safe paper towels to absorb grease. If cooking a high-fat meat for longer than five minutes, choose a baking dish that can withstand the high temperature

of the fat.

Microwave-cooked meats don't brown as well as conventionally cooked meats. A special microwave browning dish can be used to brown meats. Larger cuts can be brushed with soy sauce or Kitchen Bouquet for a rich brown color.

To check when micro-cooked meats are done, begin at the minimum cooking time and follow the doneness guidelines: Check the meat's color, pork and ground beef should have no pink remaining; then check for tenderness; finally, with large cuts, use a temperature probe or microwave thermometer to test for the correct temperature (check

the meat in several places to make sure it is done throughout).

To prevent some meat portions from cooking before others, turn over large cuts, rearrange pieces or stir mixtures, according to recipe directions. If thinner portions of meat do finish cooking before the rest, shield them with small pieces of foil so they won't overcook (check the owner's manual first to see whether foil can be used in the microwave oven).

One final hint: When checking the meat, there may be a lot of liquid accumulating in the baking dish. These juices lengthen the cooking time, so spoon them off occasionally.

new products

SCHOOL FLAVORS

Official school ice creams are being produced by Country Fresh, McDonald and London Dairy, working together with a single flavor house. For Michigan State University, there is Spartan Mint Fudge Ice Cream with fudge pieces and green mint in white chocolate ice cream. For the University of Michigan, there is Michigan Maize'n Berry, a combination of blueberry sauce and graham crust in cheesecake-flavored ice cream. Country Fresh president Delton Parks, an MSU graduate, has declared both ice creams will be treated equally at the company's Livonia and Grand Rapids plants.

ELFIN LOAVES

Single-serve snack breads are in the grocer's freezer case — now Elfin Loaves from Keebler. The loaves are made in four flavors: blueberry, banana, cinnamon-raisin and carrot. The loaves may be microwaved, warmed in an oven, or thawed before serving. Each box contains six individually wrapped, two-ounce servings of the home-style snack bread. Suggested retail price is \$2.19 per box. The loaves are made from natural ingredients — blueberries, walnuts and fresh spices — with no preservatives added.

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