

Meet grand master at baking brownies

By Anne Lehmann
special writer

What could be more homey than a fudgy, melt-in-your-mouth brownie paired with a tall glass of icy cold milk?

The number of brownie mixes with new-fangled ingredients on grocery shelves nowadays is a testament to the popularity of these chocolate confections.

So how does one get back to homegrown brownie basics? We asked John Bloom of Southfield, who — besides balancing a full-time career as a plant manager at Thermoelectric Induction, organizing fund-raising events for charities and the arts, and entertaining up to 20 guests several times a month — is a master brownie baker.

"Rich, thick, with a cakey top and bottom, soft and chocolatey on the inside is how I like them," he said.

"The beauty of making these brownies is that it only takes an hour or two and it's wonderful, instant gratification."

What possessed this animated, well-spoken man to become involved with this devilish dessert?

"I came from a home where fine food was a focal point," he said. "But I started cooking 18 years ago when a friend turned me on to Gourmet magazine. Everything looked so pretty, and I just began cooking."

HE EXPERIMENTED over the years, and has become well known among friends as an excellent host as well as a cook.

"He has developed a reputation as a great cook and baker," said Phyllis Mara of Bloomfield Hills, a friend of Bloom's. Mara has worked with him on a number of fund-raising projects.

"I don't eat desserts," she said, "but John's brownies are worth every single calorie. These are extremely specific."

Unlike most bachelor pads where, at best, refrigerators contain a carton of souring milk, old mustard and perhaps an unopened jar of Spanish olives, Bloom's kitchen is brimming with cooking paraphernalia.

Though modestly sized, the counters reveal, among other things, a Kitchenaid food master, hard-bound issues of Gourmet magazine and a plethora of odd-sized copper pans — truly suggestive of a food lover at heart.

BLOOM ENJOYS sharing his creations with friends.

"Entertaining is a hobby of mine, and liv-

ing in an apartment, I am limited to what I can do here, so I try to make my dining room the focal point by cooking and sharing great meals," he said.

It takes Bloom up to three days to prepare for a party.

"It's easy in the winter because I use Mother Nature as a refrigerator," he said, smiling and gesturing toward the balcony.

AS FAR AS tastes are concerned, Bloom goes for the "homey and hearty" in American cuisine.

"What," he asks, "is more Americana than brownies?"

He favors Southwest regional cooking, with its robust quality and unique combinations of food, but finds French cooking "contrived."

Not one to fall for stylish trends, Bloom said that, "Cajon cuisine and William 'Refrigerator' Perry have a lot in common. They are both manifestations of the press, hyped up over and above their true value."

Part of the pleasure Bloom derives from making the brownies is giving them away.

"The feeling of accomplishment in creating something, pleasing people and making them feel good — that turns me on," he said.

Since significantly reducing his cholesterol level, however, he refrains from indulging in more than an occasional taste of his homemade dessert.

BLOOM INSISTS that very little creativity goes into his cooking.

"If you like my cooking, then I'm the greatest walking billboard for reading a good magazine like Bon Appetit or Gourmet. There is no trick to it."

Still, when it comes to his brownies, Bloom has ventured out on a creative limb by adding such flavorful ingredients as raspberry liqueur, scotch and raisins, orange, espresso and more.

"You can make any flavor you want," he said, "by adding a half cup of almost anything."

AS FOR BEING timid about cooking, Bloom's advice is to take the plunge.

"Anybody that can read a recipe and look at a picture can become a good cook," he said.

Face the challenge

Brownie-lovers and good cooks everywhere — here's a challenge to you, issued by the Observer & Eccentric. Can you beat John Bloom's brownie recipe with one of your own?

Guaranteed that his recipe is delicious and different, but maybe yours is, too. We'd like to have a copy of your brownie specialty. The most interesting recipes submitted will be published in the Taste section.

Send your recipe by Friday, April 15, to: Brownie Challenge, Taste, The Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia #9160. Include your name, address and phone number.



Treat has raspberry flavoring

JOHN BLOOM'S BROWNIES

16 oz. unsweetened chocolate
16 oz. butter
7 eggs
1 tablespoon plus one splash vanilla
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons cocoa
1 cup sugar
½ cup raspberry jam
2 tablespoons raspberry liqueur
2 ½ cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
Frosting (see to this day's recipe)

Melt chocolate and butter in a double boiler. Line an 11-by-17 cast-iron frying pan with enough extra foil to fold over top after baking. Butter inside of foil-lined pan.

With electric beater, mix eggs, vanilla, salt, cocoa, sugar, jam and liqueur. Fold in butter and chocolate mixture. Sift flour and baking powder into the mixture and pour into pan.

Bake 20 minutes. Brownie cake will rise and crack. Cool in pan several hours or overnight. Wrap brownies in foil and refrigerate or freeze. Always serve the brownies at room temperature.

This recipe was tested in the Observer & Eccentric kitchen prior to publication. As an 11-inch frypan might be difficult to obtain, a 9- or 10-inch skillet may be used by decreasing the amount of batter by one-third. Any remaining batter may be baked in a small loaf or the pan in a similar fashion. Cooking time may have to be increased by one-half hour.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer
Is your brownie better? Phyllis Mara of Bloomfield Hills thinks John Bloom of Southfield bakes one of the best brownies around.



Happy tears flow with nutritious onion

How could something so sweet, so luscious, so unpretentious bring tears streaming down the cheeks of the heartiest of men?

It was once called a miracle cure for baldness. Its medicinal value is said to cure fits and could remedy the bite of a mad dog.

Long before Contact and Acified were on the market, it was known to cure the common cold, clear up a bad complexion, rid the body of arthritis and aid in digestion.

Long ignored and abused, the onion may be the single most important and most significant addition you can make to any meal.

Nutritionists, scientists and doctors have shown that health-protective chemicals are packed in onions, which have the ability to help contribute toward a more healthy heart and circulatory system.

Many studies and experiments have been conducted throughout the world proving the onion's ability to lower blood pressure, reduce cholesterol levels in the blood and help stop dangerous blood clotting.

EVEN MORE astounding is that it doesn't matter whether onions are raw, boiled or even fried. They still produce the same cholesterol-lowering effect.

Onions contain a mild antibiotic that fights all kinds of infections. Onion odor and chopped onions can be used to draw out the infections of serious wounds within minutes of application.

Onions have always been used by the Indians to soothe burns, soothe stings and even the itch of athlete's foot.

taste buds

chef Larry
Janes



Onions ARE low in calories, with only 80 calories in a medium-sized onion. Onions have no fat or cholesterol, yet they are a great source of vitamin C, vitamin B6, potassium and other minerals. This miracle vegetable is even high in dietary fiber.

OK, enough of the Marcus Welby stuff, let's get to the food facts.

Onions should be stored in a well-ventilated, dry location. An old pair of panty hose works well for ventilated storage.

THE ONION'S flavor, odor and tear-inducing characteristics come primarily from sulfuric compounds in this vegetable.

When onions are peeled and sliced, this chemical is freed and can dissolve in small quantities of water within the eyes. This produces sulfuric acid, an irritant that causes crying.

Cutting the onion under cold running water or refrigerating the vegetables for several hours before cutting can reduce the problem.

I have found that your best solution is to give the onion to someone else or throw it in a food processor and let the machine suffer.

However, it is a proven fact that cutting the top off the onion and peeling down without trimming off the root end works best. Supposedly, the cells that release the eye-irritant vapors are most prominent near the roots.

Although breath odor normally comes from onions eaten raw, cooked onions leave virtually no odor on the breath.

Here are some suggestions to help onion odor:

1. Rinse your mouth with equal amounts of lemon juice and tepid water.

2. Chew a citrus peel, whole clove or cinnamon.

3. Eat a freshly washed apple.

4. Probably the best solution of all is to eat a sprig or two of parsley, since parsley contains chlorophyll and is a natural breath sweetener. (And you wondered why restaurants always use parsley as a garnish? Wisen up, folks!)

Onions are an easy way to help make your meals different and exciting.

See recipes, Page 2.