



taste buds
chef Larry
Janes

These nibbles special

Here it is, getting close to a whole new season of showers, weddings, graduations, holiday parties and just plain old backyard get-togethers.

It might not be bothering you yet, but as an occasion draws nearer, you will probably end up agonizing over a few silly cookbooks looking for appetizer recipes.

I'VE DISCOVERED that my most creative ideas come from taking something old and incorporating something new. I guess a classic example of this would be to take an old appetizer meatball recipe in a basic sauce. A meatball is a meatball, right?

Well, take the ingredients for meatballs and, instead, wrap thinly around a thin bamboo skewer and you have a classic Indonesian-style appetizer.

Rather than serving the sauce, use it as a marinade or brush on during cooking. Serve the skewered meat mixture on a cake rack suspended over an electric frypan filled with fragrant sizzling onions, garlic and herbs.

Wrap green onions, available at local florist shops, around the handle and base of the frypan to camouflage the utensil. Presto!

Now just about anyone can take a packet of dry salad dressing mix (i.e. Ranch, Italian) and stir it into a cup of sour cream. Still one of my favorite appetizer dips is a recipe I learned at a Cuisinart cooking demonstration. You place a bunch of green onions in a processor and chop finely. Add an 8-ounce package of room-temperature cream cheese and process until smooth.

THE RESULT is a velvety, pale green dip that looks great in anything from a white bowl to the most sparkling crystal. OK, now what? Would you ever think of taking this basic dip and placing it in a pastry bag with a frilly tip? Go crazy over crackers, fill a bunch of celery, or my favorite is to take fresh pea pods (many produce stores stock them now) and split them open. Fill the pea pods with the cream cheese/green onion mixture and add a tiny sprig of parsley to garnish. Va-va-va-boom!

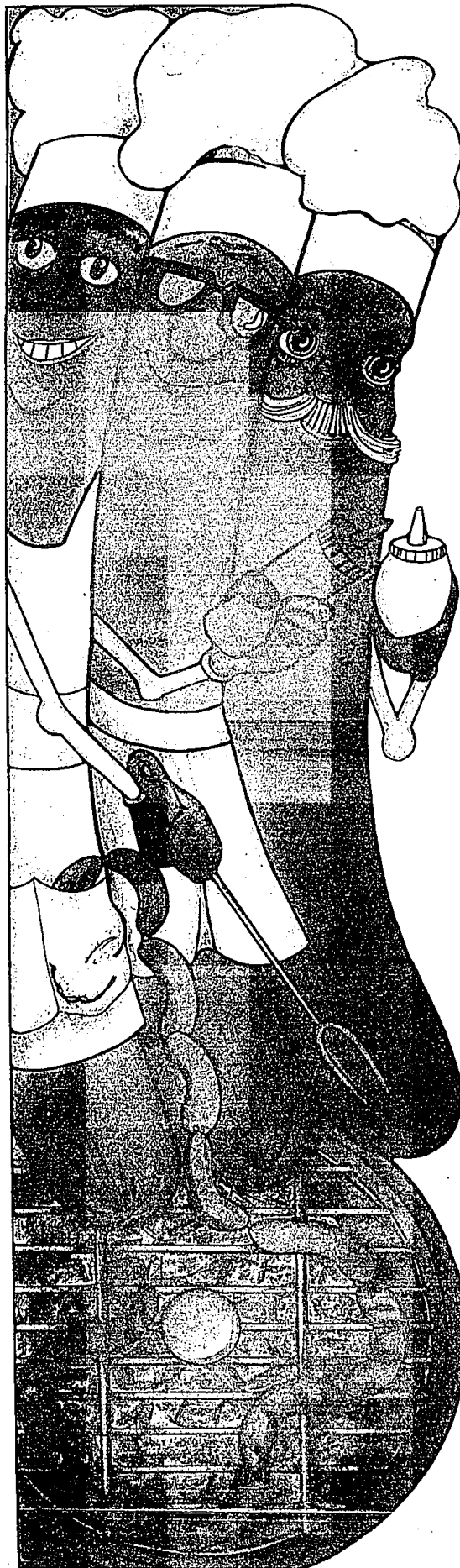
Even the ready-made products available at all major foodstores can be utilized when preparing different, yet elegant appetizers. (Notice how I kept mentioning appetizers, mainly because I can't spell hors d'oeuvres?)

I am proud to say that a package of those refrigerator "pop" biscuits will never grace my kitchen. On the other hand, you can make a simple but elusive appetizer by taking the "pop" biscuits and cutting them into quarters.

Melt a stick of butter or margarine in a large skillet and stir in a packet of Ranch or French onion dip mix. Add the quartered biscuits (raw), toss to coat, then place them on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake them at 350 degrees for about 5-10 minutes or until golden. Mmmmm good!

Simple vegetable trays featuring the mundane celery, carrot and broccoli routine can be jazzed up with Belgian Endive spears, thin asparagus, bok choy and pea pods. You don't have to spend a million to look like one.

So if you're anticipating a summer party, do a little planning now. Try these recipes and let me know what you think. If you have something you would like to share, drop it to me in care of the Observer & Eccentric (3635) Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150 and I'll print the good ones. Bon appetit!



DRESSIN' UP THE DAWGS

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

When one thinks of American fare, roast chicken with tarragon hardly fits the bill.

No offense to poultry lovers, but hot dogs — not trendy or terribly versatile — are as American as apple pie, baseball and the flag.

Fast foods and health-consciousness aside, hot dogs have been a dietary mainstay. With Memorial Day weekend fast approaching, the barbecue grills are coming out of hibernation and hot dog sales will be going full tilt.

"At the holiday season, sales go way up. The number of people who don't eat them is low. Most of us eat hot dogs," said Carl Gylfe, vice-president and marketing director for Hygrade, based in Livonia.

"Everyone says they're watching their calories, but look at the sale of potato chips," Gylfe added. "Everyone talks nutrition, but it (applies) to the other guy."

No doubt about it, consumers are definitely buying hot dogs. Hygrade turns out 200 million franks a year — that's 25 million pounds worth.

HYGRADE MANUFACTURERS both turkey and chicken franks in Chicago and exclusively chicken franks in Baltimore. The Livonia operation includes the famous Ball Park frank sold at Tiger Stadium (a mixture of pork and beef) and the all-beef winner.

"Poultry (hot dogs) have been around since the '60s, mostly sold down South. In the late '70s, chicken franks were promoted on the fact that the taste was the same (as meat) but the nutrition was superior, with lower fat levels," Gylfe said.

"The sale of turkey and chicken franks goes up in ratio to meat franks regarding price. It's much less expensive than meat."

Grow Master chicken franks manufactured by Hygrade sell for as low as 79 cents a pound, compared to about \$1.79 a pound for Ball Park Franks. A pound usually equals eight hot dogs.

Sales of poultry franks are usually static around the holidays, Gylfe said. Beef franks' sales soar, which shows the American preference for a meat hot dog. Hygrade sells twice the number of hot dogs in the summer.

"It's a waste of money to get off the mainstream," said Gylfe. "We do put cheese in one of our chicken franks."

How we eat them is a matter of taste.

"I PREFER MINE in Tiger Stadium, steamed," Gylfe said. "It's the whole ambience. To me, microwaved is the least palatable. My son likes the toaster oven. It's a

With Memorial Day weekend fast approaching, the barbecue grills are coming out of hibernation and hot dog sales will be going full tilt.

matter of individual taste."

While Kowalski Sausage Co. is known for Polish sausage, hot dogs, to the tune of three million pounds a year, are produced in the Hamtramck plant.

"I think hot dogs are going up in popularity," said Russell Herzfeld, Kowalski vice-president and general manager.

"The U.S. government regulates the fat and ingredient content. It's a convenient item. It comes in its own container and is instantly ready. And it tastes good," he said.

Kowalski sells hot dogs in supermarkets and in delicatessens.

"We have 900 accounts in the tri-county area, and outstate we're in Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, California and Ohio."

"We use an old-fashioned smokehouse. Our hot dogs are smoked over natural hardwood sawdust — we don't use water. The newer method sprays on the smoke. I think you can taste the difference. Liquid smoke has a bitter aftertaste."

Kowalski manufactures skinless franks, natural casing, cheese inside, foot-long, all-beef and cocktail-size dogs. The hot dogs are either all beef or a pork-and-beef mixture.

"WE USE ONLY imported spices, like white pepper, paprika and basil," Herzfeld said. "It's quite a group of basic spices — no oily resins. We use natural spices only."

Potato salad, chili or sauerkraut continue to be favored side dishes, he said.

"I prefer to eat it plain. Our hot dog is all meat, so I don't want to cover it up," Herzfeld said.

"Hot dogs are definitely not going out of style. Commercially they sell from 69 cents a pound all the way to \$6 a pound for gourmet hot dogs out of New York. Once Memorial Day happens, sales will increase and stay through Labor Day, then begin to taper off after that."

"Hot dogs lend themselves to hot-weather eating."

Chicago-style dog leads to new career

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Call it a midlife career change.

For 30 years, Larry Freedman was an administrator with the Farmington Public Schools, the last 18 years spent as assistant superintendent.

Today he operates Hot Dawg! . . . & More, a Chicago-style hot dog joint in Farmington that's drawing crowds and rave reviews.

"I knew I wanted to leave the schools, but at 53, I was too young to retire," said Freedman, who resigned last May.

Already a fan of the Chicago-style hot dog — a pure beef wiener topped with mustard, sweet relish, onions, tomatoes, hot peppers and a dill pickle — Freedman did his research firsthand.

"I WORKED THE GRILL in a friend's shop in Chicago. Freedman's son-in-law, Mike Glanzrock, a Chicago native who worked his way through college in hot dog joints, serves as his partner.

"In Chicago, there are 2,000 hot dog places, all independently owned," Freedman said. "It's not a chain. But they all serve the Chicago-style dog made with pure Vienna beef."

Freedman opened the doors last November in the Village Commons mall, on Grand River east of Farmington Road.

"We sold approximately 15,000 hot dogs since November," said Mimi Freedman, Larry's wife and co-worker.

Transplanted Chicagoans from as far as Grosse Pointe drive in on weekends for the taste of home, Freedman said.

Gluckman Denny of Southfield, created the interior, which has seating for 60 at round and square tables. Peach, mauve, raspberry and turquoise pastels mix with black and white accents. Classical or jazz music plays softly in the background.



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Larry Freedman, owner of Hot Dawg! . . . & More.

"We are using the best-quality foods," Freedman said. "Our hot dog is all beef, no fillers or additives."

"EVEN THE BUN is baked in Chicago and driven overnight to us. It's eggbread with popovers."

All the relish and condiments are from Chicago, as is the Vienna beef hot dogs.