

taste buds

chef Larry Janes



Wanted: new stove from Santa

Dear Santa:

I know that I'm writing this about three months too early but I recently came across the ultimate Christmas present.

I've been writing to you now for the last 35 years, making sure never to request something too outrageous, too dangerous, too expensive. You have always been very generous and, as of this year, have brought me everything I ever asked for, with the exception of a '69 fire-engine-red Lamborghini and a hair transplant that surely would have made me look like Tom Selleck.

This year, however, you can make it real easy on yourself by just ringing me one thing: An AGA.

What is an AGA, you ask?

AGA is short for an Amalgamate Gas Accumulation stove that has recently been introduced to the Northern Hemisphere. It's really not a new toy, having been invented in the early '20s by Swedish Nobel Prize Laureate Dr. Gustaf Dalen. It is a totally hand-assembled, cast-iron, enamel-finished cooking center (dare I call it a stove?) that does everything a regular stove will do, only better. Much better.

JUST HOW GOOD can one stove be, you ask?

This little gem has four ovens: a roasting oven for those delectable legs-of-lamb and stuffed geese; a baking oven for your favorite tortes, Mamma's apple pies and cookies for Jessica's preschool class; a simmering oven that will slow cook and keep foods from drying out; and even a warming oven that will keep plates hot and will hold a plum pudding for you, no matter how late you get here. Add to that two top burner plates that boil, simmer, stew and everything else four normal burners would (but in the size of only two).

Now, Santa, I know this sounds too good to be true, but the informational brochures say that the AGA "never makes mistakes" because there are no controls, knobs, dials or fancy gadgets to screw up with. The AGA is always "on" and ready to produce when you are. That, of course, leaves little room for error and more time to "play" while cooking.

So, Santa, I'm writing to you extra-early this year because I know this is a rather hefty request. It takes almost 10 weeks just to order one, and then you need a trained AGA installer to unpack a four crates weighing more than 1,300 pounds, to assemble and hook up the little beauty.

Santa, this year you can keep the Tupperware and put a hold on the polyester slacks that match my golf bag. All I really want for Christmas is an AGA. The normal package price includes sales tax, installation, freight, handling and even a free set of cookware. Oh, and by the way, it sells for \$8,576.

Your friend,
Chef Larry

P.S. In the event that you deliver it early and avoid the Christmas rush, I'll have a plate of your favorite cookies in the warming oven and a pot of steaming hot chocolate waiting for you.



THOMAS ARNETT

Ruth Tralson, Sheri Devries' grandmother (left), Sheri and Jeffrey Devries and son Daniel, gather at family meal with traditional

menu, including braided egg bread called challah, for Rosh Hashana, at the Devries home in West Bloomfield.

Holiday foods symbolic

By Anne Lehmann
special writer

FOR MOST PEOPLE, September heralds the beginning of fall — but for Jews around the world, the 12th and 13th of this month marks the beginning of the year 5749 in the Jewish calendar.

Rosh Hashana, which translated from Hebrew, literally means "head of the year," is a time for reflecting on the year past and planning hopefully for the future. Families get together for elaborate feasts filled with foods that symbolically reflect the spirit of the holiday.

For example, challah, a braided egg bread that is traditionally eaten every Friday night as part of the weekly Sabbath meal, is round and laced with raisins. The circular shape is a reminder of the cyclical nature of life with its new beginnings.

The raisins are a way of adding additional sweetness to the soft, chewy bread, as an expression of hope for a sweet and happy year. The challah is dipped in honey as are apple slices, again symbolizing the hope for a sweet year to come.

REBBETZIN Chaya Sara Silberberg of Congregation Bais Chabad in West Bloomfield, says many people mold their challahs into such unique shapes as "a crown to signify the acceptance of God's kingship anew, a key, to unlock all the blessings of the year; and a ladder, to ascend to greater spiritual heights."

"For us it's a time for family and another opportunity to eat," says West Bloomfield resident Sheri Devries. Though most of her family (spanning four generations) lives in Detroit, Devries says, "Everyone really makes a point of making it to the Rosh Hashana get-together."

Devries and her husband, Jeffrey, a pediatrician,

are expecting their second child in January. This year she already has begun preparing for the more than 25 guests she plans to have sitting at her dinner table during Rosh Hashana.

"The truth is, I use a lot of old family favorites, and then I freeze as much as I can. I leave as little as possible for last minute," she says.

Generally, the side dishes and desserts are what take center stage on Rosh Hashana. "We usually have a roast or a stuffed turkey, and I build a variety of side dishes, many of which are sweet, from there."

THIS YEAR there will be a crown-shaped noodle kugel that is baked in a bundt pan. "It is a sweet dish and, because of its shape, recalls the theme of

God's divine kingship," she says.

Tzimmes, a sweet, sliced-carrot dish, is a common favorite, symbolizing the hope for a sweet year. Additionally, the golden-corn-shaped vegetables express the hope for a year of financial security.

"The Spice and Spirit of Kosher Jewish Cooking," compiled by the Lubavitch Women's Organization, says, "The head of a fish is usually eaten, signifying our hope to be the 'head,' outstanding in righteousness." Also, round farfel, or egg barley, is sometimes eaten because of its round shape.

Interestingly, on the second night of the holiday, at least one fruit, not sampled in the season, is usually eaten. The novelty of the item helps to recall the newness of the year. Often the new fruit is a pomegranate, because this is one of the fruits for which Israel is well known and also because it is said to contain 613 seeds, equal to the total number of commandments in the Torah.

Aside from the many themes of the holiday, observant Jews follow dietary laws that prohibit them from eating and mixing certain foods. "Being kosher nowadays," says Devries, "is really easy."

"EVEN THOUGH you are not allowed to mix meat and milk, there are new products on the market that make almost anything possible," she adds. One of Devries' deceptively rich specialties is a chocolate mousse cake. "It's relatively easy to make and tastes like it's made with fresh cream," she says.

"For me desserts are a big part of holiday cooking," says Devries. "I suppose part of it is that during my college years we'd all get together over the holiday for dessert and coffee. So I was always big into baking special Rosh Hashana treats."

And what better way to start the New Year than with the lingering taste of something sweet.

Family enjoys special dishes

ROSH HASHANA CHALLAH

- 2 packages of dry yeast
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 cups warm water
- 3 eggs
- 1/4 cup oil
- 6 cups flour
- 1/4 cup raisins

Combine yeast, sugar, salt and water. Let stand until the top gets cloudy. Mix eggs, oil and flour and

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Back to school

Kids can make lunches they tote

By Nechama Bakel
special writer

Here's a scenario that's likely to occur once the routine of having the kids back in school becomes familiar.

At 8 a.m. on a typical school morning, you watch the school bus wind its way down the street, and a familiar shriek pierces the air.

"Mom, you forgot my lunch!" Again.

Not to worry, says food consultant Peg Watson, who recently demonstrated a bagful of innovative tips and gimmicks for brown bag lunches at Jacobson's Kitchen and Gourmet Shop in Livonia.

Not only did Watson provide lunchtime ideas for Mom to use, but she also suggested how children can help prepare the lunches, or make their own.

Some 30 kids, not crossed-legged on mats and not wearing pajamas, made play food by Wednesday. "I made a sandwich," said one boy, "but it was just a piece of bread."

Watson has written articles on cooking for kids and has appeared on Channel 13's "Kids' Beat."

She is understanding of parents who hesitate to let youngsters "make a mess" in the kitchen, but she believes cooking is a good learning experience from which most children can benefit.

"It helps them with math, helps them with chemistry, helps them with creativity and with culture," Watson said.

"If you eat Mexican or Chinese food, it's an opportunity to learn" about those places. "And if you mix anything together, it's just like a formula."

Watson set guidelines for children of different ages. From ages 2 to 6, she said, children should be able to stir and add ingredients, begin to measure, and use a vegetable peeler and melon baller after instruction.

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Try Watson's choices

in lieu of a Sandwich

1. Pineapple and cream cheese sandwich. Mash the cream cheese with a spoon. Open can of pineapple. Put the strainer over a bowl while you pour the pineapple into the strainer. Mix pineapple and cream cheese with a spoon. Stuff into celery sticks. (May also be used as a sandwich filler.)

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ART EMANUELE/Staff photographer

Jill Stark, 10, of Livonia (left) and Heather Drow, 11, of Farmington Hills, taste some clover, quick and easy snacks for brown bag lunches, demonstrated by Peg Watson recently at Jacobson's in Livonia.