

taste buds
chef Larry
Janes



Olives neat in grocery and vodka

I really can't tell you which I enjoy more, strolling through a Greek grocery, breathing in the air scented with Calamata olives or stirring a few anchovy-stuffed olives in an Icelandic vodka on the rocks.

I love olives. Whether they're served up on a steaming bolan from Xochimilco's or sliced and tossed with some cherry tomatoes and a light vinaigrette, I love 'em even more.

The olive is one of the oldest known fruit crops. Man grew olive trees even before recorded history. It is not known when the wild olive was first brought under cultivation. But records point to the limestone hills of Attica, the Greek peninsula, as the seat of its first cultivation.

The olive is frequently mentioned in the Bible. The Spanish brought the olive to California in 1769. In the early Franciscan missions, the fruit was pressed for oil and used in the diet and burned for lamps.

AT LAST COUNT, there are more than 15 million acres of olive trees in the world. Each year, more than nine million metric tons of olives and more than three million tons of olive oil are produced. The countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea grow most of the world's olives and olive oil.

The olive tree is adapted to a hot, dry climate, and it does well on many different soils. For bearing fruit, it must have water, along with good drainage. Trees come into production at five years of age but are not in full production for at least another 10-15 years. They are long-lived, however, because it is known that trees brought to the United States by the Spaniards are still bearing fruit.

For the production of high-quality table olives, the fruit must be picked by hand. Harvesting for the oil industry is usually done mechanically, either by knocking the fruit from the trees or by the use of shakers.

Methods of processing the olives for the table vary widely. First, there is the traditional Spanish method, which has unripe yellowish-green olives being fermented. Second, the American method, in which half-ripe reddish fruit is used and fermented, and lastly (my favorite) the Greek method, in which the fully ripe, dark purple fruit is preserved.

In most processing methods, a weak solution of lye is applied to neutralize the bitter principle. The lye penetrates the olives and hydrolyzes the bitter taste. The lye-treated olives are immediately rinsed and soaked in water, with frequent changes, in order to remove the lye. The washed olives are placed in fermentation tanks and barrels and are then covered with brine. The use of lye is not allowed in Greece. Instead, the brine is relied on to lessen and mask the bitterness, hence the different taste.

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Pumpkins more than an eyeful



By Mary Rodrique
staff writer

Halloween is just around the corner — the day when pumpkins are elevated to star status.

Those orange orbs are good for more than just carving jack-o-lanterns. The pumpkin, cousin to squash and gourds, and sure symbol of autumn, can be cut, cooked and transformed into everything from soup to dessert.

Upland Hills Farm in Oxford has been celebrating the pumpkin for several years with a Pumpkin Festival, complete with spooky and goblins and a haunted house. It continues each weekend through October, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for children. Visitors can take a horse-drawn hayride to a pumpkin patch, where they can pick their own pumpkin and have it named by the Great Pumpkin (who moonlights as a psychologist when he's not holding court in the pumpkin patch). Prices run from \$1 for the smallest to \$5.50 for a 16-inch pumpkin.

Of course, the less adventurous can do just as well at the local grocery store, fruit market or roadside pumpkin stand — which seems to multiply this time of year the way Christmas tree lots appear in December.

PUREEING FRESH pumpkin is not hard. The folks at Upland Hills recommend not peeling unless the pumpkin is very large with a tough rind. Cut the pumpkin into cubes and put the squares in a preserving kettle with a pint of boiling water. Simmer without a cover for 5 or 6 hours, until the juice has evaporated.

Mash the pumpkin through a colander, or use a blender to make the puree. Pies, puddings and soups can be made from the fine, creamy pulp. If you use a colander, the leftover pulp can be used for cookies, cakes and bread. One medium-sized pumpkin will produce five or six cups of pulp.

If you have a large pumpkin, whose rind can't be used, clean it out, put its cap back on, and bake it in the oven. Place it on a cookie sheet and bake at 300 degrees for five or six hours. Then scrape out the meat and puree it as previously described.

Upland Hills has two pumpkin patches and has been operating the autumn festival for about 10 years, according to staff. Farmer Knight Webster says the patches are 10 acres each. And if they run out of pumpkins, they bring in more from neighboring farms.

"We get 15,000 to 20,000 people each year," he said one recent Sunday. And despite cool, brisk weather, the farm was teeming with many families taking rides out to the pumpkin patch.

KNIGHT and his wife, Dorothy Webster, operate the family owned farm with the help of sons Bruce, who serves as president, and Ken, who runs a catering business and restaurant: Ken's Kitchen at the Wagon Wheel in Lake Orion.

One of Ken's specialties is pumpkin tarts, which sell for 80 cents at the pumpkin festival.

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STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Bruce Webster of Upland Hills Farm set out a plate of pumpkin tarts, and Tavio Benetti enjoys tasting one. The homemade tarts are 80 cents apiece at the festival.

From soup to tarts, mousse

Ever thought of serving pumpkin as a soup or a main course? Even desserts made with pumpkin can be more versatile than the usual star of Thanksgiving dinner, pumpkin pie.

Upland Hills Farm offers these recipes, which can be made with fresh pureed pumpkin or the canned solid-pack natural variety. If substituting canned for fresh puree, use natural solid-pack pumpkin. The amounts are the

same. For example, two cups of fresh puree equals two cups of canned solid-pack pumpkin.

CREAM OF PUMPKIN SOUP

1 cup pumpkin puree
1 tablespoon butter
2 cups milk
¼ cup cream
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp nutmeg
pepper
Melt butter over low heat. Blend

in pumpkin and heat. Mix remaining ingredients and continue to heat. Serves 4.

STUFFED PUMPKIN

1 ½ cups uncooked rice
2 pounds lean ground meat (beef, pork, lamb or combination)
1 green pepper, chopped
2 onions, chopped
bay leaf

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STEVE JONES

Gundella the Witch celebrates Halloween with party guests by serving them a frightful — but tasty — array of food including Bloody Mary Soup, and Liverheads and crackers.

Halloween party wards off chill

Halloween, like Christmas, is a season, not just a day. The whole month of October vibrates with it.

Early in the month, Mother Nature decorates with festive fall colors — orange pumpkins and brown cornstalks. The leaves are aflame with reds, yellows, oranges and golds.

Later in the month — as these leaves fall to the ground — bare, spindly branches reach out like arms against the background of the gloomy gray sky on a rainy day, or cast weird lacy shadows in the night, by the light of a cold, white moon.

Sometimes, a mist will rise up from the ground to add to the effect, and produce a bit of a shiver in even the most stalwart.

Is it any wonder that this is a favorite time for parties? People need to get together to ward off the chill. They need to laugh and make light of the scary things that threaten us all as winter draws near.

HALLOWEEN PARTIES are special fun. Guests can come in masquerade and act anyway they like because their masks hide their true identity, and everyone knows they are only playing a role.

For one party, I hired a young high school girl to don a burlesque dress, let her hair wiggle and smear dirt on her face. She was then seated on a shelf in the living room, where she screamed madly at the guests as they entered the house, startling them a bit — to say the least.

That was a great ice-breaker. On another occasion, we had a young man wear a parachute harness underneath his clothing, and hang suspended from the rafters on the porch.

Everyone thought he was a stuffed dummy, until they got real close and heard him moan.

All sorts of tricks and scary games can be used, but at Halloween — as at any other time of year — it is the food that really determines the success of the party.

Traditional foods such as cider and doughnuts, apples in any form, pumpkins and popcorn, are always great.

But, at times, it is fun to try something different.

We once ordered a six-foot submarine sandwich, had it wrapped in a white sheet, delivered by a hearse, and carried in on a slab — like a corpse.

SUGGESTED HALLOWEEN MENU

Liverheads and crackers
Bloody Mary Soup
Dead-Eye Delight (salad)
Jellied Carrots and Dead Flies (salad)
Halloween Ham
Maggots and Mice (pasta and meatballs)
Pumpkin Shell Peach
Black Widow Cake

To make Bloody Mary Soup, use the recipe given in this column April 25. If you didn't save it, you can call



me, and I'll give it to you over the phone.

LIVERHEADS

Liverheads are fun and easy to make. This recipe makes one large, or two small heads.
Use your hands to mix together:
2 pounds smoked liver sausage
2 8-ounce packages cream cheese
1 envelope dry onion soup mix
optional: 2 ounces Lauche Kummel (caraway liqueur)

Shape mixture into heads, bats, witches, devils, pumpkins and monsters. Frost with cream cheese, softened with a few drops of lemon juice. Tint some of the cheese with food coloring for the hair, eyes and mouth. Serve with crackers.

DEAD-EYE DELIGHT

For each serving, place a ring of spiced apple atop a lettuce leaf. In the center of each, arrange one (canned) litchie nut stuffed with a raisin, a dark grape, or dyed cream cheese, to resemble an eye.

JELLIED CARROTS AND DEAD FLIES

Prepare one large, or two small, packages of orange gelatin dessert, using only 3 cups of water, instead of the four cups called for on the package.

Pare and shred two carrots. When the gelatin is semi-firm, stir in shredded carrot, along with one cup well-drained, crushed pineapple (canned), and one cup black raisins. Leave mixture in refrigerator until firm enough to cut into squares. (I make this a day ahead, to make sure it is jelled enough.)

HALLOWEEN HAM

4 pounds canned ham
¼ teaspoon ginger
1 box frozen puff pastry
1 Tbsp. water
1 cup prepared table mustard
1 cup brown sugar
1 egg yolk

Cut ham into two-inch cubes. Mix together the mustard, ginger and brown sugar. Coat each piece of ham generously with the mixture. (Save the remaining mixture to serve as a sauce with the cooked ham.)

Meanwhile, thaw puff pastry and roll out until it is double in size. Cut into pieces to fit the ham. Neatly wrap each piece of ham with pastry. Use cold water to seal the edges and place on an ungreased cookie sheet.

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