

taste buds
chef Larry
Janos

Seminar a chance to learn

How could I resist? The brochure that heralded the "First Annual Chef's Seminar" at Schoolcraft College in Livonia brimmed with typical media hype touting it as "the seminar for serious, sophisticated cooks as well as young chefs who appreciate the value of techniques and tips... shared by the finest in the business."

The demonstration and classroom sessions ran simultaneously and the organizers did their best at placing the more than 40 registrants to their requests. It always didn't work out, as was the case after lunch at the Williams-Sonoma lecture when Susan Rousseau, manager of the new Williams-Sonoma showplace in Troy's Somerset Mall, queried her classroom participants as to reasons they were in attendance.

One honest student went right for her jugular with a response that included "I'm here because they wouldn't let me in to observe Ed Janos and Bryan Gawlas" (their session was filled). So much for honesty.

The \$150 day began with back-to-back sessions in the squeaky clean Schoolcraft College culinary arts kitchen featuring chef Douglas Grech while certified master chef Michael Russell took over the demo lab with a program entitled "Cookbooks — Using Them as your Mentor."

CHEF RUSSELL of the Kingsley Inn in Bloomfield Hills discussed the proper use of cookbooks and how to utilize them to advance your skills. The feedback I received from other members of the class was positive.

And then there was Duglass. Life has not been kind lately to the flamboyant chef/owner of Brasserie Duglass in Southfield. His presentation "Go to Health" seemed scattered and the audience frequently found itself waiting and wondering while he searched for ingredients. Printed recipes were not supplied at his presentation. Those in attendance scribbled fruitlessly.

Many requested ingredient amounts and finally — after tasting what resembled sugar-free Jell-O-chocolate pudding and not mousse, sank disappointedly in their chairs. Granted, I wouldn't want to die from arteriosclerosis, but after eating this stuff, I can only hope the recipe hasn't made it to Sinai Hospital's kitchen (Chef Duglass is cooperating with Sinai on a heart-healthy menu).

After a short coffee break, session number two had the participants choosing between certified chef Milos Chelka of the Golden Mushroom in Southfield cooking wild game and Frank Stulock, sales manager of Don Lee Distributors, Dearborn, purveyors of wines. It was a tough choice.

HOW COULD YOU not learn from the mild demeanor of chef Milos? The quintessential chef, confident, steady. A Detroit classic. With this guy guiding the Michigan Culinary Team, honorable mentions are not enough. He goes for the gold, and frequently achieves it.

For his demonstration, chef Milos did a complete turnaround from Duglass, using backfat to lard every inch of venison fillet and wild boar leg. The class sat in awe, listening to his tales from a hunt, all the while his nimble fingers lanced the larding needle through the wild game. I didn't think anybody still larded.

Ah, but the truth is in the tasting, and the lucky members of this class sank their plastic forks into the bite-sized bits between continuing choruses of oohs and ahhs.

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Fast lane or slow, go easy with stew

By Larry Janos
special writer

FAITH AND BEGORRAH! What's this world coming to? Who ever heard of a classic Irish stew cooked any other way than in a cast-iron Dutch oven? St. Patrick would roll over in his grave watching Irish stew prepared using crockpots, claypots and pressure cookers!

Some cooks go through life clinging to their Cuisinarts and microwaves, constantly looking for more ways to make cooking faster. Then again, there are folks who relish the hand chopping, the gentle simmering, the subtle braising... cooking to them is a joy that should be savored like a fine wine, not chug-a-lugged like a six-pack.

Honestly, I can attest to falling somewhere in the middle of the road. I'd never trade my Cuisinart but still enjoy chopping fresh herbs and vegetables. Yep, I own a crockpot, and 362 days a year it sits gathering dust in the fruit cellar. I also have acquired the classic, old, rattling pressure cooker that Momma used to transform cheaper English blade cuts of beef into shreds of beef that would literally slip off the fork because they were so tender.

Lo and behold, here we are with St. Paddy's Day upon us. Those of us living in the fast lane are wondering how to make a fast and tasty pot of good old Irish stew. The remainder of us are content to sit and drink green beer and dance a jig while the pot of lamb, potatoes, onions and herbs simmer themselves into a delicacy.

THE LUCK of the Irish would have it, two lovely lassies, both heralding different stories on Irish cuisine and cooking techniques, crossed my path during the last week.

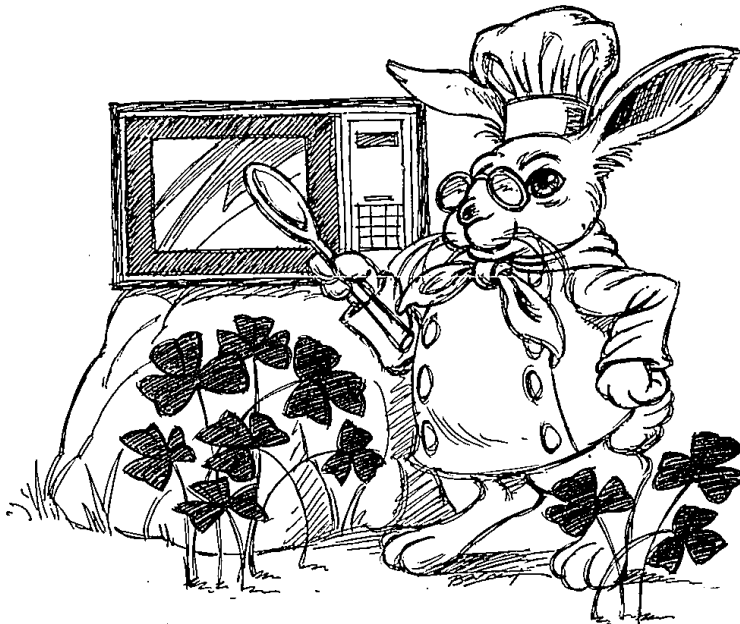
Joan Rector, manager of the gourmet shop at Jacobson's in Livonia, passed along some great information on crocks and pressure cookers. "The younger 'yuppie' shopper purchases the slow cookers and clay pots while the 'middle-age' suburban shopper seems to go for the new pressure-cooker models," Rector says.

She adds, "The person more apt to purchase the pressure cooker is the person who was raised with one." (That pretty much categorizes me!) Rector was nice enough to pass along some information on the sleek, trendy and definitely high-tech version the folks from Cuisinart have introduced.

Seems that the pressure cooker my momma used to utilize was virtually removed from the marketplace. I can remember the jiggling safety valve on the top that would rattle for hours. Occasionally, Momma would get a steam burn from releasing the pressure too fast.

Nowadays, pressure cookers have dual safety devices, which will allow for the safe escape of steam automatically. Pressure cookers will cook meats in half the time of conventional cooking and do wonders to soups and stews, most of which can be made in 20 minutes or less once optimum steam pressure has been reached.

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Irish stew is a classic

The following recipes can be made either in the slow cooker or by pressure cooker. See directions for techniques and times.

CLASSIC IRISH STEW

- 2 pounds lamb, trimmed and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 pounds small Irish potatoes
- 3 medium onions, finely sliced
- 4 small turnips, sliced
- ¼ cup fresh chopped parsley
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- ¼ cup fresh celery leaves
- salt and pepper to taste

Place a layer of lamb in the cooking vessel. Top with a layer of potatoes, onions, then turnips. Repeat until all lamb, potatoes, onions and turnips are used. Divide parsley, thyme, celery leaves, salt and pepper and use after every layer of lamb. Add just enough water to cover. To cook in a pressure cooker: Bring to medium pressure and cook for 1 hour. To cook in a crockpot, cover and cook on medium for 7-8 hours.

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Bread-baking skills come from Ireland

Jam tarts, rock buns made for teatime, too

By Arlene Funke
special writer

Friends of Theresa Hasson know she's always good for some fresh-baked Irish bread or buns.

The 53-year-old Livonia woman learned her culinary skills back home in County Clare, Ireland. "We baked every day," Hasson said. "We had to, with 10 children in the family. It was a treat to get something from the store."

Although she doesn't bake nearly as often now, Hasson still enjoys turning out batches of Irish bread, jam tarts or rock buns — a biscuit-like dessert sweetened with sugar and golden raisins.

The rock bun gets its name from its pebble appearance. "If someone is going to come over, you can make a batch of rock buns," Hasson said. "By the time they get here, it's done. They are very good, served warm."

The former Theresa Malone left Ireland in 1956 and came to the United States. She settled in Detroit and took a job as waitress at the old Stouffer's restaurant downtown.

She met her late husband, Jim, a communications technician for Western Union, at the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, an Irish social club. Jim Hasson, who also was born in Ireland, moved his family to Livonia around 1971.

MEANWHILE, Theresa Hasson was building a following for her

tasty breads, pies and other desserts.

"People would ask me for my baked goods," Hasson said. "None of them are overly sweet."

Hasson also enjoyed the ritual of serving something fresh from the oven, preferably with a cup of tea.

"In Ireland they drink tea all the time — good and strong," she said. Her husband, who died last year, relished the Irish specialties. The four Hasson children — now ranging in age from 18 to 24 — especially enjoyed their mom's bran bread, a variation of the famous Irish soda bread.

The bread contains no yeast. Hasson combines natural raw bran (purchased in a health food store) with flour, baking powder, soda, salt, margarine and buttermilk. A deep cross is cut on top of the bread. The bran bread bakes up crunchily on the outside and has a hearty consistency. "It's very healthy," said Hasson. The bread is rich with fiber from the bran. "It's excellent for toast!"

A similar recipe is used for rock buns. The batter, enriched with egg, sugar and raisins, is dropped onto a cookie sheet and forms a bumpy look after baking.

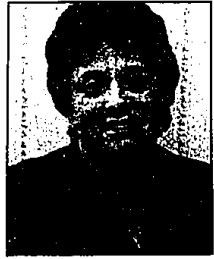
HASSON USES a pastry crust for her light and buttery Irish jam tarts. She emphasizes that the filling be jam, not jelly.

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Tea table is set with some of Theresa Hasson's homemade specialties.

JIM JAGDELO/staff photographer



Theresa Hasson of Livonia came from County Clare.

Recipes popular with friends

BRAN BREAD

- 4 cups white flour
- 1 cup natural raw bran (available in health food stores)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ stick margarine
- 2 cups buttermilk

Mix flour and bran together and rub in margarine. Add baking powder, baking soda and salt. Mix well. Add buttermilk until mixture has formed a kneading consistency. Knead on a floured board and roll to ¼-inch thickness. Place in floured pie pan or cookie sheet. Cover top of bread with a table-

spoon of buttermilk, spread evenly over top of bread. Sprinkle top of bread lightly with bran. Cut a deep cross on bread and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

ROCK BUNS

- 4 cups flour
- 1 stick margarine or butter
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 ½ cups raisins
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 egg
- 1 cup buttermilk

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