

taste buds  
chef Larry  
Janes

## Beef up choices for grill

Readers who are aware of the Janes Gang eating habits know that beef products are not a high priority in the family food budget.

But with Father's Day just around the corner and traditional family barbecues heating up all over, here is a primer for getting the most for your money at the butcher's or meat department of your favorite grocer.

The grades used on all meat and meat products may include the grade names of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and/or the grade names of packers and retailers.

Both grade and brand names are applied to meat with a roller stamp, which leaves its mark the full length of the carcass and ribs. The bluish vegetable-base marking fluid used on all beef and for the inspection stamp is totally harmless.

**PRIMARY PURPOSE** of the Federal Meat Inspection Stamp is protection of you, the consumer, by guaranteeing that all meat inspected is from healthy animals. It states that the animal was slaughtered and butchered under sanitary conditions and that it is entirely suitable for consumption.

Primary factors determining the value and general acceptability of the carcass include:

- Conformation.** This refers to the general form, shape or outline of the carcass. Superior conformation is characterized by thick backs with full loins and ribs, deep, plump rounds, thick shoulders, and short necks and shanks.

- In addition, the quality of the meat is determined by checking the maturity (age) of the animal, marbling or the flecks of fat within the lean portions which enhance palatability, juiciness, flavor and tenderness and, last but not least, the color, firmness and texture of the lean sections.

- Cutability.** This refers to the amount of usable meat in a carcass. High cutability of carcasses combine a minimum of fat covers with very thick muscling. The USDA cutability grades are numbered from one to five, with one having the best cutability.

- Aging.** Usually, only the ribs and loins of high-quality beef, lamb and mutton are aged. To be suitable for aging, meat must have a very thick covering of fat to prevent discoloration of the lean portions and keep evaporation to a minimum. This is why the biggest, fattest steers awarded blue-ribbon prizes at State Fairs.

**VACUUM PACKAGING** is more noticeable in the butcher's meat case these days. This form of moisture and vaporproof film protects meat from the time it is processed till the time it is consumed and reduces weight loss and surface spoilage for two to three weeks.

Quality grades are given to cut outs so that consumers can use a guideline to choose what they prefer and can afford. The various grades include prime, choice, good, standard, commercial, utility cutter and canner.

You may be surprised to learn that meat grading is not compulsory. It is a voluntary service on the part of the wholesaler and slaughterhouse, which pays a fee to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, whose inspectors make the decision on how the meat will be graded. What is compulsory, however, is the USDA stamp of approval on the health of the steer.

If you are looking for the best cuts of beef for your summertime grilling, the top of the line is prime, which features light-colored meat with firm, white fat and fine-textured, even marbling throughout the meat. Less than two percent of the meat in the butcher shops and markets are prime, so when you see it, expect to pay for the quality.

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# Dad gets his just desserts

By Debbie L. Sklar  
special writer



JIM JAGGELD/staff photographer

The Gourmet Cheesecake Club in Farmington Hills offers a different, delectable flavor each month. June's cheesecake is Key Lime, which may be ordered with a Father's Day decoration.

The words "Father's Day" are spelled out in white chocolate, made from a mold.

**F**ORGET ULTRA-LOUD ties and cardigan sweaters with little green alligators on the breast. Creamy cheesecakes are the items for Father's Day, proclaims one local company.

"Who doesn't need a cheesecake? It's the perfect gift for Dad," said Marian Sheridan, co-owner of the Gourmet Cheesecake Club based in Farmington Hills. "For the month of June the flavor is Key Lime."

Four years ago Sheridan, 35, a former medical technician, and her sister Linda Ozog, 39, who still is an art director for an advertising agency, began looking into businesses that they could own and somehow came up with cheesecakes. "I knew of a lady in Colorado who had a cookie-of-the-month club," said Sheridan. "I thought, 'Why not cheesecakes?' It could be so much better."

And, so they say, history was made. Sheridan said that before things could really take off, packaging and recipes needed to be perfected. "I always made cheesecakes, but I didn't know how well they would ship," she said. "I also didn't know how long they would stay fresh."

While exploring their options, the women discovered a mail-order catalog that shipped cheesecakes. "We found that to be something very interesting to stumble upon."

FROM THERE they had to come up with a scheme that would allow them to begin, but without having to purchase "thousands of boxes."

"It took us about four months of searching various states before we found someone to cut forms and corrugated material that would go into the gift boxes," she said.

Once the search for the perfect packaging material ended, the business officially kicked off in May 1985. "It was great. We opened up for Mother's Day," she recalled.

Since then, the Gourmet Cheesecake Club has been baking unique and elegant cheesecakes, ready to eat and to send.

"To get as busy that we had to hire another baker, who does all our baking for us out of a licensed kitchen in Berkeley," explained Sheridan. "In the experimental stages, my sister and I did the baking out of my home."

Sheridan said eventually the club would like to branch out and operate its own bakery — minus a retail front. "Instead of contracting out, we could do all the baking ourselves."

SHERIDAN SAID their cheesecakes are made with the finest, freshest, natural ingredients. There are 13 in all. Each month, a different gourmet flavor is featured, such as irresistible Raspberry Ribbon, Amaretto, and Chocolate-Crowned.

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## Plastic plates for real, really good food

It was so good, we could have licked the plate of the house salad, and it didn't even matter that the salad was served on plastic.

But you will have to get around that fact if you want to enjoy the food at Kruse and Muer, a restaurant that literally fits into a hole in the wall in Rochester Hills' Meadowbrook Village Mall.

In something under 2,000 square feet, Kruse and Muer packs a culinary wallop into very little space. The menu includes homemade pasta, fresh fish, a varied selection of chicken dishes and pizza. There's also a smattering of items borrowed from the Muer Corp. — Charley's Chowder and homemade bread. Something not borrowed is the plas-

tic dishes, which at first seem out of place and then seem almost acceptable.

In a note to customers, co-owner Bill Kruse explains that plastic dishes mean more room for cooking (and thus menu diversification) because china storage and a dishwasher no longer become an issue.

**CONSIDERING** THE concept of Kruse and Muer, it makes sense.

"We wanted to be a carryout for that two-income family, with both Mom and Dad working. We wanted to provide nutritious, well-balanced carryout meals," Kruse said.

The concept, he added, seems to be "dead on." Nearly 35 percent of the restau-

rant's business is in the takeout department. As the restaurant approaches its one-year anniversary in August, Kruse hopes to see the percentage increase to 50.

The "we" part of Kruse and Muer is Chuck Muer of the famed Charley's Crab. A 17-year Muer Corp. employee, Kruse served his last seven years there as vice-president of operations.

During his tenure, he learned the restaurant business and developed with Muer the concept for the Rochester restaurant, which is separate from the corporation. Muer, said Kruse, "is my financial partner and my operational mentor. Before I left the Muer Corp., Chuck and I were talking a lot about carryout — and

that that was a way to go in the future."

"SO, WE THOUGHT we'd give it a whirl. The 50 seats we do have were really to help promote the carryout business. The restaurant ended up telling what we were all about."

And what is that, exactly? The restaurant focuses on three areas. 1. Bread — homemade and hot out of the oven. 2. Fresh fish and homemade pasta, and 3. Pizza.

Our favorite was a wonderful combination of greens and fruit concocted by Kruse's wife, Cindy, that makes up the house salad. A delightful and distinctly different flavor results from combining cantaloupe with romaine lettuce and tossing it with a honey-mustard vinaigrette, which you can buy by the pint (\$3.95). The salad changes depending on what's freshest at the time. The evening we had it, we could have made a meal of the salad alone. Do not miss it.

For dinner we tried the chicken primavera, not one of the top three draws but delicious nevertheless. Crunchy broccoli, red pepper and other vegetables are mixed with a chicken cooked just tender. The entree was delicious and plentiful at \$7.95, including bread and salad.

Another entree tried was the Shaft barbecue ribs. While we were impressed with the amount of meat on the bones and the flavor of the sauce, the grease factor — though always expected with ribs — was still more than we cared for. The ribs were made to imitate those at an Aspen restaurant named the Shaft. Maybe after a long day of skiing, all that grease warms you up. In Rochester, it provides a little too much finger-licking.



INDEED, IF there is one complaint overall, it was the excess liquid factor. Not so much to make it intolerable but enough to notice.

Details: Kruse and Muer, 64 N. Adams Road, Rochester Hills. In the Meadowbrook Village Mall. 375-2503. Hours: Mondays-Thursdays 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Fridays-Saturdays 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Sundays 12:30-3:30 p.m. MasterCard, Visa, American Express.

Prices: Dinners, including salad and bread, start around \$7.95. Sandwiches start at \$4.95. A pint of Charley's Chowder is \$2.95. Carryout: Extensive, with main entrees priced a few dollars less than on eat-in. Salad (\$1.95) and bread (\$1.95) are extra.

Reservations: Yes, parties of six or more. Value: Great variety, good taste, fair prices.



JIM RIDER/staff photographer

Bill Kruse, co-owner of Kruse and Muer, leans down to chat with Jack Schodowski of Rochester Hills, Anne Schodowski of Birmingham

(center) and Helen Schodowski of Rochester Hills, at the casual dining spot in Meadowbrook Village Mall in Rochester Hills.