



taste buds

chef Larry Janes

Real kids like to eat real cakes

Remember when you were a kid and whenever a cake was being prepared in the family kitchen, you would beg to lick the beaters and if (and only if) you ate all the peas and carrots on your plate at dinner, you might also get to finger-lick the bowl?

Even with the addition of box cake mixes filled with moisture-laden puddings, and black-anodized cake pans that ensure picture-perfect cakes, there's something about the aroma of a fresh-baked cake.

I can remember Momma getting down on her hands and knees while she searched the back of the cupboard for the old Sunbeam hand mixer. To this day, I can recall vividly the sound of the clanking beaters that got that way by inadvertently gobbling up the wooden spatula that slipped through Momma's fingers while trying to scrape the sides of the mixing bowl with one hand and, at the same time, steadying the electric beater with the other.

In those days, there were no Kitchen-Aid countertop mixers with 10-speed settings. As a matter of fact, we probably could have used the old handcrank rotary beater hidden even further in the cupboard had Dad not given Momma the electric Sunbeam for a Christmas gift.

IF PREPARING homemade cakes has taken a back seat to the preparation of brownies, tortes and other culinary dessert creations in the kitchens of today, you might be interested in checking out the latest in baking paraphernalia that is on the market for the budding bakers of the '90s.

On a recent field trip to the bookstore with the kids one couldn't help but notice the same that has been on the New York Times best seller list for the last few months, Ruth Levy-Bernbaum's "Cake Bible." While the kids were busy searching out the Bernstein Bears and Dr. Seuss, I was literally parked at the cook-book section checking out the flood of culinary epics.

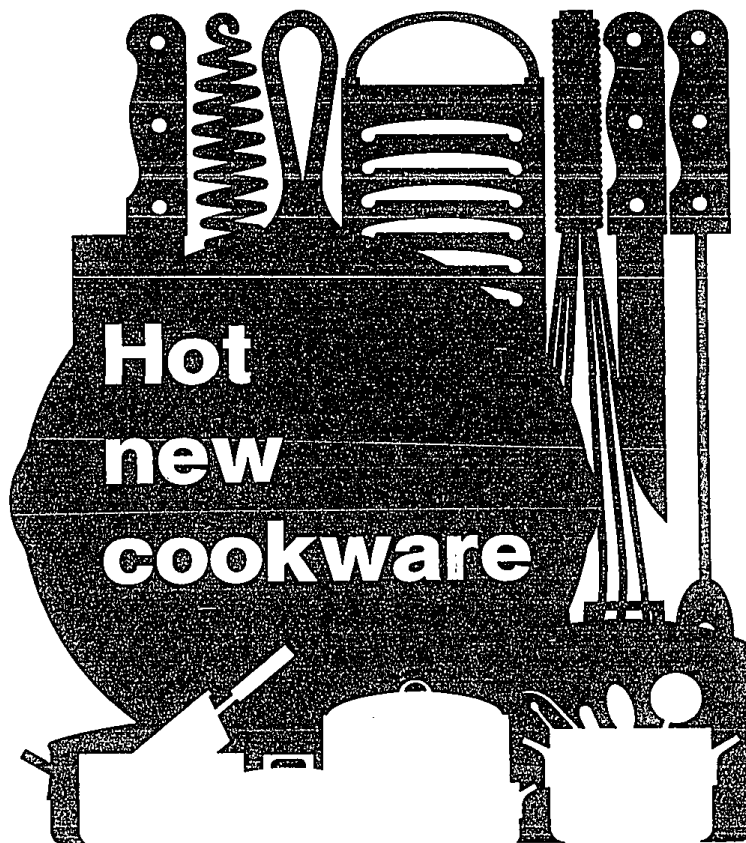
Anyone "into" cakes will certainly appreciate this addition to his or her cooking library. The book is filled with pre-tested works of wonder that will surely melt in your mouth. But watch out Mrs. Bernbaum, you're sure to be bumped from the top slot now that Julia Child's 10-pound heavyweight has hit the shelves.

In addition to the mountains of cake pans varying from the standard aluminum (which my kids say still makes the best set of drums money can buy) now jockeying for counter space are non-stick varieties in addition to black-anodized and shiny stainless steel. I've prepared a few cakes in my lifetime and have "inherited" a set of Momma's older aluminum varieties.

IT'S MY OPINION you just can't fool Mother Nature with new-fangled varieties that promise better baking, when a good, well-seasoned cake pan rimmed with butter and lightly dusted with flour can't be beat. So what if you have to pound out a few bumps with the back of a spatula after a previous life as a snare drum?

One of the nearest kitchen contraptions that every great cake baker should not be without is the "cake ring." The strip of cloth-covered velcro absorbs water, and wrapped around a cake pan during the baking process emits a humidifying effect. Supposedly, this keeps cakes from mounding in the center during baking, making a camera-perfect filling that can't be beat for filling with frosting.

There is an assortment of cake testers, some made of steel, some of bamboo, but I remember crouching around the old oven while Momma inserted a toothpick to check for doneness. To this day, my kids still fight for the right to lick the toothpick that tests the James Gang cake creations.



Scouting the local kitchen shops

By Geri Rinschler
special writer

REMEMBER fondue? Oh, did you sell your fondue set at the church rummage sale? Weep no more. I know just the place to get you a new one. And not just any fondue pot but the finest, top-grade stainless steel fondue pot available.

Is fondue trendy again? One might think so after a visit to the Williams-Sonoma kitchen shop in Troy's Somerset Mall. One of the first displays designed to catch the shopper's eye is stacked with white stoneware fondue plates, fondue forks, a Chantal fondue pot and other accessories.

Are they selling lots of fondue pots these days? Well that's difficult to say. But everyone on the Williams-Sonoma staff agrees, fondue pots are fast becoming a hot item for holiday gift giving.

For those of you who passionately monitor food trends, successful kitchen shops such as Williams-Sonoma are great barometers for indicating what's hot and what's not. So, is fondue making a comeback? Will we soon be giving away our hot-air popcorn poppers this year? And which exotic coffee maker should you give to great-aunt Mary for the holidays? For the answers to all these questions and more, stick around.

WHEN HOME cooking became fashionable in the '70s and early '80s, suburban Detroit could boast of at least a dozen distinctive kitchen shops. As the trend waned, we were left with half as many. Kitchen Port in Ann Arbor, Pointe Pottier, Grosse Pointe, and Sauces and Tosses in Bloomfield Township, to name a few, all survived the downturn.

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Cafe Bon Homme is close to perfect



With the same kind of determined patience and planning that it takes to make a good sauce, chef Greg Goodman has developed the Cafe Bon Homme into one of the finest restaurants in this area.

It was all by design. A few years ago, Goodman recognized that the charming small town of Plymouth was missing an important ingredient — an elegant restaurant. He scouted out the "perfect" location, bought out a previous restaurant and opened his own French cafe.

Although he had lofty aspirations for his restaurant when it opened in 1988, he started out with moderately priced meals and slowly upgraded his menu to the point where you now can enjoy entrees served with demi-glaces, sauces and soups that have been labored over for days.

Today, when you walk through the black wrought-iron gates at 844 Penniman, you enter a restaurant where everything from the atmosphere to the meal preparation and presentation is of the utmost quality. After just a sip of the cream of celery soup, we knew this was no ordinary restaurant.

A FORMER OWNER of MacKinnon's in Northville and a former executive chef at the Clarkson Cafe, Goodman loves both small towns and good food. His small cafe in Plymouth (which he named for himself) commands all his attention now.

While the meal preparation uses classic French techniques, Goodman prefers to describe his menu as European, reserving the opportunity to add dishes with Spanish, Portuguese, Belgian and other European influences. At his right hand is his talented sous chef, Greg Murphy.

The restaurant is decorated tastefully with the look and feel of a French cafe, flowered wallpaper here, a white-painted brick wall there, gracefully draped bay windows overlooking a sleepy little one-way street with little traffic. It's enough to lull you into thinking you've crossed the Atlantic.

If you happened to be served by the French-speaking waiter, you may have to pinch yourself to remember where you are.

No amount of atmosphere or ambience can make up for mediocre food. That isn't a concern at Cafe Bon Homme, where the food is absolutely exquisite. It's clear that the same kind of careful planning that went into establishing the restaurant is guiding the efforts in the kitchen.

THE LITTLE TOUCHES, like the golden raisins and walnuts on our house salad or the warm English stilton cheese placed on top of the grilled beef medallions, make the meal special.

The sauces and demi-glaces make the entrees extraordinary. Indeed, Goodman said he has stock pots on

the stove literally around the clock, being boiled and strained, boiled and strained. A demi-glaze can take two to three days, he said.

The Tournedos au Buerre Rouge, beef tenderloins, were very tender and very good — glazed with a demi-glaze and prepared with shallots, garlic and Burgundy wine.

This, as well as the other entrees served at our table, was picture perfect in presentation, with fingers of glazed carrots and pea pods adding color and interest to the plate.

Meals are served on lovely, oversized white china, simple yet elegant.

The entree that drew the most praise at our table was Grilled Lamb Chops Francais, a dish in which lamb chops have been cut away from the bone. They were grilled and baked, garnished with chevre cheese and glazed with a natural lamb demi-glaze — and tasted absolutely wonderful.

WE ALSO TRIED a special that consisted of veal medallions and a grilled lamb chop served in a sundried tomato demi-glaze. It, too, was delicious, with the meat very tender and juicy.

Throughout our meal, the wait staff kept offering more French rolls. We could have made a meal of the delicious soup and the crusty bread alone.

A popular entree that we didn't try, regrettably, is "comparisons of game," in which Goodman prepares an entree featuring two to three items depending on what's available in the market — pheasant, quail, duck, boar or venison.

when the chef prepares special entrees tableside and answers questions from his guests. At \$22.95 the meal includes everything from appetizer to dessert — to a short course in European cooking.

Although he admits it gets a little tricky fielding questions and cooking, Goodman said he loves interacting with his guests.

Even with its somewhat expensive and select menu, this restaurant remains friendly and comfortable, neither stuffy nor arrogant. It seats a little more than 60 people in three

small, quiet rooms. A pianist performs on a shiny black baby grand during dinners. It is exceptional. Don't miss it.

Details: Cafe Bon Homme, 855 Penniman, Plymouth, 453-6260.

Hours: Lunch 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday; noon to 5 p.m. Saturday. Dinner is served 6-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday. Closed Sundays. Accepts reservations.

Prices: Range from \$5-\$12 for lunch and \$10-\$27 for dinner. Value: Exceptional.



Bill Bresler

Greg Murphy, sous-chef at Cafe Bon Homme, holds roast loin of Provimi veal au champignon, and salad of sauteed wild mushrooms, Granny Smith apples with Caviar sauce.