

## taste buds

chef Larry Janos

## 25 wines are most palatable

Fresh from a viewing of the recent Star Trek flick, I was ready to voyage where no palate had gone before, to spend an evening with Robert Parker Jr. (editor of "The Wine Advocate") and 150 other oenophiles (wine lovers) while we sampled 25 assorted Bordeaux wines from the 1988 vintage.

This was no ordinary wine tasting. When the James Gang gets together to uncork a few bottle tops, we usually sample California chardonnays. That night, however, I sat at a table with nine other wine lovers, and between tastes of Chef Milos' country plate and an assortment of cheese and fruits, we tasted what easily could have totaled about \$300 worth of Bordeaux wines ranging from the mediocre to the sublime.

Seated at my table were Kathy Kiskulak of Birmingham, Bill Harmon and Helen and Rob Haines of Williams Lake, Cindy and Steve Knight of Royal Oak, Kathy and Tom Halbeson of Birmingham and Larry Guild of Warren. Kathy and Bill are the main organizers of this unofficial wine group, which meets every month or so to try a few wines, compare tastes and make case purchases, which are divided among group members. When I announced my palate leaned toward wines with screw-off tops, I knew I was in for a treat and an exciting evening with these folks, who swirled, twirled, swished and gulped with gusto.

THIS TASTING was sponsored by Eddie Jonna and the folks from the Merchant of Vino, with shops in Southfield, Birmingham and Troy. Eddie brought in Parker to highlight the evening and share his knowledge of fine wines. The audience was packed with such wine experts as Paul Mann, leader of Paul Mann wines, and Madeline Triffin, the only master sommelier in the Detroit area.

We started sampling the wines in what wine terminologists call "flights." Little did I know that my head would be "in flight" by the time the evening was over, especially after trying 25 different Bordeaux wines.

The first flight consisted of five St. Julien Bordeaux wines, which have been aging in new oak barrels for two years and were bottled the spring of 1989. Of all the wines sampled, these were the most tannic. As Parker pronounced, the tannins will eventually melt away, bringing forth more fruit and depth, and the wines will be drinkable within 8-10 years.

Yours truly thought the Grand Larose was the best, marking ballots, the 150 oenophiles in attendance voted that the Gloria selection was by far the best.

Flight Two brought forth an assortment of St. Estephes and Haut Brion Graves. Our table voted unanimously for the Cos d'Estournel, which came out on top after the votes were tabulated from the audience.

Flight Three brought forth the big guns of the lot, with five assortments ranging from a La Lagune, L'Angelus and a Prieure Lichine Margaux. Parker admitted that the Brane Caudanne Margaux was the best of the lot, while I leaned in favor of the Figeac, St. Emilion.

BY NOW, I should have emulated the authority at our table who was observing, tasting the various wines and then spitting out the volume, relying solely on the taste buds to form an opinion. Next time I'll know — thank goodness I brought along a designated driver!

Flight Four consisted of an assortment of St. Emillions and Pauillacs, with a Lynch Bages surfacing as the over-all favorite of what was easily turning out to be a tipsy table. It was the consensus of our group to lay low on this flight, looking with anticipation to the last flight.

By this time, my nose and palate were becoming saturated, but I continued to sip, all for the glory of the story.

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Dale Walley went whole hog, as usual, for annual outdoor party at his house in Livonia. Here, he checks the 205-pound porker

that that has just been cooked on a covered charcoal rotisserie. This kind of feast would highlight any summer weekend.

## Throw a party, roast a pig

By Larry Janos  
special writer

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IF INVITING another couple over for hot dogs and potato salad sends shivers up your spine, wait till you hear Livonia Firefighter Dale Walley's idea of a party.

First you start with a 200-pound whole hog and add to that at least 200 pounds of a good quality charcoal and about two quarts of a good-quality lighter fuel.

Rub the lamb generously with a cup of oregano, crushed garlic and kosher salt. Then you mix in about 200 of your closest friends, relatives, neighbors and fellow workers.

To keep the recipe running smooth, you can liberally douse with about three barrels of draft beer, 10 cases of pop and an occasional bottle of Jack Daniels. Last but not least, you can incorporate an assortment of roast sausages, pastas, salads and desserts.

BRING THIS all together on a long weekend and what have you got? Livonia Firefighter Dale Walley's annual Pig Roast and BBQ.

When I received the invite to witness first hand the throwing of a real barbecue, the first thing that came to mind was a frantic host, running from BBQ pit to spit roaster. Not at the Walley barbecue.

In order to pull off something of this magnitude, you have to rely on qualified assistants such as Ron Butcher, retired Livonia police officer, and fellow firefighter Ken Kenny. Seems that as long as Dale Walley has been throwing barbecues (and they get bigger and better every year) you tend to rely on friends like Butcher and Kenny.

When it became evident that this party was to be an annual affair, Ron, Ken and Dale sat down and laid out plans for a homemade lamb spit (one full revolution every 2 1/2 minutes, made from an old washing machine motor).

This year, firefighter Walley relied on the folks from Richmond Packing to supply the 205-pound hog (dressed weight) and the motorized, covered charcoal rotisserie.

THE TRAILERIZED rotisserie rents for about \$65 for the

weekend and all sizes are available, from the smallest 40-pound, suckling-pig rotisserie to a cream-of-the-crop, top-of-the-line propane-powered trailerized roaster that rolls out for about \$150 for the weekend, including gas.

The hog (anything more than 100 pounds is a hog, anything under is a pig) varies in price from \$2.29 per pound (for the smallest suckling pig) to the norm of about \$1.10 per pound for the fattest hog. The lamb used on the homemade spit was purchased from Wolverine Packing and retails at about \$2 per pound.

Now if pigs, hogs and spring lambs sound like more than what you want to accomplish on a summer's weekend, you also can purchase assorted roasts, beef rounds, ribs, chickens and tenderloins, available in all quantities and sizes to fit an assortment of spits and rotisseries.

For more information, you can contact your favorite meat packer or call the friendly folks at Richmond Packing at 727-9765.

If your budget will allow, and if your idea of spending a summer weekend is a trip to the beer barrel, Richmond Packing also caters out and can supply everything and everyone needed to pull off a successful barbecue.

TRYING to sneak in an interview with firefighter Walley, while he cooked, met friends and made sure the beer was cold enough, was like trying to chase a greased pig. Every time we started to talk, we were pleasantly interrupted with welcoming greetings and checking meat thermometers.

So, it was necessary for me to do what the other 200 or so guests were doing — just sit back, enjoy the weather and listen to the great sounds of the Gentlemen Songsters (formerly the Chevrolet Club) serenade the guests with an assortment of barbershop quartets, do-wop, show tunes and pop singles.

Songsters spokeswoman Sheila Edwards of Detroit explained the group sings just about anything that has been

performed by a male singer. Complete with straw hats and an assortment of guitars and horns, the group circled the confines of the Walley backyard, offering an assortment of renditions that kept everyone happy — both young and old.

All the friends, relatives, neighbors and fellow workers brought a dish to pass so that even the little kids who were in awe watching the hog and lambs on the spit could be well nourished.

Jackie Collica, a fellow Livonia neighbor (yes, that's her real name), brought along some homemade applesauce, and there was an abundant assortment of cobbles, crudites and creations, some basic and some gourmet.

AS WITH ALL the pig roasts I've ever done or attended, it was a treasure to observe the kids. All those queries about whether or not they were brave enough to eat the pig or lamb started out with a resounding "no," but after the finished product was carried to the slicing tables and cut up, even Adams School fourth grader and Observer & Eccentric carrier Ricky Leinert was willing to try the beast.

Six-year-old Nicole Hernandez of Canton was licking his fingers after sampling the beast. Ben and Mark Kittle of Westland were trying their darndest to get a few of the hog's teeth for a souvenir of a fun afternoon. Granted, these souvenirs aren't as treasured as a Tiger baseball, but the looks on the little kids' faces when shown the cooked carcasses said it all. Hhhmmmm good!

When queried about how he can pull this off all by himself (and with the help of a few friends), firefighter Walley said he just lets nature take over. Many a time, he tried to get in to help slice off the tasty tidbits of meat, but fellow guests were fighting for the opportunity to pick up a sharp knife and exert their culinary skills.

After dinner was served and there was many an empty Tupperware container on the table, the guests all helped by picking up chairs (everyone was asked to bring his or her own) and trash, and just when I was leaving, a straw hat was passed around to help cover the expenses.

Sounds like you have it all down pat, Dale. I can't wait for next year's party!

Area developer enjoys sweet smell of success  
A shopful of goodiesBy Ariane Funke  
special writer

Just say he has chocolate in his blood.

Kenneth Lenchner of Bloomfield Hills is a highly successful real estate developer. But the 60-year-old tycoon now is fulfilling a dream to operate his own candy and cookie store.

Lenchner's shop, called Sweet Cravings, is on Farmington road at Grand River Avenue, in a downtown Farmington shopping center. Step into the doorway and miff the rich aroma.

It's obvious this store caters to the sweet tooth.

"Every once in a while you're entitled to a treat — something sweet," Lenchner said.

The store, which opened last fall, sells rich cookies, muffins laced with

orange juice and plump blueberries, to-die-for chocolate truffles, frozen yogurt and ice cream. Also available are croissant sandwiches, pies, cheesecake, salads and soups.

"IT'S A FUN project," Lenchner said of Sweet Cravings. "It's close to my heart."

Lenchner is president of the Southfield-based Equitable Group, Inc., a major developer of shopping centers and retail properties in the Midwest. But fond memories persisted of his childhood in Pennsylvania, where his family operated a candy and confectionery business.

The decor of Sweet Cravings is old-fashioned sweet shop, with round marble-top tables and selections printed on chalk board. Lights are shaped like ice cream cones. The effect is warm and friendly.

"What sets Sweet Cravings apart is that we do most of the items in the store — baking the cookies, bread and muffins," Lenchner said. "It's almost like a mini department-store for food."

Only the ice cream and candy so.

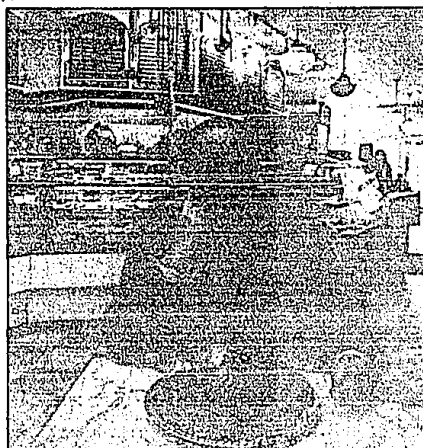
lections are made by an outside vendor. All the other foods are prepared on the premises.

Ironically, the shop is a failed Sanders outlet. Lenchner said he made "certain suggestions" back when Sanders was still there. When Sanders went into bankruptcy, Lenchner said, "I'm going to do it myself."

LENCHNER HAS BEEN assisted by several family members, who also are affiliated with the Equitable Group, Inc.

Sweet Cravings is immaculately clean. The baking ovens, just inside the door, give off irresistible fragrances, ranging from the savory aroma of coffee to the sweetness of pecan rolls.

Gleaming glass cases are filled with freshly baked, golden muffins, both full-sized and mini. Among the varieties are banana bran, carrot raisin, raspberry orange, apple walnut and the ever-popular, cholesterol-lowering oat bran.



Kenneth Lenchner, owner of Sweet Cravings, is shown with an assortment of offerings from the store including truffles, muffins and cookies.

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