

## taste buds chef Larry Janos

### Recipes a family treasure

A few weeks back, I discovered a buried treasure in my basement.

Before I elaborate on the treasure I found, here's what led me to go treasure hunting.

A few weeks ago, my brother-in-law's mom died. Maria Keller will surely be missed. She passed along her old recipes to her daughter, Anna Pickett of Livonia, and daughter-in-law, Rose Keller (my sister).

Maria Keller was from the old country, and could she cook. There was never an occasion when I got my fill of Maria's chicken paprikas.

I always looked forward to the holidays when I knew there would be ample platters of pierogies and assorted other Eastern pastries prepared with care and devotion to detail.

With Maria's passing, I spent a hot summer's eve last week in the cool confines of my basement, searching through cluttered cookbooks, scribbles on yellowed paper and shoebox upon shoebox of old, James' family recipes that were passed down from the James gang, culinary archives. Fortunately, I found a few of the old family favorites, but I also came upon a wealth of information about my culinary heritage and tradition.

TO THIS DAY, my frequent ventures down to Momma's house in Wyandotte yield an over-the-shoulder glance while I watch her prepare and take mental notes of the pinches of this and handfuls of that that make up satisfying dinners, salads and desserts.

The day after I found the culinary treasures, I took my 3-year-old son, Jeff, and my dad out fishing to Bright Bay in Monroe. We caught a pall full of perch. I sat awe as I watched my dad return to the campsite we had set up earlier and perform the scaling and gutting ritual that so many times before just sailed right over my head.

His 74-year-old fingers handed that razor-sharp knife with skill and ease. A slice here, an incision there, and within an hour, there was a platterful of perch fillets awaiting Momma's special cornmeal and seasoned-flour mixture after a quick bath in an egg wash.

WHILE THE FILLETS were drying out, I observed Momma heating up the old cast-iron frypan with just a spoonful of bacon grease and a dot of pure butter adorning its bottom. There was no need for coleslaw, potatoes or a salad. These special perch, caught by a group of guys spanning three generations, were all that was needed for a special dinner.

With today's emphasis on fast foods and foods-to-go, this was one of those "old-time" moments that, unfortunately, many of us don't take the time to savor. To this day, I don't know who was more proud, my dad for delicately cleaning and preparing the catch, my Momma who was pleased as punch with the fresh-caught taste of the catch, my son, who called the treat the "best fish sticks he had ever eaten," or me, who fought back tears enjoying the moment. A moment I will cherish in my heart till I, too, pass on to that big kitchen in the sky.

THE BEST part of this story is yet to come.

For the most part, many of us still have the opportunity to spend some cherished moments together with folks who, like Maria Keller, my Momma and my dad, have legacies to pass along. If you haven't talked with your folks or another senior in your lives, make a mental promise to do so, now.

Whether the opportunity arises over a cherry strudel or a Dunkin' Donuts cruller, many a generation gap can be bridged with one of the most common denominators in history — food.

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## Where to find it Specialty stores carry unusual foodstuffs



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Owner Elvie Magat shows some of the Chinese canned goods available in her Westside Oriental Grocery in Garden City.

By Larry Janos  
special writer

WHETHER IT BE Mucky Duck Mustard or Petrosian Caviar, the northern and western suburbs have a bounty of small, independent stores that can cater to just about every whim.

One would think it easy to just pick up a yellow page and thumb through gourmet food listings, but unless you know what you're looking for, and keep your ear to the pavement, finding unique and avant-garde foodstuffs isn't as easy as letting your fingers do the walking. Many of the area's specialty food stores are looking to keep a low profile, concentrating mainly on serving that one-of-a-kind customer who will travel miles for canned lobster nuts and Udon noodles. And the best part is that it won't necessarily mean a trek downtown or to Ann Arbor to find it.

There is an incredible number of Oriental food stores in just about every community the Observer & Eccentric reaches. Three days were spent just hopping from one Oriental store to the other, and that didn't include specialty gourmet shops, Middle Eastern stores or restaurant supply houses that also service customers in our area.

GRANTED, YOU STILL have to venture down to Bagley and 24th streets in Detroit for the best tortillas and Mexican foodstuffs, but other than that, many small mom-and-pop operations in our suburbs can supply you with everything you need to make dishes ranging from Kim Chee to a Mongolian Hotpot.

One of the most fun Oriental stores is Westside Oriental Grocery at Ford and Middlebelt roads in

beautiful downtown Garden City. In addition to being stocked with a wide assortment of Oriental foodstuffs, this shop also is like visiting the Hong Kong mainland, mainly because the walls are brimming with Samurai swords, fans, and tons of the most extensive arrays of teapots and rice steamers one could ever dream of.

It has coolers stocked with an array of intriguing fresh Oriental produce and freezers stocked with specialty fish, squid and assorted other sundries. The store stocks the best-tasting imported soy sauce for a stir-fry. Sorry, LaChoy, this has you beat, hands down.

Of course, not to be outdone is Cho's Oriental on Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield, Mt. Fuji Oriental on Ten Mile Road in Southfield, Hana Oriental on Dequindre Road in Troy, Seoul Oriental at Nine Mile and Beech Daly roads in Southfield and, last but not least, the Asia Mart on Big Beaver Road in Troy.

A call to Tonia Pataskis, owner and CEO of the much-heralded Kitchen Glamor chain, had her singing the praises of Cho's, mainly because it supplies all the Far Eastern goodies for the many Oriental classes Kitchen Glamor offers.

IF WANDERING through stores from the Orient gets the blood pumping, then you would really get a kick out of an equally exciting trip to one of the area's Middle Eastern markets. The International Market at Five Mile and Inkster roads in Livonia, along with the Oasis Mart on Woodward Avenue in Royal Oak and Patel Brothers on Ford Road in Garden City also stocks this area's finest collection of everything you need to make baba ganoosh and kibbee.

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Looking to visit one of the great shops mentioned in the accompanying story? Here's a listing:

### ORIENTAL

Westside Oriental, 29454 Ford Road, Garden City, 421-0019  
Seoul Oriental, 25840 W. Nine Mile Road, Southfield, 357-2929  
Cho's Oriental, 6878 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield, 855-4646  
Asia Mart, 2903 Big Beaver, Troy, 689-6999  
Hana Oriental, 34769 Dequindre, Troy, 524-4980  
Mt. Fuji Oriental Foods, 22050 W. 10 Mile Road, Southfield, 357-0478

### MIDDLE EASTERN

Patel Bros., 28804 Ford Road, Garden City, 427-4445  
International Market & Spice, 15375 Inkster, Livonia, 822-3220  
Oasis Mart, 4720 N. Woodward, Royal Oak, 549-0001

### SPECIALTY/GOURMET

Merchant of Vino — 29525

Northwestern, Southfield, 354-6505  
254 W. Maple, Birmingham, 433-3000

4050 Rochester, Troy, 689-0900  
R.I.R.A., 6846 Telegraph, Bloomfield Township, 655-4005

Oliver's, 1087 W. Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Twp., 647-6056  
Market Basket of Franklin, 32854 Franklin Road, Franklin, 626-2583

Market Square of Birmingham, 1954 Southfield Road, Birmingham, 644-4641  
Market Square of Bloomfield, 1900 Woodward, Bloomfield Hills, 644-6554

Bottle and Basket, 190 N. Hunter, Birmingham, 258-5555

### ITALIAN

Cantero Market, 19710 Middlebelt, Livonia, 478-2345

### JAPANESE

Koyama Soten, 37176 Six Mile, Livonia, 464-1480

## Don Carlos is a Mexican standout



carefully guarded recipes. Even though the restaurant is branching out, it still delivers fantastic food at modest prices.

WE RECENTLY DINED at the Redford location, a spot which for years was a New-Orleans-style restaurant. The brick has been painted the pinkish mauve that characterizes Don Carlos, and is trimmed with grey. Even the lampposts outside look a little Mexican with the new color scheme.

Inside it is bright-light and colorfully decorated — and the service staff is extraordinarily pleasant. Owner Sandy Sulkes says, "We have a good time" — and it shows. You almost feel like part of the family by the time your meal is over.

We enjoyed everything we tried, from the margaritas to the sopapillas (a dessert of gently fried tortillas covered in honey, cinnamon and sugar). An easy way to get a sampling is to try one of the combination plates, such as the Fajita Suprema with shrimp, steak and chicken sauteed with vegetables and topped with muenster cheese.

We really enjoyed the Fajita Don Carlos, which combines strips of tender steak with green peppers, onions, mushrooms and tomatoes and is covered with melted muenster cheese. You can customize your fajita by stuffing your flour tortilla with the main entree and portions of the three side dishes: refried beans; a delicious, slightly chunky guacamole; and diced tomatoes, onions and peppers. As you start eating,

your tortillas are kept warm in a pink fiberglass-like dish. A nice touch to a delicious entree. All for \$8.95.

Equally tasty were the enchiladas suizas, three corn tortillas stuffed with chicken and green tomato salsa and topped with cheese, sour cream and salsa. Very good, not too spicy — and very heavy portions of chicken.

THE MENU FEATURES the standard selection of tacos, burritos, enchiladas, tostadas and fajitas as well as a wide selection of seafoods, including pickerel, perch and (when it's available) red snapper. Everything has Maria Shaffran's stamp on it in the form of specially formulated sauces and fresher-than-fresh ingredients.

The chicken noodle soup is, by all accounts, "very, very special" as is the flaming cheese appetizer with a special sauce and chorizo (Mexican sausage).

For lunch, you can order from the main menu or select from the day's specials, generally the same entrees in smaller portions, priced at just \$3.95 and promised to arrive within 15 minutes.

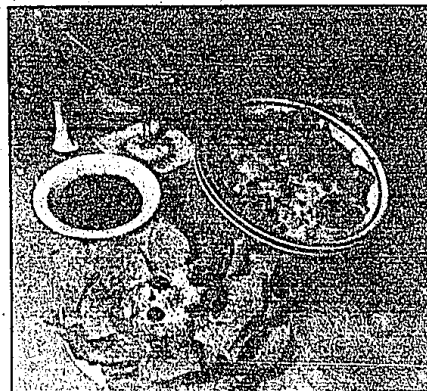
This is one restaurant that is destined to grow. It's good and inexpensive. Shaffran has no intention of letting quality slip as Don Carlos expands. She has been known to anonymously order carryout from one of her restaurants — or show up unannounced with her tasting spoon in hand.

Details:  
Don Carlos, 8563 Telegraph, Redford, 533-8099. (Also locations in Dearborn, Garden City, Mt. Clemens, Melvindale and Detroit.) Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.; Friday, 11 a.m. to

11:30 p.m.; Saturday, 3-11:30 p.m.; Sunday 3-9 p.m.

Prices: \$3.95-\$9.25. Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Diner's Club.

Value: Very good meals at modest prices.



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Guacamole with corn chips, and Fajita Suprema accompanied by Pico de Gallo (hot sauce) are served at Don Carlos' first franchise, in Redford.