

taste buds
chef Larry
JanasZucchini,
zucchini,
zucchini

It's that time of year again. Any day now, I'm expecting to see zucchini squash at the produce stands piled as high as an elephant's eye with a big sign proclaiming: Free! Please take one.

The absolutely gorgeous weather we've been enjoying has created a bumper crop of zucchini again this year in the Janas Gang garden. So far, I've sautéed it, grilled it, steamed it, fried it, frozen it, baked it, stuffed it and have given more away to friends than I care to remember. And every morning, when I venture out to check, I've got more.

Certainly, zucchini must be related to rabbits and mosquitoes. Just letting it sit in the garden after a three-day soiree to Cedar Point, I returned to find sizes and shapes that easily could be listed as assault weapons. So, now that the freezer is full and the family echoes in unison, "Zucchini, again!" at dinnertime, I feel that it's my public duty to pass along still other unique ways to serve the vegetable that plagues many gardens during this time of year.

The wild ancestors of the zucchini appear to have originated in the vicinity of the border between Mexico and Guatemala. From there, they spread to North and South America. First use of these vegetables as food appears to have originated around 8000 B.C. in Mexico.

AT THAT TIME, the Indians gathered the wild plants mainly for seeds because the fruits contained only small amounts of bitter-tasting flesh. Over the centuries, mutant plants with more fleshy, milder-flavored fruits appeared and were grown along with beans and corn by the Aztec, Inca and Mayan Indian civilizations of Latin America.

Blame Christopher Columbus for first noticing and transporting the wily vegetable. Shortly after the discovery of America, squashes were brought back to the Old World, where the production eventually surpassed that of the New World. Statistics on the total United States production of zucchini are not readily available, but it is estimated that more than 50,000 metric tons of these vegetables are frozen and that the same amount are canned by processors.

And if you think we have more than what we can deal with, China, the main producer of zucchini and other summer squash, sells a remarkable one-million metric tons. (Probably most of it ends up as a filler in chop suey, right?)

Anytime with a vegetable garden is always looking for new ways to prepare such a prolific vegetable. Even if you don't have a garden but live close to someone who does, there is a very good chance that zucchini has

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Tart connoisseur Sheila Foley with an array of favored offerings (clockwise from bottom left) a flan of fresh strawberry and peach slices, miniature pecan tarts, in-

stant pistachio nut pudding garnished with fresh kiwi, almond-raspberry with lattice top and bite-sized puff pastry tarts with grapo jolly.

SHARON LeMIEUX/staff photographer

Bakeries
tempt you
with tarts

Area shops that sell tarts include:

• Bonnie's Pastries, 23223 Northwestern Highway, Southfield. In business nine years, Bonnie's uses fruit of the season to feature fruit classics, including Strawberry Devonshire with a sour-cream and cheese-cream base, a walnut-based Apple Frantipan and Swedish Almond featuring apricots and lemon.

• Mrs. Maddox's Cake Shop, 2781 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. In business 60 years, Maddox's specializes in bite-sized tarts, miniature versions filled with cherry, strawberry, blueberry or raspberry on a bed of sweet custard.

• D'S Quality Cake, 25011 Six Mile Road, Redford. In business two years, D'S features a bite-sized tart of cheesecake and cherries, based on an old family recipe.

• Iverson Bakery, 17180 Lahser, in the Old Redford district of Detroit. In business for more than 40 years, Iverson always tries to have fresh strawberry and key lime tarts on hand. Other standards include cherry and pecan.

• Graf's Pastry Kitchen, 30010 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. In business 12 years, Graf's specializes in European-styled tarts with whipped cream, including yellow and chocolate cake with strawberries and rum, Khalsa with coffee cream and apricots and Black Forest with chocolate nuts and cherries.

• Yvonne's To Go, in Farmer Jack, 37695 Five Mile Road, Livonia. In business six years, Yvonne's also has locations in Farmington and Southfield. Flan is available fresh daily, featuring fruits of the season.

Lowly
pastry
can be
high art

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

THE TART, likely of humble origin and elevated to culinary distinction by the French, normally contains a flaky crust as light as the breath of an angel, plump handpicked fruit of the season and a mouth-watering custard of fresh milk and eggs.

But not always. "The tart has about a hundred definitions," explained Sheila Foley, a foods expert who has taught cuisine and related subjects for 22 years to Livonia school students and, more recently, to adults expressing a belated interest in cooking.

"By definition, a tart is a pie, except one is deeper than the other," said Foley, attempting again to explain a tart.

This rift is certain. The tart is a European pastry of common origin, probably a culinary creation of the peasants.

"Most things with fruit were considered common because anybody could pick fruit. Royalty said they like enjoyed things like lamb stuffed with pear, stuffed with pheasant, stuffed with whatever things not everyone could have," Foley said.

THE FRENCH ARE credited with transforming the lowly pastry into a "high art" now savored by gourmets the world over. The American-styled tart is patterned after that favored by the French and English.

Foley has made it her business to become an expert in its preparation, for a series of baking demonstrations she will teach next month for Kitchen Glamour in Halford Township, West Bloomfield and Rochester Hills.

"The best thing," Foley said in still another explanation of the tart, "is to always say, generally, 'You can't describe it by hard rules.'"

In Eastern Europe, for example, the traditional tart of Yugoslavia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia is folded, with fruit rolled directly into the pastry.

This is Foley's third year of classes for Kitchen Glamour. Tarts is one of five subjects she will teach, topics suggested by Foley and agreed to by the shop. Foley delves deeply into each new subject, emerging as a specialist in that form of cooking.

"Working with adults is wonderful. They pay money and they really want to learn," she said, adding after a pause, "We know a shocking number of people don't know how to cook." During one demonstration last year, a student in her late 30s confided that the pot roast Foley had just readied and cooked was the first the woman had ever seen prepared.

"THE ALL-TIME favorite 'tart' is the flan, a type of tart styled and named by the French, Foley said.

Consisting of a sweet cookie crust, rich custard cream filling and garnishes of fruit arranged artistically, the flan is always "a certain bit" in culinary circles.

Due to its popularity, it is also terribly overpriced when sold by the slice, according to Foley, who said it is relatively inexpensive to prepare.

She favors garnishing flan with slices of fresh strawberry, wedges of mandarin orange and kiwi, the New Zealand wonder that is available year-round to American consumers.

The flan exemplifies the tart's favored status. A visual delight, its showy nature is particularly fitting of any restaurant dessert cart.

"People can turn down cake but it's not that easy to turn down the tart. People think it's the best thing they've ever in their lives seen," Foley said.

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Volcano inspires Italian 'stramboli' bread

By Arlene Funk
special writer

The name is "stramboli" — layers of ham, pepperoni and mozzarella cheese baked into a fresh loaf of bread. "It's almost like a rolled-up pizza," said 27-year-old Joe Mainella of Joe's Deli and Bakery in Livonia, where stramboli has been holding forth during the last five years.

"It's a one-of-a-kind taste," Mainella added.

Hefty, fragrant loaves of fresh-baked stramboli may be sliced and served as a hearty sandwich, snack or full meal. It is available in full loaf, three-pound sizes (10-12 slices) at \$7.49, or half-loaf portions at \$3.99.

A vegetarian stramboli, with broccoli and cheddar cheese sprinkled with Italian seasonings, also is popular.

Mainella and other family members in 1989 came from their native central Italy to the United States. Five years ago, after working at several other local Italian bakeries, Joe Mainella and his mother, Filomena,

opened their own shop at Five Mile and Merriman roads.

"WE SAW the business grow, and one year later we had to bring in the whole family," Mainella said. Father Luigi and brother Phillip, who had been in construction work, joined the bakery. Joe's wife, Anita, and Phillip's wife, Nina, also help out.

The Mainellas, who all live in Livonia, work in the shop baking and selling bread, preparing trays of unbaked pizza, rolling out loaves of stramboli and preparing fancy Italian desserts such as the cream-filled cannoli.

The bakery throbs with the homey, yeast-filled fragrance of dough and the tangy aroma of Filomena Mainella's special spaghetti sauce simmering on a stove in back.

Each week, the bakery sells approximately 60 quarts of the sauce, which contains fresh oregano, basil, parsley, finely chopped onions and tiny nuggets of fresh Italian sausage. "Everything is made by us," Joe Mainella said.

Mainella owes the introduction of the stramboli to his mother-in-law,

Teresa Coppola of Novi, soon after the bakery opened. Coppola went to New York and, while there, she sampled a similar layered sandwich featuring salami and a sweet-and-sour sauce.

"I didn't particularly like the taste of it," Mainella said.

But he did like the concept, and developed his own variation featuring slices of boiled ham, thin strips of pepperoni and mozzarella cheese sprinkled with green pepper.

"I GOT the name from my mother-in-law," Mainella said. "I think it's the name of a volcano." Mainella makes stramboli by placing the meats and cheese, in layers, on a piece of pizza dough, which has been flattened.

Each end of the dough is moistened slightly with water. Mainella rolls the dough firmly over the ingredients. When finished, it forms an oblong. The ends are tucked in.

The stramboli is brushed with an egg wash and sprinkled with poppy seeds, then placed in a loaf pan lined with baking paper. Poked the dough with a fork to eliminate air bubbles.

Bake at 350 degrees for one hour.

Stramboli may be eaten cold. But warming enhances the flavors.

The ham, pepperoni and mozzarella brings out the cheese and softens the

bread to a deliciously chewy consistency.

The ham, pepperoni and mozzarella variety is mildly spicy — not

overwhelmed by the pepperoni. The vegetarian-style stramboli is jazzed up slightly with a sprinkling of Italian spices.

THE SHOP sells dry pastas, wine and lunch meat. It makes up party trays and caters weddings and parties. The Mainellas also put out several varieties of bread, dinner rolls and doughnuts.

Some of their special, rich, baked-on-the-premise desserts are small eclairs, napoleons and lemon buns. The slender, cream-filled tubes of pastries called cannoli are light and flaky.

These confections are priced at 45 cents each or \$4.80 a dozen for a small party, or 50 cents each or \$7.50 a dozen for the larger.

Another interesting dessert is a Sicilian peach. This round, sweet shell is filled with rich cream and decorated with frosting and a cherry. It costs 99 cents each.

Joe's Bakery and Deli at Five Mile and Merriman is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday-Saturday. Closed Sunday. Phone 261-5666.



Joe Mainella, owner of Joe's Italian Bakery & Deli in Livonia, shows "stramboli" bread, which is baked with meat or vegetables inside.

JIM JAGDELO/staff photographer