

taste buds  
chef Larry  
JanesRite stuff:  
downing  
an oyster

It used to be true that oysters should only be eaten in months that end with an "r." For all we cared, the month could end in "z," because swallowing one's first raw oyster is a rite of passage reserved for that minute classification of people who dared eat ripe, mountain oysters and snails.

Oysters are neither cute nor do they have a compelling aroma. One must work at loving oysters.

If memory serves me correctly, I was into the age of adulthood before I sampled my first raw oyster. It was somewhere between my second and third new car and well past the age when my driver's license was no longer required just to enter a bar.

All oysters are considered "filter feeders," meaning that they do not necessarily move about to get their food but, instead, get nourishment by pumping hundreds of gallons of water a day through their valves and filtering out tiny larvae and plankton for nourishment.

OYSTERS THRIVE on every coast and are categorized by that geographical definition. Domestically, there are Atlantic oysters, Pacific oysters and Gulf oysters.

In the last few years, an incredible amount of new classifications of oysters has sprung into prominence. What used to be simple groups like Bluepoints, Olympics and Cotuitus have been integrated with the assorted tastes like Belons, Hog Island Sweetwaters and Portugueses, along with about a dozen or so other varieties. And that doesn't even begin counting the thousand or so varieties available from other worldwide coastal areas.

As stated earlier, it used to be written in seawater that oysters only be consumed during months that end with an "r," namely, September, October, November and December.

Oysters reproduce during the summer and, as a result, most summer mainland oysters used to be unappealingly flat (about to spawn) or have a strange texture (just spawned). However, oyster harvesters now say that oysters can be perfectly acceptable in summer, especially if you order some of the colder-climate varieties like those from Washington State, British Columbia or Nova Scotia.

Because oysters are filter feeders, they are continuously exposed to infectious bacteria and viruses that get pumped through their bodies along with the food supply. These bacteria and viruses are usually found in waters polluted by industrial wastes and sewage. Periodically, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issues advisories warning consumers not to eat raw shellfish, including oysters.

BUT THE FDA has never really come forward and said that eating raw oysters is harmful. If it's any consolation, all oyster harvesters and distributors must use a detailed system of tagging every box of oysters that reveals the exact date of harvesting, including the specific oyster bed and the date received by the distributor and the date received by the restaurant. Restaurants are supposed to keep the tags on hand for 60 days, ensuring that any resulting health problem could be traced quickly.

Judging from oyster sales, safety is not weighing on most oyster-lovers' minds. Oysters have become so popular that for several years they have been over-harvested. As a result, there are fewer and fewer oysters, and they cost more and more.

According to data from the National Marine Fisheries, on the East Coast alone, 48 million pounds of oyster meat valued at \$46 million were sold in 1978. By contrast, in 1988 only 15 million pounds were sold, valued at \$72 million. That's a 27 percent decline in production and a 57 percent increase in price.

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Lobster  
Crustacean stars  
at ultimate bash

Its claws taped, a live lobster awaits its fate.

By Larry Janes  
special writer

IF YOU REMEMBER correctly, it was just a few short months ago when a story was run on a Livonia firefighter's quest to throw the ultimate backyard barbecue—a pig and lamb roast for about 150 close friends, neighbors and fellow firefighters.

Watch out, Livonia, because vying for a little friendly one-upmanship are Keith and Louise Malinowski and the firefighters from Redford.

Right after the last story ran, this reporter received an invitation to a backyard lobster bake and I've got to admit, it was quite a party. It never ceases to amaze me how folks can throw parties for between 125-150 friends, with ease. Simple get-togethers at Chateau Janes for six people send me over the proverbial fire hydrant, and thoughts of multiplying the guest list 20-fold send shivers down my spine.

So what's the secret to these ultimate backyard bashes? The Malinowskis and their kids from Redford have been doing this for the last seven years, and the only time I noticed firefighter Malinowski slightly flustered was when he was told by another firefighter that they were having trouble with the beer tap.

BEFORE MALINOWSKI could utter an, "Oh no, what's next?" his friend volunteered to head to the nearest party store and get another tap. Ah, the secret has been revealed. It isn't enough that these guys trust their lives with each other every day. They all seem to band together and help each other when the need arises.

To pull off a party of this magnitude, however, a few months of solid planning are de rigueur. So what if the weekend weather bantered back

and forth with intermittent showers and sunshine? After successfully throwing parties like this for the last seven years, a little experience never hurt anyone.

The reason for the ultimate lobster bake came up many moons ago when the Malinowskis discovered their taste for fresh Maine lobsters. After many pilgrimages to the East Coast, they found themselves carrying back requests from firefighters and other friends for fresh, live Maine lobsters and clams.

Fortunately, with today's jet-fresh transport services just a short drive away at Metro Airport, it seemed like a piece of cake to request 12 dozen lobsters and 50 pounds of clams to be packed, wrapped and sent via air cargo. Malinowski claims his East Coast supplier-wholesaler said the lobsters were still swimming in the ocean Friday morning, and after being caught Friday afternoon, they were immediately boxed, topped with seaweed and put on a plane for the Motor City.

Unlike the Livonia firefighter's, pig roast where a straw hat was passed at the end of the soiree to help defray expenses, the Malinowskis send out a flyer every summer asking guests to r.s.v.p., along with a check to secure their requests. For those attending the party who chose not to indulge in live lobsters, New York strip steaks prepared just the way you like them also were handed on a large, portable grill.

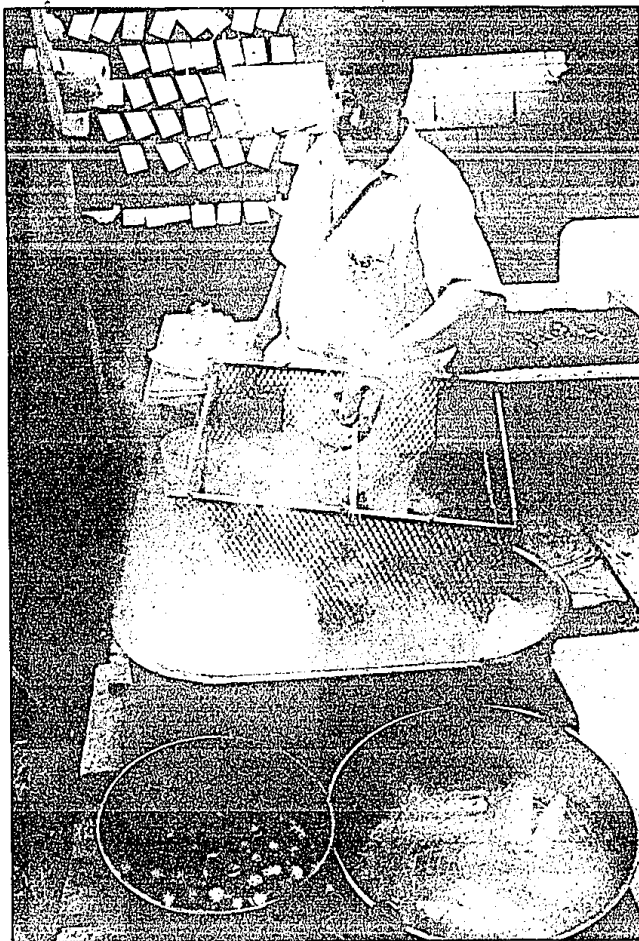
FIREFIGHTER Jim Gomulka and Malinowski's brother, Mark, were in charge of grilling while the big boss man and compadres Gary Burke and Ed Leonard assisted the chef himself with the "exactly 13 minutes in rapidly boiling, lightly salted water" for the lobsters.

In addition to the hardy surf-and-turf fare, Malinowski included fresh, boiled, corn on the cob and what I thought were the best-tasting onions I had ever sunk my teeth into. A side trip to the Detroit Eastern Market at 5 a.m. the day of the party had the Redford fireman slinging 50-pound sacks of corn and onions over his shoulder for the hungry guests. The onions were boiled in their skins (till tender, again for about 13 minutes).

Immediately upon their removal from the steaming, institutional-sized cauldron, the root ends were sliced off, and tender, juicy, tasty onions were squeezed out by hand. I could have a dinner just on the onions, but I chose to indulge in the other culinary fantasies in order to save my breath from sheer disaster.

Tucked away in the tidy Malinowski kitchen was Bob Thomas, president of the firefighter union lo-

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JOHN STORMEANO

Keith Malinowski of Redford gives each live lobster exactly 13 minutes to boil, its meat cooking to tenderness and its shell turning an orange-red.

First you take  
a lobster . . .Keith and Louise  
Malinowski's  
Lobster Bake Recipes

## TO COOK FRESH LOBSTERS

Use a very large pot and fill with water  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. Use about 1 cup of kosher salt to 5 gallons of water. Bring salted water to a boil and drop live

lobsters into water and when the water returns to a full boil, cook lobster for 13 minutes exactly. Serve with melted butter.

## BOILED ONIONS

Drop whole small cooking onions into boiling water with a little salt in it and boil for 13 minutes or until tender. Remove from water and drain. Cut onion on the root end and squeeze onion out of skin. Best if served warm or hot.

NEW ENGLAND CLAM CHOWDER  
2  $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds butter

3 pounds salt pork, diced into  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch cubes  
7 pounds onions, chopped medium  
10 pounds potatoes diced medium  
2  $\frac{1}{2}$  gallons water  
10 cans clams (51-ounce can)  
10 quarts cream, scalded  
pepper, thyme and cayenne pepper  
to taste  
pork cracklings

Cook salt pork in butter over medium heat until pork is golden brown. Remove cracklings and reserve for garnish. Sauté onions in

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## Love that pizza — from wood-burning oven

Its doors opened just a few weeks ago, but America's Pizza Cafe is having no trouble finding customers. It seems like everyone who loves pizza (and that's everyone, right?) is rushing to try out Mike Ilitch's newest venture, a diner-like gourmet pizza place in Southfield.

And the response is just about as enthusiastic as the staff that serves you: good and excitingly different pizzas, modest prices and a fun atmosphere. The pizzas are definitely terrific — familiar enough to be comfortable, yet different enough to inject a whole new enthusiasm for pizza.

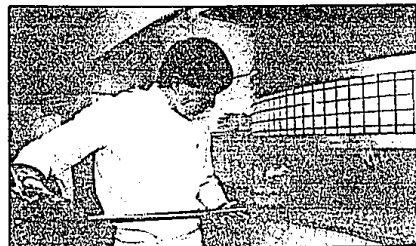
The setting is upbeat too. White-painted brick walls, turquoise vinyl booths, formica-topped tables, copper-trimmed counter, ceiling fans and a wonderful, lifelike sculpture of two waitresses sharing a smoke.

The standard pepperoni et al pizza is all but gone from this menu. Here you can select from a dozen variations including Mexican burrito style with chicken, Italian and cheddar cheeses, as well as mild salsa, pin beans, onions and tomatoes; a teriyaki chicken version with chicken in an orange teriyaki sauce, onions and red and yellow peppers; or Greek style with lamb sausage, grape leaves, red onions, tomatoes, olives, green peppers and, of course, feta cheese.

THE NEW-YORK-style cheese and garlic pizza features a great

combination of Italian cheeses and is very heavy on the garlic. The light, crisp crust and touch of tomato sauce are gentle reminders that this is, indeed, a pizza.

Another wonderful selection is the "Polynesian" pizza featuring pineapple, Canadian bacon, ground cashews and tomato sauce. It has a refreshingly sweet taste. One of the most popular selections is the "traditional bar-b-q chicken" with a sweet sauce, red onion and cilantro.



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Brian Freshwater, vice president of restaurant concepts for Little Caesars, tends the pizza oven at America's Pizza Cafe in Southfield.

All the pizzas are cooked, in full view of the diners, inside a wood-fired oven which brings a little different taste to the food. Each pizza is small, designed for one person. Most customers order at least one pizza per person and then share. It seemed everyone was leaving with a "carryout."

There are six salads to choose from, including an excellent romaine and watercress salad (\$4.75), with apples, onions, walnuts,

gruyere cheese and a sweet parmesan dressing. This was easily shared between the main entree. Other selections include an antipasto or a Caesar salad.

The menu isn't exclusively pizza. There are 12 pasta dishes, some of which are similar to the pizzas offered — like the lemon-garlic pasta or the garden vegetable marinara. The pastas also are moderately priced (\$4.25-\$7.95), though they definitely play second to the pizzas.

You can finish your meal with a dessert, like harvest apple cobbler pie or caramel praline cheesecake. Beverages range from standard soft drinks, California wines, wine coolers and beer to Kaliber, a non-alcoholic Guinness beer, and Perrier. Espresso and cappuccino are also available.

BECAUSE THIS restaurant is taking off like a rocket, allow time for standing in line — especially on weekends. We waited nearly an hour, but the amazingly upbeat staff made the wait as pleasant as possible. We were constantly reassured that we would be seated as quickly as possible — and we were. The instant a table was vacated, it was prepared for the next customers.

Even though the strain of the steady stream of traffic was showing on some faces (there was still a line at 9:45 p.m. on a recent weekend), the staff was exceedingly friendly. They seem to share the ex-



uberance of the place. Or maybe they sense they are onto something big.

Details: America's Pizza Cafe, 24459 Telegraph Road, Southfield, 332-5588. No reservations. Carryout available.  
Hours: Monday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Friday 10:30 a.m. to midnight; Saturday 11:30 a.m. to midnight; Sunday 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Prices: Pizzas and pastas \$4.25-\$7.95, salads \$1.95-\$4.75. MasterCard, Visa.

Value: Terrific. Innovative pizza, modest prices — how could you lose?