

taste buds

chef Larry Janes

Getting fired up over food

O.K., I'll admit it. I'm more than a foodie. The preparation seduces me. The aromas ignite a passion from within. The presentation conjures thoughts of an artist's palette strategically positioned with cherries a ruby red, pea pods a glistening emerald intermingled with an amber-embellished chowder.

Think about this one for a minute: Which has more allure, the first taste or the lingering finish? Is it the explosion of cherry? Is it the quaver that you enjoy when biting a chocolate-covered cherry or is it the overwhelming satisfaction emanating from a sugar rush that just satisfied your sweet tooth?

For some odd reason, I think the anticipation of a food can be even more sensual than the taste itself.

I remember the first time I tasted a truffle. Having done my homework and research, these little black beauties surely must be the epitome of mushrooms. The summit. No wonder they were \$500 per pound. You needed specially trained pigs to sniff them from the ground.

I EVEN WENT out and paid \$12.50 for a stainless-steel truffle slicer so that I could "shave" off tender morsels. At \$31.25 per ounce, I thought they were tough, pungent and, needless to say, highly overrated for the price.

Another one of the chic foods that always sounds better than it tastes is caviar. I can't tell if it's sturgeon, salmon or carp, but eggs are fish eggs. They taste salty and I always seem to get them stuck between my teeth, so it never fails that when I'm enjoying a slice of pie for dessert one becomes diatologed and I get that awful taste of salty fish with my next two bites of pie.

And forget the letters, folks. Yes, I have tasted Beluga, and the only thing that makes caviar go down any easier is the consistent shots of vodka.

On a recent trip to the Big Apple, I was lured to the one and only establishment that can now serve the dreaded Japanese fugu fish. Fugu is the seafood-lovers' version of Russian roulette, and if not prepared properly contains tetrodotoxin, a deadly poison that is said to kill more than 100 Japanese diners a year.

I paid \$50 for about 2 1/2 ounces of razor-thin fugu that deserved a minus two on a scale of zero to 10. It didn't taste like fish. As a matter of fact, it didn't taste like anything. Period. Zip. Nothing. For 50 bucks, all I got was a good chew and, yes, it was chewy. When I complained to a fellow foodie, I was told that fugu loses a lot when it's frozen. I felt like I lost \$50.

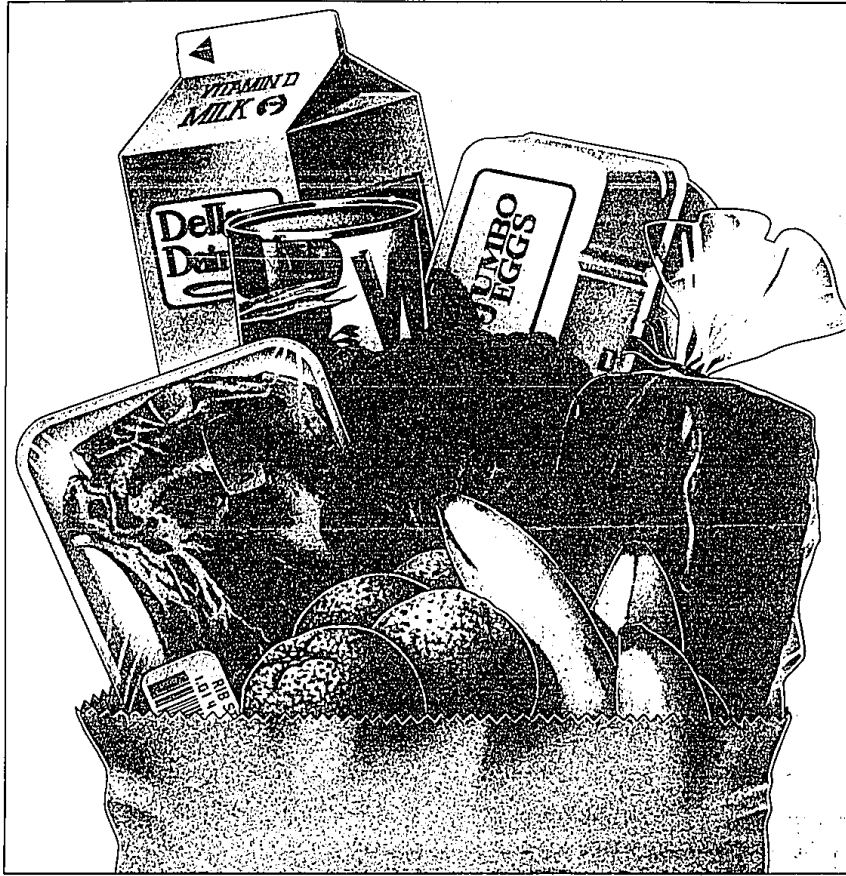
NOT EVERYTHING chic has to be expensive. Take tofu for instance. Coming in at just under \$1.50 per pound, this trendy Asian import makes its way into stir-fries, sandwiches, casseroles and even ice cream.

Honestly now, have you ever stuck your finger into a batch of tofu? Worse yet, have you ever tasted said finger after removing it from the tofu? Not only does it just sit on your tongue, it's bland, tasteless, unimaginative, boring and downright nauseating.

When you stir it into chill in place of meat, you get little lumps of tofu the same color the ceiling was painted in the house you grew up in. It doesn't melt, and God only knows it will never incorporate into a sauce.

But why are these chic foods so chi-chi? My guess is that there will always be folks like me who will be dumb enough to plow down 50 bucks a crack to sample what some culinary guru from the West Coast says is de rigueur.

This is only a smattering of what some folks call trendy foods. Yes, it's my job, and for the sake of my job, I will continue to sample the likes of goose livers, thymus glands and chill-stuffed hot dogs that plump when you cook 'em. But just between you and me, I'll always welcome the sight of a BLT, the aroma of a bowl of Momma's bean soup and a tall, cool, frosty A&W root beer with a scoop of artificially flavored vanilla ice milk floating on top. Bon appetit!



A healthy grocery bag

By Larry Janes
special writer

THE HEALTH FOOD store of yesterday, which seemed to cater to the likes of folks in tie-dyed T-shirts and Earth shoes, is slowly being replaced by the larger, more upscale and much more diversified natural food stores of today.

Whereas before, "health-food" type stores stocked an assortment of vitamins, supplements and occasional packs of tofu (bean curd), the full-line natural food markets now cater

to families who predominantly spend almost 50 percent of their weekly food budget on items like soy milk, organically grown veggies, and plastic cartons brimming with vegetarian tabbouleh, hummus, brown rice dishes and an occasional oat bran muffin.

Today's shopper for these gourmet, natural-food havens can find aisles chock-full of all-natural, fruit-flavored cereals even the James gang kids love, naturally fruit-sweetened cookies and treats, and an assortment of flours ranging from whole wheat to cracked wheat to barley,

not to mention healthy-for-you canned products ranging from soup to nuts.

Speaking of nuts, health food grocers stock one of the most complete assortment of nuts available — raw cashews, pine nuts, walnut-flavored oil and even nut flour.

AND YOU THOUGHT today's health food stores were mainly filled with vitamins and supplements? Look again. Betty's Grocery at 877 S. Hunter in Birmingham has been in existence for more than 14 years. The store's trade has grown from ba-

sic health foods to a full line of canned goods, bakery items, organic produce, organic poultry, herbs, dairy products and even a deli, all specially earmarked for the health-conscious shopper.

Stacey Hessen, store buyer and deli manager, started working for Betty's more than four years ago. At that time, she was some 80 pounds overweight and her diet consisted mainly of pizzas and Cokes. Today, she is a svelte, vivacious young woman who follows a vegetarian re-

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Her cookbooks a way for sharing recipes

Updated version published

By Arlene Funke
special writer

The Redford woman with a big heart is at it again.

Ann Miller has produced her second collection of mouth-watering recipes. She is selling copies to benefit Children's Hospital of Michigan research projects into all forms of childhood cancer.

The book, "Sharing Recipes II," is selling for \$6 per copy. Proceeds from sales of the softcover book will be given to the fund-raising organization Leukemia, Research, Life, Inc.

"I don't look at it as much from the profit standpoint," said Miller, a retired Michigan Bell Telephone Co. operator.

"The more books we can sell, the better. It's good for public relations and a little extra way of raising money. If we can sell some cook-

books, we can save a few kids."

Miller and her husband, James, a tool and die welder with Tek-X in Garden City, are eight-year members of Leukemia, Research, Life, Inc.

The non-profit organization sponsors several fund-raisers annually to support ongoing research projects at Children's Hospital.

"Sharing Recipes II" contains approximately 250 recipes. Its cover is white with royal-blue lettering and graphics. Miller compiled an earlier cookbook in 1985. That edition, with a blue-and-yellow cover, sold 2,200 copies.

"WHY DID I update it?" Miller said. "People would say, 'Are you going to do another one?' A lot of people told me they like the cookbook because it contains people's favorite recipes."

The cookbook features several of Miller's own favorite recipes, including the unusual, molded potato salad that won Miller first prize in the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers contest last year.

"I really like that one because it's different," Miller said of her winning recipe. "Although a lot of people prefer creamy potato salad."

For Miller's new cookbook, her daughter, Betty Fryer of Westland, contributed a recipe for Swiss chick-

en casserole.

Janie Grandinett of Livonia — another active member of Leukemia, Research, Life — chipped in with her recipe for low-cholesterol baked chicken with sweet-and-spicy sauce.

"There are so many good things in here," said Miller, who has tried many of the recipes herself. "A day doesn't go by that I don't pick the book up and look at it."

MILLER HAS successfully solicited recipes from celebrities and politicians for inclusion in the book. President George Bush obliged by sending a recipe for all-American clam chowder. Miller tried it and gives the recipe a thumbs-up.

Columnist Ann Landers sent her recipe for lemon pie. Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent a recipe for her favorite orange and walnut cake.

The Millers don't have a child suffering from leukemia. They are simply among the legions of people who are concerned about finding a treatment or cure for childhood cancers.

The couple has two grown daughters and a grown son, and "six healthy grandchildren," according to Miller.

BUT THE Millers have experi-



Ann Miller and "Sharing Recipes II," the cookbook she compiled as a fund-raising project.

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