

taste buds  
chef Larry  
Janes

## Venison cooking varies

Heralding from a very blue-collar family in Wyandotte, I recall that November always hailed the start of hunting season.

For someone like me who shuns weapons of any kind, hunting season was the one time of year when I joined the men of the Janes gang in attempting a strange bonding ritual. We set off to the woods in the hopes of returning with enough food to fill the Kenmore deep freeze for the winter.

More often than not, we returned with a trunk full of dirty clothes and smelly sleeping bags rather than a deer.

To this day, many of the Janes men still set off, some for weeks at a time, stalking the deer, the bear, the antelope, the moose and whatever else the great north would surrender to the sound of rifles.

Now it's always been known that I was the "weird" one of the family. To this day, when I accompany the great hunters, I would rather sit in a hunting blind and watch the deer approach, photographing them in their natural habitat rather than blowing a hole the size of a melon in their side.

BUT REALITY sinks in fast when I see hundreds of dead deer strapped to car trunks and roofs, making their way back to suburbia and a gaggle of cooks who know only how to fry thin strips of venison tenderloin in a cup of bacon drippings while chewing bread with the other hand.

There is more to cooking venison than one might imagine. For the record, venison connotes the flesh of any antlered animal, not just deer.

Any deer hunter worth his weight in sugarcubes knows that venison should always be aged before eating or freezing. With cold weather fast approaching, you will notice many great hunters hanging their bounty in the garage or shed for a few days before butchering.

Actually, for optimum results, young deer should hang for at least one week, with older, bigger-rack deer hanging for up to three weeks. Temperature should be at least 34-36 degrees to avoid spoilage. If the thought of keeping the car in the driveway for that long a time upsets the household, check out freezer or meat locker rentals.

Venison lends itself best to corning (cooking with other liquids), curing, drying, smoking and sausage making. Because the animal is very active, the meat has a tendency to be tough (muscular), and grinding the meat with small amounts of fat to make venison burger is probably the most widely used form of venison around.

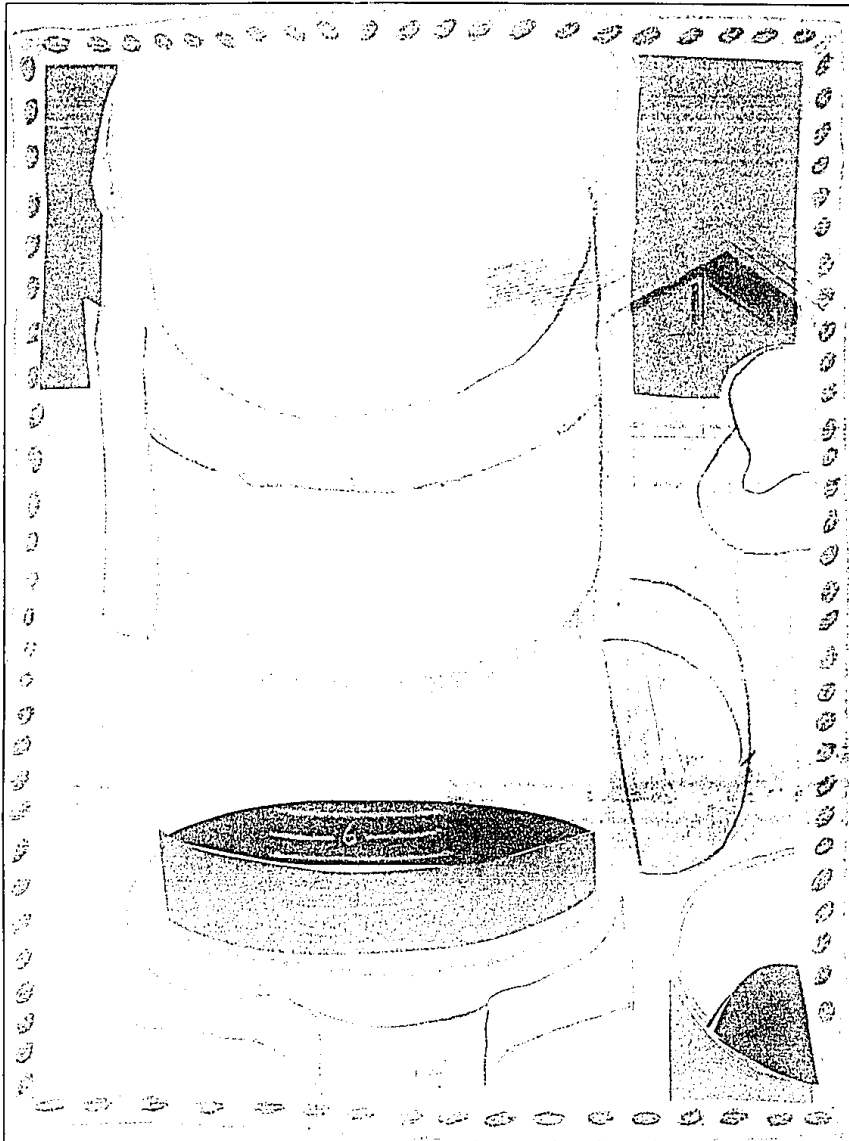
THE TENDERLOINS, rib steaks and roasts, and loin roasts are the most prized and taste remarkably good when cooked in covered dutch ovens, clay pots and casseroles to keep the moisture in. Venison roasts and chops can greatly benefit from the use of marinades. A simple soaking in cheap red wine will produce a stew that is tender, moist, juicy and very flavorful, with the flavor of the wine helping mask a possible "gamey" taste that usually accompanies the meat.

Salt pork makes an excellent larding for venison roasts. Never use deer fat as the flavor and smell will surely soil the final product. A wrapping in bacon strips is also useful while broiling or baking to insure a moistness and good flavor.

I have observed the butchering of many a deer, and while a seasoned pro might enjoy the challenge and benefits of cutting up your own carcass, it's best to leave the butchering to a pro. Jack Prabue, owner of the Porter House butcher shop in Plymouth, says he will process more than 100 deer this season. He cautions hunters from hanging their own deer for aging, mainly because of uncontrolled temperatures that occur, which results in spoiled meat.

See recipes, Page 2

## Seeking a perfect cup of coffee



## What it takes to make it

By Gail Rinachlor  
special writer

IF YOU HAVE BEEN yearning for a better cup of coffee, if the coffee you're drinking is a bit flat or bitter, if you're looking for that perfect cup, have no fear. The probability of finding that perfect cup is not as unlikely as you think.

Luckily, specialty coffee is fashionable. Restaurants are grinding their own coffee beans. Specialty gourmet coffee bean shops are springing up all over the place — in malls, department stores and gift shops. If ever there was a time to create the perfect cup, it's now.

First, you need to buy the right coffee. High-quality specialty coffee is essential.

ALTHOUGH YOU can find specialty or gourmet coffees in grocery stores as well as gourmet food shops, the difference can be as exaggerated as night and day.

You may pay a dollar or two more for coffee bought at a gourmet shop or coffee bean store, but the essence of the brew will bear little resemblance to those made from inferior beans found in most grocery stores, pre-packaged or sold in bulk.

Specialty coffees taste better than the mass-market beans because the specialty coffee shops and gourmet shops buy better beans. The proof is in the cup.

COFFEE TREES are native to Ethiopia and are cultivated throughout the Torrid Zone. These trees produce two types of beans, arabica and robusta.

Specialty coffee shops and gourmet food departments only sell arabica species beans. Among this species are more than 50 varieties, not including the decafs, darker roasts or flavored coffees. Your selection or blend of these varieties ultimately depends on your personal preference.

Coffee beans are grouped or named after their origin.

Latin American varieties such as Colombian, Costa Rican and Brazilian Santos generally have a bright, straightforward taste and a good balance between body flavor and tang.

African beans such as Kenya and Ethiopian are snappy or spicy. Yemsa Mocha or Java Estate, Asian beans, are full-bodied. Pure Hawaiian Kona coffee yields a medium-body cup with rich, subtle, wine-like tones.

ON A recent trip to Gloria Jean's Coffee Bean shop at Fairlane Town Center in Dearborn, I encountered a selection of more than 70 different coffee beans.

A large number of them were flavored coffees, decaffeinated and espresso. Beans for flavors such as Cherry Chocolate, Caramel Nut and Kahula Kona are sprayed with a natural extract at the factory after roasting.

If you like coffee without caffeine,

Please turn to Page 2

Please turn to Page 2

## Of coffee and cake

### PERFECT COFFEE CAKE

Serves 8-10

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup unsalted margarine or butter blend
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

- Topping
- Mix together: 1 cup finely chopped pecans
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg

Cream butter and margarine with 1 1/4 cups of sugar in mixer bowl until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Beat well after each addi-

tion. Fold in sour cream and vanilla. Mix together flour, baking powder and all spices. Fold dry ingredients into base gently with rubber spatula. Butter and flour an 8-inch or 9-inch springform pan or deep-dish cake pan. Spread 1/2 of the batter evenly in pan, sprinkle 1/2 of sugar-nut mixture. Spoon remaining batter into pan, smoothing out surface. Sprinkle

## Change all to the good at Hillside's Ernesto's

Change is nothing new to the Hillside Inn.

Since the day it was converted from a house alongside a gently flowing stream to a cozy little restaurant featuring barbecued dishes, the Hillside has been growing, changing and watching its quiet country setting evolve into another bustling suburb.

So the latest change shouldn't shake the rafters. Or will it? In a rather dramatic move, owner Sam Messina has changed the menu and, heaven forbid, the name of this landmark on the outskirts of conservative Plymouth.

It is now Ernesto's, an Italian Country Inn. With well-respected chef Ernesto DeMichele — who has worked in the metropolitan area for 45 years — guiding efforts in the kitchen, this restaurant is entering



yet another phase of its existence.

ACTUALLY, THE antique-filled restaurant with its warm, homey atmosphere, fireplaces and walls lined with clocks, old photos and other mementos of time gone by lends itself nicely to the "Italian country inn" theme.

The name was chosen carefully, Messina said, to honor DeMichele's talents and reputation, as well as to reassure long-time customers that the basic atmosphere wouldn't change.

Though some updating is in the works, changes to the upstairs dining room, the downstairs "trattoria" and the banquet rooms will be cosmetic, Messina said.

He bought this 80-year-old restaurant 6 1/2 years ago from the original owners, the Stremich family.

THE MENU is now exclusively Italian and the lengthy, varied wine list features a broad, reasonably priced selection of Italian wines.

The pasta dishes we tried were delicious — a fettuccini dish with

Please turn to Page 4



Chef Ernesto DeMichele, whose staff calls him the "maestro," creates a bevy of appealing dishes at Ernesto's in Plymouth.

GUY WARREN/staff photographer