

taste buds
chef Larry Janes



Instant gourmet cooking

Sometimes, there just aren't enough hours in the day.

Between newspaper stories, speaking engagements and taking care of two bustling kids, even I have trouble making sure lunches are packed, school notes are answered and dinner is on the table when my hard-working wife arrives home after a grueling day at school.

I guess I'm lucky that my schedule allows me to work out of my home. Ditto for the fact that my evening dinner always consists of at least one of the recipes that is printed here every week for your enjoyment.

BELIEVE IT or not, there are some days when we all walk in the door right around the same time, and my wife and I throw \$5 each into the pot and send out for pizza — forget the sauteed green beans in a balsamic vinaigrette.

On those nights, canned mushrooms and a sprinkling of green pepper and onion on our favorite double-cheese pizza are all the thoughts of cooking we could muster. You have to realize that my wife's idea of cooking is to throw a Lean Cuisine in the microwave.

There's no doubt that she is the best kindergarten teacher in town, but when the Lord passed out culinary abilities, she must have been standing in line at Wendy's.

SO WHAT DOES the Janes Gang do when the dinner bell rings between Scout meetings and after-school roller-skating parties?

In addition to home-delivered pizza and a six-pack, an occasional Chinese take-out, and turkey franks wrapped in Pillsbury crescent rolls, we usually make it a family affair and share the few minutes we have with each other, in the kitchen.

My wife Diane usually searches the vegetable crisper for lonely strands of green onion and an occasional left-over baked potato that fortunately has yet to show fuzzy spots of old age.

I, IN TURN, get out the old omelet pan and search for tiny, foil-wrapped bits and pieces of margarine or butter that have fallen behind the ketchup and mustard jars.

The kids gingerly remove the carton of eggs, trying desperately not to crack the ones that stick to the inside of the carton.

Even Kibbles the cat gets into the swing of things by reminding us of milk still sitting in the dinosaur cup in the fridge, left over from breakfast.

Granted, it's not chateaubriand and Potatoes Anna but, then again, neither is it a crescent-wrapped hot dog nuked into oblivion.

EGGS USUALLY are reserved for Sunday breakfast in our house, but occasionally it's nice to know a hearty farmer's omelet can be whipped up in no time and still allow us to make ballet or piano lessons.

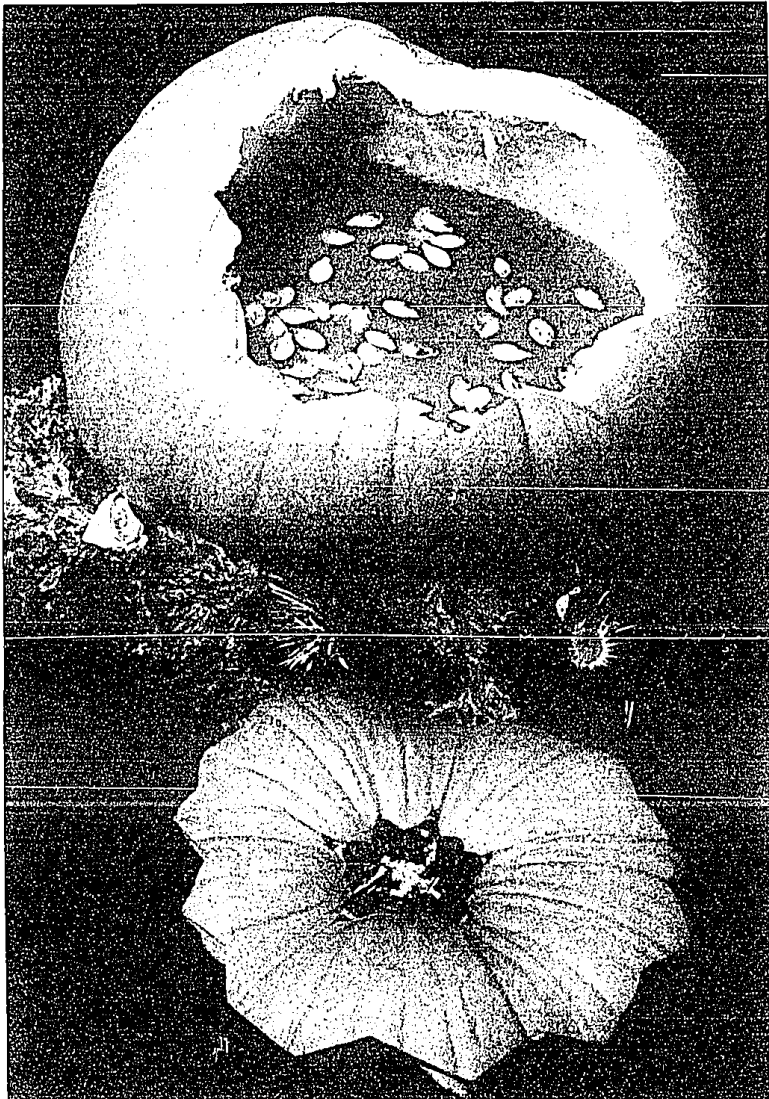
Sound familiar? I still remember fried-egg sandwiches on those forgotten Fridays when we couldn't eat meat, how about you?

Speaking of not eating meat, I remember simple dinners of French toast (folks in Wyandotte used to call it "egg toast"). When Momma wanted to be a real gourmet, she would open a can of chicken broth and bring it to a boil and whisk in a few beaten eggs for an egg drop soup that could bring an emperor to his knees.

WHEN MOMMA felt Italian, she would throw in a couple of handfuls of instant rice while the broth was boiling and a squirt of lemon juice from a plastic bottle made to look like a lemon. She would serve it up in these big bowls that were emblazoned with the Currier and Ives logo that you could get for free by saving your grocery receipts.

Occasionally, take-out dinners can be a boon to harried households, but never underestimate what lurks in the vegetable crispers and doors of the old Fridge.

Giving Thanks



Acorn squash puree soup with curry is served in a hollowed-out pumpkin at a traditional Thanksgiving dinner, with innovative touches created by Chef Matthew Prentice for cooking class he taught at Sebastian's in Troy.

Culinary surprise in store

By Gerl Rinschler
special writer

THANKSGIVING IS JUST not Thanksgiving for some of us unless the very same recipes appear on the menu year after year. Uncle Jim looks forward to pureed rutabaga made with a dash of nutmeg. Cousin Bill insists the cranberry sauce is simple, pureed and strained. And Grandma Norma will only stuff the bird with fluffy, white sandwich bread, butter and sage.

If you ask your friends and neighbors how they prepare Thanksgiving dinner, you will soon come to the conclusion that no two family dinners are alike. Variety and virtuosity are indeed part of the Thanksgiving tradition.

A friend from West Virginia mixes up a flavorful cornbread stuffing in a separate pan and cooks the turkey unstuffed, a common practice throughout the South. Cookbook author Bert Greene once wrote of his favorite turkey dressing, jambalaya. This New Orleans specialty of rice, sausage, diced peppers, herbs, ham and shrimp is one of the most unusual dishes I have ever sampled. Needless to say, this annual feasting day has melted into the pot of the American experience.

Now, if you recall, only some of us expect a repeat performance of the same menu every year. There are a number of us who anticipate a traditional meal but welcome some culinary surprises. One family in particular is that of Matthew Prentice, chef-proprietor of Sebastian's at Somerset Mall in Troy.

"THANKSGIVING IS perhaps my favorite holiday of the year," Prentice announced, as he began a private cooking class for his students in the restaurant kitchen. "It's wonderful because the whole family gets together for a festive meal to celebrate the fall harvest and to thank God for the bounty he's bestowed upon us."

"When I first planned this cooking class, I considered making a traditional turkey stuffed with exotic ingredients such as blue cornbread, but after some consideration, I decided not to because no one would make it for their Thanksgiving dinner."

In order to make the traditional feast appealing as well as interesting, Prentice wrote a traditional menu with a few twists. The menu opened with two appetizers, smoked Green River trout pate served on baguette toasts and tempura shrimps garnished with fall mustard.

Please turn to Page 2

Cookies traveled road to success

By Katlo Maple McBride
special writer

Evie Madison recently returned to the Detroit area to start up Evie Madison, Cuisinier, a company that sells her homemade mandelbread and shortbread cookies to local retailers.

A former gourmet cooking instructor in West Bloomfield, she is back in the kitchen after a successful 16-year career as a manufacturer's representative in Chicago.

"This business just happened," Madison said. "If I'd had to plan this, I never would have had the guts to do it."

Her cookie career unofficially began two years ago, when she started serving her special shortbreads and mandelbreads to buyers who visited her Chicago showroom.

"MY CUSTOMERS would talk about my cookies, and I started getting calls from other reps in the building, asking if they could buy them from me, to serve, too," Madison said. "Pretty soon I started getting calls from Dallas, Atlanta and other major markets where the

buyers traveled. I couldn't believe it."

Her baking expertise takes on many flavors, including plain, chocolate chip and chocolate mandelbread (nut slices) and apricot or raspberry-filled, brown-sugar pecan-chocolate chip and peanut butter-chocolate chip shortbread.

"Mandelbread is a traditional Jewish cookie that a lot of people are baking and selling in other areas," she said. "In this area, many people bake them at home, but I don't know of anyone else doing it commercially."

Evie Madison, Cuisinier cookies are sold for about \$1 a pound in several shops locally, such as Shopping Center Market in West Bloomfield, Strawberry Hills in Farmington Hills, Market Basket in Franklin, Quorton Market in Birmingham and Vic's Produce in Southfield. The cookies also are sold at Marshall Field in Chicago.

MADISON WORKS with her assistant, Sue Heick, to bake and package their wares in the kitchen at the Armenian Congregational Church in Southfield. The company's business



Evie Madison (left) and Susan Heick make mandelbread (nut slices) and shortbread cookies at kitchen of church in Southfield, for Madison's new business Evie Madison, Cuisinier.

manager, Phyllis Convasser, handles all purchasing, bookkeeping and promotions. "I was operating out of my home in Chicago, and I didn't sell to stores because I couldn't handle the business," Madison said. "I was shipping 200-300 pounds of cookies a month. Sales have increased 'tremendously' since starting her full-time

business here in late July. Madison said she attributes the success of her cookies "to taste — people like them because they're good."

Her shortbreads are made with pure butter, sugar, flour and the added ingredients to make each special flavor.

"THEY'RE A conglomerate of recipes I've tried. I started playing with the flavors," Madison said. "For example, I saw apricot-filled shortbread in a catalog and adapted a recipe to make those. Then I tried peanut butter."

Mandelbread, or nut slices, are formed by hand, partially baked in long, skinny loaves and then sliced. Similar to Italian biscotti, the cookies are baked a second time, cut-side down.

Madison adapted her grandmother's recipe to perfect her nut slices, using pecans instead of the traditional almonds.

"Most mandelbread are hard, and mine aren't, which sets them apart," Madison said. "They're firm, and great for dunking."

Please turn to Page 4