

taste buds

chef Larry
Janes

Herbs add character or accent

In most ethnic cuisines, certain herbs are so important to a given dish that it would lack its character without them.

The dish would become something else — and certainly something less.

Often, one herb is so characteristic of a region or country that its fragrance and taste can call to mind an entire cuisine.

Thyme, rosemary and marjoram, the herbs that make up the bases in that neat little pot of "Herbs from Provence" that many gourmet retailers sell for ridiculously steep prices, would be considered the character herbs from the Provence region of France.

Oregano, freshly diced and rubbed into an olive oil-draped leg of lamb, heralds from Greece. While basil, the main staple in pesto and classic tomato sauces, has its passport stamped from Italy.

But it's just not as simple as chopping up a handful of these fresh beauties and tossing them into a dish to make it shine like an August moon. In addition to the so-called, above-named character herbs, sophisticated cooks should also be aware of the accent herbs. Parsley, chives, chervil and dill offer a subtle background to many dishes that are virtually nonexistent to the untrained palate.

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE between the two groups of herbs is, of course, the taste. The character herbs are robust and can easily overpower when sprinkled with a heavy hand. The accent herbs have the property to mellow out and accentuate the taste from within.

Robust herbs can, with one swoosh of the scissor, blow away a delicately flavored fish or poultry. Seemingly, they can add magic to a vegetable while another herb might become lost.

Big deal, you say. You know what you like and like what you use, right? I'm sharing this with you because now is the perfect time to begin a fresh herb garden. With winter passing peacefully into oblivion, clean out the spice cabinet and rid your kitchen of those assorted jars and bottles that have long since passed their prime.

Once a cook has tasted the intense and distinctive flavors of fresh herbs, it seems a culinary crime to go back to using a dried variety.

Last year, the Janes gang garden sprouted an assortment of parsley, a chive plant that has already returned with the early spring weather, we experienced two weeks ago, fresh basil, thyme and, of course, mint. This year, we have already budgeted a large area for herbs that will undoubtedly include the likes of fresh watercress, sorrel, oregano and some sage.

These are all basic herbs which can be bought in seed form at just about any garden shop and, for the uninitiated, can even be bought in little pots right up to growing season from larger and more specialty greenhouses.

Burdine's, the garden mecca for north and east sliders in Rochester, always seems to have an abundance of domestic and exotic herbs in both seed and pot form.

On the west side, Gray's Greenhouses in Plymouth is one of those neat little, virtually unknown spots that has been around for years for the serious gardener but for some odd reason remained unknown to the press.

There's still time to locate one of the many great seed catalogues out there. Some of my favorites include "The Cook's Garden," P.O. Box 65, Londonderry, Vt. 05148; "Shepherd's Seeds," 30 Irene Street, Torrington, Conn. 06790, and Redwood City Seed Co., P.O. Box 361, Redwood City, Calif. 94064.



Eric Berkley (left) and Mark Hyman are co-owners of Get Sauced, a recently opened store with condiments galore, at Trapper's Alley in Detroit's Greektown.

Shop has saucy appeal

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

GETTING SAUCED is, according to a pair of creative suburban entrepreneurs and a culinary arts graduate, an ideal state of being.

Not sauced, as in alcoholic titillation, but sauced as in an array of savory relishes, marinades, dressings and other mouth-watering offerings available at Get Sauced, an inviting shop in Detroit's Trapper's Alley whose collection of sauces and related fare is possibly the largest ever gathered.

Unique enhancements for otherwise plain or bland food is "a developing art," said Eric Berkley, pointing to some 300 decorative condiments on display. "You'd be amazed at the variety of tastes that are available," he said.

Berkley, a Farmington Hills attorney, launched the shop five months ago with partner Mark Hyman of Troy, who owns two additional Trapper's Alley shops, a toy store dubbed Lost and Found and the Children's Book Mark.

Long-time friend Ann Frogner, a 1975 graduate of Schoolcraft College's culinary arts program in Livonia, manages the endeavor, personally taste-testing each item and guaranteeing it meets health and ingredient guidelines she has established.

A STROLL ABOUT Get Sauced is an experience in international cuisine, a journey of taste to far-away places. There is pungent marinade studded with tamarind from Thailand, hot Jamaican Hot Fire and Pickapeppa sauces or Jerk paste for preserving meats, and creamy Almond

Cooking Sauce prepared by an East Indian woman drawing on traditional family cuisine.

Many of the offerings are based on family heritage, old recipes handed down from one generation to the next and translated into commercial offerings by enterprising descendants.

"People have had recipes for years and have decided to spread the wealth," Berkley observed.

Jabar's Complements, a line of unusual vinaigrettes spiced with peaches, raspberries and other fruits for marinating chicken and meat, is a case in point. Drawing on tried and true recipes from the past, two Walled Lake women prepare the marinade and introduce it to gourmands in cooking demonstrations at Get Sauced and elsewhere.

"A tremendous amount of good flavors come from Michigan," Hyman said, adding the store's two top sellers hail from Michigan — Billy Bone's Original BBQ Sauce and Mucky Duck Mustard. Billy Bone's concoction, the current reigning champion sauce in international barbeque competition, is produced by the master barbequer in Sanford. Mucky Duck, a pungent English pub-style mustard of eggs, vinegar and sugar, is prepared by a woman in Franklin Village.

Other Michigan products include Houlihan's Gourmet Applesauce and a version for toddlers, made in Auburn Heights, and low-calorie American Spoon Foods jams and jellies produced in Petoskey.

"TRY THIS. I'VE been trying it on bread for a couple of days now," said Frogner, providing an ample dollop from a sample jar of a new smoky sweet mustard. If the mustard passes Frogner's taste-test muster, it will be included in the shop's

ever-expanding inventory. Frogner and the partners are continuously looking for new items.

Matouk's Hot Calypso Sauce, for example, was recently added after a customer, a commercial airline pilot from the West Coast, extolled the product, describing it as "the best ever." Frogner immediately obtained a sample from Oregon and, agreeing with the pilot's assessment, now stocks it.

J.C.'s Hot Sauce, a delicious salsa prepared in Texas and another recent addition, was discovered by Berkley at a New Year's Eve party. His sister-in-law is currently perfecting a family recipe for a hot fruit sauce, described as "out of this world," and an area restaurateur of Lebanese descent is busy creating garbanzo bean and eggplant relishes. When ready, each will be submitted to Frogner for taste testing.

Other recent additions include select nuts, soups and pastas, including Cinnamon Spice Pecans from Georgia, low-salt Swedish Lentil Soup and a new pasta topping with the tantalizing name of Cowboy Caviar.

HEART SMART products, aimed at the health conscious or others on restricted diets, feature Cajun Power, a garlic sauce free of salt, and other products low in salt and sugar. Preservatives are eschewed in all products, according to Frogner.

Ever tasted Garlic Lover's Herb Sauce by Cook's Classics, a seemingly gentle sauce that packs a subtle wallop of taste sensation? Purchase \$40 in goods from Get Sauced and receive a free jar, an excellent marketing ploy, according to Hyman, because once tasted, Lover's becomes addictive.

Please turn to Page 2

New weekly column focuses on wine

Introducing Eleanor and Ray Heald, wine journalists, who will begin writing a weekly column "Focus on Wine," to appear each Monday in Taste starting April 2.

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

The Healds, who live in Troy, began writing their first regular column about wine in 1982 but their fascination with the grape goes back a few years earlier.

"Our interest in wine came first, when we started making amateur wine at home," Ray Heald said. "We began buying wine to make a comparison. We went to Karl Bailey for many years. Eleanor and I picked a ton of grapes one fall and made wine from it in small batches."

Bailey, who is now deceased, had a vineyard on Adams Road in Bloomfield Hills, which is now managed by different owners.

The Healds began to do freelance writing and in 1978 went to Europe, where they pursued their study of wine.

"We went to all the wine regions," Eleanor Heald said. "When we came home, we showed slides to our

friends and they said, 'You should do something with this skill.' We looked for more positions to place our writing."

SINCE 1979, the Healds have been teaching a class in wine appreciation at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington Hills.

"In 1982, we started our first regular wine column in the Ann Arbor News and did weekly columns for six years," Ray Heald said. "In 1983, we started writing for Practical Winery & Vineyard, a technical publication. Eleanor and I both have master's degrees in chemistry."

Their knowledge of chemistry has been invaluable. "We know how to make the chemical tests, to analyze the grapes we were using to make the wine," Ray said.

The Healds also are wine editors and columnists for the Beverage Journal, published in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. "Our monthly column has appeared for the last four years," Eleanor said. The journal is a publication for wine retailers, wholesalers and restaurateurs.

The couple continues to work as contributing editors for Practical Winery & Vineyard. In addition, the



DAN DEAN/staff photographers

Eleanor and Ray Heald, who both have master's degrees in chemistry, started as amateur winemakers and now write authoritatively about their knowledge of the grape.

Healds are feature writers for the Quarterly Review of Wines and for the bi-monthly Wine News, both consumer publications with national distribution, where their writing appears in every issue.

"OUR FOCUS is on wines of the world," Eleanor said. Readers of the

column can enhance the mealtime experience, the total enjoyment of life, and add a delightful dimension to their lifestyle."

They point out that the column will emphasize wine, as paired with food at mealtime, not wine drinking by itself. "We will very frequently talk about wine and food combinations," Eleanor said.

"Not only do we write about wine but wine-based beverages," she said, and listed these as sherries, ports and cognacs.

Ray said that because they have traveled in the wine areas, they occasionally will do a column on that subject. Their travels have taken them to the major wine areas of France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, California, Oregon, Washington and the eastern United States.

THE HEALDS' wine appreciation classes at OCC are offered in the spring, fall and winter. Because the topic is changed each quarter, people frequently repeat the class.

Ray said, "Another class is coming up in May. The wine classes are always held five consecutive Wednesdays. The next class runs from May 9 through June 6.