

Larry
Janes

Garlic 'in' from East to West

Last month I was on the East Coast and I noticed it there. Last week I was on the West Coast and saw it again but was told that it's been the "in" vegetable for the past six months.

Chicago is going crazy and using it in soups, garnishes, sauces and appetizers. Even here in the metropolitan area, where food trends are running six to nine months behind the coasts, garlic is cropping up as the herb de rigueur.

Even though garlic is experiencing a resurgence, it has been cultivated for at least 5,000 years. Ancient Egyptian writings attest to its importance as a crop as early as 3300 B.C.

And what a crop it was. Bulbs of garlic have been used medicinally, for strength and virility, as a germicide, to ward off vampires; and, lastly, as a food source.

We can credit the poor people of Yunnan, China, with bringing garlic to the culinary forefront. They used the lily relative by mixing it with chopped liver and ate it raw because they had little fuel for cooking.

The Italians became known as garlic lovers, although it is mainly the Calabrians and Sicilians who used the seasoning in so many of their dishes. Ironically, Northern Italians prefer various other spices.

More than three million metric tons of garlic are produced worldwide each year. China, South Korea and Thailand rank as the top three garlic producers, followed by Spain, Egypt and India. The United States ranks seventh with about 100,000 metric tons grown annually, all or most being fresh bulbs from California.

THE U.S. CROP is mainly dehydrated for garlic powder, garlic salt and seasoning salt because these forms are more convenient for the food industry than raw garlic bulbs, which are susceptible to spoilage.

Gaining in popularity (and a big hit in the Janet Gang kitchen) is the processed chopped garlic available packed in oil in small glass jars. This virtually eliminates the peeling, chopping and potential sprouting that always occurs with the fresh variety.

I always keep a few bulbs of the fresh garlic around, and when I see them beginning to sprout, I peel them and place them in a small glass jar filled with oil in the fridge.

The oil is great for stir-frying and the garlic will keep almost forever.

Ah, but what are metropolitan Detroit's best kitchens doing with garlic? A random sampling found baked garlic appearing as an appetizer at R.L.K., tossed with escargot and puff pastry at the Lark and pureed and reduced with top cream as a flavorful sauce for hearty venison and buffalo steaks at MacKinnon's.

Yours truly will never be able to forget the garlic soup which was a staple at the old Allette's on Porter and 24th streets in De-

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Last chance for contest

Only a few days remain to submit entries for Taste's recipe contest. If you have a favorite vegetable dish, why not mail us the recipe?

If you win, you will receive a \$25 gift certificate, to buy something special for your kitchen. Any vegetable, or vegetables, of your choice may be featured in the recipe.

Include your name, address and phone number and mail to: Taste Recipe Contest, Observer & Eccentric, 56351 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Entries must be postmarked by Tuesday, May 8.



DOUG SUSALLA

Ann Gordon of Westland (center); Garlene Gordon of Ketter of Lincoln Park. Ann's granddaughter, got to Livonia (left), Ann's daughter-in-law; and Ann Marie together at Garlene's house to make pirogi the same way it has been made in the family for generations.

3 generations make pirogi

By Larry Janes
special writer

MET THE GORDON girls. Well, really, it's two Gordon mommas and one Ketter momma-to-be, but they all have the same blood and the same panache for food and cooking.

Family matriarch is Ann Baczowski-Gordon, formerly of Lincoln Park but presently residing in the Greenwood Villa Senior Citizens Apartments in Westland. A gentleman like myself would never ask a woman her age, but judging from the platter of pirogi I sampled, I will graciously peg Grandma Gordon's age at "something over 60."

These were not the pirogi made by the hands of a 22-year-old but instead were molded with experience and tales prior to the days of Culinaris and Kitchen-Aid mixers. Speaking of glib kitchen gadgetry, Grandma Gordon was quick to point out, "The fanciest kitchen gadget I own is a good sharp knife." Enough said. Having bought my momma crates of the latest culinary tools known to modern man, it never ceases to amaze me how she still re-

lies on basically her knives, bowls and cookware. Period.

My kitchen looks like the show-room at Foland's. Grandma Gordon's kitchen looks just like a grandmother's kitchen, resplendent with a tea kettle and cutting board and nary an electric can opener or, God forbid, an electric wok.

SO WHO GETS the credit for passing along a heritage of Polish, German and basic Eastern-European recipes and cooking skills? Basically, Grandma Gordon was taught by her momma using the proverbial "pinch of this and dollop of that" expertise. Though not trying to take away due credit, this Grandma of two, and soon-to-be great-grandma, said that mainly she learned by doing things herself.

"Sure, my momma showed me the basics, but I got real hands-on experience when I was first married and had to cook," she said. The first cookbook this grandma owned, and still has, was mainly used for guidance and seldom was a recipe followed verbatim.

That must have been a real hands-on home-ec experience because

Grandma Gordon says that to this day fellow residents at the Greenwood Villa Senior Apartments get a whiff of whatever she is preparing and, "There's always someone coming over to share lunch or dinner." Ever her two sons, Walter of Livonia and Steve of Highland, still enjoy momma's homemade pirogi, kuspata and krushki.

Attempting to get a written recipe from this grandma was about as easy as pulling teeth. "It always turns out different," she said. "Some days you add more milk, some days you add more egg." "You got to feel it" was the final statement before handing over the treasured family pirogi recipe. That's about as real as it gets.

Not to be outdone with her words of wisdom and kitchen skills was another soon-to-be-grandma Gordon, Garlene, who resides in Livonia with husband Walt and son Christopher. Garlene Gordon is a modern momma who works all day as a secretary for the IRS in downtown Detroit, then highlights it home and still has the energy to put dinner on the table. "How do you do it?" I asked.

"I CHEAT EVERY now and then and put together a few things on Sunday afternoon for the week" was her honest reply. We should all be so lucky. If I had a momma who worked all day, our plates would be filled with the likes of microwaved frozen corn, fish sticks and fries.

"What's your favorite dish?" was my next rapid-fire question. "It depends on my feelings" was her answer, with a devilish smile. C'mon, Garlene, tell the truth. What's your favorite? "Going out to dinner to someplace good and casual like the Olive Garden," she replied.

Finally, the truth. Just as I flashed writing the last line, Garlene perked up and said, "But when I need to cook, I love to bake. Anything, as long as it's rich, gooey and full of calories." I mean, could this be your mother or what?

When it comes to the advice department, Garlene says that daughter Ann-Marie makes an occasional plea for help, but for the most part, she thinks her daughter has to learn just like she did, by experience. Husband Walt doesn't enjoy working in

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Food designed for a Toddler Gourmet

By Arlene Funke
special writer

Gourmet applesauce and exotic finger food for pint-sized customers? Elaine Houlihan of Bloomfield Hills has developed a line of upscale food products for toddlers.

"It's aimed at two-income families who have one or two kids," said Houlihan. "It's a special treat kind of thing. It's a gift item for grandparents to buy. Or for parties."

Houlihan employs four people in her Auburn Hills-based company called Houlihan's Culinary Traditions Ltd. Her line of interesting snacks and sauces is sold in specialty grocery stores.

Of the Toddler Gourmet line, only the chunky applesauce currently is available. But more products will be introduced this summer. These will include a tomato sauce sold with a packet of fresh, dried pasta; a snack mix combining cereal with dried Michigan cherries and raisins; and a sweet-and-sour vegetable, such as green beans, which a toddler can eat out of hand.

"If we start children out with a good taste instead of one so bland,

maybe they would enjoy finer foods," Houlihan said.

Mother of five grown children, Houlihan launched her business last year.

THE TODDLER applesauce, which is slightly chunky, is flavored with white and brown sugars and cinnamon. It costs around \$4 for a nine-ounce jar.

Houlihan is a native of upstate New York, where her parents ran a restaurant.

"It was called Houlihan's," she recalled. "Dad was as Irish as could be, but they served Italian food. The cooks were my grandmother, my mother and aunts. They were all Italian cooks."

Houlihan, who has a degree in psychology, worked in corporate sales at Eastman Kodak before starting this venture. Her husband of five years, attorney Jay Brant, encouraged her to capitalize on her love of good food and her sales background. In the fall of 1989, Houlihan's plans began to take shape. While taking daughter Caroline Collins to Michigan State University, Houlihan stopped at a roadside stand and

bought a bushel of Empire apples.

"I came home and started making applesauce," she said. "I wasn't into applesauce. It was pasta. But something seemed to click right."

For several months Houlihan experimented with sweeteners and methods of preparing the applesauce. She wanted a slightly chunky consistency reminiscent of homemade.

HOULIHAN, WHO likes the texture and tartness of the Empire apple, doesn't put her applesauce through a sieve. The sugars and cinnamon are added when the applesauce is almost cooked, then allowed to "rest" and permeate the product for extra flavor.

Although more costly than national-brand applesauce, the Houlihan product has a tight-fitting lid and stays fresh in the refrigerator for more than a week.

Houlihan's packaging dishes up a healthy dollop of nostalgia. Each jar has a sticker with a printed promise of "sweet smells and tastes of childhood memories."

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JOE RUDEMAN/PHOTOGRAPHY

Chunky applesauce is the first product available in the Toddler Gourmet line from Elaine Houlihan of Bloomfield Hills.