

taste buds

chef Larry
JanetLegumes
instead
of meat

Entire cookbooks have been written about the satisfying and economical legume.

Most of us are complacent. We buy a can of the prepared product and simply heat and serve.

For the uninitiated, a legume is simply a humble lentil, pea or bean.

For the James Gang, our weekly menus are usually comprised of a cooked pinto or refried bean, with an occasional kidney bean dish or split pea thrown in for variance.

ALTHOUGH LEGUMES can be eaten fresh, sprouted or dried, the dried are by far the most abundant and economical.

Bulk food shops carry a wide assortment of dried peas, split peas, kidney beans and lentils, with prices in the lower dollar-per-pound range.

Natural food stores are also a great source for dried legumes, and occasionally carry fresh varieties.

BUT SHORT of opening a can or soaking them for hours on end, can legumes really be used as a so-called "meat alternative" and still taste great? You bet.

In the spring and summer, many dried beans can be sprouted to make interesting and tasty additions to a light salad.

Dried adzuki or dried kidney beans will sprout if first soaked in water and then placed between damp paper towels.

The process will take between three and five days, but fresh bean sprouts lightly rinsed, then splashed with a little oil and vinegar and tossed with fresh tomatoes, sliced mushrooms and hearts, make just the right accompaniment for a summery-light lunch or dinner entrée.

Most gourmet shops and natural food stores even carry sprouting jars, which are no more than glass mason jars with a screw-screen top, in addition to a wide assortment of dried legumes for sprouting.

SPEAKING of natural food stores, the health- and diet-conscious have long known the value of the legume as an everyday wholesome food, especially when paired with grains and a dairy product.

Legumes are chock-full of valuable nutrients and are very low in fat and cholesterol.

This surprises me somewhat, especially when I can buy refried beans in a can, and upon reading the label, notice they are mixed with lard.

Here I am trying to offer a healthy alternative to my family, only to be shot down by insidious additives.

Fortunately, however, I have noticed many of the larger grocery stores now stocking canned refried beans made without lard.

If you are lucky enough to locate fresh legumes, look for unshelled or shelled beans that are plump with a tender skin. Anything dried, shriveled, spotted, over-yellow or with flabby pods should be passed by.

NOW, IF you're not interested in sprouting and the Eastern Market farmers aren't offering fresh alternatives, how can the everyday household cook prepare legumes so that the family yells "Enore!"

The traditional method for preparing legumes has you rinsing and draining the dried product under cold running water, then placing it in a large bowl with tough cold water to allow the legumes to expand at least 2 1/2 times.

This means using about 3 cups of water to each cup of dried legume. Soak for at least 8 hours or overnight, but whatever you do, don't throw away the soaking water. Use it for cooking the legumes.

If you are pressed for time, legumes also can be quick-cooked by simply combining 1 cup of rinsed legumes with 3 cups of water in a pot, bringing to a boil over medium heat, boiling for 2-3 minutes, removing from heat, covering and soaking for 1 hour.



DOUG SUSALIA

Mom's not the only cook in the household. Peter Sugar first met Marva, now Mrs. Sugar, in a gourmet cooking class. They live in Bloomfield Hills with their three daughters, Liza, 6, and twins Carly and Danya, 1. Here, Peter keeps the home fires burning as he grills salmon steaks.

Dad's cooking rivals Mom's

See recipes, Page 2B.

By Noreen Flack
staff writer

BACK WHEN I was a kid, Mom did all the cooking. But once in a while Dad would get in that gourmet mood, head for the kitchen with spatula in hand and wrap Mom's pink "We love you, Mom" apron around his waist.

By mid-recipe, Dad was digging through drawers, shuffling through spices, mixing through mixes and yelling at us kids for help.

Although Dad's cooking sessions were supposed to double as quiet time for Mom, our biggest job as assistant cooks was to relay messages from living room to kitchen.

"Go ask Mom where she puts the garlic," Dad would say.

Before we could get to the living room, Mom would yell back, "In the pantry, second cupboard, third shelf, under 'O' for garlic."

She would then roll her eyes, remind us this was her quiet time and

utter something like, "I wish he would get out of my kitchen."

Eventually, we all wished Dad would get out of "Mom's kitchen," but he was determined to be the chef of the house, and as his children, we thought it was our duty to allow him to believe it was so.

UNLIKE MY DAD, many fathers aren't strangers to the kitchen environment. As a matter of fact, there are some local modern-day dads who could compete with the best restaurants in town.

Peter Sugar of Bloomfield Township gives his wife, Marva, credit as the chef of the house, but she said he runs a competitive race in the kitchen.

On his specialty list, Marva raves about his veal dishes and classic chef salad.

"I have never had a good chef salad in a restaurant," Peter said. So I decided to make one of my own.

With his own choice spices and dressing, Peter fills his chef salad with lots of romaine lettuce, spin-

ach, fresh cucumbers, olive oil, lemon juice and garlic.

AND HIS veal. Oh, his veal!

First, lightly breaded and pan-fried in olive oil, the veal is sautéed in shallots, ground pepper, basil and other spices. And he adds lots of morel mushrooms and red bell peppers.

Topping off the dish, the veal is served separately with asparagus and squash. Why go out?

Peter, a private investment adviser, cooks about two or three times a week. He is the father of three daughters: Liza, 6, and the twins, Carly and Danya, 1.

Born in Budapest, Peter was raised on good Hungarian food, including paprikash and caraway seed soup, cooked by both parents.

IRONICALLY, HE and Marva met in a gourmet cooking class in 1975. He attended the course after his divorce in order to learn more about cooking and foods.

"I never thought I'd meet anyone in my cooking class," Marva said.

"It's wonderful to have a husband who cooks and likes it. It's refreshing. It's like going out to eat sometimes."

"We drive each other crazy," Peter said. "We're under each other's feet all the time. But as long as I stay out of her way and clean up, it's OK."

"When I cook, I really think of it as a way of contributing, a way of participating and sharing in what has to be done at home."

Marva's expertise lies in Chinese cooking and Peter raves about her Chinese barbecue ribs.

"I swear, they are the best ribs I have ever eaten."

THE BEST meal starts in the market, Peter said. You should decide on your meal depending on the quality of the meats and vegetables presented at the market that day.

By fiddling in the kitchen one day, he made a palate-perking pasta dish out of leftovers in the refrigerator. The dish was mainly a mixture of fresh linguine, Italian sausage, jalapenos and tomato

sauce. "It really came out good," he said. "The next night, the baby sitter had some and when we got home she said, 'What was that? That was delicious.'"

THERE ARE TWO problems men must overcome about the kitchen, Peter said.

Some men believe they're the only ones who can cook and be chefs, while for others it's a "macho thing" and they fear a stigma will be attached to them if they enjoy working in the kitchen.

"As strange as it may be, some men still think the kitchen is the woman's place."

Between Peter and Marva's gourmet meals, the two remain slim and fit. Peter ignores the hype on health-out eating and low-cal food substitutes.

"I don't mind low-calorie foods as long as they don't sacrifice the flavor," Peter said. "The balance comes with reduction. A half-pound of meat will feed the three of us because we eat a balanced meal."

It's got panache along with comfort

Located as it is in Birmingham's island fortress, the 555 Building between Woodward and Hunter avenues, Panache could easily be a forbidding, supercilious restaurant. Diners might expect haute pretensions to go along with haute cuisine.

They would be wrong. Panache, though on the expensive side and richly decorated, is an especially friendly, comfortable restaurant in an exclusive spot in Birmingham.

People have fun at Panache. On a recent weeknight, Panache was packed for dinner — with customers from throughout the Detroit area, a couple of couples tete-a-teteing, yuppies winding down from a tough day and family groups that looked like regulars.

Happy chatter predominated. The menu is non-threatening, allowing diners to concentrate on relaxing with their friends while the chef prepares a satisfying, above-average meal.

Panache, under the same ownership as Maverick's further south on Woodward and the numerous Charley's taverns/restaurants, is pleasant rather than adventurous dining. Seafood dominates the selections, with a few exciting options mixed in with several standard entrees.

A SEAFOOD STRUDEL (\$18.50) is one of these interesting variations, featuring salmon, shrimp, scallops, crabmeat, gruyere cheese and arti-



choke hearts wrapped in a pastry. Though good and competently prepared, it lacked a bit of an edge.

Often, ordering a seafood platter is a gamble. You are likely to get warmed-up leftovers as freshly prepared entrees. But we ventured ahead here in an effort to try a little of several intriguing entrees.

We weren't disappointed. The outstanding entree delivered was the Shrimp Orly. The shrimp itself was lightly breaded, deep fried and served with a tangy strawberry sauce. Equally good were the Maryland crabcakes, loaded with crab and nicely seasoned. The others — scallops cooked in sherry, sautéed shrimp, grilled tuna and frog legs — were good.

Salads were solid, though the dressing on the spinach salad was almost syrupy sweet. The potatoes Anna, scalloped potatoes poached in chicken broth and sprinkled with Parmesan cheese, were delicious. The wine list is neither exceptional nor exceptionally priced, but the house wines are varied and of good quality.

From a lengthy list of seafood-dominated appetizers, we tried something different — peanut chicken. The skewered chicken was grilled with onions, topped by a fantastic, warm peanut sauce and accompanied by breaded, fried apples. Excellent.

Almost any diner would find a satisfying meal at Panache. Its traditional, somewhat formal atmosphere manages to be warm and accommodating rather than cold and pretentious.

Details: Panache, 555 S. Woodward, south of Maple, Birmingham. 642-9400.

Hours: Dinner only during the summer, 5 p.m. to midnight Tuesday-Saturday. Lunches will return in the fall with updated menu.

Prices: \$14.95-\$23, including bread, salad, vegetable. Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Diner's Club, Discover, Carte Blanche.

Value: Very good.



Bob Sikorski, owner/general manager, shows one of the house specialties, charbroiled Atlantic swordfish served over bed of linguini and red pepper puree, at Panache restaurant in Birmingham.

STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer