

taste buds

chef Larry Janes



Achieving sandwich perfection

You kind of begin to wonder about your state of mental health when, all of a sudden, you begin to question the existence of a grilled cheese sandwich.

Not just any grilled cheese sandwich. Think about this one for a second. I'm talking the ultimate grilled cheese sandwich.

I'm talking about the sandwich that used two of those inch-and-half-thick slices of homemade seven-grain bread that was made two hours earlier. Realizing that not everyone has the wherewithal to make homemade bread just for a grilled cheese, you would search out an obscure little old Italian or Jewish breadmaker who had just the perfect recipe for a hearty and crusty baguette.

If you plan on getting that obsessed over the bread, this will probably mean a trip to the market for some unsalted butter. But, then again, merely opting to open a new whipped-margarine tub just so you won't have to dip into a crumb-scattered mixture of margarine would be well worth this sandwich.

TRYING TO suppress the urge to be a "foodie," I would insist to myself that the grilled cheese not be bastardized with trendy sundried tomato slices or gossamer-thin rings of Vidalia onions. No way, Jose. Just the best grilled cheese in town.

You will know there is a far greater power in the universe when, expecting to open the refrigerator door and find a half-dried wedge of Velveta, you instead notice a little more than three-quarters of a pound of some imported French Froppin cheese that was purchased for the family Christmas open house and somehow got misplaced hiding behind that half-crushed Velveta box. Even more surprising, is the fact that the Froppin was so well wrapped there still was not a spot of green fuzzies anywhere to be found.

As you bend over to yank on that great drawer sitting ominously under the oven door — you know, the one with enough crumbs split within to make a cracker crust — you say that this grilled cheese will be worth the effort to venture to the cellar and locate that wondrous cast iron behemoth that is the only skillet you had that wasn't purchased from Meijer's enmeshed with some test-tube produced non-stick coating. Only a heavyweight cast iron can perform the task of toasting the outside bread slices to a light, spotted mahogany white, at the same time, allowing the cheese between to become "racletish."

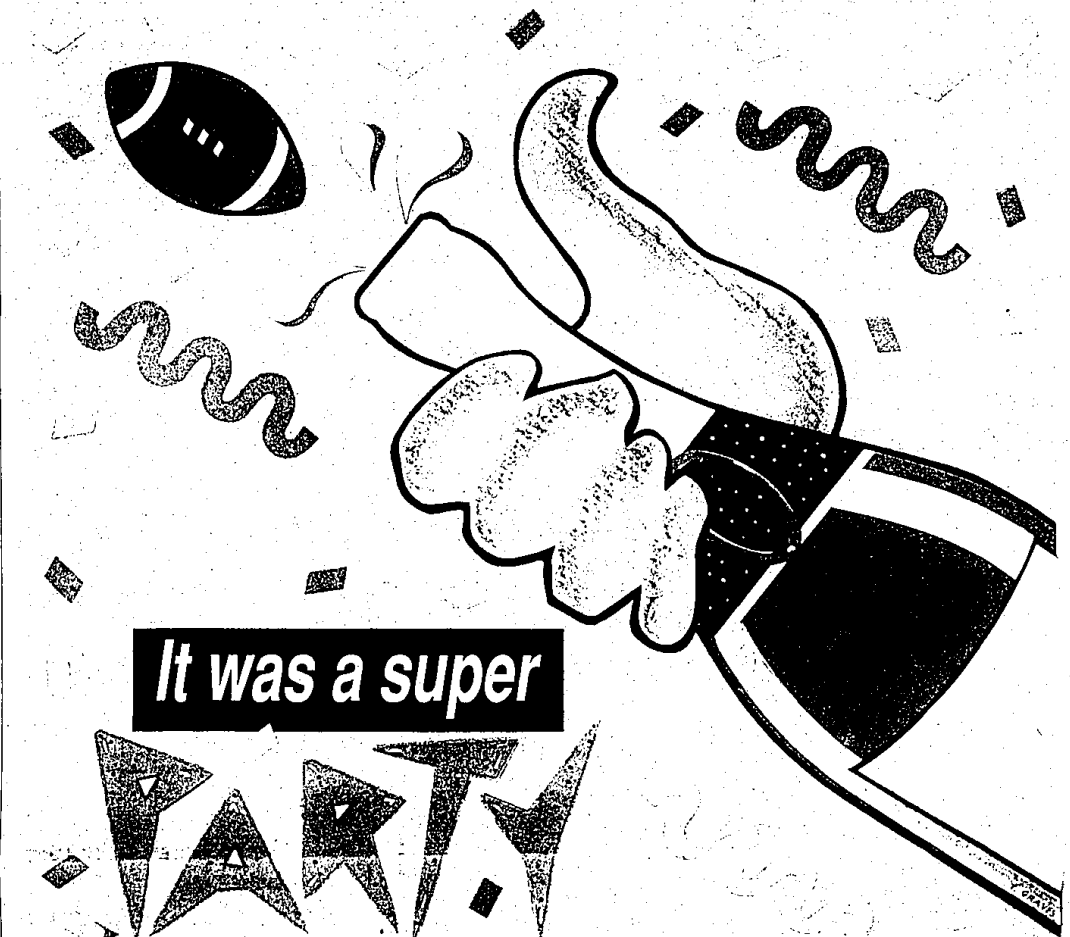
The slices of bread will stizzle, if just for a moment. Make sure the fat is not allowed to darken beyond an amber hue as it spreads over the bottom of the skillet.

I will search the junk drawer, narrowly missing a poke of a stray thumbtack while searching for a cheese slicer that will produce millimeter-thick accuracy while slicing the cheese. The cheese will be positioned, almost as if by an artist, making sure that the picture is perfect within the realms of the crusty frame.

I WILL RELY on my raw talent and gut feeling, knowing just when to flip one perfectly prepared side onto the other. No, the crusts will not be removed.

The ultimate grilled cheese will be sliced diagonally and placed on a simple white plate, with a little luck, and adorned by either a fat kosher dill from the deli next to the bakery or, if all else fails, a spear from the Aunt Jane's jar.

The only question left to answer is, Will I serve the ultimate grilled cheese with a bowl of Campbell's or the ultimate homemade tomato soup, or not?



It was a super

PARTY

By Larry Janes
special writer

JUST THE MENTION of the phrase, "Let's throw a party" can send shock waves of anxiety through the hearts of many. Let's see, there's the caterer, or worse, planning the menu, the refreshments, the seating, the invitations, the major cleanup before, the massive cleanup after.

It's enough to make folks think twice about having a dozen or so friends over for any day, let alone Super Bowl Sunday.

"What a pessimistic attitude," said Rick Bannister of Troy, who, along with his wife Connie and

their two children, Ricky Jr. and Lucy, hosted a dozen friends, neighbors and their children Sunday when Super Bowl XXV kicked off.

The Bannisters claim that putting together a Super Bowl party really only took about 30 minutes of "OK, let's sit down and plan this baby out" advance thinking.

ONE OF THE reasons the Bannisters threw this party, in all honesty, is that they do carry with them a few years' experience. A large family room, coupled with a big-screen television set — not to mention a finished basement with another TV and VCR that can double as a movie theater for the kids

— has made their home the perfect location for a super party.

Connie and the kids spent an hour or so at the family's Macintosh computer designing and formulating the invitations. Rick was in charge of the refreshments and prepared a roaster full of his famous "Mushy Meathalls" that are comfortable on a plate or tucked within the realms of a submarine-sandwich bun. The remainder of the food was supplied by the guests, each getting advance notice to tote a munchie, hot appetizer, salad or dessert.

The Bannisters are experts when it comes to delegating jobs and culinary assignments. Ricky Jr. and Lucy were responsible for

getting the basement in shape and for choosing the movies, popping the popcorn and making sure the two coolers were full of snow to keep the refreshments cold.

When queried, Rick claimed he had no problem being in charge of getting the family room in order, along with keeping assorted bowls of munchies filled, for the guests. Professing to have more ability at the office rather than in the kitchen, Connie claims her hardest job on Super Sunday was supervising the kitchen and pointing out to their guests where the platters, bowls and plates were so, "They too could take an active interest in putting out the halftime spread."

Rick and Connie believe it was

their main job, as hosts, to make sure guests had plenty of piping hot coffee and hot cocoa, in addition to alternative soft drinks — especially after the fourth quarter whistle blew, so their guests could have a safe trip home. Both made a point of saying they had red ribbons tied to their rear-view mirrors and do not advocate driving while intoxicated and would never allow a guest to get behind the wheel drunk.

BUT MEATHALLS, munchies and a big-screen TV do not a Super Bowl party make. When questioned as to how they kept from

Please turn to Page 2

Pritikin urges: Get the fat out

By Anne R. Lohmann
special writer

Polished and tan, Robert Pritikin looks very much like a living advertisement for the program his father Nathan began more than 20 years ago. Though most people associate the name Pritikin with weight loss, in fact it is a lifestyle plan.

Diet, exercise and stress management are all part of a program which goes by the credo "Live Your Life in Your Prime."

After years of concentrating on research to support their clinical findings, the Pritikin people are reaching out to the community at large via the "Eat Healthy! Live Hearty!" program. Events include a free evening seminar with Pritikin, which was held last week at the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham, the Pritikin Culinary Classic, a chef's competition (not open to the general public) Monday, Feb. 4, at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, and free, educational handouts in local food stores beginning the first two weeks in February.

"The point of this program" is to let people know that they can eat well without compromising taste or lifestyle," says Pritikin, who is di-

rector of the Pritikin Longevity Center.

CITING NUMEROUS studies, Pritikin points to dietary fat as the culprit which leads to the major causes of death in the United States: heart disease, cancer and diabetes. People in countries like China eat a 10 percent fat diet and consequently have a

much lower incidence of these life-threatening diseases.

The Pritikin Program advocates a diet of 10 per cent calories from fat. Getting the fat out of what we eat is the bottom line, according to Pritikin, whose plan is said to reduce average blood cholesterol by 23 percent in three weeks.

This is no small feat for Ameri-

cans whose diet straddles the 39 to 40 percent range of calories derived from fat. When one considers that food which derives 30 percent of its calories from fat can be labeled low-fat, this is not surprising. And although Americans appear to have become more health-conscious in recent years, Pritikin maintains that things haven't changed all that much.

In 1978, one study revealed that Americans ate a diet made up of 40 percent fat. In 1988, despite an increased interest in nutrition, fat in the American diet was reduced by only three percent.

People deceive themselves, Pritikin explains. They may eat more vegetables but they stir fry them in oil. They add a bit of butter before broiling their fish, or add oily dressings to large salads. He agrees that they are making better food choices in some respects but that ultimately the preparation of foods is critical to reducing fat consumption.

THIS IS WHY the ingredient restrictions for the Culinary Classic, the chef's competition, are largely based on fat, not calorie content.

Please turn to Page 2

