

Monday, February 11, 1991 O&E

★ 18

taste buds

chef Larry Janes



It's cold and he's crabby

It must be this cold weather that brings out the crababes in me. Being the eternal optimist, thank heaven, I don't get crabby too often. But when I do, watch out.

Having just spent two weeks doing some incredible travel, I will never understand how airlines get away with passing off that tray garbage labeled as food. I took a charter flight to Las Vegas and was tossed a tray containing an entree, vegetable and starch measuring no more than three-by-five inches.

It contained something that remotely resembled chicken, some rice that tasted like overdone instant and some pole beans cooked beyond oblivion. Couple that with a salad of questionable age, a roll that doubled as a hockey puck, and the only remotely tasty item in the box — a two-pack of Popen's Danish Shortbread Cookies — even McDonald's sounded good on the way home.

So you think this only happens on charter flights, eh? The above description makes dinner on United Airlines to New York City sound like a banquet. The only word of advice when flying domestic, either pack your own (and be prepared for airport security to crush your Oreos), or do as I will do from now on, order a specialty kosher or vegetarian meal when booking your flights.

ANOTHER OF life's little idiosyncrasies is the meaning-to-do-well servers who insist on filling my glass to the brim, sometimes after one sip from the wine glass. Even my reminders, they all must have gone to that Bialfran school that says you must drink and eat it all. Things got so out of hand at a trendy Bay Area eatery the other day that I literally picked the bottle from the bucket and set it next to me, out of any server's reach. Read my lips folks: I'll pour my own wine, whenever I want.

I would love to get my hands on the person who invented that seemingly-innocent-looking raspberry container that make it look like you are getting somewhat near your mummy's worth. Instead, you open it to find that the sides slant in on a 45-degree angle and what looked like two cups of raspberries has shrunk to nothing more than half a cup.

This entire column could be spent on television commercials. The one that most readily comes to mind is of the floor-cleaning women who can make a dirty kitchen floor "shine like new." First off, I can't just dump mop my kitchen floor and expect it to be even remotely clean. The way I cook, this job turns out to be one of those down-on-your-hands-and-knees sessions I always dread.

Can you really damp mop a floor and expect it to be clean and shiny? Am I the only person who has to scrape off crud with a butter knife while washing my kitchen floor?

I do the grocery shopping for the James Gang. Someday, I hope to get called for "The Price is Right." I will never be able to understand how or why the price of soap powder can fluctuate. One week, I can get a 40-pound box of All for \$8.99 and two weeks later it goes for \$12.49. Does Saddam Hussein exert control over the United States laundry market?

I have come to realize that I have about as much control over the food an airline serves me as I do the price of soap powder. One thing that always makes me feel better is a batch of double chocolate cookies and an oversized mug of hot chocolate, especially in the throes of winter.

With Love: Desserts and Wine

By Gori Rinschler
special writer

DOES ANYONE KNOW who St. Valentine was? No one seems to know for sure. A number of legends describe the patron of lovers. Author Edna Barth explains in "Hearts, Cupids and Red Roses" that early church records list a number of martyrs with the name St. Valentine, and they all shared the same feast day, Feb. 14, during the third century.

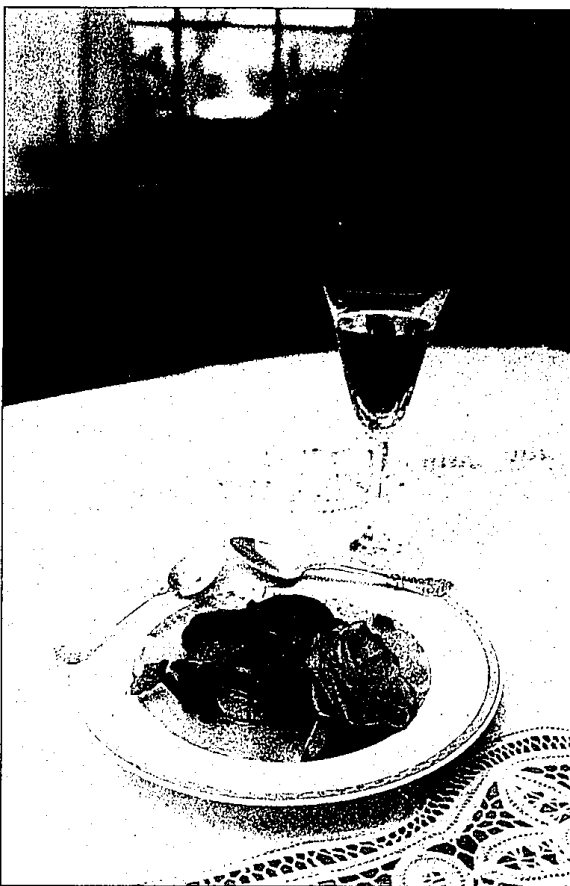
In spite of its obscure origins, the celebration of love has survived through the centuries. What better way to celebrate the holiday than with hearts, the symbol of love: chocolate cheesecake hearts, pastry hearts filled with custard and fresh fruits, genoise layer-cake hearts layered with buttercream, custard cream and strawberries; or frozen chocolate ice cream hearts filled with lingonberry sauce and topped with bittersweet chocolate.

A Valentine dessert party is an easy way to entertain because all the desserts can be made ahead or purchased from a number of talented local chefs or bakers. Complement the desserts by adding four or five fine dessert wines, to create a majestic dessert, wine-tasting party.

If you have never attempted a tasting party before, there are some things you need to know. Decide on the number of guests, then select a few sumptuous recipes and a few appropriate dessert wines. Not sure where to begin? To help out, we have consulted experts in the field of fine food and wine.

AFTER ESTABLISHING the guest list, develop the menu. Edwin Greenwald of Elwin's To Go in Royal Oak and David Auer of Baking by the Auer's in Southfield returned our challenge with three fabulous heart-shaped delights. For a party of 10, the experts agreed five desserts is a workable number to generously accommodate the group.

Greenwald suggested the menu have at least one chocolate dessert. He decided to prepare Espresso Way Tu Your Heart, individual chocolate cheesecakes served with a passion fruit sauce and a pas-



DOUGLAS SUSALLA

try heart filled with custard and topped with honeydew, cantaloupe and watermelon balls.

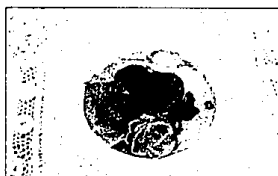
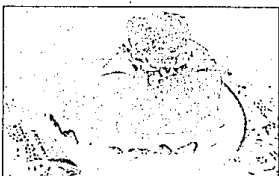
One of Auer's most spectacular recipes is for a Bagatelle Torie. This French genoise cake is layered with pastry cream, buttercream and fresh strawberries covered with a layer of pink-tinted marmalade and topped with a hand-shaped fondant rose, at our request.

To round out the menu, we added an apple-cranberry crisp and a 10-inch chocolate ice cream heart, filled with lingonberry sauce and topped

with melted bittersweet chocolate.

Five desserts for 10 guests may seem extravagant but is essential for a dessert-tasting party when dinner is not being served. One guideline to keep in mind is that the desserts should be distinctly different from each other — a few very light and one or two of them very rich. For a larger party with 20 guests, five or six courses are certainly ample, just double the recipe.

Please turn to Page 2



Chef Gary Danko flips simmering onions for onion-cranberry compote.



JIM JAGDHU/David photograph

Chef is in the know

Gary Danko knows food. Gary Danko knows wine. Many chefs know food but not many know wine. Gary Danko knows wine because for the last 10 years he has been the chef manager for The Restaurant at Chateau Souverain Winery in Sonoma County, Calif.

During his tenure at Chateau Souverain, the Restaurant received a four-star rating from the Wine Spectator magazine, and Chef Danko was honored as one of the Top 10 New Chefs of 1989 by Food and Wine magazine.

Danko recently demonstrated his skills of matching wine and food, at Detroit's London Chop House, where he participated in the Great Chefs program "First and foremost," Danko said, "freshness is the hallmark of my cuisine."

Beginning with a coupe of Maison Deutz California Brut Cuvee, Danko explained that the Deutz had a French taste because the limestone chalk soils at Deutz are very much like the soils of Champagne, France. "Salty, fried, spicy and Thai foods go best with sparkling wine," Danko suggested. "The bubbles lift the food and refresh the palate. I prefer this wine when it is served very cold."

WITH THE 1989 Beringer Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc, Danko prepared Pan Steamed Fresh and Smoked Salmon with Fennel, Leeks and Spinach. Pinwheels of fresh and smoked salmon were quickly sautéed to leave a center of delicate pink flesh. "Salmon is a medium fatty fish," Danko said. "It matches well with dry, high acid wines like sauvignon blanc. The wine's acidity



focus on wine

Eleanor and Ray Heald

cuts through the fatty character of the fish just like lemon."

Grilled Marinated Quail was presented with Polenta Croûtons, Cranberry Onion Compote and three vinegars (1984, 83, and 86) of Beringer Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon. The small game birds matched with the cabernets because the cranberries tied the dish to the wine. The tannin in the cabernets heightened the fruit character of the quail and acted as the tie that binds.

The same three wines accompanied the third course of Lamb Medallions, Tarragon Lamb Essence, and Celery Root-Garlic Puree. A completely different phenomenon carried off this combination. The puree of celery root, with its earthy flavors, played against the natural herbal qualities of the cabernets, highlighting a completely different wine personality.

"Serve the best wines early in the meal," Danko advises, "before the palate tires or dessert arrives. I serve a 'savor' course following the

Please turn to Page 2