

## taste buds

chef Larry Janes

## Classic sauces dying out

In this modern age of weight-watching and health consciousness, with fads coming and going so fast they make your head spin, velvety sauces are becoming a thing of the past in the kitchen.

Is it obscene to dress a fish with a dollop of orange glaze? My fresh broccoli shivers at the thought of a squeeze of fresh lemon where a glossy egg-enriched hollandaise used to envelope it. The next thing you know, Campbell's will start advocating the use of its Cream of Mushroom Soup as a soup instead of a sauce.

In some of the trendier restaurants around town, you can just about kiss the classic sauces goodbye. Fortunately, there are still a few of the old bastions (like Benne's) who can still do justice to a burlesque. It might be healthier for me to enjoy an enoki mushroom puree with my filet, but a wild mushroom cream reduction could send shivers down this spine.

Making a great sauce at home always turns into a labor of love. A simple brown gravy, delicately laddled over a mound of hand-mashed potatoes, can make even a plate of fish sticks look good. Al dente pasta shimmers under candlelight, covered with a fresh basil and butter sauce. Even ribs can take on a whole new meaning when slathered with a hip-tingling baste.

**OLD TIMERS** use a myriad of kitchen tips when making great sauces. The tip is only as good as the recipe it's making, but if you find yourself with lumps, curdling and separating, you might want to remember a few of these suggestions:

- The reason mamma's gravy is so good with nary a lump is that when she goes to thicken it with a flour and cornstarch 50/50 dissolved in some milk, she always strains the lumps out before she whisks the thickening in. (She uses a small, inexpensive tea strainer).

- Emulsified butter sauces (hollandaise and bernaise) sometimes separate, no matter how careful you have been. If this happens, try removing the pan from the heat and beating in a tablespoon or two of ice-cold water. Better yet, place the icy water in a bowl, add just a little of the separated sauce and beat until it emulsifies again. Then beat the remaining sauce in a steady stream.

- When making a gravy or sauce, a "skin" may develop. If you want to keep the gravy or sauce for an extended period, do not heat the skin. Instead, remove with a slotted spoon. To help keep the skin from forming, use a stick of butter or margarine and lightly rub the top of the sauce with the end of the stick, allowing a gossamer-thin layer of fat to prevent skimming.

- Tomato-based sauces freeze well. Herbs don't. The freezing of herbs in sauces will intensify and could possibly make the sauce bitter.

If you are looking for a natural addition to your home cooking library and want to learn more about sauces, check out "The Complete Book of Sauces" by Alice Y. Williams, 1990, MacMillan Publishing, \$19.95. This tome is home for more than 300 great sauces, especially the classics, not to mention some great recipes for mole (a spicy Mexican sauce), salsa, dressings and bastes.

A simple brown gravy, delicately laddled over a mound of hand-mashed potatoes, can make even a plate of fish sticks look good.



Waffle irons include pizzelle maker, which bakes thin, delicate pizzelles (left); classic waffle, for homestyle waffle rounds; and Belgian waffle, with extra-deep pockets (tablecloth courtesy of Williams-Sonoma, Laurel Park Place, Livonia).

By Larry Janes  
special writer

**C**RISP AND CRUNCHY on the outside, tender and delicate on the inside.

Drizzled with real maple syrup or slathered with butter. Studded with blueberries or drenched in strawberry sauce. There's little doubt that waffles will always have the "preferred favorite" status among breakfast and brunch items.

Unfortunately for the history buff, there is little information regarding the how and when of a waffle's birth.

**WAFFLES, LIKE** their cousins the pancakes, consist of a thin mixture called a pour batter — the amount of liquid and dry ingredients are about equal and are wet enough to be pourable.

Most pour batters are classified as quick breads because they use a leavening other than yeast. However, I have included a recipe for waffle batter using yeast that, in my opinion, makes for an outstanding addition.

Basic ingredients for making homemade waffles include flour, baking powder or soda, salt and occasionally sugar, combined with liquids consisting of milk, oil or melted butter and eggs.

Frequently, the same batter can be used for either pancakes or waffles, the difference being in how the batter is cooked.

I prefer waffles over pancakes, which are soft and pliable and get far too soggy when bombarded with accompaniments.

Waffles are like ridged potato

# WAFFLES

They stack up as breakfast or brunch favorite

chips. They coddle the syrup into tiny pools. Cooked properly, they let forth a distinctive crunch when cut with the side of a fork and chewed.

**SOME FASCINATING** utensils have been designed to produce classic waffles. The iron in which waffles are baked — giving them a distinctive gridlike pattern — may be round, square or rectangular.

The most popular waffle irons are electric, while others are designed for use on the stovetop.

Modern technology has developed non-stick coatings that are far superior to their earlier counterparts, when you needed almost a quarter cup of oil and a paintbrush to make sure the waffles would not stick and create havoc.

The more popular non-stick models on the market require no advanced seasoning.

A simple spray of a non-stick coating material such as Pam or Marola No-Stick is all that is required to have them virtually popping out of the waffle by themselves.

There are still traditional waffles that do not use a non-stick surface, for the hard-core waffle curmudgeon.

These should be seasoned prior to use, with a ritual of grease, heat and cool, repeated a minimum of three times before using.

**A PERSONAL** favorite of the James Gang is the classic Belgian waffle.

These waffles were the hit of the 1964 World's Fair in New York, and they are thick, with deeper pockets than the traditional waffle.

Classified as more of a dessert waffle, they are usually piled high with strawberries and whipped cream but are equally as delicious with ice cream and fruit.

Since we, in the United States, have our classic waffles and the Belgians have their own version, it didn't take the Scandinavians long to develop their own type of waffle using four interlocking hearts forming one waffle.

Even the Italians have created their own version, dubbed a pizzelle, that produces a flatter, more cookie-like version of the regular waffle.

**HERE ARE A FEW** tips for making waffles.

The pan or appliance should be preheated to the proper temperature before adding the batter.

Electric waffles will signal proper temperatures with a light. Non-electric waffles should be heated so that a droplet of water will jump when it hits the surface of the hot pan.

**COOK WAFFLES** until steam is no longer given off from the sides of the waffle. Waffles are best when served immediately after cooking, for best texture and flavor.

For optimum results, plates should be warmed as well as any syrup, butter or sauce accompaniment. Never stack waffles or they will lose their crispness and become soggy.

Extra waffles can be frozen, well wrapped, and then toasted, but they will never have the same crispy flavor as when freshly made.

For best results when using a traditional soda-leavened batter, allow the batter to sit for up to one hour after mixing.

This technique relaxes the batter and makes it arier, resulting in a more tender product. Buttermilk, buckwheat and sourdough waffles will develop greater character if allowed to stand for the same amount of time.

FROM HER new book "All New Hints from Heloise" (Putnam Publishing, 1989, \$9.95), this household authority says that waffle iron grids can accumulate burned-on grease.

To clean metal grids, place an ammonia-soaked paper towel or napkin between them, and leave it overnight. Then brush with steel wool.

If you have non-stick grids, follow manufacturer's instructions so the surface is not damaged.

The author goes on to say that new or recently cleaned grids can stick and for best results should be greased well with an unsalted fat and then preheated thoroughly before using.

**IF YOU ARE** considering buying a waffle (what a great Father's Day gift idea), non-electric varieties start at around \$12-\$15.

Electric models start at \$30.95 and creep upward, with the priciest having interchangeable grids and cooking surfaces for all types of waffles, pancakes and grilled sandwiches.

A personal recommendation calls for considering a Black Angus waffle. I received one for a wedding present 18 years ago and it's still going strong.

Best to begin with a basic waffle and then, as the need arises, consider buying a Belgian waffle and/or pizzelle.

See recipes, Page 28



John DiCecco, executive chef at the Mayflower Hotel, shows dishes including Star-Spangled Chicken Salad.

## A historical place to dine



The feast involved photographing paintings in Plymouth Hall in Massachusetts, and then having the photos blown up, retouched and fitted into covers along the dining room walls. The room itself is patterned after one room in the governor's mansion in Williamsburg, Va. The result is a museum like atmosphere, where scenes of the pilgrims' first years in Massachusetts surround guests.

Its historic theme even the phone number — 453-1620 — marks a significant date: isn't surprising, given the nature of the city of Plymouth and the Lorenz family's longstanding role in the community. Lorenz believes, history never goes out of style, and he has proven that.

But atmosphere, or ambience, is only one element in dining out. What about the food? Not surprisingly, the Mayflower menu follows a traditional course here too: steak, chicken, fish and, then having the photos blown up, retouched and fitted into covers along the dining room walls. The room itself is patterned after one room in the governor's mansion in Williamsburg, Va. The result is a museum like atmosphere, where scenes of the pilgrims' first years in Massachusetts surround guests.

**STEAK AND SCROD** are the restaurant's specialties, and this month they are offering a combination of both for \$9.95. Although the scrod, almondeine is a specialty, it was our least favorite entree. It was dry, listless, boring, and a tad overcooked. The same could be said for the steak, which was cooked beyond the degree ordered. A chicken piccata entree, with mushrooms and artichokes added to the cream sauce, was pretty good

and the best prepared of the four entrees we tried. Also, a steak, and lobster special of the evening looked mouthwateringly fantastic, only to be overcooked.

A seafood appetizer gave us a taste of the scrumptious corn rolled in bread crumbs that were tasty as an appetizer but seemed too bland to take on as an entree, as many apparently do. The shrimp and scallops in the appetizer were much tastier, cooked more appropriately than our main entrees. Accompaniments, a baked potato, rice or fries, are about average, with the baked potato the best selection.

The all-you-can-eat dinner salads are good, especially with the house-made creamy garlic dressing. Desserts are terrific, most notably the lemon meringue pie and the rice pudding, both served in hearty portions. Next time we may start with dessert.

The service is friendly — and familiar. Several waitresses have worked there for years, as many as 25 years.

**Details:** The Mayflower Hotel, 527 W. Ann Arbor Trail, Plymouth 481-1620.

**Dining Room Hours:** Breakfast 6:30-10:30 a.m., Dinner Friday-Saturday, 5:30-10 p.m., Lunch and dinner also are available in the adjacent Steakhouse.

**Prices:** Dinners \$8.95-\$14.95. Lunch for large parties (four or more) \$4.50-\$7.95. All major credit cards.

Value: A "must see" dining room with acceptable food.

Rating: \*\*

### RATING GUIDE

- Average (lots of places with similar quality)
- • Good
- • • Very good
- • • • Excellent
- • • • • Consistently superb — a rare honor