

taste buds

chef Larry Janes

Gazpacho: the pot that cools

The last place I want to be on a hot, sultry summer's eve is slaving over a hot stove in the kitchen. If you feel the same, have you given any thought to a large, cooling pot of gazpacho for dinner?

For the uninitiated, gazpacho is a one-pot dinner, filled with a mélange of the produce store's best offerings, topped off with a chilly tomato base, olive oil and a pinch of herbs and spices. To me, a chilled pot of gazpacho is like a sprinkler to a 4-year-old or a lawn chair on Belle Isle to a senior citizen.

Gazpacho is easily prepared and can be as basic as a chopped cucumber, a bunch of green onions and a seeded and chopped tomato. Burly diners can opt for the addition of some cooked beans or legumes. Culinarians can include micro-diced bits of purple onion and a hefty splash of wine. Once touted as a vegetarian's delight, this so-called soup can chill the sweaty brow of anyone within a nose shot of some fresh chopped cilantro and a sprinkling of crushed coriander seeds.

The difference between a good gazpacho and a great one lies in its base. Betty Crocker cooks are happy with a large can of tomato juice. Health nuts can the basic juice and reach for a can of V-8. Yours truly suggests a cool blend of a splash of cheap dry wine and an equal amount of imported olive oil and the juice of a fresh lemon. Better yet would be a jar of Momma's famed stewed tomatoes, sent for a quick whirl in the blender.

PURISTS MIGHT choose to strain the broth and then slowly heat it, with the requisite herbs and spices, only to chill once again. My thoughts on that: "Why make more dishes to wash!" Gazpacho is a peasant meal, usually made during the dog days of summer. If President and Mrs. Bush decide to dine at Chateau Janes, this procedure might be in order, but for the time being, the sweat continues to drip, and I'm opting for the coolest way out.

Trendoids, who are always on the cutting edge of culinary hedonism, might forego the red tomato base entirely by choosing a white base made from chicken broth and yogurt. This type of gazpacho is what Wolfgang Puck serves up at Spago's and charges around \$7 for a bowl. Again, my philosophy is that since this one-dish dinner usually means a trip to the produce market anyway, fresh tomatoes are of no big consequence.

Vegetables and/or legumes that find their way from the Cuisinart to the pot can be anything from mushrooms to jalapeno peppers. In addition to the almost mandatory cucumbers, tomato and onion, my first choices would also include a red or green pepper, with the first being preferential, some mushrooms, celery (including the tops), possibly some pea pods, carrots and water chestnuts. Allow your soul and your wallet to be your guide.

Lastly, a great gazpacho will bring with it the aroma and flavor of a vegetable garden immediately after a rainstorm. Yes, a shot of Tabasco is always welcome, in addition to a hefty hand with the salt and fresh ground pepper. Dill weed, cilantro, fresh chopped basil and oregano, not to forget coriander, celery seed and a shake of lemon-pepper, will only improve the olfactory senses.

If it's too hot to cool, chill out, with some homemade gazpacho.

See Recipes, Page 3B.

The difference between a good gazpacho and a great one lies in its base.

Lemons AND Limes

IN THE

Summertime

By Gari Rinalcher special writer

ALTHOUGH THE best lemons are available from December to March, it's not until the sizzling days of summer that they are in the greatest demand. Besides a cool dip in the pool, there's nothing as refreshing as a glass of ice cold lemonade, or a zesty bowl of Greek lemon soup (Avgolemono) or a frosty Italian lemon ice cup. You could say that at times the word lemon is synonymous with abtith: cooling; and thirst-quenching. Just how long has America been cooking with lemons? Well, that's not easy to say. In early American cookbooks, there are a number of recipes for lemon pudding and lemon sponge pie prior to the Civil War. In "American Cookery," written in 1796, author Amelia Simmons author describes a lemon cream made with "the juice of four large lemons, half a pint of water, a pound of double refined sugar, seven beaten egg whites and the yolk of one, beaten very well." Lemons and oranges are called for frequently in Simmons' recipes. Although it's said that citrus fruits were available during the 1790s in limited quantities, obviously they were readily available to Simmons in Connecticut.

THE EXACT origin of the lemon is unknown. A citrus fruit whose cultivation goes back more than 2,500 years, it is believed to have originated in the Indus Valley of Northern India.

This tender, subtropical evergreen tree was brought into St. Augustine, Fla., by the Spanish in 1565 and later to Southern California in 1769. Today most lemons are grown in California and Arizona, with a smaller crop in Florida. American lemons are available all year round, including those which we must still import from Chile, Spain and Italy. Commercially, the quality of lemons is judged by the color, clearness and texture of the skin, not by the size of the fruit, according to Jack Murdoch author of "Buying Produce: The Green Grocer's Guide to Selecting and Storing Fresh Fruit and Vegetables" (Hearst Paperbacks, 1986).

He suggests looking for citrus fruits which have the thinnest skin to yield the highest juice content. Select citrus fruits which are firm, that feel heavy for their size and are free of blemishes. Lemons usually are more expensive in the summer and less expensive in the winter. Limes, which are less expensive in the summer, can be used as a substitute in most recipes.

Limes are also available all year long but reach their peak season in July and August. Although similar in flavor to lemons, they have a slightly higher acid content. Since limes are about half the size of a lemon, you may need nearly twice as many when using them interchangeably in a recipe. In buying limes, look for those which are the darkest green. A yellowish lime is generally not as fresh or as juicy.

DO YOU YEARN to duplicate a Key Lime Pie a la Key

West, Fla.? Key limes, which are more aromatic and more potent than the standard Persian varieties, seldom appear in Michigan fruit markets but frozen or bottled Key lime juice can be found in gourmet food shops.

When extracting juice from lemons or limes, allow them to first reach room temperature. Roll them on a counter top with the palm of your hand to extract the most juice.

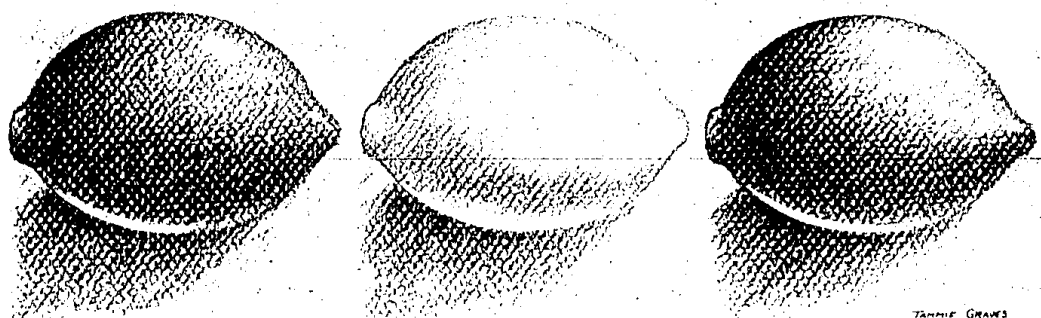
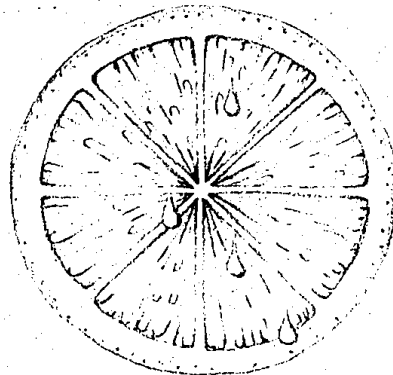
Lemons and limes will last three to four days at room temperature and up to one month when stored in the refrigerator. If a recipe calls for the zest of a citrus fruit, strips can easily be removed using a potato peeler.

Lemon zest curls make an attractive garnish on a plate along with lemon leaves (available at any florist shop). If a recipe calls for grated zest, it's most easily removed with a small kitchen tool known as a zester. A zester removes very fine strips of zest, leaving the bitter rind or white pith behind.

A second helpful kitchen tool is a stripper, which not only removes long continuous strips of zest from the fruit but also creates artistic scallop design on the outside of the fruits when the lemons of limes are sliced.

A French wooden cone or corrugated wooden cone is helpful when hollowing out lemons and lime shells to be used as individual serving cups or as a garnish. These are also available in specialized kitchen shops or in department stores.

See recipes, Page 2B.



TAMMIE GRAMES

Vineyards shop is a deli and a whole lot more

By Janice Brunson special writer

Dine on the premises, inside or out-of-doors.
Buy take-out and eat at home.
Or dine at home but at a catered affair.
Select country home-style fare or French gourmet.

At Vineyards Taste of Seasons in Farmington Hills — a diner, deli, wine shop and catering service rolled into one — the choices are endless.

About the only thing not available is a parking spot during daily noon and early evening rush hours. Then, the place is normally packed with lines of customers wending through the honey premises, which are capped by a ceiling of hanging baskets.

Availability of choice at Vineyards Taste is the result of a recent marriage in business between two former competitors. The principles involved describe the unusual partnership as a union of strength and resources.

In February, Grace Crowl, a certified chef who for three years owned a catering service on Northwestern Highway called Taste of Seasons, moved the operation across the road to Virginia's, a fine wine shop and deli with seating for some 100 that Ron Asmar has owned and operated since 1985.



Ron Asmar and Grace Crowl, partners in Vineyards Taste of Seasons, are shown with carrot cake, (left), petite pastries and Bavarian cream torte.

SHARON LAMUEUX staff photographer

from his office in Novi — helps out wherever needed. Maggie, who has always worked alongside her husband, continues to assist in countless ways.

"THE DIET Seafood Salad is my favorite," said Steven Stone who eats at Vineyards Taste at least twice weekly. He works at Friedman Realty next door. Also high on Stone's list of favorites: "The chicken dishes are really good, love the pastries, and they do something special with the rice pudding."

Stone's partner, Nathan Green was content to say he has "no favorites. Everything is good."

Vivian Stoll drinks "cappuccino a lot. And this is excellent," she said, polishing off a cup of the brew with friend Bonnie Plogers. The pair dropped in on their way to Kennick and Hashar's hair salon next door.

Ernie Malara, hired three weeks ago to manage the virgin bar, grinned at the compliment to his cappuccino. A former maitre d' at Ristorante Di Modesta in Southfield, he joined the staff at Vineyards Taste three weeks ago because "they have the potential to grow."

Vineyards Taste is open 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday-Thursday and until 9:30 p.m. Friday and 10 p.m. Saturday. Sunday hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

See Recipes, Page 2B.

"JUST YESTERDAY, I was telling Grace, 'What did I ever do without you?' How did either of us survive without each other?" said Asmar, pointing to a multitude of customers during a recent noon rush.

"Bonnie and I are a real good team," Crowl observed, simultaneously thumbing through carefully catalogued recipes, as she helped a couple who were interested in a catered affair.

The arrangement allows Crowl time to do what she does best — prepare edible works of art including marinated chicken salad with dried Michigan cherries that taste of spring, an array of country French pastries, and ethnic wonders like pasties from a genuine recipe once used by upstate miners.

"Everything except the rye bread is prepared fresh from scratch, like salads, twice a day," she said.

Asmar tends to daily operations, stocking a wide variety of wines and liquors and introducing new services such as the virgin drink bar, an instant success that features non-alcoholic beverages.

Crowl's husband James and Ron's wife Maggie are the "Jack and Jill of all trades." Jim — who is jokingly referred to as the shop's staff physician when not practicing medicine