

taste buds

chef Larry Janes

Collards a delicious bargain

All too often we get stuck in a culinary rut. The opportunity to experience new and ethnically different foods like kohlrabi, collards and bok choy can prove to be tasty and add adventure to a basic summer culinary regime.

I have walked past tables heaped with collards at the Eastern Market for years, never even contemplating how to cook them or trying to guess what they taste like. Last week, I succumbed. First off, I was absolutely shocked at the amount I received for a single dollar. "Don't worry, they'll cook down and you'll wish you'd made more" was the remark I heard coming from behind the heaped pile of greens.

Most commonly associated with "soul food" in the United States, collard greens arrived with the slaves and have been raised almost exclusively in the South ever since. There is really only one traditional way to cook them: boiled until very soft with a piece of salt pork or smoked ham hock. The assertively earthy, fleshy leaves are substantial enough to replace meat and, when coupled with some black-eyed peas and some cornbread, the meal as a whole is an inspired and nutritious blend of coarse and smooth, strong and bland, granular and chewy.

Collards, like most greens, need very thorough washing. Dunk the leaves in a sink full of tepid water and swish around. Repeat as many times as necessary.

SINCE YOURS truly walked away with two heaping bags of greens, the first night we prepared the greens traditionally cooked for two hours with the complementary ham hock. They looked a little like cooked spinach. Believe me when I say that spinach never tasted so good.

The second night, however, was the true test. With the invitation sent out to Momma to come for fried chicken, I just knew that a cast-iron pan of cornbread might ease the criticisms when a platter of collards boiled in broth for about 20 minutes, lending a chewy almost fried-cabbage taste, were presented.

Momma almost spit out her lemonade. "What is this?" was her only reply. Dad kept quiet, served himself up the minimal amount required to pass the taste test, then handed Momma the steaming bowl of collards.

"Remember all that cooked spinach you made me eat?" I said with a "so-there" smirk. "You'll like this" was my final assertion. Guess what? She liked it! Not as much as Dad (who took three helpings and said it reminded him of fried cabbage), but she said she liked it, nonetheless. That itself is a coup.

The way I see it, collards have to come out of the closet and get off that "soul food" train. Stereotyping something that should only be paired with ham hocks and broth really isn't doing this recession-priced vegetable justice. Since I initially cooked collards, I've since made a cold collard soup, chopped up some leftover collards and mixed them with cooked meat and cheese in a classic collard calzone and intimidated a few taste buds when friends from Ann Arbor came over (who are known for trying anything once) and sautéed some collards with some hot peppers and a curry sauce.

By the way, if you are interested in trying them, after washing, stack the leaves, then strip the leaves from the stems, discarding the stems. Cut the leaves into strips and voila! Trust me, you won't be disappointed.



By Phyllis Kregor Stillman special writer

DURING THE summer, especially on days when the heat shimmers in the air, appetites can dip and tempers soar. Nothing tastes as good as something cold — especially ice cream.

Homemade ice cream is a special, old-fashioned treat that some of you have probably never experienced. The texture is grainier and the consistency is mushier, but the taste is from another time. And the number of flavors is as limitless as your imagination.

If you think about making homemade ice cream at all, though, you probably think of tedious time spent first preparing the mix, then hand cranking a messy, dripping, ice cream freezer.

Although that experience is actually kind of nice, in a nostalgic sort of way, making ice cream today doesn't have to be nearly as much bother.

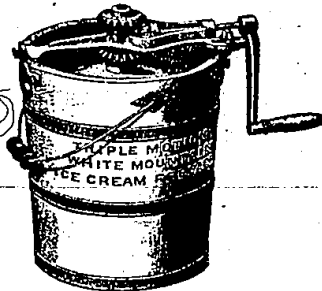
MAKING THE ice cream base can be as easy as stirring together milk, cream, sugar and flavoring. Even cooked bases are no more difficult than making pudding.

As for the freezing, you have to go out of your way to find a hand-cranked model — most ice cream freezers now are equipped with an electric motor that does the cranking for you. There are some types that don't even require ice. You freeze the unit in your freezer, pour in an ice cream mixture, then turn the dasher a couple turns every few minutes.

Back in the days when I was growing up on the farm, vanilla was the flavor of choice. My dad loved it, especially topped with maple syrup he and my mother cooked down from the sap of maple trees in our woods.

Today, anything goes. Chocolate is, of course, a favorite. All sorts of flavors can be created from a standard recipe for vanilla ice cream. You can use some other extract besides vanilla — lemon, almond, brandy, rum, peppermint. You can add chopped nuts, coconut,

Savoring a taste from another time is easier than you think



raisins, crushed cookies or candy. You can mash or finely chop fruit, mix with some additional sugar and pour into the base just before freezing.

Here are some tips on how to make homemade ice cream:

• Always make sure the mixture is thoroughly chilled before you start to freeze the ice cream. If not, some of the potency of the ice will go to chilling the mixture instead of freezing it.

• Don't fill the freezer more than ¾ full of ice cream base. The mixture needs room to expand as it freezes.

• If you use a freezer that requires ice, use crushed ice or small cubes for best results. You will need quite a bit — for a four-quart freezer, about 10-12 pounds.

• The ice must be mixed with salt so that it will melt quicker. The best freezing comes from the ice as it melts. Table salt can be used, but rock salt or special salt (available in most supermarkets in the same section as table salt) will work better.

• Follow the directions that come with your freezer for the ratio of ice to salt. My four-quart freezer recommends two inches of ice, then ¼ cup salt, layered until the ice level is at the top of the freezer.

• When the cranking becomes difficult or the motor shuts itself off, the ice cream is ready to finish freezing or "ripen." Remove the cranking unit, being careful not to get any of the brine (ice water and salt) into the ice cream, and pull out the dasher.

After the proper tasting procedures have been executed, put the lid back on, putting a cork in the hole where the dasher was. Then lift the ice cream freezer so that the brine drains out the drain hole in the side. Pack more ice in around the container and over the top of the freezer, then cover the whole thing with a blanket and put in a cool place for about three hours.

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Sauvignon blanc goes great with food

Jackie Cakebread, owner of Cakebread Cellars in Napa Valley, is so taken by the charm of sauvignon blanc that he has made it the winery's specialty.

"Sauvignon blanc has been kicked around by the wine press," he explains. "Early in the production of varietal sauvignon blanc, wine writers referred to it as the poor man's chardonnay. This comment immediately imposed second-class citizenship on these wines."

"Sauvignon blanc is much more versatile with food than chardonnay because it is never over-oaked and the wine remains lean, clean and fresh. It accompanies fish and refreshes the palate."

Cakebread's wife, Dolores, has created exciting dishes to complement sauvignon blanc. Through this effort, the Cakebreads have discovered the ageability of sauvignon blanc and how it matures.

BRUCE CAKEBREAD, the winemaker for his parents' winery, uses the following as descriptors for Cakebread Sauvignon Blanc: citrusy, lemony, floral, spicy and herbaceous. "Young wines have a grapefruit assertiveness with hay and melon accents," he contends. "As the wine ages, the fresh, crisp, fruitiness complexes to yield a golden color with toasty, smoky aromas and flavors."

According to the Cakebreads, there are rules of thumb that help when designing recipes to accompany sauvignon blanc:

- Avoid using cream. Substitute yogurt. Sauvignon blanc has good acidity, but cream covers the wine's richness.
- Delicate use of tarragon accents shrimp flavors when served with sauvignon blanc.

focus on wine

Eleanor and Ray Heald



- Substitute wine or lemon juice for vinegar, especially in salad dressings.
- Shallots pick up any herbaceous quality in the wine.
- Fresh cracked pepper accents the wine's spiciness.
- Cilantro, used judiciously, emphasizes the lightness of a young wine and its lavender flower makes a colorful plate accent.
- Smoked chicken or turkey will

enhance a smoky character in the wine.

A tasting of Cakebread Sauvignon Blanc with specially designed cuisine illustrates the versatility and ageability of this varietal.

The 1990 Cakebread Cellars Sauvignon Blanc, served with an appetizer of Spinach Balls with Mustard Sauvignon Blanc Sauce, is a classic harmony for a young sauvignon blanc.

"The wine has a liveliness due to good acidity and balanced fruit," Dolores Cakebread says. "It isn't overpowered by the mustard, and the spinach enhances an herbal quality in the young wine. One year of bottle age adds a complexity to sauvignon blanc that I describe as toasty."

This is well illustrated when a mature sauvignon blanc is served with Seafod Terrine with Roasted Bell Pepper Sauce. The wine maintains good acidity and keeps its varietal characteristics without being overly herbaceous. The Seafod Terrine is kept light by the use of only fresh white fish, scallops and prawns, with a minimum of butter. The tangy bell pepper sauce not only makes a great accompaniment for the wine, but it also brightens up the presentation of the white terrine.

TO ENHANCE the delicate smoky character of a sauvignon blanc, Dolores designed Tarragon with Smoked Chicken Salad.

Cakebread Sauvignon Blanc develops a Graves style with age," comments Bruce Cakebread. "It ages in approximately 20 percent new French oak, 40 percent one-year-old and 40 percent two-year-old barrels to prevent a dominating wood character. This barrel regime serves the same function as spices do in cooking."

"Americans are eating wisely and taking care of their health," Dolores Cakebread maintains. "Our recipes are designed light and right."

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Wines of the Week

1990 Cakebread Cellars Sauvignon Blanc (\$17) is a complex mélange of grapefruit, melon and pineapple aromas. Flavors mirror the aromas in a clean, crisp, yet elegant way with expressive fruit and hints of fresh figs. This handsome rendition is tailored to harmonize with food. The following Cakebread Cellars wines are also available in this market and represent stylish winegrowing:

1989 Chardonnay (\$25); 1988 Chardonnay Reserve (\$34), and the 1988 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$17) which ranks among the top 100 percent varietal cabernet sauvignons from the Napa Valley.



Dolores Cakebread prepares to sample her recipe of Seafod Terrine with Roasted Bell Pepper Sauce.

Photo by RAY HEALD