

## taste buds

chef Larry Janes



## Easy to use, Dutch oven is versatile

For hundreds of years, good solid grub from an old-fashioned Dutch oven has satisfied the appetites of explorers, colonists, pioneers and miners.

Still used by campers, hunters and picnickers, the Dutch oven remains one of the most utilitarian cooking devices ever created. It can be used for frying, poaching, baking, roasting and even takes the cake, literally, along with the soup, stew, bread and biscuits.

There are basically two types of Dutch oven. The outdoor type has three short legs, to elevate the oven above the bed of coals or hardwood to circulate air, and the indoor type, with a flat bottom and somewhat rounded lid, designed to be used on the stovetop or inside an oven.

Almost any recipe can be adapted to Dutch ovens. With the lid firmly in place, it can be made into an oven regardless of location as long as there is a heat source. As a general rule of thumb, cooking out on the open range using a grand, old, cast-iron Dutch oven, internal temperature hovers around 300 degrees over a slow coal or wood fire, about 375 degrees for a well-started, grey ash coal or wood fire, and about 450 degrees for a fire with 3- or 4-inch flames surrounding the Dutch oven.

REMEMBER, IT'S easy to use too many coals and hardwoods and burn the food. It's always best to increase the heat later or just cook it a while longer. If the need arises to add more coals or hardwood, always add them on top of the smoldering ones rather than on the bottom of the Dutch oven where the food is more likely to burn.

Paul Revere is credited with the design of the Dutch oven. His initial design had a flat lid with a turned-up lip to hold the coals or hardwoods, which in turn provided the heat to cook, simulating an oven's environment. The pot itself stood on three short legs, which could be settled evenly over a slow fire.

The oven was named for 18th-century itinerant peddlers — many of Dutch descent — who sold pots and pans from the backs of their wagons. These peddlers usually were eagerly awaited. Households often had several Dutch ovens that were used for cooking, baking, laundry and dyeing fabrics.

Venture into any good gourmet or houseware shop and you are likely to find aluminum and cast-iron Dutch ovens. The aluminum varieties were developed purely for their ability to be easily transported because they mainly weighed but one-quarter of their cast-iron counterparts.

Enameling also has been introduced, but something as heavy and cumbersome as a Dutch oven frequently chips the enamel coating during handling and storage.

Cast-iron Dutch ovens should always be washed and seasoned before using. After washing, simply rub the entire vessel with oil, lard or shortening and place in a 250-degree oven for 4 hours. Turn off the oven and allow the oven to cool slowly, retaining the oil in its pores.

WHETHER YOU are planning to cook in the convenience of your kitchen or do some Old West cuisine on the range and over an open fire, you might want to consider taking along an old-fashioned Dutch oven. New units are expensive, and the best bargains usually are found at garage sales and flea markets.

For a fine kettle of information, check out "Chuck Wagon Cooking" by Stella Hughes (University of Arizona Press, 1985, \$9.95).

**The oven was named for 18th-century itinerant peddlers — many of Dutch descent.**

## Take to the Trails: Gourmet goodies go portable



Use a Dutch oven and a frying pan to cook up delicious dishes when camping.

JIM JAGOFF  
staff photographer

By Larry Janes  
special writer

## How to

# PACK YOUR BACKPACK

FIRST THERE was the chino hiking shorts. Next came the hooded parka/raincoat, guaranteed to fold into a package no bigger than a portable face-tissue box. Subtotal \$142.59.

Granted, any hiking boot might do, but I just had to get the gray suede hikers with ultra-cushion insoles and hydro-durabond soles. They were on sale at \$119.95.

Special hiking socks especially made to repel blisters were \$20.

Chalk up another \$40 for incidentals like a compass, a Swiss Army knife and a hatchet. I borrowed a top-of-the-line backpack from a friend and saved myself almost \$300.

I could see it would be very easy to drop \$1,000 without even trying. There was little doubt I looked like a backpacker.

NOW I wanted to eat like one, too. Shopping for totable hiking cuisine was like visiting a NASA supermarket.

Freeze-dried stroganoff, freeze-dried beef bourguignon, freeze-dried fettuccine primavera, and peanut butter

in toothpaste tubes, not to mention film canisters filled with condiments, and a cookstove that weighed less than a one-pound box of macaroni and cheese. Food total: \$137.25.

It cost \$5.98 for a two-serving Alpine Sierra Chicken, \$4.49 for another two servings of Richmond Beef and Rice with peas and onions, \$8 for Harvest Foodworks Sweet and Sour Ginger Rice, \$6.49 for Natural High Fettuccine Primavera.

AND THAT was just for me for two days. Multiply that by two, for two people, and then figure an additional five days.

"This stuff will taste greater after a long day's hike" said the salesman at Backpacker's Paradise.

"Yeah, but what if I wanted to try it first at home?" was my retort.

There was little doubt, after trying a

few samples at the Janes Gang kitchen compound, either this guy's idea of fine cuisine was a hot dog and fries or he was the best of salesmen. I was correct on both counts.

NOW KNOWING that anything dehydrated or freeze dried that only needs water to make it taste good is not for backpackers who enjoy good food, I set out to offer you solace amidst the mountains of fog.

There can be good eats, nutritional eats, guaranteed better than anything served in a 12.4-ounce hermetically sealed plastic package. May I suggest:

The most talked-about food item at any backpacker store has to be carbohydrates. If you choose to eat good food while backpacking, be prepared to eat pasta, rice, bulgur, quinoa, kasha and legumes.

If there is no convenience store within

hiking distance, plan on using non-fat dry milk. Anything liquid is heavy, and the risk of leakage is always prevalent.

ANYTHING DEHYDRATED and pre-packaged is expensive.

If you know someone with a food dehydrator, you can save megabucks by drying your own fruits and vegetables. If not, experiment using a clean screen in a low oven with the door propped open for circulation.

Bouillon is a flavor saver by the gods. It is very salty, however. Look for the low or no-sodium varieties.

JUST ABOUT anything can be made to taste good with enough condiments.

Small, empty film canisters work wonders to hold condiments. You can even buy shaker tops at the camper's store.

Better yet, most outfitters also sell a product called food tubes.

These are empty and refillable toothpaste-like tubes that can be crammed with the likes of gravies and sauces. Guaranteed to turn any boiled pasta into an Alfredo with minimal effort.

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## Getting personal about food

By Joan Boram  
special writer

When we think of personal shoppers, we tend to think of a person shopping for busy executives who want to be properly dressed but don't have the time to shop for their own clothing.

At the Quarten Food Market in Birmingham and the Market Basket of Franklin, however, a personal shopper means something entirely different. Their personal shoppers make sure their clients are properly fed.

"Our customers tend to be very busy people. We'll go to almost any lengths to see that they get the service they need," said Ted LaVergne, co-owner of the markets. "We accept telephone orders, and our fax machine is operative from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. for those who wish to send orders from the office."

The stores' policy is to have the same clerk assist the same customers, if it is at all possible. Customers often ask for "their" clerk by name and will call back if he or she is not available.

IF A CUSTOMER has a taste for a particular cheese, or an exotic fruit, a personal shopper will advise when such delicacies are in stock. "Our customers travel a lot, and often they'll come back from a trip



requesting novel foods, such as edible flowers, or an herb or spice that they experienced," LaVergne said. "They'll ask us to order the item so they can serve it at home."

AS YOU would expect, prepared foods are a specialty of the service-oriented stores.

Customers can order anything from fully cooked roast beef to stuffed chicken breasts or meat loaf. The deli provides salads made on the premises, and cheese or vegetable trays are made up for

special occasions. There are no pre-packaged meats at the butcher counter. Instead, there are real, live butchers ready to give you exactly what cuts or quantity you need.

If you're a novice at cookery, and words like "boning," "butterflying" and "larding" strike terror to your heart, these people will do those tasks for you.

The stores are renowned for their gift baskets, assembled under the direction of Stan Fishman.

"I KNOW MOST of our customers

by name," Fishman said. "And I've chatted with most of them in the past 20 years. We discuss families and friends and social events. So when they order a gift basket, I can frequently anticipate what will appeal to the person who's receiving it."

"We don't make any 'formula' baskets. They're all tailored to the recipient."

BUT THE stores' special claim to fame is a trademarked sandwich — the Dilly Roll, named after one of LaVergne's favorite places — London's Pilsbury Circus.

"It was inspired by the Lawash bread made in Pontiac by American Bakery Products Co.," LaVergne said.

The unleavened bread contains no fats, preservatives or sugar, and we wanted to make it available to our health-conscious customers.

"We devised a calorie/cholesterol-conscious menu of fillings for the flat bread. The customer can select from lean roast beef, turkey or several other choices, and we'll add lettuce, tomatoes or cheese, as he or she decides."

"Then we roll the bread up, and — roun! — a Dilly Roll. The sandwiches are neat, compact, ideal for eating on the run, in the car, or relaxing under a shade tree."

The sandwiches were "invented" in 1987, and continue to be a great success.

Dilly Rolls are available in the Quarten and Market Basket markets, as well as at Just Nuts and at Muffins and More, both in Birmingham.

The Quarten Food Market is at 1744 W. Maple, Birmingham, 644-5510, for 644-6644. The Market Basket of Franklin is at 32654 Franklin Road, 626-2583.

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## New editor at the helm

Keely Wygonik, a seven-year veteran of the community newspaper business, is the new Taste/Entertainment editor of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, assistant managing editor Bob Sklar announced last week.

An O&E copy editor since mid-1989, Wygonik replaces Ethel Simmons, a 29-year veteran newspaperwoman who starts today as Suburban Life editor of the O&E's Birmingham-Bloomfield edition.

Since joining the O&E, Wygonik has been a copy editor, overseen the new computerized library, written feature stories and served on redesign and Keely Wygonik special section committees.

"I'm excited about Keely taking the reins of these two key sections," Sklar said. "She's outgoing, upbeat, hard working, full of fresh ideas and sensitive to what readers think."

"We'll miss Ethel and the fine work she did in editing these sections the past five years," Sklar added.

Before joining the O&E, Wygonik was a reporter and later administrative editor for The Citizen in Hamtramck. She co-edited and authored a commemorative book on Pope John Paul's 1987 visit. She also won many professional awards for her writing and editing.

