

## taste buds

chef Larry Janes

## Pamper birds, pets with treats

As I sit in front of my word processor in a cozy office with my belly full of food, I have mixed emotions about writing a column such as this.

Anyone who has not been touched by the plight of the needy must be going through life wearing rose colored glasses.

PICK UP any newspaper and headlines abound with stories of the homeless, general assistance cuts, unemployment and the general negative state of the economy.

I have much to be thankful for. In addition to a wonderful family, I have a crazy cat named Kibbles and a bird feeder outside my front and back windows that hosts many a wild feathered friend.

Many pets have touched my life including a spider monkey named "Singe" and a golden retriever named "Jack." The aquarium collecting dust in the basement has been home for angel fish, sharks, turtles and even a hamster or two.

THAT'S WHY this year, in addition to other Human charities, I'm supporting the Humane Society. But just as important as writing a check, I'm also getting into the spirit of making some good old fashioned pet food for the upcoming winter months for my pet, and the ones that give me so much pleasure in my backyard.

Having just finished reading "Feed the Birds" by Helen and Dick Witty (Workman Publishers, 1991, \$8.95) I couldn't wait to start my own backyard birdfeeder resplendent with homemade suet bells coupled with a birdacious corn and raisin cake.

This book is filled with tips on inviting our fine feathered friends to your yard so that you too can watch their goings-on and hear their song.

THE RECIPES are easy enough for a "bird brain" to follow. If there's a bird lover, and a window in your house, this book gives a whole new meaning to "guess who's coming to dinner!"

But during this time of year, we should also remember the driving force behind the animal rights movement.

Anyone who has ever enjoyed the warmth of a pet has heard of the Humane Society. Kibbles came from the Huron Valley Humane Society with a warning that having been an abused pet, she might not adapt well to home life, especially with the exuberant Janes Gang.

We must have had a lot of love to offer because Kiba has been a part of the Janes Gang now going on five years.

This year, as in the past, Christmas morning will find her tearing into a pet basket filled with homemade tuna cookies, home-grown catnip, yarn balls, and one of those springy-squeaky mouses on a string that all cats go crazy over.

But in addition to a check, Kiba will again ride in the van with a donated "goody" box for needy animals at four local animal shelters. The box will be packed with old towels and a generous assortment of food for less fortunate animals.

These are the same animals that have given you and me a laugh, and sense of love. Animals that people have decided to give up for one reason or another, but animals that right now need our help, love and hope.

See recipes inside.



Photos by SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Cookie artists Katie Christensen, 7 (left) and Heather, 4 check the consistency of the green frosting they will use to decorate Christmas tree, bell and star sugar-butter cut-outs. Hungry cookie fans grab the finished product, below. A little frosting, a few sprinkles, and the creative talents of Katie and Heather turn ordinary cookies into Christmas treasures.

## Families repeat timeless holiday tradition

By Larry Janes  
special writer

MY UNIQUE ability to procrastinate will again this year have me finishing my holiday baking sometime by New Year's Eve. There's little doubt that I will once again be forced to chill my dough for an hour in the freezer rather than allowing it to mellow and harden normally for a few hours in the refrigerator.

I WILL again break my vow of not shopping after midnight trying to find an all-night grocery in search of sugar, red and green sprinkles and butter-flavored Crisco, knowing darned well I should have had enough on hand before I even started.

But people like Ursula Rymarz of Livonia, and Yvonne Christensen of Farmington Hills certainly influence me with a continuing reminder that there is hope for us cutting-edge trendies.

Rymarz, the mother of three grown children, calls herself "basically an old-fashioned, down-to-earth gal" who eschews the virtues of newfangled air-cushioned cookie



sheets and parchment paper.

She still uses old cookie sheets handed down from her mother, and wasn't the least bit interested in learning more about parchment paper.

She has always looked upon her holiday baking chores as a tradition more than a job, and has been doing so for more than 28 years. This year,

as in the past, she and her daughter Michele, 22, will have made 12 different types of Christmas cookies, ending up with "about 25 dozen or so, depending on how many they taste."

Christensen will also have her holiday cookies baked, packaged and secured in addition to sewing holiday costumes for kids Katie and Heather for a holiday pageant. With a little

help from husband Claude, and even 8-month-old Corey getting into the spirit, the family will gather for an evening of cookie baking and decorating.

Christensen claims that several years ago, she went out and bought some "fancy-shmancy" cookie cutters, only to fall back on the old faithful inexpensive tin ones after

being disappointed.

Not even knowing the benefits of air-cushioned cookie sheets or parchment, this holiday baker will again rely solely on her "Baker's Secret" cookie sheets and 39 cent tin cookie cutters.

I KNOW I rely far too much on trendy gadgets and goodies that make life in the kitchen a little easier, but for folks like Ursula Rymarz and Yvonne Christensen who have yet to discover the joys of baking cookies on parchment paper, once you try it, you'll never want to grease another pan.

Parchment paper that can be reused not only makes clean-up a breeze but it literally enables the cookies to slide off the sheet.

Here are two examples of modern-day women who have little or no need for the "trendy" equipment that modern-day cooks need. They might not have air-cushioned cookie sheets and fancy cookie guns, but the final product emerging from the oven shows that with a mixer, a bowl and a few spoons "noshin' says lovin' like somethin' from the oven!"

See recipes inside.

## Smart cookies share secrets

"A home with cookies baking in the oven is a home filled with love and happiness," said Rose Levy Beranbaum, author of "Rose's Christmas Cookies." (William Morrow, Inc. \$23).

Here are some of Beranbaum's tips for perfect cookies.

To cream butter, begin with room-temperature butter, or use refrigerated butter cut into squares. Beat until light and fluffy.

Choose flat baking sheets with very low edges so the air can circulate over and around cookies during baking.

Preheat the oven for at least 15 minutes prior to baking. Double-check the oven temperature with a thermometer that rests on the center rack in the oven.

Arrange baking sheets in the oven at least 2 inches apart so the hot air can circulate freely around each sheet. If the oven does not accommodate two sheets, bake only one batch at a time. Rearrange and rotate cookie sheets halfway through baking time to ensure even browning.

Do not store soft cookies and crisp cookies together; the soft cookies will cause the crisp cookies to soften.

Use a separate container to store each variety of cookie to preserve its special flavor.

For the holiday baker looking for timeless holiday baking tips, Yvonne Christensen recommends:

• Bake one sheet of cookies at a time on the center rack of a preheated oven. Check at the end of the minimum baking time — a minute can make a heck of a lot of difference.

• Unless recipe states otherwise, remove immediately from the cookie sheet with a spatula to a wire rack to cool.

• Place a slice of bread in cookie tins for storage to keep cookies from drying out and getting too hard.

• Place a pan of water in the oven while baking cookies and other holiday baked goods. The humidity keeps the baked goods from rising too high in the center.

The American Dairy Association has created a new leaflet filled with hints for baking, storing and sending butter cookies. For a copy, send 50 cents, plus a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope to: American Dairy Association, Butter Cookie Traditions, P.O. Box 760, Dept. PR, Rosemont, Ill. 60018.



## Book captures Christmas spirit

By Keely Wygonik  
staff writer

Reminders of Christmases past, and answers to questions about Christmas present make "The Frugal Gourmet Celebrates Christmas" by Jeff Smith a holiday treasure.

Published by William Morrow and Company Inc. (\$25), the hardcover book features original woodcuts of characters at the manger, color photographs taken by Smith of his creche figures, reproductions from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and more than 75 color photographs of the recipes.

If YOU have children, or grand-

children, especially ones who ask a lot of questions, this is the book for you. Beginning with a chapter on Advent, Smith leads readers through the history of Christmas focusing on traditions, theology, myth, and food. Many chapters end with a recipe.

In a chapter about Joseph the Carpenter Smith writes, "What should we prepare for Joseph? Something that simple man would understand, such as unleavened brown bread cakes. You could make these and take them on a trip, as they would last a long time." A recipe for unleavened bread follows.

Subsequent chapters explain Christmas traditions like Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, Santa

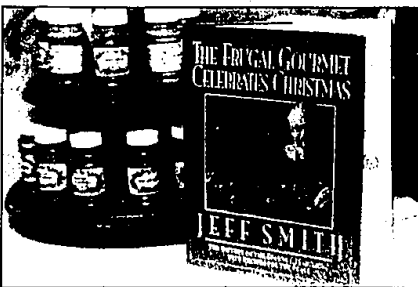
carols, gift giving, Christmas bells, puddings and cakes.

There's even a chapter on the history of Hanukkah followed by recipes for a seasonal meal of latkes and Tzimmes.

A chapter on cookies contains some unusual recipes like Babes Wrapped in Swaddling Clothes and Cookie Ornaments for the Tree.

For those of looking for something different to serve for dinner, there's a section of favorite Christmas menus and recipes including roast prime rib of beef, roast goose, and crown roast of pork.

See recipe inside.



Enjoy the holidays with the Frugal Gourmet's newest book "The Frugal Gourmet Celebrates Christmas."