



Monday, February 17, 1992 O&E

taste buds

chef Larry Janes



Beef dish warms cold winter day

It might possibly be the weather. Then again, it is February and spring is still a good seven weeks away. It's nights like these that make a pot of traditional beef bourguignon so heartwarming. You know what I mean.

I COULD blame it on the howling winds or maybe even the fact that the snow has yet to melt in my driveway from last month's blizzard.

IT'S ON a night like tonight that I uncork a bottle of Gallo Hearty Burgundy, get out my heaviest Calphalon saucepan and crank up the electric blanket to a notch above "7."

I SILENTLY give thanks that the tiny pearl onions have waited to sprout after more than a few weeks in the cellar.

I remember how good red wine is now that it's been proven that a glass or two really is good for the body, and tonight, equally as good for the soul.

Unwrapping the package of tenderloin tips from the butcher, I must remember to applaud his trimming and uniform cutting, leaving me with nothing more to do than brush the mushrooms and peel the vegetables.

AS DARKNESS descends while Bill Bonds does his 5 p.m. newscast, I begin to notice faint signs of frost beginning to form on the bottoms of my elderly aluminum windows.

Before long, the frost is transformed into steam while the beef sizzles in a healthier substitute for butter.

CULINARY PURISTS might question my addition of cooked bacon, opting instead to cook the bacon with the garlic after removing the beef from the pan.

Tonight is the night to relish and replenish, certainly not to clean.

Frying bacon is not on my agenda when four minutes between paper towels in the microwave can suffice.

It takes all the strength I can muster just to pare and slice the carrots. Furthermore, back issues of foodie magazines await me under the electric blanket.

Yes, there's a bottle of Stag's Leap Cabernet in the wine rack. But since beef burgundy needs to be kept many to a simmer, and since the name is burgundy, we will opt for a 1990 Gallo hearty Red Burgundy.

It was one of those "three for \$10" bargains at the corner deli that was impossible to pass up.

THE RECIPE calls for cheap red wine. At just \$3.33 a bottle, I can't imagine finding anything cheaper than that.

While some might not agree, in all honesty, the wine drinks as well as it cooks.

An hour or so has passed and the time to prepare a starch has arrived. Glass beef burgundy begs to be presented over a bed of buttery wide noodles.

But I have, on many occasions, enjoyed it over rice, fettuccine, barley and once, with polenta.

FROM EXPERIENCE, you can skip the polenta as it made for a feeling one gets having a gold brick under after a two-pound lobster dinner. Ditto for the barley.

The fettuccine was acceptable and the rice was, how do we say it, poltely OK.

Classic beef bourguignon begs to be ladled over wide real egg noodles so that the noodles can stand up to piece of meat and vegetables on nothing less than a full-sized dinner fork.

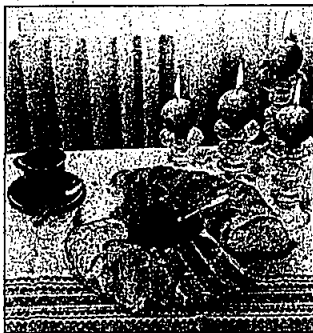
A salad would have been refreshing but as I snuggled under the blanket with a steaming plate, a full glass, and the TV remote primed for Murphy Brown, I felt a hearty warmth overtake my senses.

Beef burgundy is to winter what ice cream is to summer.

See recipe inside.

Simple fare

Finnish hospitality chases chills away



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Finns like food that is tasty and eye appealing. Coffee, a plate of freshly baked Nisu and raspberry jam, await guests at Grace Nayback's home. A Finnish embroidered tablecloth, glowing round candles in tiered Finnish crystal candlesticks decorate the table.

By Keely Wygonik
staff writer

FRESHLY BREWED coffee, and slices of Pulla or Nisu — a cardamon-flavored, sweet braided yeast bread — await visitors at Grace Nayback's West Bloomfield home. Nisu is the old-fashioned Finnish word for wheat.



ON A recent visit, her dining room table was covered with a Finnish embroidered tablecloth. Two round candles in tiered Finnish crystal holders, glowing, matching coffee cups and plates completed the picture.

"Finns like to make a pretty table," said Nayback, whose husband Ruben is the Finnish Consul for southeastern Michigan. "The food has to be tasty, as well as eye-appealing."

EMMA AND Arno Alhollina of Livonia agree. Arno grew up in Finland, and has taken his wife, Emma, home to visit.

"Every where we went in Finland the coffee table was set beautifully," said Emma, who added it's almost a national law in Finland that you do not leave a home without being offered a cup of coffee. It is served with lump sugar and real whipped cream.

Nayback makes delicious Nisu. It's a big seller at the Finnish Center

Coming Events:

There's always something happening at the Finnish Center, 35200 W. Eight Mile Road, Farmington Hills. If you're looking for Finnish cookbooks or crystal, you'll find them at the gift shop in the center.

Fish & Chips served 5:30-7:30 p.m. every Friday in the Members Lounge. Come for brunch on the second Sunday of every month, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Both events are open to the public, call 478-6939 for more information.

Special events include a Kalevala Day Program, 3 p.m. Sunday, March 1, at the center, donation \$3. For information, call 478-6939.

The Holjakat Folk Dancers are having a party sale to raise money for their trip to Finland. Orders placed by Wednesday, Feb. 26, will be available for pick up Saturday, Feb. 29. Call 682-4189 to order.

In Farmington Hills. When Nayback and her friends get together, they make 90 loaves at a time, 200 for bake sales. The bread sells quickly at the center for \$2.50 a loaf.

LEFTOVER NISU is recycled into Korppa, which resembles melba toast. The slices are buttered, sprinkled with cinnamon, sugar and oven baked until they dry out like toast.

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Grace Nayback, dressed in a traditional Finnish folk costume, shows off loaves of freshly baked Nisu, a cardamon-flavored braided yeast coffee bread.

Northern spirits
Aquavit, vodka, Scandinavian favoritesBy Eleanor
and Ray Heald
special writers

Nearly all regional beverages developed due to an abundance of a given raw material or because the beverage paired so well with the region's food.

Scandinavian aquavit and vodkas are no exception. Vodka and aquavit are primarily associated with northern European countries. They are well suited to the region's hearty fare.

AQUAVIT TRANSLATED "water of life," is the national beverage of the Scandinavian countries and has been considered a cure for various ailments since the 16th century.

Production methods for aquavit are similar in Denmark (where it is called Akvavit), Norway and Sweden, although there are some variations in the proportion of the principal flavoring, caraway seed.

Danes have been producing a nearly neutral, colorless spirit from both grain and potatoes for about 400 years. Today's Akvavit from Aalborg is typical of the Scandinavian favorite drink.

Each potato used in its production has sufficient starch for a single shot. Aalborg makes more than 10 types of potato spirits, using the flavored caraway as well as dill, coriander, bog myrtle, fennel, angelica and cinnamon.

At their inception, Scandinavian vodkas were distilled in primitive alembics from any available carbohydrate, grains as well as potatoes. They probably had little appeal by today's refined standards.

ALL SPIRITS are perfectly colorless when they run off the still. In whisky, color comes later, by extraction from wooden casks during aging or by addition of caramel.

It may be assumed that northern Europeans did not practice aging and thereby mellowing their spirits in wooden barrels because the rigors of the climate made it impractical.

Eventually, improved production methods and strict quality controls allowed even northern Europeans to produce colorless spirits like vodka that have a singular character.

Production methods for vodka differ from one country to another and from one producer to another. Basically, as in the case with whiskey, the grain is made into a mash, fermented and put through a continuous still.

The distillate is collected at about 190 degrees F. and is almost entirely free of the congeners that impart distinctive flavor characteristics to whiskey.

INGESTION OF these congeners, or flavor elements, also happen to be the root cause of the headache experienced by many people, even those consuming at moderate levels. Died in the wool vodka drinkers claim they never experience headaches. This is not a myth. The headache claim has its basis in scientific fact.

Absolut vodka from Sweden is our personal favorite. It has distinctive, yet delicate aromas with substantial body and elegant, sophisticated finish. Finlandia from Finland has slightly more body and flavor than American vodkas.

It's clean and dry, but in our opinion, lacks a taste distinction. Denaka from Denmark is similar.

Finlandia vodka (left) and Aquavit from Denmark are popular Scandinavian spirits. Both are well suited to the region's hearty fare.

SHARON LEMUEUX
staff photographer