

taste buds  
chef Larry  
Janes

## Dip into bucket of tasty smelt

I long for these wonderful spring days. Gorgeous warm days sprinkled with the rays of the sun and cool nights, just right for a long, hearty after dinner stroll. I also love this time of year because days like these beacon the prolific smelt, long a delicacy of any Michigan sportsman.

In addition to being a tasty dish that can be prepared in a multitude of ways, smelt are also a major budget stretcher. They can allow the cook to prepare a meal for a large family and still have enough money left over for those delayed payment options now appearing from Christmas past. Expect to pay about \$1.50 per pound for fresh smelt.

ANYWHERE ALONG the Great Lakes in the metro area where you can find a beach, you can expect to see smelt dippers. Our weather this year has been nothing short of perfect.

Department of Natural Resources spokesperson say if the weather holds out, this should be another bumper crop for the tiny delicacies.

Smelt are already appearing on many local grocers and fishermen's shelves, but in this sportsman's eye, a bucket just dipped from the still frigid waters, cleaned in the morning and fried in the evening, can't be beat.

Catching a few pounds of fresh smelt at your local grocery store will never beat the excitement of netting your own. Smelt dipping does not necessitate the experience and investment that regular fishing incurs.

WATERPROOF WADETS and a fine seine net, coupled with the ability to withstand a spring night chill are all that's needed to guarantee a good catch. Granted, Mother Nature does have something to say about weather conditions, but when the word gets out that "the smelt are running," a net and waders are all that's required. No boats, no poles, no bait, no lines, no lures.

Whereas a flashlight and/or lantern are optional equipment, you won't be alone. If the night is right, and the moon shines full, expect to fill those buckets with minor effort.

When it comes to preparation, smelt are just about as easy to prepare as they are to catch. A bucket can easily be cleaned in no longer than the time it takes to cook them. Simply remove the head behind the gills and slit the belly removing the entrails, rinse and cook. Of course, smelt purchased from your local market will probably have the first two tasks taken care of.

James Beard once said he preferred his smelt deboned, but to any Great Lakes angler, the bones are so tiny that it seldom necessitates deboning.

SMELT FREEZES well and to this day I remember milk cartons drunk of their contents and filled with smelt and water, and then frozen for many a Friday smelt fry.

Smelt are, in my opinion, best when coated with fine cracker crumbs and lightly fried for a few minutes in hot oil. For the more health conscious, they can be baked or broiled with minimal effort.

Anyone who considers themselves a smelt aficionado knows about the tasty smelt fry available at the legendary Bluebird Inn in Leland. There, the smelt is dipped in a lighter-than-air batter and fried until golden. With the recipe inside, you, too, can make a delectable pan fried or batter fried smelt, again, keeping costs down and efforts minimal.

Look for smelt fry now being offered at various churches and restaurants. A little closer to home, and a personal favorite of mine, is Frank's Bar in Wyandotte which also specializes in a wonderful pan fried perch.

It's a shot and beer joint, and they only serve on Fridays. It's well worth the wait.

See recipes inside.



JIM JACOFF/ELDT/staff photographer

Armed with a shopping list and pencil to calculate prices, Helen Barnes stocks up on cereal, toilet paper and other groceries at the Warehouse

Club near her Redford home. Barnes, who does much of the shopping for her family, likes to compare prices.

## No frills warehouses thrill shoppers



**Editor's note:** Weathering the recession, worsened by the auto sales slump and planned closing of the Willow Run assembly plant in Ypsilanti, is not easy, but we'd like to help. Our series continues with shopping at warehouse clubs.

By Arlene Funke  
special writer

WHEN HELEN Barnes wants to stock up on Cheerios and frozen chicken breasts, she shops at the Warehouse Club near

### Weigh advantages of volume buying

Shopping at a warehouse can be both convenient and economical. A few points to keep in mind before signing up:

- Make sure the no-frills, volume shopping concept suits your lifestyle and tastes.

- Will you shop often enough to pay a membership fee? Visit the warehouse and look around before signing up.

- Bring your shopping list and be prepared to break down the price when buying multi-pack items.

- Buy only what you can use in a reasonable amount of time, or can store adequately.

- You must be flexible. Although warehouse stores carry many items, brand selections may be limited.

her Redford home. Barnes, who does much of the shopping for her five-member household, likes to get her money's worth. "For the most part, it's cheaper," Barnes said. "I like to compare prices."

Huge stores such as Warehouse

Club and PACE Membership Warehouse Inc., appeal to people who shop for quantity and value, forsaking frills. Customers must apply for membership to shop there.

Warehouse Club's Redford location is in a former industrial building on Plymouth Road west of Tele-

graph. Other local outlets are in Hazel Park and Allen Park.

**PACE LOCATIONS** include Westland, Farmington, Ypsilanti and Madison Heights.

Neither company accepts manufacturers' coupons. Shoppers won't

find the variety of brands available in chain markets. Packages generally are large, or multi-pack.

"You don't have to buy a case," said Buddy Lee, director of marketing at Warehouse Club's Skokie, Ill., headquarters.

"You may have to buy five or six cans of green beans, or three packages of Ultra SlimFast," Lee said. PACE, which has an in-store bakery, has its own brand of garbage bags and laundry soap. Warehouse Club carries name-brand items.

Both stores also sell all kinds of other merchandise.

Today, Barnes is shopping for paper toweling, cranberry-apple drink, cereal and frozen chicken breasts.

Barnes, 73, has a direct-sales busi-

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## Stretch wine dollars with values

By Eleanor and Ray Heald  
special writers

True, many wines are too expensive. What historically was the common man's beverage, wine has taken on value-laden terms like "premium" — credited to the California wine industry. Once every cork-finished bottling acquired the name premium, the "super-premiums" became the sought-after pears.

Today, there are so many super-premiums, that the chic 1990s term is "ultra-premium." Are these terms a guarantee of high quality or merely a sales gimmick? Are these loaded sales terms persuasive marketing devices for the uninitiated wine drinker?

OUR ANSWER is "yes" because with each succeeding tier of supposed quality, the price rises significantly. A \$40 chardonnay? That's ultra-premium pricing that is frequently not backed by ultra-premium taste.

What has happened to an everyday wine — the stuff we used to call jug wine? First of all "jug" is a wine reference that makes us sound cheap. As Americans, we don't want to pay a lot, but we don't want to appear cheap.

### WINE SELECTIONS OF THE WEEK

A white wine from the Cotes de Gascogne that's crisp with citrusy aromas and a solid taste treat. 1990 Domaine de Pouy (6). This wine can be found only at Cloverleaf Market in Southfield. 1989 Cypress Merlot (47) has fresh cherry aromas characteristic of the merlot grape. The wine is soft and supple with bright fruit flavors.

both palate and purse. High-quality \$5 bottles of wine are few and far between, so we're looking at palate pleasure all under \$10 in our recommendations. We've placed the real winners as Wine Selections of the Week.

To heighten your spirits, we're starting off with two Euro bubbles, produced like the best French champagnes and California sparklers from grapes grown in the Crimea. Riga Brut and Riga Bravo (both \$9) are not only tasty sparkling pears, but the Riga Brut still has the old "Cobecocoe" label. Now that the Soviet Union is dissolved and Latvia has regained independence, the bottle is a collector's item!

WHILE WE champion the "buy American" sentiments, we have to lay some of the blame for the high price of domestic wines squarely on

the shoulders of California producers and their myopic view of wine purchasers. The majority of North Coast wine producers have generally ignored the segment of the market seeking wines under \$10 per bottle.

This is not true of The Monterey Vineyard. Here sights are focused on this majority section of wine drinkers. The Classic White and Classic Red wines are flavorful and generous for around \$6.50. The Monterey Vineyard varietally labeled bottlings can be purchased for around \$9 and represent true expressions of the grape variety.

The same can be said of Del Arbores wines. Felzer Vineyard's second label, The reds in the Del Arbores line are the best buys. Equally quality-price conscious are the offerings from Foppiano Vineyards bottled under its second label Riverside Farms.

French country wines or "Vin de Pays" are some of the best values available. They originate principally in the region known as the Languedoc-Roussillon and carry the following major viticultural regions on the label — Coteaux du Languedoc, Cotes du Roussillon, Vin de Pays d'Oc, Corbières and Minervois. The 1989 and 1990 bottlings from these regions are very tasty buys.

White wines (1990 vintage) from the Cotes de Gascogne (Gascony region of France) are crisp and delicious. Drink these wines young because they quickly lose their freshness.



Wine savings add up with 1991 Cypress Merlot (left) and 1990 Domaine de Pouy.