

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Favorite foods taste better cooked on grill

Ask any of the Jones gang how they prefer their meat or fish cooked and the answer would be unanimous — "on the grill." Whether tossed on a \$6 bargain basement special or cooked to perfection on an \$800 outdoor range, you just can't beat a grill for cooking your favorite foods.

Maybe it's the look of the grilling marks, perfectly zig-zagged on a filet or the suspicious sizzle from swordfish being brushed with an herb butter that makes the food so good. Maybe it's just being outside on a sultry summer's eve with a spatula in one hand and a cool drink in the other. There's no doubt about it, I love to cook on the grill.

Cooking on the grill can be exotic and expensive, as you well know. Standard grills require charcoal, starter and plenty of long handled utensils which help avoid singed hands and arms.

Gas grills require propane, the same long handled utensils and a little more attention to cleanliness less the burners get clogged with drippings and food residue. In addition to the cost of the grill, those are just for starters.

If you desire and can afford more, the list can escalate dramatically with the addition of special woods for that delicately imparted flavor and additional equipment that can make the job a little easier.

Charcoal chimneys, non-stick grill pans, specialty food holders and claw utensils not to mention meat thermometers, grill mitts and squirt bottles all make grilling more of a culinary fete, in addition to costing a bundle. What's hot and what's not?

Hot gadgets

Here's a look at what's available and in descending order, what should be a priority should you wish to expand your summer grilling expertise.

If you happen to be like me, you're still relying on the famed old standby, a Weber kettle grill. This grill is the standard for the industry and performs well. In addition to the grill and charcoal, to make lighting easier, you need a charcoal chimney. This is nothing more than a tall coffee can with handles. Simply set the chimney in the grill, add a crumpled Taste section and top off with charcoal. Light the bottom and in 15 minutes or less, expect glowing coals.

Available anywhere grills are sold, expect to pay \$12 to \$20. Speaking of charcoal, you certainly get what you pay for. Look for genuine hardwood briquettes, no ifs, ands, or butts. They not only last longer, but in the long run, allow you to really use less, saving you more money for better gadget or food purchases.

Relatively new on the market within the last few years are non-stick grilling pans that sit right on the grill grids and allow the backyard barbecue an opportunity to cook a multitude of foods without ever having to worry about the food falling into the hot coals.

The first prototypes introduced were nothing more than cookie sheets with holes, but the market has improved itself and now heavier models are made of anodized aluminum. Non-stick surfaces make for a grilling pan with holes that will not warp and make cleanup a breeze. Prices vary dramatically with some models, depending on size, starting at \$15 and running the gamut to about \$75 for the top-of-the-line. I bought mine at a gourmet shop for about \$25 and wouldn't think of firing up the grill without it.

Claw tools and specialty baskets for burgers, meats and fish are cute, but it's my professional opinion that they are useless, especially when a top grid grilling pan is available.

Flavor enhancers

Specialty woods seem to be the rage again this year, as in the past. Hickory chips, applewood and other assorted fruitwood chips supposedly add a distinct flavor, but unless you plan on covering the grill and allowing the smoky flavors to penetrate whatever it is you cook, they are expensive additions which do little.

Herbs are more readily available and can be tossed on the hot coals directly when fresh or can be soaked for a few minutes in liquid infused. In my opinion, they are more flavorful and cost-effective than those fancy woods.

Lastly, I would like to mention two personal favorites. A few years back, I picked up one of those inexpensive plastic squirt bottles and a good instant read thermometer.

The thermometer is always useful for immediately registering internal meat temperatures while the squirt bottle is always kept loaded with wine, broth or water to douse flare-ups that help keep what's cooking moist. Trust me on these last two, you won't be disappointed with either.

So if the backyard beckons, or you happen to be looking for a few new ideas for Father's Day gift giving ideas, the above mentioned gadgets will surely please all who cook on the grill.

See recipe inside.



GLENN WARREN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

DAIRY MONTH something to moo about

■ Chef Larry Jones learns how milk gets from the cow to the dairy case at the Gill dairy farm in Canton Township.

BY LARRY JONES
STAFF WRITER

You have to realize something right off the bat; the closest I've ever been to a cow was being chosen as a celebrity cow milker at last year's Michigan State Fair. I lost the competition because my cow "missed" inadvertently knocked over the milk pail when I assumed I grabbed her in little too ardently.

So when a packet of information heralding June as National Dairy Month crossed my desk, I couldn't wait to contact Irene Cameron from the Michigan Dairy Council, and a Livonia resident, to set up an interview with a dyed in the wool dairy farmer. I wanted to be ready and knowledgeable should that State Fair gig come up again this year.

I was surprised when she returned my call with information on one of Southeastern Michigan's premier dairy farms, owned and operated by Stanley and Sarah Gill just south of Canton in Wayne County.

This dairy farm, with close to 500 "howsies" in it's herd is one of the oldest and largest continuously operating dairy farms in the Midwest. Owned and

operated by the Gill family, whose heritage traces back to England, it was founded in 1834 and is still being run by Stanley and Sarah Gill with their son Tom and his wife Sherry.

The visit was an eye opener. The Jones gang has long been avid milk drinkers, but never gave much thought to where milk comes from and how it got to the dairy case.

With a milking herd of about 480 cows, this dairy farm is in operation 24 hours a day. The Gills employ a crew of 17 who tend the cows, and farm more than 1,200 acres of prime alfalfa, hay and straw. The farmland helps generate feed for the milking herd, and the 100 or so hells and 65 calves that keep the operation going at full swing.

The milking herd gets milked three times daily — 4 a.m., 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Sarah Gill keeps tabs on the farm's house, paperwork, and calves, while husband Stanley sees that more than 4,000 gallons of fresh milk get delivered through rain, snow and shine, 365 days a year to the Michigan Dairy in Livonia.

For the uninitiated, that means the Gills' farm produces more than 13 million pounds of milk every year.

The Gills are proud to point out that their operation is one of the few that produces only pure, Grade A milk. There are various grades of milk, but only the Grade A milk gets made into real butter, whole milk and ice cream. The other grades are processed into

other forms of milk products.

Cameron was quick to point out that in Michigan alone, there are more than 5,000 dairy farmers with over 850 of these that have been in business over 50 years.

"Together, dairy farmers and processors contribute more than \$15 billion to Michigan's economy," Hard to believe, but Michigan ranks only seventh in total milk production with over five billion pounds being produced annually.

"Technology, new milking practices, and the fluctuation of milk prices have dramatically changed the way dairy farmers do business," said Cammeron. Sarah Gill agrees and says, "Last year's price drop of \$1 per 100 pounds darn well near swept our feet right out from under us."

The Gills use computers and modern milking technology to get the highest volume from their milking herd. One of these technologies knocked the socks off this writer when I visited the Gills' state of the art eight stall herringbone milking parlor that can milk 16 cows simultaneously in less than 20 minutes. "It was a major investment," said Gill, "but it has paid for itself with the added speed and convenience."

In addition to her duties on the farm, Sarah Gill is also quite a cook. A recent visit found her preparing buttermilk biscuits from scratch that rivaled mums'. Here's a lady who eschews modern conveniences in the kitchen, but not



New calf: Dairy farmer Sarah Gill introduces one of the newest members of her herd, a calf born this spring.

on the farm. She still washes her face with milk everyday, and looks pretty darned chipper for someone who works 365 days a year.

So the next time you pick up a gallon of milk, a hunk of cheese or some ice cream at the grocery, remember folks like Stanley and Sarah Gill who literally work around the clock to bring folks like us the best Michigan has to offer. See recipe inside.

Good food, cabaret at Punchinello's



STEPHEN CANTRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Springtime specialties: Mark Davis of Punchinello's presents chicken strudel with fresh vegetables, spring rolls, and Greek salad. The popular restaurant in Birmingham is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

BY KEELY WYGNONIK
STAFF WRITER



Some things are different, like the new breakfast menu, coffee bar and vodka bar, but many things are the same at Punchinello's in Birmingham which is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

"We use only real, fresh ingredients," said Mark Davis, owner and manager of Punchinello's, 184 Pierce at Martin. "The only thing frozen is ice cubes. Yes, we might be a little more expensive, but real costs more."

Prices range from \$5 to \$12 for lunch items, \$14 to \$25 for dinner. Menu specialties reflect the freshest fruits and vegetables of the season. "Our Seafood Alfredo is made with fresh lobster, shrimp, Parmesan cheese, and pasta, and tossed with a double cream sauce," said Davis.

He opened Punchinello's in 1982, and it immediately gained a reputation for innovative and creative cooking. He has incorporated Italian, Chinese, American and other styles to complement the

French cuisine he specializes in.

There are also heart-healthy, vegetarian and an assortment of salads on the menu. During the summer, you can dine outside. The downstairs cabaret shows at 9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays feature talented local entertainers who make a night out of a holiday. Restaurant hours are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Mondays, 9 a.m. to midnight, Tuesday through Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday. Call 644-5277 for reservations.

Davis graduated from Michigan State University in 1972 with a degree in French literature. While attending school, he trained at MSU's Kellogg Center where he received a taste of French cuisine. He studied cooking in France, and worked at such area restaurants as the Money Tree and Tweeny's. Favorite herb or spice.

Basil.

Best experience as a chef?

A recent Christmas party he gave. "They ate everything, and seemed to enjoy it," said Davis.

Worst experience as a chef?

"I was having a party at the restaurant, and went to the store to do some last minute shopping that should have taken 10 minutes. I was blocked in by

two cars in the parking lot, and was an hour late for the party."

Specialty?

Country French and Italian cuisine. Favorite piece of cookware at home and at work?

Saute pan.

Name five things in your refrigerator?

Sliced fresh turkey, cranberry juice, skim milk, frozen yogurt, grapefruit.

Cooking tips

"Don't over beat. If you're beating until stiff, and it's coming out dry, stop doing that. Preheat your oven. Buy the finest, freshest ingredients you can afford."

If you could cook dinner for anyone, who would it be? What would you serve?

"Thomas Jefferson because he was brilliant. I would serve a menu of Michigan foods — smoked fish canapés, garpacho, Michigan chardonnay, chicken curry served with a Michigan blush wine, mixed salad with Michigan cherries, and for dessert, a pecan pie wrapped in phyllo dough."

See recipe inside.