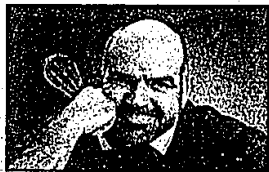


TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Roll out the dough to make pocket bread

When it comes to creating food from the Middle East, my palate quickly gravitates to unique flavors and tastes of tabbouli, falafel and lamb.

Long a staple in the Jones Gang kitchen, Middle East flatbreads have played an extensive role (excuse the pun) as tasty envelopes for the above mentioned foods.

Easy to prepare and even easier to stuff, these breads can turn a cooling, crunchy tabbouli salad into a meal with minimal fuss.

Depending on what region your taste succumb, pocket bread can be called Armenian, Peda, Greek, Arab, Syrian or Euphrates bread.

Widely used

Widely used as pocket bread, the dough can also be made into hard rolls or long thin loaves. They can be brushed with butter and sprinkled with sesame seeds or even deep fried into a quasi-Mexican version of sopapillas.

Needless to say, a recipe for this type of bread is multi-national and can be used in many different ways.

Baking secrets

The secret for making true Middle Eastern flat bread lies in the final baking process. The recipe is vaguely similar to a basic white bread and when experimented with in the kitchen also can be rolled into pretzels.

The kneading and the rising processes are the same as is the addition of some salt and a dash of sugar to bring out the richness.

As a matter of fact, about the only thing you can do wrong with this recipe is to use a non-active yeast. To make sure that doesn't happen, check the expiration dates on the packet and make sure to proof it in some very warm tap water before adding.

If you haven't invested in an instant read thermometer before now, ninking your water between 105 and 115 degrees virtually assures a tasty finished product.

These instant read thermometers, by the way, are also infallible for grilling steaks and cooking meat in the kitchen and can be bought from any reputable gourmet or gadget shop for around \$15.

Middle Eastern flat bread can also take on different shapes and textures. A recipe for Khuzh Hkaf (thin bread) calls for taking a haste recipe for pocket bread and rolling it out to tissue thickness before baking.

After preheating the oven to 400 degrees, a non-stick cookie sheet is then placed on the hot coils. The thin bread is then rolled around a 1/2 inch stick and unrolled onto the hot cookie sheet, baking only for 2-3 minutes or until golden brown.

The hot bread is then folded into fourths, sprinkled lightly with water and then covered with dry cheesecloth until ready to serve. Usually served with soup or kebabs, this bread literally melts in your mouth, and since it was rolled so thin, has a unique texture.

Be creative

If you think you can only make bread with a basic Middle Eastern flat bread recipe, think again. The dough, when rolled as flat as putty, can also be used in a dish called Akros Al-Laham, also known as meat pies.

The dough can be rolled and studded with linnec caraway seeds if desired for additional flavor, but upon sampling, yours truly thought the caraway seemed to overpower the meat pie itself.

The basic recipe can also be fortified with a biscuit baking mix, eggs and butter for a heavy-sogget-type bread that is exceptional when mixed with Caraway and sesame seeds.

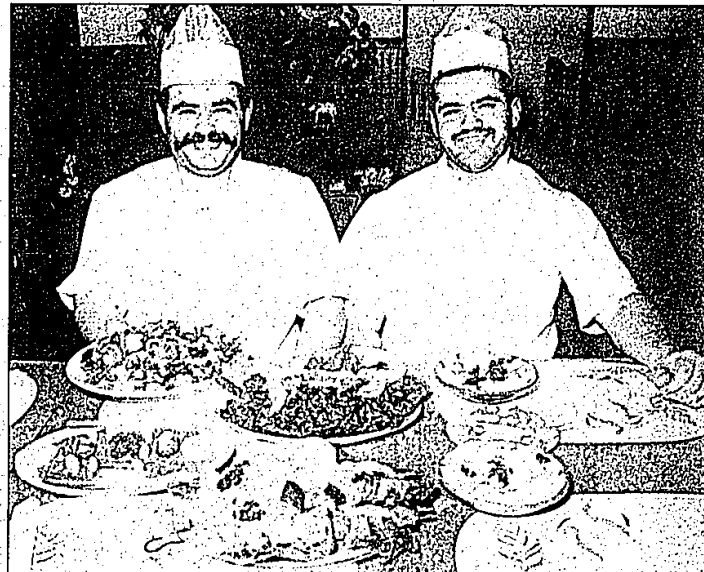
And, if that's not enough, some milk and eggs in addition to the basic recipe, coupled with a sweet mixture of sugar, cinnamon, and chopped walnuts can produce a product called Mutabakaya (sweet bread). When made into a rolled loaf, this bread can double as an exceptional coffee-type bread that is delectable when slathered with a little butter or margarine.

So if your cooking talents find you venturing into the kitchen to make a basic Middle Eastern flat bread, use your imagination and experiment with some additional flavors — you won't be disappointed.

See recipes inside.



FRESH
f.o.o.d.s
SATISFY
SUMMER
APPETITES



ART EMANUEL

Middle East cuisine: Brothers Ziko and Casper Sobh offer a wide variety of Middle Eastern dishes including Hummous, Baba Ghanouge, Tabbouli, raw kibbee and Lebanese salad at Pine Land Restaurant in Westland.

■ Refreshing, light and nutritious, Middle Eastern cuisine tastes good in the summer. Now is a good time to try it.



BY KIRBY WYONIK
STAFF WRITER
Middle Eastern food does your body good. It's hearty fresh food, it has a special flavor, when you eat this food you enjoy it," said Casper Sobh, owner of Pine Land Restaurant on Middlebelt in Westland.

"If you've never tried Middle Eastern food, now is a good time. 'Our food is healthy," said Sameer Eid, owner of the Phenicia Restaurant on Woodward in Birmingham. "It was healthy out of necessity. People created wonderful dishes out of the food that was available, lamb, grains and vegetables. It's so light and refreshing in the summer."

Middle Eastern food was uncommon in this area 20 years ago when Eid opened his restaurant in Highland Park. Besides Phenicia, there was the Sheik in Detroit, and Uncle Sam's in Dearborn.

Now Middle Eastern restaurants are popping up everywhere. Two area newcomers are Pine Land which opened a year ago, and La Cedar's in the food court of Wonderland Mall, Livonia, which opened May 5.

Sobh, grew up in Lebanon and studied cooking at the University of Beirut. He also studied cooking in Italy and France. "I always liked to cook," he said. His brother, Ziko works beside him in the restaurant.

A Middle Eastern meal often begins with hummous, a dip made from pureed chick peas mixed with tahini (sesame seed paste), or Baba Ghanouge, baked

or char-grilled eggplant, peeled, mashed and blended with tahini.

Lemon, garlic, olive oil and mint give Middle Eastern salads a zesty flavor. Many people are familiar with tabbouli, a mixture of parsley, mint, cracked wheat and tomatoes. Other popular salads are Fattoush, a mixture of salad greens, cucumbers, radishes, mixed with toasted and cracked pita bread, and Greek salad made with salad greens, green peppers, cucumbers, black olives and feta cheese.

"These salads are especially delicious in the summer because of the availability of and freshness of Michigan produce," said Eid.

For a main course, try some of the grilled dishes like shish knob, Shish Tawook, (chicken kabobs) or Shish Kafia, ground lamb or beef with parsley, onions, and spices).

"Marinating tenderizes the meat and adds flavor," said Casper Sobh. Eid recommends a marinade of olive oil, lemon juice and garlic.

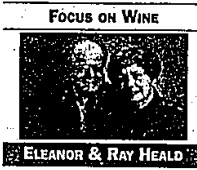
Grains are also a very important part of Middle Eastern cuisine. "We use a lot of rice and vegetables," said Lillian Shallah of West Bloomfield who is Chaldon. "You can serve a very nutritious meal, and not have a lot of fat. If you're trying to cut back on cholesterol, it's very good food."

Some popular vegetarian entrees are stuffed cabbage and grape leaves made with a mixture of rice, parsley, chick peas and pine nuts, Mtardana, lentils and rice topped with onions and spices, and falafel, ground chick peas, fava beans, parsley and onions that is deep fried.

See recipes inside.



Lebanese winemaker survives war



ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

Chateau Musar wines are available from the following vintages:
• 1981 (\$19-\$20)
• 1982 (\$15-\$17)
• 1983 (\$15-\$19)
All three wines demonstrate the ageability of these outstanding Lebanese wines.

Serge Hochar, owner of Chateau Musar in Lebanon, explains the dedication necessary to produce wines in his war-ravaged Middle East homeland.

"I have been producing wines in Lebanon since 1958, when I took over for my father. For years, 90 percent of my wine was sold and consumed in Lebanon, but because of the war, I now export 90 percent of it."

Chateau Musar was founded in 1930 by Gaston Hochar, Serge's father, in an old Moslem castle named Musar. The name was changed to Musar because of the strong French presence in Lebanon at that time. War has plundered Lebanon and local demand for Musar wines. Hochar was happy to sell most of his production in Lebanon, but when circumstances changed, he was forced to change his tactics in order to stay in business.

"This all turned out to be a blessing," Hochar said optimistically. "By entering the world market, I discovered how good my wines were compared to the great wines of the world. I showed my wines for the first time in 1970, in Bristol. They were a hit because

no one expected to taste such fine wines from Lebanon."

Michael Broadbent, writing in "Decanter," the prestigious British wine journal, described Musar wines as a "full soft — a hit of claret and a touch of Burgundy."

Others have debated whether the wines are more like those of Saint-Emillion or Pomerol. Let's just say Chateau Musar is akin to the Middle East's Chateau Lafite.

Today, Hochar is lauded globally for overcoming the obstacles of war and producing wines that rival some of the world's best. "We made a wine every year except 1976 and 1984 because the war prevented us from trucking the grapes from the vineyards to the winery," said Hochar. "The winery is located 15 miles north of Beirut and the vineyard is in the Bekaa Valley south of Beirut — a distance of 50 miles."

In 1976, fighting cut off electricity to the winery making it impossible to process the harvest. Hochar has since installed a diesel generator as insurance.

The Bekaa Valley is an ideal site for wine growing. An old alluvial river valley at 2,500 feet elevation, the Bekaa is watered by the rains and melting snows from two mountain ranges. There are 300 days of sunshine a year, with little or no rain between June and October. The altitude plus overcast summer weather act to moderate the extreme heat.

Moslem farmers also grow apples, pears, peaches, cherries, and melons in the Bekaa, but because of religious laws they do not drink the wines produced.

Chateau Musar wines are a blend of cabernet sauvignon and cinsault (in variety usually associated with the southern Rhone Valley in France). According to Hochar, they show best with 12 to 15 years' aging.



STEPHEN CASTLE

Lebanese wine: Sameer Eid offers Chateau Musar wines at the Phenicia Restaurant in Birmingham. Chateau Musar wines are produced in Lebanon, and are a perfect accompaniment to Middle Eastern lamb dishes.