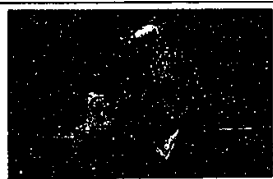


MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1992

TASTE

TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Nothing's finer than reaping what you sow

May 15th comes and I just can't wait to "get the garden in" so I can be the first on the block to show off my red ripe tomatoes.

By the 15th of July, I have picked bushels of lettuce, barrels of radishes, baskets of zucchini (they must be related to rabbits) and spent countless hours weeding, cultivating, hoeing and more weeding.

Naturalists say this makes for a contented soul. My soul is content, but my palms are calloused. All this and I have yet to begin reaping my fall harvest, which includes cases of tomatoes, carts of eggplant, some prize-winning pumpkins and yes, even more zucchini.

Bumper crop

The cool, wet weather has made for big leafy plants. My garden looks like a jungle. For the first time in years, my tomatoes are as tall as me, and I never once added a drop of those so-called "wonder grow" additives.

However, in all honesty, this has been a bumper crop for the annual Janes Gang garden. And for that, I give thanks.

The freezer salesman at the appliance store thanks you. My Cuisinart shredder and Daisy seal-a-meal thanks you. And I have a small garden. Not bigger than 10 by 20 feet.

So if you were one of the lucky ones who planted this year, and made an attempt to keep it up for the first few months, you are probably just beginning to realize the true bounty of your efforts.

I wonder if there's some sort of law against having a "garden sale." Kind of like a garage sale.

One of the good things to come out of this over-abundant crop are the many uses I am finding for garden vegetables.

Appetizing vegetables

After planting just a single row of green onions, I have used green onions in everything from quiche to Tempura (dipping the white ends in batter, then frying in hot oil until golden) which makes an outstanding summer appetizer.

The secret is to make a light enough batter to just lightly coat the ends. Even dipping in egg and rolling in cracker crumbs can produce a positive effect.

Ditto with zucchini (but watch out, the coating crumbles easily). Now I have a little green salsa on my flowered Hawaiian shirt.

One thing the garden harvester really thanks are those burpable plastic containers. Great for keeping green beans and pea pods snap-crackling fresh.

I have used mine for marinating sliced tomatoes with olive oil, fresh basil and cracked black pepper.

On a recent buying binge, the smallest ones have found their way into my tackle box, the medium sized are great for storing fresh herbs and sauces while the largest ones hold everything from cereal and flour to tabouli and tossed salads.

Savoring herbs

This crazy weather has proved to be very beneficial for the family herb garden. Hidden off in a remote section by the bird feeder and fake snake to keep critters at bay, my cilantro bolted early while I was on vacation, but the basil, parsley and chives have all been fighting for space under the pumpkin leaves and shade from tomato plants.

I've already harvested the rosemary, mint and thyme which were tied into small bundles and hung from the kitchen ceiling to dry.

This not only makes for an interesting splash of color, but the aroma generated from the drying makes you want to just stand there and smell. Kinda like a summertime potpourri.

Probably the biggest thrill of the summer garden is the sharing that takes place among friends, neighbors and relatives.

I know of people who sneak around with grocery bags of fresh garden delights, only to leave them at the doors of strangers, hoping that they, too, will share in their bounty.

If you find yourself with more than what you can use, contact your local soup kitchen or senior citizens cooperative and drop off a bushel of mixed vegetables that are sure to bring nourishment to the less fortunate.

If you didn't plant a garden this year, but are hungry for some garden-fresh vegetables, visit one of the many area farmer's markets. There's one in Plymouth on Penman, off Main Street in downtown Plymouth, open 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturdays, and in Royal Oak at 11 Mile and Market St., open 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays.

See tried-and-true Janes' family-tested recipes inside.

HOT Stuff!

Top chilis
fired up

Paul Huyck is warmed up and ready to defend his title at the Michigan Chili Cookoff. He and other chilis offer tips for stirring up a tasty pot.

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Paul Huyck of Farmington Hills has learned a thing or two about chili since he won the 13th annual Michigan Championship Chili Cookoff at the Lark Restaurant in West Bloomfield last year.

"I've been practicing. Believe it or not, I never heard of adding chicken broth to chili, but it does add flavor," said Huyck, who will return to the Lark on Sunday, Sept. 13, to defend his title at the sold-out event.

"In good chili, it's the flavor not the heat that counts. It has to have a little bite, but the flavor is very important. It has to have a great taste and be consistent so it's good every time," said Huyck who competed in the World Championship Cookoff at Rawhide, Nevada after winning the Michigan competition.

In Nevada he competed against 88 cooks who were divided into four tables for judging. He placed seventh at his table. In February, he competed against 43 cooks in Jackson, Mich., and won.

Chili cookoffs, although festive and fun, turn serious when it's time to judge the winning pot. A panel of celebrity judges including yours truly, must follow the International Chili Society rules. There are no absolute guidelines to indicate how judges should make their winning decisions, but they consider flavor, texture of the meat, consistency, the blend of spices, aroma and color.

One of the questions asked to help the judges make up their minds is — "If I am to have one type of chili for the



Warm up: Busy fall schedules don't leave much time for cooking. Chili is perfect for quick dinners and tailgate parties. Chili compliments of Old Mexico Restaurant.

As temperatures fall and get chilly,
there's nothing finer than a warm
bowl of chili.
Rustle up some friends and cook a pot,
just remember some like it hot, others not.

Immigrant's dream of 'Old Mexico' comes true



BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Vickie Castaneda will never forget the Thanksgiving when she and her husband, Ramon, went to Chicago to visit her sister. "We went to this tiny restaurant called Mr. Taco later in the day after we had our turkey dinner. It was just a tiny place. The business was unbelievable. My husband started talking to the owner and he said 'we've got to go home and get a restaurant.' That weekend we went home, looked at the classified ads and found a restaurant to buy."

More than 20 years later, Vickie is still happily married to Ramon, the mother of two children, Tim and Alicia, and grandma to Alexander. "I got dragged into this business," she said with a smile.

Vickie is of Lithuanian and Irish descent. She was born in Virginia, grew up in Detroit, and graduated from the High School of Commerce. She and Ramon met on the Boblo Boat. "Everyone laughs and thinks we made it up," she said.

Ramon grew up in Mexico, moved to Detroit when he was 16 and worked in many area restaurants, dreaming of some day owning his own.

Their first restaurant was in the old Redford section of Detroit. They sold it and have since opened restaurants in Livonia and West Bloomfield. Vickie manages the Livonia restaurant, and Ramon spends most of his time at the West Bloomfield restaurant.

Their son, Tim, is in the catering business. Alicia, helps out at the West Bloomfield restaurant cooking and waitressing.

Who does the cooking at your house?

"Ramon does the cooking," said Vickie. "I like to cook, it relaxes me," said Ramon. "When I come home from the restaurant I'll cook something to eat." Where did you learn to cook?



ART EMANUEL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

"My mom was a good cook," said Ramon. "She used to get up at 6 a.m. and cook all her tortillas fresh. I found I enjoyed cooking. I love to eat, and I love the restaurant business. I'm proud of my nationality, and I enjoy sharing my culture by serving people this food."

What's a normal dinner at your house?

"Steak and potatoes with cilantro, peppers and tomatoes," said Ramon. Favorite piece of cookware?

"A charcoal grill. It adds flavor," said Ramon who has a grill at his West Bloomfield restaurant. His grilled Steak Fajitas are a popular dish. Favorite herb or spice?

Ramon likes oregano and hot peppers. "I carry some hot peppers with me in my pocket when I go out to eat or visiting. Your system gets used to it, and you've got to have something hot."

Name five things in your refrigerator at home?

"Three kinds of mustard, watermelon, black beans, tortilla shells and leftover pork."

Cooking tip?

"Don't over spice or over salt your food. You can always add, but it's hard to take away," said Ramon.

What to do if you eat a pepper that's too hot?

"Drink milk or something hot like coffee, not water to take away the heat," said Ramon. Putting salt on your fist, and licking it like people do when they drink shots of tequila helps too, he said.

rest of my life — which container on this table would I choose?"

Three winners will be chosen from the 40 chili cooks entered in the competition. Event proceeds will help fund \$1,000 scholarships for 10 area culinary arts students at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Oakland Community College in Livonia, Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn and the Culinary Institute in Hyde Park, N.Y.

Jim Adamaki of Redford, winner of numerous cookoffs including the North Central Chili Cookoff in 1982, will be returning to the Lark this year to compete. Adamaki bottled his secret spice blend. It's called "Adamaki's Original Sin Chili Powder," and is available at Conrad's Market, 27470 Schoolcraft west of Inkster Road in Livonia.

"Use good meat," said Adamaki who won the first Michigan competition in 1979. "Don't make it too hot. You can always make things hotter."

Gary Ray of Livonia goes to a spice store in Eastern Market for "pure chili."

"The chili powder you buy at the store is a blend of chili, cumin, garlic powder and salt. I make my own blend."

At home, he likes to make chili and spaghetti that's spicy, but in competitions, he considers the likes and dislikes of the region.

"Out east they like a touch of red in their chili. The red, of course comes from tomatoes. Here they don't," said Ray who competed in the cookoff at the Lark last year and will be returning this year.

For meat, he recommends using ground sirloin or bottom round steak chopped up.

If you've ever wondered whether chili is a Texan or Mexican dish, according to Charles Ramsdell, author of a history of San Antonio, Texas and H. Allen Smith, author of "Nobody Knows More About Chili Than I Do," chili was invented on the Canary Islands by Spanish settlers seeking to reproduce the spicy cuisine of their homeland.

Texas is the only state in the union that has passed a bill naming chili as the official state food. The bill was passed in 1977.

Actor Will Rogers called chili the "Bowl of Blessings." It's virtues are many. Chili can be made ahead and frozen for quick dinners. It's perfect for tailgate picnics and casual dinners with friends.

If you're a Democrat, get in the spirit of the election and make a pot of Park's Texas Democrat Chili from the El Paso Chili Company's Texas Border Cookbook (see recipe inside).

You Republicans are going to have to rustle up your own recipe. I couldn't find one.

See recipes inside.

They're cooking: Ramon stirs the beans and his wife, Vickie, checks some hot peppers cooking on the stove in the kitchen at the Old Mexico restaurant in Livonia.