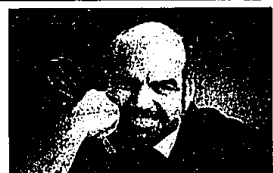


MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1992

TASTE

B

TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Cranberries in stores, bring on the holidays

Not being one to rush the seasons, but let's face it folks, the holidays are upon us. I haven't even put away the lawn chairs yet, and still have a recipe for the ultimate Mint Julep waiting patiently on my desk to try.

What happened to summer? I have friends who have already completed their Christmas shopping. They have their greeting cards written, addressed and stamped, and are ready to head south for some sun. I haven't started my spring house cleaning yet.

It is to these organized people that I dedicate this column on cranberries. Why? Because traditionally, I'm about five weeks ahead of myself. I am typically because this year, I must be about five weeks behind.

When I start seeing cranberries on the shelves in grocery stores, the holiday season can't be that far away.

Medicinal values

For the nostalgia buffs, cranberries have been popping around kitchens for hundreds of years. Originally called the mossberry (because it is usually grown in boggy areas of North America and Europe), cranberries look like small cherries. The color varies from a clear pink to a deep red.

Used extensively in the Middle Ages as a medicinal product, cranberries have an acid flavor, taste very astringent, and are bitter when eaten raw.

It is because of these "bitter" powers that the cranberry was used to "draw out" certain ailments. The Indians used cranberries, not only medicinally and for cooking, but also used the coloring as war paint and colorful makeup for tribal rituals.

Cooking cranberries

When cooked, cranberries produce a compote like jelly with a delicate taste. They are traditionally served with fowl and wild game.

Cranberries that are processed usually wind up in the obligatory holiday favorite, canned cranberry sauce, and that omnipotent cure-all for the kids, cranberry juice.

Beginning now, you will see cranberries brimming in poly-sealed bags all over grocery stores, gearing up for their big show, which is the holidays. It is during these times that the fresh cranberry finds its way into muffins, breads, fruitcakes, candies, sauces and stuffings.

Ammunition for kids

Of course, when you have kids, you will also find them being used in elingshots; they can be thrown with force because of their solid weight and tendency for explosion on impact.

These smashed cranberries cannot be removed from couches, curtains and carpets unless you are lucky enough to own something made with that new material that won't absorb stains.

Should you have any leftover berries, it is highly suggested that you not place a string of cranberries outdoors "for the birds," especially if you have a light colored automobile near by. Yes, they can stain a car finish too!

Momma's recipe

While researching this column, I called upon momma who agreed to part with her all-time smash hit for homemade cranberry sauce. With pencil in hand, I anxiously awaited the formula which I'm sure would be passed down to yet another generation of Jones'.

Needless to say, I felt like the air was let out of my soufflé when told that all you need was one pound of cranberries to 1½ cups water and 2 cups sugar (1 plus 1½ plus 2).

Easy to remember? Sure. But I was looking for something with a little more aplomb that included various amounts of spices and about 14 hours or so on the stove.

"Pour it all in a stainless saucepan, cover and cook until the berries pop" was all I was told. Finally, something of momma's that I can better. I tried the recipe and included a healthy zest of lemon and orange rind, and was even more pleased with the results.

Storing cranberries

Anyway you try it, the taste comparison over that canned stuff is undeniable. Everyone knows that fresh is best.

Cranberries will keep in the refrigerator when simply rinsed under cold water and placed in a colander in one of those taper drawers or on the lower shelf for about 10 days when fresh.

See Jones family tested recipes inside. To leave a voice mail message for Larry Jones, dial 953-2047 on a touchtone phone, mailbox 1886.

Dare to be Rare

Roast turkey over an open fire



In the 1990s, Turkey has become one of America's most common foods. Reasonably priced and "healthy," turkey cutlets, turkey breast, turkey drumsticks, turkey ground and turkey smoked are readily available in delis and meat departments.

BY JOAN BORAM

SHARON STALEY

If turkeys were T-shirts, their motto would read, "Familiarity makes the heart grow fonder." After all, there was a time, not long ago when "turkey" meant a whole turkey, roasted with all the fixin's appropriate to Thanksgiving, and, possibly, Christmas.

In the 1990's, turkey is one of America's most ubiquitous foods. Reasonably priced and "healthy," turkey cutlets, turkey breast, turkey drumsticks, turkey ground and turkey smoked are readily available in delis and meat departments.

In 1930, Americans consumed 1½ pounds of turkey per person. In 1980, consumption had risen to 10.4 pounds, and in 1991, we're averaging 19.6 pounds of turkey per person.

And yet, practically everyone in America still has turkey with all the fixin's for Thanksgiving. Even though there's no evidence that the first celebrants ate more turkey than venison or quail or even oysters, Thanksgiving just isn't Thanksgiving without turkey.

"It's a turkey holiday," said Mike

Albus, owner of Stan's Market, in Livonia. "We do sell some other birds, such as capons or ducks, but not enough to talk about."

"The really unique aspect of the Thanksgiving bird is the dressing. I hear people in the store talking about their special dressings, or about their secret ingredient that they won't share even with their children."

Some cooks can't get along without Awrey's white stuffing bread. Others buy Pepperidge Farm stuffing and use that as a basis for their own special formula.

Just notice: If you go to somebody's house for Thanksgiving dinner, the real question isn't "How was the turkey?" but "Did you like the dressing?" The dressing is the proof of the cook's talents and hard work.

And ethnic background makes a difference too, said Albus. "My wife's grandmother is Polish, and the day before Thanksgiving she boils a chicken so she can shred the meat and use it in the stuffing. The dressing is fabulous, but who else would go to the trouble?"

We can't deny that all dressings are unique, but there are other approaches

to preparing the big bird that both distinguishes it from the "norm," while veering more toward authentic cooking methods.

Certainly the first celebrants cooked over an open fire, and some 1990s celebrants manage to cook their turkey without the benefit of an oven, also.

Sharon Staley of Birmingham, her husband Dennis and their three children once spent Thanksgiving camping in the Alpena area. "We were with three other families who also had children with them," she said. "We cooked the turkey in a fire pit. It was a simple way to cook the bird — actually, the only way, since we didn't have a stove — and the novelty took the children's minds off the fact that they were away from the malls."

To follow Staley's method, first you dig a pit, somewhat larger than the 13 pound bird that the families cooked. Build a good-sized fire, and when it has ceased blazing, wrap the well-greased bird with an onion in the cavity, in several layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil and put it on top of the fire. Bunk the coals around the bird, and add wood or charcoal to cover the bird.

"It takes about three hours," said Staley. "And the bird is really moist. And of course, waiting for dinner in the crisp northern air really gives you an appetite."

A couple of years ago, Staley was

remodeling her kitchen and had to rely on a two-burner hot plate to feed the family. "We cooked our turkey that year in the fireplace, using basically the same method that we did in Alpena. It turned out beautifully."

Warren Harvey, of Birmingham has always cooked his family's Thanksgiving turkey because he likes to cook, and his wife Charlotte was born and raised in Scotland where turkey isn't exactly a tradition.

"I just take an 18-pound turkey, grease it good with butter, wire the wings and leg in position, and put it in the rotisserie about 9 a.m. It's finished about 4 p.m."

"I baste it about once an hour, or whenever I happen to walk by. I don't stuff it, but I suppose you could if you wanted to. One year we went to a football game and it didn't get basted at all. The outside was pretty crispy, but the inside was still moist."

In the past, the Harveys fed as many as 50 family members for Thanksgiving, but as their three children and other children have married, and started their own holiday tradition, the guest list has dwindled to about 20.

"In the early days, we also had a ham," said Harvey. "And every family brought a dessert dish. To tell the truth, we miss the crowd."

See recipes inside.

NATIONAL TURKEY FEDERATION

Warm up with country chicken and barley soup

WINNER DINNER



BETSEY BRETHEN

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

WINNER DINNER

The nip in the air reminds us that November has begun. What better way to ward off the chill in the air than with a delicious bowl of hearty soup.

This week's Winner Dinner bill of fare, submitted by Linda McCormick of Bloomfield Hills, features recipes for country chicken and

barley soup, romaine and dried cranberry salad and an easy recipe for chocolate fudge sauce.

Originally from Massachusetts, McCormick and her husband, Donald, moved to the Detroit area from Boston five years ago. They have been very happy here, enjoying all the pleasures that Michigan has to offer, especially the many beautiful lakes and the warm friendliness of Michiganders.

Prior to moving here and the birth of her son, McCormick worked in advertising for 10 years. She has shifted

her focus to helping out at her son's school, and is a board member of the Junior Group of Goodwill Industries.

The group is hosting an antique show that will run Nov. 20-22 at the Michigan State Fair Grounds in Detroit. For information, call 549-3160 or 644-8779.

An avid antique hunter, McCormick tries to never miss the monthly Saline Antique show. Her other hobbies include needle arts, golf and tennis. She also teaches a weekly religious education class at St. Thomas More Church in Troy.

Thank you, Linda McCormick, for sharing your recipes with us, and congratulations on being this week's Winner Dinner Winner.

Submit recipes to be considered for publication in this column, or elsewhere, to: Winner Dinner, P.O. Box 3503, Birmingham, Mich. 48012. All Winners receive an apron with the words "Winner Dinner Winner" printed on it. To leave a voice mail message for Betsy Brethen, dial 953-2047 on your touchtone phone, mailbox 1851.

Winner

Dinner: Lin-

da McCorm-

ick and her

son Jeffrey,

5, make one

of their fa-

vorite din-

ners, coun-

try chicken

and barley

soup and

romaine

and dried

cranberry

salad.

WINNER

DINNER

WINNER

DINNER

WINNER

DINNER



STYLERIE CANTRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

Winner Dinner Recipes



COUNTRY CHICKEN AND BARLEY SOUP

4 chicken breast halves (with bones)

½ cup barley

5½ cups chicken stock

1 stalk celery, chopped

3 carrots, peeled and sliced

1 large tomato, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon soy sauce

½ teaspoon basil

Dash of oregano

Dash of thyme

Dash of cayenne pepper

2 tablespoons fresh parsley, minced

In a stockpot, bring all ingredients, except parsley, to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Remove chicken from soup. When cool, remove meat from bones and chop into bite-sized pieces. Return chicken to soup and simmer for 15 minutes. Stir in parsley and serve. Serves 8.

ROMAINE AND DRIED CRANBERRY SALAD

1 head romaine lettuce

½ cup dried cranberries (or dried cherries)

½ cup sliced mushrooms

3-4 green onions, chopped, including green stems

CROUTONS

3 tablespoons olive oil

2-3 whole garlic cloves, peeled

3 slices white bread, crusts removed and cubed

DRESSING

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

2 teaspoons red wine vinegar

¼ cup olive oil

Salt to taste

Freshly ground pepper to taste

Rinse and dry romaine lettuce.

Add other salad ingredients, toss and chill.

To make croutons, remove crusts and cube bread. Heat 3 tablespoons

olive oil in a skillet; add whole garlic

cloves and bread. Sauté until

bread cubes are golden and drain in

a colander. Remove garlic cloves

and add croutons to salad just be-

fore tossing with dressing.

To make the dressing, in a small

bowl, mix together mustard and vi-

negar. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Whisk in olive oil slowly. Pour over

salad, toss and serve.

CHOCOLATE FUDGE SAUCE

12 ounces semisweet morsels

30 ounces evaporated milk

2 sticks butter

1 pound confectioners' sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla

Melt semisweet morsels, milk

and butter in a large saucepan. Add

sugar and bring to a boil. Boil for 6

minutes or until thickened. Add va-

nilla and stir well. Pour into a 48-

ounce jar and refrigerate. When

serving, spoon out desired amount

and warm in a microwave oven or in

a small sauce pan over low heat.

Serve over vanilla ice cream and

cut-up fresh pears and/or raspber-

ries.