

MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 1993

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Time invested in pickles well spent

When a farmer looks at cucumber vines, he daydreams about sparkling jars in the fruit cellar filled with all kinds of pickles.

Between the garden and table, there are many hours invested in making old-time treats — fresh-packed dills, bread and butters, piccilli, chowchow, icicle pickles and many others with fanciful names.

I say invested because that's exactly what the home gardener and canner is doing, "investing" in time well spent making pickles that will be enjoyed for many months to come.

There are basically two kinds of cucumber pickles — brine cured (also called fermented) and quick process or freshpack.

In the brine cure, vegetables are kept in brine until fermentation is complete (about 4-6 weeks). Experts agree that these pickles, if well made, are worth the time and attention they require.

But many quick process pickles are equally delicious. Some quick process pickles can be canned immediately after a brief simmer in a brine solution, others age gracefully being nurtured on the refrigerator shelf and kept chilled to a crisp perfection.

Right ingredients

In order to make the best pickles you have to start with the right ingredients.

Slicing cucumbers, grown for salads and fresh eating, do not make the best pickles. Waxed cucumbers from the local grocer are totally unacceptable.

Immature cucumbers make the best pickles and the pros agree that it's best to can them immediately after picking or as soon as possible after picking.

Cucumbers that have been picked more than 24 hours before canning make pickles that are hollow, shriveled and tough. A secret Grandma Lory passed down to momma was never use any cucumbers that float in the water while you're washing them; they're usually hollow.

Pros also use good dry onions in the pickling process as fresh onions do not pickle well. As any good pickler can tell you, always use clear vinegar with a specified acid strength of 5 percent or 50 grains. This information should be on the bottle label.

White distilled vinegar gives pickles the best color. Cider vinegar may darken pickles, but some home canners prefer its flavor and aroma. Salt is the major ingredient in brine and pros prefer a pickling or canning salt over table salt. The additives in table salt to prevent caking make the brine cloudy while iodized salt may darken pickles and retard fermentation.

Pickling fanciers use only the freshest spices for the best flavor. Whole spices help produce pickles of superior color. Fresh dill as opposed to dry is preferred. The use of sugar or other sweetening agents is occasionally used and again, the canner should use pure sugar, cane or beet, unless the recipe specifies other sweeteners.

Lastly, it is important that you have good, soft water. The minerals in hard water interfere with the curing process.

Canning equipment

As far as the correct equipment is concerned, professional canners use only stainless steel cookware and utensils.

Aluminum reacts with pickling liquids and cast iron, unlined copper or galvanized steel combine with pickling acids and salts to form very small quantities of harmful substances.

Experienced canners know it's important to have good jars. They check jars for chips and cracks, and scrutinize lids for rust, bends and cracked rubber seals.

Jars should be sterilized for any pickle recipe that calls for processing the pickles less than 15 minutes. I sterilize my jars in the dishwasher, and keep them there during the drying cycle until I'm ready to use them.

Open-kettle canning is no longer considered safe for canning pickles and relishes. There is always the danger of spoilage organisms entering the food when transferred from kettle to jar. Processing jars after filling them destroys yeasts and molds and also helps achieve a good seal.

Helpful cookbooks

So if you're thinking like a farmer and can't wait to fill the shelves in the fruit cellar with the freshest treats of summer, you might want to check out "The Farm Journal's Freezing and Canning Cookbook," (copyright, 1978, Ballantine Books) by Nell Nichols and Kathryn Larson.

At under \$5, it's a worthwhile investment to anyone anticipating home canning. The Kerr and Ball canning jar companies also have step-by-step books available, and there are lots of canning books at your local library.

See Larry Janes' family-tested recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1886.

TAPAS

PERFECT WALK-AROUND FOOD



Tapas: A tasty variety of hot and cold tapas offered to guests to nibble at Bill Thee's summer picnic.



Hot and cold tapas are the perfect walk-around food. They're portable, tasty, and not too filling, so guests can nibble on them all day.

BY JOAN BORAM
SPECIAL WRITER

Twice a year, for the past 21 years, Bill Thee has thrown a three-day feast for 100 family and friends. From dinner at 6 p.m. on Friday until lunch at noon on Sunday, the Bloomfield Hills resident serves foods and wines of the country or region he has selected as the gastronomic focus.

For the 1993 21st annual Summer Picnic, (as opposed to the annual Winter Picnic, held in his basement). The served foods and wines of the Iberian Peninsula.

Saturday was given over to hot and cold tapas, delicious morsels that Spaniards nibble on while

schmoozing with their friends in tapas bars. "Tapas are perfect for the kind of get-together we have on Saturday," said Thee, who takes a week's worth of vacation to prepare for the feast.

"Friends come in from around the country — former classmates from U of M and Notre Dame, co-workers, family, my parents fly in from Florida — everyone wanders around talking to people they may not have seen since last year. Tapas are a perfect walk-around food; they're portable, they're tasty, unique, and not too filling, so guests nibble all day."

On the official "menu" that accompanies the season's picnic, Thee listed nine kinds each of cold and hot tapas, but in reality there were many more, listed on a blackboard that encouraged guests to pace themselves so they'll have room for delicacies to come.

"I try to maintain an even flow of tapas, bringing out a tray every 15 or 20 minutes," said Thee. "Usually one or two that go well together. One of



PHOTOS BY BILL HANSEN

Perfect host: Bill Thee sautees shrimp for guests at his backyard picnic.

my favorites is empanadas — ground veal with tomatoes, cumin and other spices. I use a prepared puff pastry; just put dabs of the veal mixture on a sheet of pastry, cover it with another sheet, and stamp out empanadas with a ravioli cutter. Empanadas actually benefit from freezing, which gives the flavors a chance to develop.

Thee credits his suppliers for the success of his picnic — his philosophy is — "use simple ingredients, but only the very finest."

Most of his produce comes from Strawberry Hill in Farmington Hills. J.R., a butcher at Fisher's Market in Birmingham, always finds Thee what he wants, even if it's something weird like 10 pounds of pork fat, on short notice.

To show his appreciation, he invites suppliers to the annual event. They enjoy the festivities, and it means a lot to see their contributions to a Russian, Tex-Mex or Spanish feast.

See TAPAS, 2B

Family makes an effort to have dinners together

SUPER SUPPERS

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Every day is different at the Campion house in Southfield. Everyone is busy, but they make a concerted effort to have a home-cooked meal together nearly every day.

Their front door often resembles a revolving door, with people coming and going all the time. Roberta Campion is director of alumnae relations for her alma mater, Mercy High School in Farmington Hills. For the past 10 years, she's also directed and choreographed musicals at the school, and she is the choreographer for the school's show choir, the Mercyaires.

Campion also directs and choreographs musicals at Andover High School in Bloomfield Hills and is a dancer with the Los Flamencos Dance Theater.

Her husband, Michael, is a master carpenter, and son Patrick, 15, is a junior at Catholic Central High School in Redford, plays baseball, and works part-time at the A&W Restaurant at Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi. Patrick has also performed in some plays.

Roberta's mother, Vincie Santangelo Misura, a retired pharmacist, helps keep this busy family on schedule. She's an excellent cook, and has been the volunteer production manager for Mercy High School's musicals for the past several years.

She said she learned how to cook

from her mother, who learned how to cook from her mother, who cooked for a princess in Palermo, Sicily.

"My mother's emphasis was on unique ways of preparing vegetables," said Vincie, who discovered that she could get her family to eat carrots if she put a brown-sugar glaze on them.

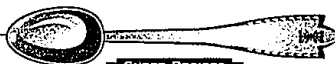
Roberta and her mother are spending quite a bit of time this summer at Mercy High School preparing for the school's third annual Meg Mallon Golf Outing, set for Monday, Aug. 16. The event includes morning and afternoon tee-offs, breakfast, lunch,

See FAMILY, 2B



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Helping out: Patrick Campion adds cheese to the zucchini his grandma is sauteing.



SUPER RECIPES

POLISH MEAT PATTIES

- 3 slices soft white bread (moistened with milk and crumbed)
- 1 cup finely minced onion (sautéed in margarine or butter)
- 1 1/2 pounds lean ground chuck
- 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup Italian bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup corn flake crumbs

Combine all ingredients except bread crumbs and form patties. They should be wet but firm. Combine bread crumbs, coat patties.

Brown patties in skillet with onions until cooked through, about 10 to 15 minutes. Serves 4.

SAUTEED ZUCCHINI

- 4 to 6 medium zucchini
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon corn oil
- 1/2 cup grated Colby cheese (or more to taste)

Peel and slice zucchini into "coin shapes." Fry in mixture of corn and olive oil until golden brown (10 to 15 minutes). Turn off burner. Sprinkle cheese on top of zucchini. Put a cover on frying pan so cheese will melt. Serve very hot.

JULIENED CARROTS

- 4 or 5 carrots
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar

- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine

Water to boil carrots
Slice carrots very thinly into "skinny sticks." Boil in a small amount of water. When somewhat tender, drain. In the bottom of a small frying pan, melt butter or margarine. Add a tablespoon of brown sugar, stir. Pour glaze over carrots, serve.

CREAMED CUCUMBERS

- 1 large seedless cucumber (sliced very thin)
- 1 white onion sliced very thin
- 4 heaping tablespoons salad dressing like Miracle Whip
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 3 to 4 teaspoons sugar (to taste, optional)
- Milk
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Dill weed to taste
- Slice cucumber as thin as possible. You can substitute large firm cucumbers for seedless cucumber if you wish. Place cucumbers in a bowl, cover with a plate and place a heavy weight on plate to drain cucumbers. Drain after approximately two hours.
- Mix salad dressing with milk to a runny consistency. Add red wine vinegar, mix well. Add sugar to taste, salt, pepper and dill weed.
- Mix cucumbers with dressing, marinate in refrigerator until serving time.