

THURSDAY, MAY 7, 1992

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Lend an ear for ways to enjoy fresh corn

If there is one vegetable that is welcome on any table, it's probably corn. Corn is delicious in chowders, vegetable medleys, as a vegetarian entree or just cooked plain. There are six principle types of corn, with sweet corn and dent corn, also known as field corn, being the most widely consumed.

Dent corn is by far the most common variety. It accounts for about 95 percent of all the corn grown in the United States, and is mostly fed to livestock with some sold to manufacturers who make food and industrial products from it.

Sweet corn is grown chiefly for human consumption, and is harvested at an immature stage. The kernels are relatively high in sugar at the time they are harvested. It tastes best when eaten as soon after picking as possible.

Fresh corn on the cob will quickly lose its flavor unless it is kept refrigerated after harvesting. This happens because heat turns the sugar in the kernels into starch, resulting not only in a marked loss of flavor, but also a noticeable toughness.

Momma always was a little leery about buying corn from a supermarket, but today's refrigerated transportation services make it possible to enjoy fresh corn far from the fields where it was grown.

Cooking corn

One of the most common faults in cooking corn on the cob is overcooking it. Not only does overcooking toughen the corn, but continuous boiling reduces the sweetness.

In his revised edition of "The New York Times Cookbook," Craig Claiborne suggests that instead of boiling the corn, simply bring a large pot of water to a boil (enough to cover the corn) and add one tablespoon of salt for each quart of water. Bring the water to a rolling boil, shuck the corn and drop it into the boiling water and allow it to return to a boil.

Immediately turn off the heat and allow the corn to stand in the water exactly five minutes. Simply drain and serve for the best corn. Another James Gang favorite is roasted corn on the cob.

Fire up the grill or barbecue while the unshucked corn bathes in cold water in the kitchen sink. No need to soak for long periods, 10-15 minutes proves more than adequate to soak the husks.

Purists might choose to remove some of the silk before cooking but I find this an unnecessary step. Drain the water and place the ears on the hot grill so that they are not crowded and cover. All that's needed for delectable roast corn is 16-20 minutes of patience, with a rotation half way through it. Yours truly finds corn roasted on the grill has a nuttier flavor, lacking that "boiled out" taste that usually accompanies boiled corn. Another variation of this method finds the backyard chef loosening the husks and applying an herbed butter directly to the ears, then bringing up the wet husks for a more gourmet approach.

Anyway you cook it, it's great. I would be remiss if I forgot to mention those folks who enjoy fresh corn, but prefer to enjoy their corn sans the cob. Uncle Orin was one of those corn aficionados who never enjoyed the cob variety. I remember observing Grandma Lory eliciting the kernels off the cob in a unique way. Grandma would venture down to the cellar and bring up a well-used tube pan or bundt cake pan. She would place the shucked ear, before blanching it, in the center tube and slice away. If memory serves me correctly, she would use an angel food tube cake pan that just fit a corn cob. As she sliced away, the corn would fall into the tube pan with nary a kernel hitting the floor or counter top. There's little doubt where momma got her culinary expertise.

Enjoying corn past the harvest season is another culinary wonder made possible by the use of a freezer. You can blanch the corn in boiling, lightly salted water either on or off the cob.

Blanching on the cob should take about 3 minutes while blanching off the cob should be done for no more than 2 minutes. Drain and immediately cool the corn in cold running water. Drain, pat dry and freeze individual ears on a cookie sheet for about 2 hours or spread kernels on a cookie sheet and freeze for 1 hour.

Package in freezer bags, seal, label, date and return to the freezer for corn you can enjoy in the middle of winter. Frozen corn is great in hearty winter chowders, fried corn cakes or stirred into packaged cornbread mixes for a fresher taste. Anyway you slice it, fresh corn on the cob just can't be beat. Enjoy some today!

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

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Dinner is in the pan when we catch fish in our area's inland lakes. Fisherman share cooking tips for pan fish.
- Find out what's new in California wine country.



BILL HANSEN

Holiday dinner: Helene Weiss delegates Rosh Hashana meal preparation tasks to her children Netanya, 13 and Izzy, 11. Here they help her make Rosh Hashana Honeyed Carrots, a traditional side dish.

Jewish New Year BUSY FAMILIES PREPARE SIMPLY Wonderful Feast



BY ANNE LEHMANN
SPECIAL WRITER

Holidays place special demands on working moms. Helene Weiss shares tips for making a simply delicious Rosh Hashana dinner.

Juggling the roles of wife, mother and career woman is a common challenge for many women these days. Add to that the stress of having to plan for large holiday dinners and a schedule which is hectic can become dizzying.

Helene Weiss, mother of two, Netanya, 13, and

Izzy, 11, is up at 5:30 a.m. each day, carpools her kids from her West Bloomfield home to Akiva Day School in Southfield, and by 8:30 a.m. is at her desk at PRN in Madison Heights as a pharmaceutical sales representative.

With a shortage of time, and lots to do, preparing elaborate meals for Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, which begins at sundown on Sept. 15, is a real challenge. "You have to be organized and keep things simple," said Weiss.

She adheres to the principle that a meal doesn't have to be complicated to be good. Hence, for her family, the first holiday meal will consist of such traditional favorites as chicken soup, roast turkey, honeyed carrots and apple

cake.

Simple though it may be, it takes a lot of planning and organizing to pull it all together in time for the holiday.

In the early morning before dropping her kids off at school, she'll stop at the cleaner's and pick up baked goods at Zeman's, a kosher bakery in Oak Park. Her lunch hours are reserved for errands that can only be done during business hours.

"Now that my kids are older I delegate," said Weiss. "I think they have a sense of responsibility and enjoy helping to assemble, what for my family, is a very meaningful meal."

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Dinner no problem for organized mom



BY KEELY WYOGNIK
STAFF WRITER

You've heard the saying — "If you want to get something done, give the task to a busy person." That's what organizers of the Marian Calico Craft Show had in mind when they asked Teresa Saputo of Troy to run the kitchen, dubbed Calico Cafe.

Saputo and her husband William own two McDonald's restaurants. They also have two children — Jessica, 15 and Bill, 13. Jessica is a sophomore at Marian High School.

"Being a working mom, I don't do a lot at school," said Saputo between the lunch and dinner rush at the McDonald's restaurant she and her husband own on Woodward at 13 Mile in Royal Oak. They're in the midst of a major renovation of a McDonald's they just took over on Rochester Road at Avon Road in Rochester Hills.

"I volunteered to run the kitchen. I figured it can't be much harder than running a restaurant," said Saputo. "The money goes for scholarships, science lab equipment, and other things at the school."

Calico Cafe show which runs 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 1, and 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 2, at Marian High School, 7225 Lahser, Bloomfield Hills, will feature over 125

exhibitors and a Harvest Market with pumpkins, mums, and scarecrows. When you're tired of shopping, and hungry for a treat, visit the cafe. "We'll be serving pizza, ham and cheese sandwiches, chicken noodle soup, cream of broccoli soup, brownies and apple sauce bars," said Saputo.

A preview party is scheduled 7-10

See DINNER, 2B



JIM RIDER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Quick dessert: Jessica (left) helps her mom, Teresa, make apple surprise, a delicious dessert full of fall flavors.



SUPER RECIPES

CHICKEN WITH RICE

- 1 can (10 1/2 ounce) cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can (10 1/2 ounce) cream of celery soup
- 1 soup can filled with cold water
- 1 soup can filled with hot water
- 1 beef bouillon cube
- 1 soup can filled with uncooked white rice
- 6-8 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 envelope onion soup mix
- 1 stick butter, sliced

Mix cream soups together with water, bouillon cube and rice. Put in a 13 by 9-inch pan.

Lay chicken breasts on top of rice. Sprinkle with soup mix and butter slices. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour uncovered, bake 15 more minutes covered. Serves 6.

APPLE SURPRISE

- 2 cans (21 ounce) apple pie filling
- 1 can (21 ounce) crushed, drained pineapple
- 1 box yellow cake mix (18.25 ounce box)
- 1 1/2 sticks melted butter
- Cinnamon

Place pie filling in a 13 by 9 inch pan. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

Sprinkle crushed pineapple on top of mixture. Sprinkle dry cake mix

on top of crushed pineapple. Pour melted butter over top. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Serves 6. You can substitute cherry or peach pie filling for apple.

CHOP SUEY

- 1 round steak, 1 1/2 to 2 pounds (sliced into 1/2-inch pieces)
- 1/2 stick butter
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 4 cups water
- 2 beef bouillon cubes
- 1 can (14 ounce) chop suey vegetables
- 1 can (8 ounce) water chestnuts
- 1 can (14 ounce) bean sprouts

Brown steak in melted butter with garlic and bouillon cubes. Add water. Cook covered on low heat until tender, about 30 minutes. Add vegetables, simmer until vegetables are warm. Serve over hot cooked rice. Serves 6.

To save time — cook steak and rice in advance, reheat and add vegetables when you get home from work. Add whatever vegetables you have on hand — peas, pods, mushrooms and carrots are another tasty combination.

If you don't like chop suey, add a jar of gravy to the meat and serve over egg noodles — instant spaghetti.