

Purim merriment capped off with delicious hamantaschen

Masks, plays, merriment and hamantaschen make the Jewish celebration of Purim a delight for children, as well as adults.

The holiday, celebrated Feb. 25, marks a time in Jewish history without persecution. Believed to be taken from the Book of Esther, Purim is celebrated with customs from the Persian New Year dating back 2,000 years.

Persecution has been a part of the Hebrew-Jewish tradition since Joseph entered Egypt, but

the Purim story talks of a time when a secular king ruled most of the known world and married a Jewess. The king turns the tables on those who persecuted the Jews and sets out to annihilate those who sought their destruction.

Preparation for Purim begins well in advance of the festival with families making masks and costumes and preparing the traditional hamantaschen. The treats are believed to have originated in

Germany and are sometimes called mehtaschen.

A pre-Purim event with mask- and crown-making activities for children will be hosted locally by the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield at 10:30 a.m. Feb. 24. Grandparents are invited to bring their grandchildren dressed in Purim costumes to the center. Reservations can be made by calling Lorraine Morris at 681-7649. There is a fee for the event. Purim itself is not a full holi-

day and children attend school as usual. Late in the afternoon, a special Purim meal is prepared and the actual celebration begins.

The traditional Purim Se'udah (festive meal) would have included 24 meat, poultry and pastry dishes, but the meal has been simplified for most modern-day Purim revelers. Families then visit their synagogues where the Purim traditions continue.

After a celebration of games, masquerading and a reinactment

of the book of Esther, the costume-clad children venture off with baskets of hamantaschen to share with neighbors.

The traditional hamantaschen recipe is quite involved, but a simple children's version of the holiday treat will keep the celebration alive in Jewish households and allow maximum involvement for the entire family.

HAMANTASCHEN FOR KIDS
1 cup butter
2 cups sugar

1 Teaspoon vanilla
3 eggs
4 cups flour
½ Teaspoon salt
jam or jelly

Mix all ingredients together, except jelly. Roll into balls and then flatten out. Place a spoonful of jelly or jam in the center of each flattened circle of dough. Pinch the corners together to form a triangle. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 8 to 10 minutes or until golden brown. Recipe makes 12 servings.

Lamb dish marks spring thaw

Spring means many different taste treats to many different people, but for those of us who spent winters in the cold snowy parts of the country, fresh vegetables were a taste of heaven.

The tiny pink buds of rhubarb pushing through the ground, followed by the bright green heads of asparagus gave us a sure indication that spring and warm weather had arrived.

Even though American lamb is not seasonal as once thought, it still comes to mind as the spring holidays — St. Patrick's Day and Easter — near. St. Patrick's Day invites a hearty lamb stew, and Easter features a crusty brown, pink and tender roast perfect for a large family celebration.

American lamb is certainly more versatile than stew and leg of lamb, and many people who have not tried lamb before will find that stir-fry with simple ingredients will enhance their meals, both nutritionally and economically.

Lamb is characteristically tender so that cuts such as the arm chop or leg steaks makes an ideal cut for slicing into thin strips for stir-frying.

This asparagus lamb combination is a hit when it comes to nutrition. Both asparagus and lamb are sources of iron. Since

American lamb is generally low in sodium, use the reduced sodium broth and soy sauce now found on grocery shelves to keep your stir-frying dishes in line with the guidelines suggested by the dietary guidelines. Additional good news about this recipe includes Vitamins A and C, fiber and less than 20 percent calories from fat.

Don't forget to cut your lamb in even strips so that it cooks evenly. Freezing also makes it easier to slice.

The asparagus needs to be well trimmed so that there are no tough stalks. If a knife does not cut the stalk easily, either peel the tough outside or discard the remaining piece. Try to use asparagus as soon after buying or cutting from the patch as it tends to toughen as it is stored.

Fresh mild green onions create a delightful background for the lamb, but any onion can be substituted. Make sure that you do not overcook the lamb to keep it at its tender best. And by keeping the other vegetables crisp tender, it will help retain the vitamins and minerals. Celebrate spring with fresh asparagus and American lamb.

LAMB ASPARAGUS STIR FRY
12 ounces boneless lean

American lamb, leg or shoulder, cut in ½-inch strips
1 tablespoon oil
1 clove garlic, minced
2 teaspoons cornstarch
½ teaspoon ginger powder
1 tablespoon soy sauce, reduced sodium
1 cup chicken broth, reduced sodium
4 cups asparagus, trimmed and cut diagonally into ¾ inch pieces
1 large onion (1 cup), cut into ½ strips
½ cup carrots, thinly sliced
¼ cup silvered almonds or peanuts, optional

Mix cornstarch and ginger. Gradually add soy sauce and broth, blending well. Set aside. Heat oil to medium hot and add garlic and lamb strips to the skillet or wok. Stir-fry until the lamb is slightly pink. Remove the lamb from the skillet or wok. Add asparagus, onion, carrots and continue to stir-fry until crisp tender; 3 to 5 minutes.

Return lamb to the vegetable mixture. Stir in broth and continue cooking until the lamb vegetable mixture is glazed and heated thoroughly. Serve over rice or ramen noodles and top with nuts.



Springtime meal: Lamb and asparagus stir-fry is nutritional and economical.

If desired. Serves 4. Preparation time 15 minutes, cooking time 15 minutes.

Calories per serving, 272, cholesterol 57 mg, total fat 14 g, saturated fat 3 g, sodium 204 mg.

COOKING CALENDAR

To get your classes or events listed in this column, send items to be considered for publication to: Keely Wygonik, Taste Editor, The Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150. Or fax to 591-7279.

HANDS ON ENTREES
Offered at the Community Center of Farmington, Farmington Hills 10 a.m. to noon Thursday, March 10 or 7-9 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 23. Emphasizes cooking for one or two, bring apron, dinner plate and place setting. Cost \$15, plus \$4 materials fee. Call 477-5404 to register.

HEALTHY COOKING
Christine Meinke will be teaching a class on the preparation of raw and living foods as well as juicing and sprouting techniques at the Community Center of Farmington, Farmington Hills 7-9 p.m. starting Feb. 28. Classes meet five consecutive Mondays, cost is \$35 per person. Call 474-0877 for information.

PASTA COOKERY
Schoolcraft College in Livonia is offering a two week Pasta Cookery Class beginning 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 21. Certified Master Chef Jeff Gabriel will give demonstra-

tions of how to prepare quick, simple and healthy pasta dishes at home. The cost is \$85, call 462-4448 to register.

BOYSFORD HOSPITAL
Cooking demonstration, Louisiana Spice — low-fat Cajun Style Cooking, Tuesday, Feb. 22. There is a \$3 fee. Call 477-6100 to register.

LES SAISONS
Fresh Catch, seafood recipes with Master Chef Jeffrey Gabriel of Schoolcraft College, 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 23. Les Saisons is on the corner of Fourth Street and Washington, downtown Roy-

al Oak. Class on Wednesday, March 2 will feature simple and elegant light meals. Class \$25 per person or three classes for \$65. Recipes and tastings included. Call (810) 545-3400 to make a reservation.

WEIGHT WATCHERS
Free cooking demonstration, 10 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 23, Weight Watchers, Troy Commons, 815 E. Big Beaver, noon to 1:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 25, Westland Meijer's, 37201 Warren Road.

LENORE'S NATURAL CUISINE
Healthful Cooking Classes in

Farmington Hills. Call 478-4455 to learn about upcoming classes.

KITCHEN GLAMOR

Lynn Rossetto Kasper, author of "The Splendid Table," visits the Novi store 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 24. Wok Cookery and Far Eastern Flavors with Helen Coon, 1 and 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 1 through Friday, March 4 at stores in Novi, Redford, West Bloomfield and Rochester. There is a \$3 fee. Call (313) 537-1300 to register, and for schedule, and information about upcoming classes.

Eggs and egg-rich foods should never be kept out of the refrigerator for more than 2 hours, including serving time.

To ensure safe Easter eggs, do not leave hard-cooked dyed eggs at room temperature for more than two hours. Hard cooking an egg destroys much of its natural protection and makes it more susceptible to bacterial growth.

When refrigerating a large amount of a hot egg-rich dish or leftovers, divide it into several shallow containers so it will cool quickly.

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