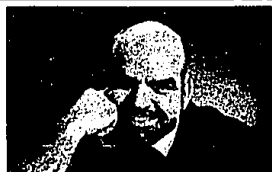


MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1994

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JAMES

Here are answers to your questions

Thanks for your kind comments about a recent column on getting ready for Lent and growing up in Wyandotte. It was fun reminiscing and hearing from readers especially those with roots Downriver.

Friday fish fries are still a big business in Wyandotte. If you know of a church or fraternal organization that makes for a great fish fry, we'd like to hear from you. Also, if your church or organization is preparing fish and other goodies with a healthy twist, please pass the word. This isn't a call for your favorite restaurant folks, just those places that prepare fish on Friday nights during Lent.

Speaking of healthy eating, Don Burski of Union Lake called to request information on a healthy cooking school.

Well Don, short of taking a course in nutrition and dietetics, I don't know of a cooking school that specializes in low-fat classes. Many communities offer healthy cooking classes as part of their adult education program. Another good source is your community hospital. St. Mary and Botsford Hospital offer healthy cooking demonstrations.

Yours truly is teaching a healthy cooking class at Kitchen Glamor shops. The next class is 6:30 p.m. Thursday, March 4, at the Kitchen Glamor store in Novi. Call 537-1300 for details.

Food allergies

In January's reader request column I mentioned Pauly Smorch of Farmington who was searching for recipes and information on gluten free cooking. Pauly was overjoyed when we passed along the name of the local Celiac Support Group whose 104 members all have allergies to gluten. They meet monthly. For information, contact Kathy Davis, President.

TriCounty Celiac Support Group, 332-2938. Anyone else out there suffer from food allergies? Drop me a note or call. We're gathering information for a future column on food allergies.

Tanya Carney and Don Quackenbush invited me to Churchill High School's second annual wild game feast in Livonia. The staff of Churchill High School, under the supervision of Quackenbush, prepared over 50 different wild game recipes that included everything from a smoked venison ham to squirrel stew and muskrat. While the wild game was great, I just couldn't resist the wonderful breads from a relatively new bakery that opened in beautiful downtown Northville dubbed Great Harvest. If you love all natural, no preservatives earthy breads that not only taste good, but are good for you, check it out.

If your taste for great food lies a little closer to home, circle March 22 for the 1994 S.O.S. (Share our Strength) benefit at the Rattlesnake Club in Detroit. Yours truly will be loosening his belt buckle to taste the foods of Marshall Chin from Mon Jin Lau in Troy, Pat Gentry from The Palate Patisserie in West Bloomfield, Matt Prentice and Tim Cikra from Morels/Bruschetta et al, and the foods of Jimmy Schmidt, Pete Peterson, Brian Polcyn, Mary Brady, Vera Ambrose and Lorraine Platman, just to name a few from our area. All of the event proceeds fight hunger in our area. For tickets call Angie Bourinas, 269-4950. I'll be there and you should be too!

Mark Fagninelli of Canton has requested a recipe for a great tasting homemade tomato sauce. Well Mark, this is the best. You can add mushrooms and cooked meats to make a heartier sauce.

Tomato Sauce

(Salsa Di Pomodoro)

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

1 small onion, minced

3 fresh cloves of garlic, minced

One 28 oz. can peeled Italian plum tomatoes, crushed

Several sprigs of parsley, bay leaves and celery leaves

Heat oil in saucepan and add onion and garlic and cook over moderate heat until the garlic turns golden but does not brown.

Add tomatoes and herbs. Simmer, uncovered for 30 minutes. Remove the herbs, season with salt and pepper.

Larry Janes answers more reader requests for recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1886.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

■ Local hospitals are celebrating National Nutrition Month by offering programs to help you improve your diet.

■ Wine columnist Eleanor and Ray Heald feature wines from France's southern Rhone.

SPECIALTY FOOD SAMPLER



STAFF PHOTO BY DAN DEAN

◆ 'AMERICAN CONNOISSEUR' WINS GOURMET GAMBLE ◆



BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Blasting his stereo got Todd Rones more than he bargained for - an opportunity to own and operate his own restaurant - American Connoisseur in West Bloomfield.

The restaurant is just part of the suburban success story of Birmingham entrepreneurs Peter Gikas and Dave Zilko who launched the American Connoisseur line of gourmet marinades, salad dressings, vinaigrettes and dessert toppings two years ago with no food experience and a \$2,500 credit card loan. In 1993 they doubled their sales, introduced five new products, and opened their first restaurant with the help of Rones who is the owner and operator.

"The first time I met Dave

he complained my stereo was too loud," said Rones, 23. "Todd and I were living next door to each other," explained Zilko.

Once the stereo issue was resolved, the neighbors learned they had much in common. Both are graduates of Michigan State University, and share a passion for food.

"He told me about the marinades and I thought they were very high quality," said Rones a transplanted Manhattanite who recently earned a degree in hotel and restaurant management.

"I sent a box of the mari-

nades to my mother home in New York. She was impressed and said I shouldn't pass up this opportunity."

On July 20, Rones' dream of

See CONNOISSEUR, 2B



Gourmet marinades: American Connoisseur gourmet marinades, vinaigrettes and salad dressings are rich in flavor, but low in saturated fats. Dave Zilko (left) and Todd Rones present crunchy chicken garden salad and honey mustard baked chicken made with American Connoisseur gourmet marinades.

Defend yourself to fight fat temptation



LAURA LETOBAR

Sometimes eating healthy is a struggle no matter how much effort we put forth. Most of us start our day with good intentions of eating low fat. We start with a great breakfast and before we know it, we are bombarded with temptations. A co-worker will bring in a box of doughnuts as a way of saying "thank you" for some project you helped them finish. Or, a friend will stop by with a great new casserole they just made and you feel obligated to eat it.

Nancy Hay of Livonia told me that one thing she needs to change to eat healthier is to have "more self-control when put in a position where sugary treats are available."

Hay, and her husband Keith, basically eat very low fat. They have made significant dietary changes such as no sugar desserts, no processed bakery items, and little or no red meat. But temptations do exist, so how do they avoid them?

Hay is an advocate of healthy living. Besides feeling better, she feels that "along with exercise (eating low fat) gives me more control over my health and mental well-being." Her number one defense against the fat temptation is the grocery store she shops at.

Hay shops at The Good Food Company, 42615 Ford Road in Canton. She visits this store for more than the obvious reason of buying gro-



RECIPE MAKE OVER

SPINACH PIE



Original Recipe

- 6 eggs
- 2 packages (10 ounces each) frozen chopped spinach
- 1 bunch green onions, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 3/4 pound feta cheese, crumbled
- 1/2 pound butter, melted
- 12 sheets phyllo dough, defrosted

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Butter bottom of 9 by 13-inch pan. Fold each sheet of phyllo dough in half. Place six sheets of phyllo dough in pan, buttering between each sheet. Cook spinach according to package directions. Drain and squeeze all excess liquid from spinach. Mix first six ingredients in a bowl. Place this mixture on top of phyllo dough in pan. Place remaining six sheets of dough on top of mixture, buttering between each layer. Brush remaining butter on top of dough. Bake for 20-25 minutes uncovered. Cover with foil and continue baking for 35 minutes. Serves 8.

Reduced-Fat Recipe

- Eggbeaters egg substitute equal to six eggs
- 2 packages (10 ounces each) frozen chopped spinach
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1/4 cup Campbell's Healthy Request low sodium, low fat chicken broth
- 1 cup 1 percent milkfat cottage cheese
- 15 ounces Sargento brand "lite" ricotta cheese
- 2 ounces feta cheese
- 12 sheets phyllo dough, defrosted
- Vegetable cooking spray

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook spinach according to package directions. Drain and remove all excess liquid from spinach. Fold six sheets of phyllo dough in half. Place each folded sheet in the bottom of a non-stick 9 by 13-inch pan. Mix first seven ingredients in a medium bowl. Place mixture over phyllo dough. Fold remaining dough sheets in half. Place each sheet over mixture, very lightly spraying each sheet with vegetable cooking oil spray. Lightly spray top layer of dough. Bake uncovered for 20 to 25 minutes. Cover pan with foil and continue baking for 35 minutes. Serves 8.