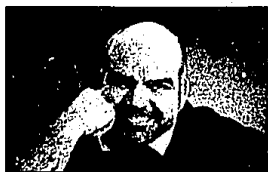


MONDAY, MARCH 7, 1994

## TASTE

## TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JAMES

## There's a vinegar for every style of cooking

**R**emember when buying vinegar meant choosing between distilled, cider, red or white? Now, as grocery carts whiz up and down aisles, shoppers stand with profoundly puzzled looks as they stare at an enormous selection of vinegars.

What's a person to do when confronted with raspberry vinegar selling at \$4 a pint on a shelf next to Balsamic vinegar that sells for \$12 a pint. A few inches away is distilled white vinegar, which costs just \$1.39 a gallon.

And those selections, friends, are at the local grocer. Have you checked out the vinegar shelves at gourmet food stores lately? Although there seems to be as many vinegars as wines, there is no reason to feel catatonic in the presence of such abundance.

Vinegar still simply means "vin aigre," sour wine, and is a by-product of fermentation. The production of wine is merely a way station in the process of making vinegar, and the number one job of a winemaker, according to Bob Trinchero of Sutter Home Winery, "is to stop about halfway through the natural progression to vinegar."

Like wine, vinegar can be made from anything that ferments, including molasses, berries, melon, maple syrup, potatoes, barley, malt, beets and even whey.

## Prehistoric beginnings

Vinegar has been around since someone accidentally discovered it in prehistoric times when a barrel of fruit was forgotten in a far corner of some cave. We know that Babylonians used it as a preservative and were canny enough to flavor it with herbs. Vinegar is frequently mentioned in the Bible. Greeks and Romans kept vinegar vessels and dipped their bread in it.

There are several types of vinegar. Distilled white is the sharpest and strongest and is made from ethyl alcohol. It is as colorless as water and has no flavor other than its acidity. It is used primarily in pickling, and, in the case of the James Gang, as a Mr. Coffee cleaner. Legendary for its cleaning properties, distilled vinegar makes windows sparkle, removes spots, stains and odors.

Malt vinegars are produced from malted barley and potatoes that are first made into a crude beer that is often converted into acetic acid. It is filtered and aged. The British douse malt vinegar on fish and chips, and is one of the main ingredients in Worcestershire sauce.

## Most popular variety

Cider vinegar, made by the first settlers from hard cider, is the most popular variety in America. The cider is aged and fermented in red-wood casks for one-two years. It ends up in everything American from catsup to pickles. Cider vinegar is also a great salt remover for snow-dampened shoes.

The Chinese and Japanese are known for their rice vinegars, made from sake with a subtle tang and lightly sweet taste. Rice vinegars are used in hot and sour soup, for pickling, and sauce for spring rolls and pot stickers.

The Germans are known for their potato vinegar, and the French have fruit and overpriced wine vinegars made from what else? overpriced wines. The saying in France is "you can't make good vinegar from bad wine."

Shoppers can find wine vinegar, sherry vinegar, champagne vinegar and from a different vinegar, compliments of the French. Of all the vinegars available today, none occasions more comment or popularity than the aceto balsamico.

Balsamic vinegar is the rich, viscous vinegar that is made only in a tiny section of northern Italy around the city of Modena.

There are others that claim to be Balsamic, but good cooks know that the best comes from Modena. What makes Balsamic vinegar from Modena such a find? Sweet grapes are cooked down and filtered and allowed to ferment slowly in a series of wood casks. Its name refers to its health-giving properties as in balm of Gilead, and to the flavors extracted from the barrels of the in which it has aged. It is transferred each year to one of a series of successively smaller barrels of oak, juniper and chestnut, among others.

Darrell Corti, food importer and one of the most knowledgeable Americans on the subject of vinegars, says that "in 10 years it's a reasonable vinegar, in 70, much better."

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.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

Join thousands who will become Irish for a day March 17 by enjoying authentic dishes.

Meet the Gavin family of Bedford, who share a passion for Irish music and food.



QUAKER PYPED CEREAL

**Pyramid power: Wake up to Banana Split Breakfast.** This delicious medley of crunchy cereal, non-fat vanilla yogurt and fresh fruit is low in fat and provides servings from three of the five major food groups in the Food Guide Pyramid. Crittenton Hospital cooks Samir Al-Katib and Leola Washington present Mediterranean Linguine a versatile pasta dish that adds an international dimension to any menu.



STAFF PHOTOGRAPH

## Importer selects finest wines from France's southern Rhone

## FOCUS ON WINE



ELEANOR &amp; RAY HEALD

Brands exclusively imports wines from the Perrin family in the southern Rhone. Brothers Francois and Jean-Pierre Perrin are renowned for the wines of Chateau de Beaucastel, Coudoulet de Beaucastel, and La Violette Ferme.

"We use the traditional grape growing and winemaking methods established by my grandfather," said Francois. "There are two essential concepts: organic grape farming and heating the whole grape before fermentation to extract flavor and color without using sulfur dioxide. Additionally, it should be noted that the consumer that Beaucastel wines are not filtered." It is a statement related to this is made on the label on the back of the bottle.

At Chateau de Beaucastel in Chateaufort-du-Pape, all 13 permitted grape varieties are planted. However, the mourvedre grape at 30 percent of the blend, sets the Perrin style for Chateau de Beaucastel Chateaufort-du-Pape. The dominance

of mourvedre keeps Beaucastel unique among its neighbors who tend to prefer a greater percentage of grenache and less mourvedre.

Coudoulet de Beaucastel is vinified in the same manner as Chateau de Beaucastel but is made from just four grape varieties: mourvedre, grenache, syrah and cinsault. The vineyards are adjacent to those of Beaucastel across a road separating apple and Chateaufort-du-Pape from the Cote du Rhone. This makes Coudoulet de Beaucastel an excellent value for those in the know. Include Coudoulet in a blind tasting of Chateaufort-du-Pape and you will be convinced.

La Violette Ferme is a negociant firm created by Jean-Pierre Perrin. He has been able to produce wines of style and distinction at reasonable prices because he is very adept at selecting grower's wines for blending to a consistent style.

"With the 1992 vintage we changed the vinification of La Violette Ferme, Cotes du Luberon Blanc," Perrin reports. "We now employ 10 percent barrel fermentation, which makes the wine rounder and fuller with greater length."

Hans and the Perrin brothers have teamed up in a joint California venture called Tables Creek Estate Vineyard in Paso Robles. The winery will produce Rhone-style wines exclusively. All budwood necessary for the 85 acres of vineyard comes directly from Chateau de Beaucastel

See WINE, 2B

Celebration  
nourishes  
healthy  
habits

Swimsuit weather will soon be here, so shape up during National Nutrition Month with help from dietitians at local hospitals.

BY KEELY WYGONIK  
STAFF WRITER

"Nutrition Fuels Fitness" is the theme of this year's celebration of National Nutrition Month, which is sponsored by the American Dietetic Association.

Exercising good nutrition is a weighty matter in Michigan. According to the Michigan Department of Health, we have a lot to lose. Only two other states, West Virginia and Mississippi, have a more overweight population than Michigan.

It's time to shape up. Dietitians at your local community hospital can help. In celebration of National Nutrition Month, they are hosting programs to whet your appetite for low-fat food including a nutrition fair and healthy cooking demonstrations.

Learn why diets don't work at a nutrition clinic hosted by St. Mary Hospital in Livonia 7-8 p.m. Tuesday, March 15. The fee is \$8. Call (313) 591-2983 to register.

At Garden City Hospital, registered dietitians will answer your questions about healthy food choices 9 a.m. to noon Thursday, March 10, and 1-3 p.m. Tuesday, March 22. Call (313) 458-4330 on those days to talk to a dietitian.

Another way to get answers from a dietitian is to call the toll-free Nutrition Hotline for the American Institute for Cancer Research 1-800-843-4114 weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

A cooking demonstration 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 22, at the Bedford General Hospital Center for Health Improvement-Health

See NUTRITION, 2B

## Wine selections of the week

The wines of the Perrin family imported by Robert Hans through his company Vineyard Brands span the price gamut. La Violette Ferme wines find few peers in their price range and the wines of Chateau de Beaucastel are at the wine pinnacle in the southern Rhone.

From La Violette Ferme we recommend: 1992 Cotes du Luberon Blanc (\$7); 1992 Reserve Blanc, Cotes du Rhone (\$8.75); 1990 Cotes du Ventoux Rouge (\$7); and 1990 Rouge Reserve, Cotes du Rhone (\$8.75). You can find lower prices than those quoted in several area wine stores.

Not to be missed under the Coudoulet de Beaucastel label are 1992 Cotes du Rhone Blanc (\$22.75) and 1991 Cotes du Rhone Rouge (\$15.75).

Best selections from Chateau de Beaucastel are 1991 Chateaufort-du-Pape (\$29) and 1990 Chateaufort-du-Pape (\$40). On second release special order, your retailer can get both the 1986 and 1983 Chateaufort-du-Pape at \$42 and \$57 respectively. Ask about these if you're interested.

