

MONDAY, JUNE 13, 1994

TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Momma's helper teaches by example

This column has been in the making for more than eight years. Although momma gets mentioned the most in my column, along with my sister Rose, Aunt Phyllis, and all the other unrivaled Jones women cooks, nary a period has been spared for my dad.

He has taught me well. Not being one to bask in the spotlight, my dad has been content to stand quietly in the wings, kind of like the kid in school who caused no problems, raised no furor, and when called upon, knew all the answers.

Silent helper

My dad never once made an omelet, but on numerous occasions, he scrubbed and seasoned the cast iron skillet so well that hardly a drop of grease needed to be used. He's the one who went to the market - without complaining after working 16 hours straight - for eggs.

Dad keenly sharpened the kitchen knife on the grinding wheel in the garage. Dad was the one who reached into his wallet when momma yelled for one of us kids to ride our bike to the Party Pantry for margarine. He always smiled and said "keep the change."

Dad was the one who, whether he liked it or not, when momma directed, would pull out the stove twice a year so momma could clean the floor, something that hasn't been done at my house since the day we moved in.

My dad never made dinner, but he spent many an hour cleaning freshly caught perch, smelt and walleye that he and I fished from the lake. He taught me how to fillet so perfectly with nothing more than a pocket knife. He taught me patience, but more important, he taught me how to sit in our boat, kick back, and if but for a few hours, forget about the crazy world on shore.

My dad taught me that it was OK to slide your bread around the dinner plate to sop up all those juices and then eat it with your fingers. He might never have made dinner, but he instilled in me a work ethic that always provided the means to enjoy dinner.

Handyman

My dad never read a cookbook, but he could help build a basketball hoop, a shelf for my trophies and rewrite the camper trailer without the help of a book or manual. Last week, six months short of his 80th birthday, he drove out and explained in detail what needed to be done, and then proceeded to help me replace my kitchen air conditioner and 220-volt line to the stove. He could light a pilot light with his Zipplighter and never singe his hair on his arm.

He could be content with a beer and a baloney sandwich yet appreciate a fine liqueur and filet mignon. He always gave thanks for what we ate no matter how simple or fancy. When he came with me to a taping of Kelly and Company at Channel 7 or was my guest while judging at the Michigan State Fair in Grand Rapids, he walked with a proud grin on his face knowing that I just wasn't his son but also his friend. My dad never complained when he had to work on major holidays. For that matter, he never complained about burnt toast, under-cooked chicken or having to change the fuse when momma blew the circuit breakers because she had the oven, stove top, mixer and two Nesco roasters operating simultaneously.

My dad, being the great connoisseur that he is, taught me that when you're on vacation, it's perfectly OK to dine at Zender's in Frankenmuth, Pete & Mickey's in Charlevoix, the Belt Street Bar in Grand Rapids and Giovanni's in Melvindale in shorts and a T-shirt. He would also hint that God was happy you came to church and that a jacket and tie wasn't always needed.

My dad never told us to say thank you to the people who waited on us in restaurants, but we knew it was the right thing to do simply because he did it. And I can still remember the day when we went out to dinner as a family and he asked the waitress to refigure the bill because when he totaled the check in his mind, she short-changed herself and the restaurant by not "carrying the one."

In his own special way, Dad has taught me about love and patience. Thank you dad, I love you, Happy Father's Day.

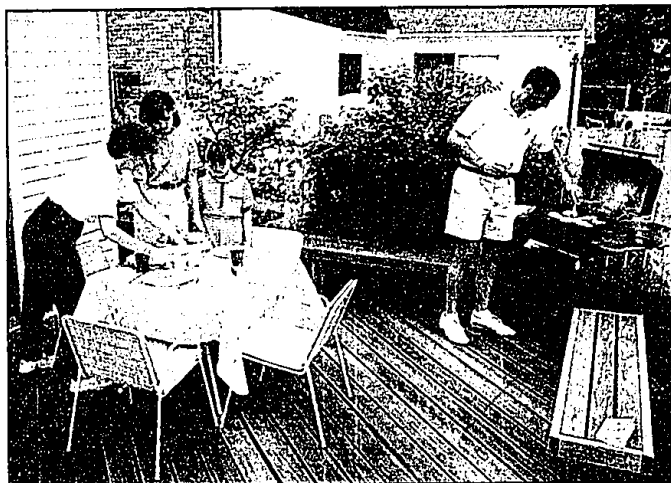
See recipes for some of Dad's favorite foods inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-2047 on a touch-tone telephone, then mailbox number 1880.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Find out where you can pick sweet, juicy Michigan strawberries, a springtime treat.
- South Africa boasts a wine history spanning more than three centuries. These wines are now available for your enjoyment.

TASTE



Family chef: Julie Kreher and her daughters Kristy, 13 and Sarah, 8 set the table for dinner on the deck, while Peter cooks one of his specialties on the grill.

Busy dad shops and cooks for his family

Peter Kreher is every busy woman's dream. When he comes home from work he drops his briefcase and reaches for an apron.

BY RENEE SKOGLUND
SPECIAL WRITER



of lamb, which starts out on the grill and reaches perfection in the oven?

"With my lamb I get marriage proposals," said Peter Kreher, a busy insurance agent and active Rotarian who not only does all the cooking for his family, but the food shopping as well. We're talking "super dad" here, or at least "super supper dad."

Wife Julie, a full-time media

specialist in the Birmingham School District, is quite pleased with the arrangement. In fact, she says it's mutually beneficial. "It gives us both the opportunity to wind down after work. I don't have the pressure to get dinner ready, and Peter has his evenings free to play volleyball, golf, tennis, or squash."

As a teacher, Julie enjoys the after-dinner time to help their two daughters, Kristy, 13, and Sarah, 8, with their homework. "Besides," Julie adds, "I don't enjoy cooking." Like most families with young children, the Krehers' lives revolve around managing careers, family activities, and community involvement. Kreher drops his briefcase and grabs an apron as soon as he walks in the door at 4 p.m. He cooks a full meal almost every night, complete with vegetables, and always with an emphasis on low fat. He claims to be spontaneous. "I really never plan anything," he says. Oh sure. Only a

man who knows what's in his cupboards can say that.

It all started when Kreher was a starving student at the University of Detroit. He constantly called his mother back in Buffalo asking, "Ma, how do you cook this?" Her response was to send him a thick book full of blank pages, with the advice to fill in those blanks. "She told me to stand over the stove and cook, keep adding things until I like it, then stop," Kreher says. He continues to follow her wise advice.

Grilling is his specialty. "I grill out all year long," he said. "I grill more in the winter than in the summer." His chicken fajitas are a family favorite. He serves them with white beans or yellow rice, his signature dish. And he usually accompanies all his grilled entrees with a serving of fresh fruit, such as watermelon.

Kreher is a mild-mannered man with a great sense of humor, except when it comes to his yellow rice. Then he's all business. "I go down to Eastern Market and buy Uncle Ben's (Converted) yellow rice. It's between a white and a brown. There's no saffron in it, and it has its own special flavor," he says. Kreher buys the rice in 10-pound sacks.

So, what does a man who can saute, roast, grill and grow his own garlic, basil, and looks serve for dessert?

Bananas Foster or cherries jubilee flamed to heavenly heights on his trusty gas grill? Not Kreher doesn't do desserts. "You know what, we run down to the Dairy Deluxe on Woodward. We're there six nights a week," said Kreher without apology. Then, always conscious of maintaining a low-fat diet, he adds, "Although I always get the no-fat yogurt."

Look for Super Supper on the second Monday of the month in Taste. To nominate someone to be featured in this column, send recipes and after work menu suggestions to Keely Wygnonk, Taste Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Readers featured in this column receive an Observer & Eccentric canvas tote bag that's perfect for carrying fruits and vegetables home from the market. See recipes inside.



INSIDE:
Super supper recipes
Dad's favorite foods

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Fathers instill work ethic in their sons

BY LARRY JONES
SPECIAL WRITER

If the guys interviewed for this story are any indication of the mainstream, the minority will be swaying on hammocks or hitting the links while the majority will be either at work or working on a hobby.

Now that I think of it, my dad always went to work on Father's Day, and on the rare occasion when we had him to ourselves, he never got breakfast in bed, seldom finished reading the paper before bedtime and spent the day putting in the rest of the garden or flower beds.

Johnny Wu, owner of Szechuan Empire Restaurant in Livonia, will be sweating over a range of hot woks while son David, a third grader at Roosevelt Elementary in Livonia, helps with the dishes.

The Wu family has owned and operated the restaurant for four years. Wu learned to run a restaurant from cousins at 96th and Broadway in New York City at the famed Szechuan Empire there. Johnny Wu got interested in food and cooking from his father, who was a respected baker in Taipei, the capital and largest city of Taiwan. Asked if he will be following in his father's footsteps, David, 10, says he doesn't mind helping in the family restaurant but hopes someday to practice medicine. For the record, David's mom, Nancy Shen-Wu, and David's sister, Jennifer, will also be working in the dining room on Father's Day along with nephews, uncles, aunts and cousins.

Knowing that Father's Day is an inherent work day for anyone in the food business, chef Mike Messing, sous chef at Sebastian's Grill at The Somerset Collection in Troy, also will be slaving over a hot stove this Father's Day. Messing, a graduate of the acclaimed culinary arts program at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills is the eldest of 10 brothers.

"Dad instilled a steady work ethic and always insisted that I reach for my goals," said Messing, who claims to get his talent for cooking smelt from his dad. Messing's career choice was also inspired by his mom and grandma, who made bread almost daily and loved to cook.

As soon as he punches out on Father's Day at Sebastian's, Messing will be out the door and headed over to dad's to help him and the day's celebration in true style.

"But I guess if you have to work on Father's Day, you might as well have to work side by side with dear old dad," or so says Andrew McIntyre, 18, the head busboy and son of Jim McIntyre, general manager of Merryweather's in Southfield.

For the elder McIntyre, who hopes that his dad, Jim Sr., will come in to the restaurant for brunch or dinner, Sunday dinner was important to the family.

See FATHERS, 2B



Cooking lesson: Johnny Wu, owner of Szechuan Empire in Livonia, is teaching his son, David, 10, to appreciate good food and the value of hard work.