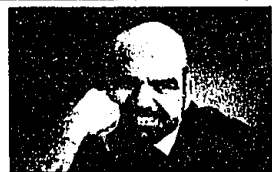


MONDAY, JUNE 20, 1994

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Making homemade jam has never been easier

Momma never was a proponent of canning. She relied on stocking the fruit cellar with donations from Aunt Vicky, her cousin Josephine Wiener, and whatever she could pick up at the church fair. If memory serves me correctly, the straw that broke the camel's back was in 1957 when Uncle Eddie noticed a small spot of mold where the paraffin didn't set up against a jar of momma's strawberry preserves. I can't recall who was hurt more, Uncle Eddie when momma threw the jar lid at him or momma's pride.

"Times have changed," said C.J. Hacker, National Consumer Affairs director and staff home economist for Kerr Glass Manufacturing. "Paraffin was an acceptable sealant back then, but now paraffin is no longer recommended for sealing jams and jellies because air can get in around the edges and cause spoilage."

Canning tips

Hacker recommends that all jams and jellies be processed in a boiling water canner for five minutes. If you have an exceptionally large freezer or access to a deep freeze, and the day is as hot as it is long, Hacker suggests making freezer jam. It's a little known fact that canning jars and lids can be used in home freezing.

"Canning jars retain the highest quality in frozen foods, prevent drying out, mingling of odors and help preserve food value, color and texture," he said. Now is the time to "put up" a batch of Michigan strawberries to enjoy this winter.

The folks at Kerr have compiled a sheet of jam and jelly tips that's free for the asking. This information sheet explains all there is to know about "weeping" (when fruits separate), sugaring, pectin and how to test for true doneness.

One of the questions I asked, which wasn't on the information sheet, was "what's the difference between jam and jelly?"

Hacker claims the difference is "jelly is cooked to the jam stage and then cooked a bit longer until the temperature increases by eight degrees."

I made a long distance call to momma's Cousin Josephine in St. Mary's, Pa., and she agreed with Hacker.

Cousin Josephine claims the additional cooking helps make jelly sparkling and clear. When turned out onto a dish, jelly should hold its shape slightly, and have a little quiver to it.

Expert advice

Cousin Josephine should know as she has been the official jelly judge at the church fair every year for the past 27 years. She ended our conversation with "don't forget to tell us that a good jelly is one that you can cut with a spoon, but is still spreadable."

Making good jam or jelly has never been easier, especially with the availability of prepackaged fruit pectins which, when the directions are followed precisely, give a remarkable jelly.

Health-conscious folks who know that a good jelly is half fruit and half sugar can drastically reduce, and almost eliminate sugar, with natural fruit pectins. These are readily available wherever canning supplies are sold, and at health and natural grocery stores. Successful canners swear by a mixture of three-quarters ripe fruit to one-quarter underripe fruit for optimum results. Pick up a box of jars, seals and lids and you're on your way! As with anything canned or preserved, always sterilize the jars first. Successful canners say the jars should be "as warm as you can stand it, and as dry as possible."

A quick glance at some freezing and canning cookbooks at the local library suggested that when making jams and jellies, you should always work in single batches, and never double the recipe.

For more information about canning, jam and jelly tips, and a free copy of "The Kerr Kitchen Pantry" newsletter with tips and recipes galore, write to the Kerr Group, Consumer Products Division, 1840 Century Park East, Los Angeles, Calif. 90007.

The folks at Kerr Glass say that "any season is canning season." A copy of "The New American Cookbook" by Lilly Hazworth Wallace (Copyright 1942, Books Inc.) says that canning season starts "when gentle spring breezes brush the purple iris." Since the iris is presently in full bloom in the James Gang garden, this must be the time. Momma says she can't wait for a taste from my first jar of jam. She promises to greet me at the door with a pan of piping hot biscuits.

See Larry Jones' family-tested recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 653-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1886.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

■ When it's too hot to cook, pack a picnic supper and head for the park.

■ Laura Letobar uses healthy substitutes to cut the fat in Swedish meatballs.

STRAWBERRIES are ripe for picking

■ There's no finer way to spend a morning than picking dew-sprinkled, sweet, juicy Michigan strawberries with your family.

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER



Some things are worth waiting for. Michigan strawberries definitely fall into that category.

The 1994 strawberry crop is shaping up to be a good one in Southeast Michigan," said Rob Long of Long Family Orchard and Farm in Commerce Township. "The cool nights that we experienced during most of May have moved the season back a bit. At our farm, I expect to start up-pick strawberries around June 20. It's a late season, but I think it will be a long season."

Other farmers I talked to agreed, and said the berries looked and tasted good. "They're real juicy," said Rose Timbers of Ward's Orchards in Ypsilanti.

Michigan's strawberry season is short, only three to four weeks. By the middle of July they'll be gone, so get them now while you can. Prices range from \$75 cents to \$1 a pound. One quart of strawberries equals about one-and-a-half pounds.

It's fun to gather the family and head out to the berry patch. Nobody minds if you sneek a few to eat while you're picking. Always call ahead to check the availability of strawberries before

See STRAWBERRY, 2B



KRAFT GENERAL FOODS, INC.

Strawberry jam: Savor the taste of fresh Michigan strawberries by making freezer jam. Spread it on toast or muffins. Toss a tablespoon of jam with cut-up fruit to add a touch of sweetness to fruit salads.

Where to pick:

- Altmetz's Berry Farm - 16580 Twenty-Five Mile Road, (313) 781-3428
- Blake's Big Apple Orchard - North Avenue at 33 Mile Road, Amada, (313) 784-8710
- Blake's Orchard and Cider Mill - 17985 Armada Center Road, (313) 784-5343
- DeGroot's Strawberries - 4232 Bull Run Road, Gregory, (517) 223-3506
- Deneweth's Pick-Your-Own Strawberry Farm - 16125 Twenty-two Mile Road, Ulica, (313) 247-5533
- Glenn Rowe Produce Farm and Market - 10570 Martz Road, east of Ypsilanti, (313) 482-6538
- Long Family Orchard and Farm - Commerce and Bogie Lake Road, Commerce Township, (810) 360-3774
- Meyer Berry Farm - 48080 W. Eight Mile, Northville, (313) 349-0289
- Middleton Berry Farm - 2120 Stony Creek Road, east of Lake Orion, (810) 693-6124
- Raymond Schultz Farm - 10090 Martz Road, east of Ypsilanti, (313) 483-1370
- Symantek's Berry Farms - 8146 E. Baldwin Road, Goodrich, (810) 636-7714
- Ward's Orchards Inc. - I-94 to Huron St. exit at Ypsilanti, south four miles, (313) 482-7744

South African wines worth exploring

FOCUS ON WINE



ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

South Africa's dry, hot climate boasts a wine history spanning more than three centuries. But it was not until the mid 1970s that the region showed its potential for serious consideration among premium wine circles.

In 1991, the renowned wine author Hugh Johnson wrote, "It is presumably a matter of a very few years before we see wines as excellent as Australia's bearing the bizarre Dutch names of lovely estates in Stellenbosch and Franschhoek." The time has come, and such wines are available for your enjoyment.

And yes, they carry the "bizarre" names of Backeberg, Boschendal, De Wetshof, Groot Constantia, Rust en Vrede, Vriesenhof and Weltevrede. There are new regions to learn such as Stellenbosch and Franschhoek, but they are joined by Constantia, Paarl and Robertson for starters. Then, there's pinotage, South Africa's own varietal. There's a lot to learn and a host of good drinking at reasonable prices ahead for those willing to expand their wine tasting horizons.

The coastal Cape region of South Africa offers a plethora of advantages and nearly idyllic wine-growing conditions. It is one of the most reliable winegrowing areas in the world.

Anywhere in the world, grapes from vines grown on slopes make better wine. Slopes in the Cape region face in all directions. An eight-month

See WINE, 2B



JOHN MARANO

Quality grapes: Gawe Kriel, manager of the Picardie Nursery in Paarl, owned by KWW, a multi-faceted organization representing 5,000 Cape grape growers, insures the grape farmers that supplied plant materials are virus free.

Tasting South African wines

Over the past several months, we have sampled a significant number of South African wines. They have, in general, been very good. They are available in this market. If your retailer does not have them, ask that they be ordered for you. We are recommending our favorites, but you should try others and discover what you like.

- 1992 Boschendal Sauvignon Blanc, Paarl (\$10) has inviting grapefruit and gooseberry aromas. Its crisp, clean, fresh, lengthy flavors make it a superior complement to grilled seafood.
- 1992 Backeberg Sauvignon Blanc, Paarl (\$8.50) showcases floral and tropical fruit. This wine tastes just like it smells. Citrus crispness matches it to seafood, especially crab.
- 1991 Boschendal Chardonnay, Paarl (\$16) is very buttery. The tastes of sweet creamery butter with oaky, tropical fruit elements and a smooth creamy finish are begging to be paired with lobster tail or lobster salad.
- 1992 Nest Elms Chardonnay, Stellenbosch (\$15) is a knockout. Fragrant, spicy oak is well integrated with generous fruit to deliver a delicious, elegant and complex palate impression. Serve it with a broiled veal chop and be pleasantly surprised.
- 1990 Springbok Pinotage (\$8) will be best appreciated by those preferring a light red wine. It's soft with berry, jammy flavors and a hint of peppery spice.
- 1990 Backeberg Pinotage (\$9.50) is a fuller, more complex version of the varietal with berry fruit and bay and mint spiciness. It's a rather rustic finish complements grilled meats.
- 1989 Vriesenhof Kallista, Stellenbosch (\$16.50) is a proprietary blend of red varietals offering a black cherry, spicy, smoky and delicious mélange of berry fruit, mint and toasty flavors. A very interesting, flavorful mouthful.