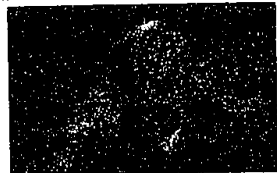


TASTE

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TASTE BUZZ



CHEF LARRY JAMES

Making ravioli is fun and not too difficult

Growing up in Wyandotte, the only time we ate ravioli was at an Italian neighbor's wedding or out of a can. It wasn't worth the aggravation.

Nowadays, with pasta machines as common as electric can openers, making homemade ravioli need not be a major undertaking. You can make homemade pasta in less than 15 minutes. It takes even less time to make if you have a pasta machine.

Many moons ago I attended a Giuliano Bugiatti pasta class at Kitchen Glamour in West Bloomfield and observed the master Italian cooking teacher preparing pasta with a passion. It was evident right from the beginning that Bugiatti had been taught how to prepare pasta by his grandmama, and I know all about learning cooking from "mamma" and nonna.

If you ever get a chance, Bugiatti on pasta is worth any price as he is the master. Bugiatti claims the best pasta dough comes from unbleached all purpose flour. This goes against the suggestion of other well known Italians who claim the only flour worth its weight is semolina. Instead of using a bowl, Bugiatti mounds the flour on a clean board or counter. A well is made in the center of the flour mixture and filled with eggs, salt and other flavorings such as spinach or saffron. Although you may be tempted to omit the salt, don't. Bugiatti insists that saltless pasta crumbles when dried and tastes bland.

Even if you add a salty sauce, all you have is bland pasta and a salty sauce. The pasta never tastes right," he says. Using a fork, you gradually incorporate the flour sides of the well into the liquid. When you can't stir any longer, it is time to knead the flour. Working with his hands, Bugiatti incorporates flour from the board until the finished product resembles a soft, elastic dough. From start to finish, the entire process takes no longer than 10 minutes. Bugiatti goes immediately from hand kneading to kneading the dough with a manual pasta machine. "Don't allow the dough to rest," he warns; "the gluten will expand and the dough will become soggy."

The kneading with the machine incorporates a roll and fold technique that takes no more than 3 minutes. Once the dough becomes elastic, it can be rolled and cut. The rolling can be done with a rolling pin but the machine makes it much faster.

For the best ravioli, it's important to proceed with filling and shaping the dough while it is still very fresh, assuring that it will not get soggy from the gluten expansion and that the pasta pockets will hold together.

Shaping the dough

The first time I attempted to make homemade ravioli, I felt the need to purchase one of those trendy molds that allow you perfectly shaped ravioli with only the press of a pastry crimper. Now I simply roll out the dough into one long stretch and drop the filling by the rounded tablespoon evenly spaced apart. I top the filled sheet with another sheet and then use a pastry crimper to cut individual ravioli with hardly any bother. To cook the filled and trimmed pasta, place it in boiling water seasoned with a bit of coarse salt and never add oil to the boiling water because it coats the pasta, prohibiting it from soaking up sauce. To check for doneness, lift one of the ravioli from the pot and drain it. When the top falls in instead of retaining its domed shape, the pasta is ready to be sauced and served.

Personally, I think the best time to make pasta is with friends. I recently coordinated a party for Livonia city councilman Mike McGee and his wife Mary. A group of 15 guests forked, kneaded, rolled, stretched, filled, cut and boiled an assortment of pasta that kept everyone interested and even more so, having fun! Pasta making, especially the filling of the ravioli, is a wonderful experience to share with your children, especially on a cold, rainy day when your choice of entertainment is between the Power Rangers and the O.J. Simpson trial.

Fillings for the homemade ravioli can be as simple as a meatball or as gourmet as a Gorgonzola/mascarpone stuffing.

Leftover chicken, dry or finely chopped Chinese or Thai food also make interesting stuffings for homemade ravioli. But whatever you do, you must first "get into" the spirit of making the dough.

See Larry James' family-tested recipes inside. Chef Larry is a free-lance writer for the Observer & Eclectic Newspapers. To leave a voice mail message for him dial (313) 963-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1888.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Brother Patrick O'Hare shares favorite Irish recipes.
- Fresh maple syrup is a harbinger of spring.

Members of this gourmet group adhere to healthy guidelines throughout every aspect of the luncheon.



STAFF PHOTO BY STEPHEN CANTRELL

Ladies host lite gourmet lunches



In 1994, four women from Bloomfield Hills invited eight friends and neighbors to join them once a month for cuisine and conversation. They were looking for a way to try out nutritious recipes, and forming a lunch group seemed to be the perfect solution.

BY SANDRA DALKA-PRYBY
SPECIAL WRITER

What do you do if you enjoy eating, like socializing, and want to collect recipes which are low in fat, sugar and sodium?

Four women in Bloomfield Hills answered these questions by organizing the "Gourmet Lite Luncheon" group.

Ruth Aiello, Gail Albert, Martha Phelps and Joyce Wheeland formed the group in September 1994.

They invited eight other friends and neighbors, most of them from the Chestnut Run subdivision in Bloomfield Hills, to join them once a month for cuisine and conversation.

"We had all become aware of the need to eat healthier. We wanted a way to try out nutritious recipes, and forming this lunch group seemed like the perfect solution," said Albert. "It has been an informative and fun experience."

To assure success, the group's original four members drew up guidelines.

Every detail of planning and serving the luncheon such as what time guests are to arrive (11:30 a.m.), and what time the meal is served (12:15 p.m.) is contained within these rules.

"The guidelines help all of us know our responsibilities for the monthly luncheons, held on the second Thursday of the month," said Phelps, who hosted the February luncheon.

Her duties as hostess were to prepare her home and share the cost of the luncheon with the two cooks — Nancy Browning and Carol Lee Chissold.

According to group rules, each member signs up to hostess a luncheon once a year, and cooks twice a year.

It is the responsibility of the cooks to plan and prepare the meal, to tell the hostess of their plans, to provide copies of the recipes and nutritional information, and help clean up.

"The search for good recipes is half the fun," said Browning. "I have scoured through cookbooks, which can be a major challenge because there are more than 10,000 on the market. I have also sought the help of cooking professionals."

Some of Browning's recipes have come from unusual sources.

"I am a Realtor and I was showing a house when I noticed a 'light and lean' cookbook in the kitchen," she said. "The homeowner nicely agreed to let me borrow it."

Each luncheon consists of a substantial entree such as Shrimp Teriyaki, which was served at the February luncheon.

"I picked this recipe because it was not only easy to make, but delicious," said Chissold. The shrimp are marinated in a mixture of soy sauce, sesame oil, garlic powder, ginger and honey. Then grilled or broiled.

Chissold was also responsible for the dessert.

"I saw this recipe, Orange Dreamslide Dessert, and decided to make it for the luncheon," she said.

"What is so nice about this group is that we're such 'copy' friends that we can experiment with untested recipes."

Chissold's experimental dessert was a tremendous success! The crust is made with graham crackers, and a hint of cinnamon and freshly grated orange peel. A tasty filling, which includes part-skim ricotta cheese, is topped with four cups of fresh orange sections.



Nutritious lunch: Betsy Cernosis (left to right), Gail Albert, Dolores Mutchler and Gladys Baker taste test new recipes at their "Gourmet Lite Luncheon." Nancy Browning, Carol Lee Chissold, and Martha Phelps prepare the luncheon plates.

In addition to the main course and dessert, the cooks can, at their discretion, add an appetizer, salad and bread. Browning made Fruity Oat and Bran Bread and Marinated Tomato Salad for her contribution to the luncheon. Phelps especially liked the salad.

"One of the best things about these luncheons is being introduced to an assortment of salads," the hostess said. "Two often we eat the same kind of salad day in and day out. This luncheon group has provided us with a variety of new and different salads."

Members of this gourmet group adhere to healthy guidelines throughout every aspect of the luncheon. This is the reason non-alcoholic beverages are served.

"And we don't put butter or salt and pepper on the table," Phelps said. "We must be an awfully polite group, because no one has ever asked for these condiments."

See Gourmet Lite Group luncheon recipes inside.



Sangiovese enjoying new era of interest

Chianti is the best-known red wine from Italy's Tuscany region. Did you know that it draws its charm primarily from the sangiovese grape? California wine producers have ushered in a new era of interest in sangiovese. As more California bottlings become available, we thought you'd be interested in some commentary on Old World chianti and its New World counterpart, varietally labeled sangiovese.

While California plantings of sangiovese remain small, there are a number of winery players in the fray. All of them, however, followed the renowned Tuscan producer Marchese Piero Antinori, who was the first to be interested in large plantings of sangiovese at Atlas Peak Vineyards in Napa Valley.

By Italian wine law, chianti has a maximum of 90 percent sangiovese and no more than 10 percent non-traditional varieties such as cabernet sauvignon. In a chianti blend, some Italian producers prefer blending sangiovese with traditional varieties, such as trebbiano, canaiolo and malvasia.

Some very flavorful examples of more traditional blends are:

1990 San Leonino Chianti Classico

- (\$12) 1990 Villa Antinori Riserva Chianti Classico (\$12).
- 1990 Ruffino Riserva Ducale Chianti Classico (\$14) and
- 1988 Ruffino Riserva Ducale Gold Label Chianti Classico (\$23).

In California, Atlas Peak, Bonny Doon, Estancia Estates, Flora Springs, Seghesio, Shafer, Silverado and Swanson wineries produce sangiovese, some in very limited quantities, but production will grow over the next several years as more planting is done. Seghesio's Chianti Station has been produced for many years, long before the varietal became "hot." However, the leader in sangiovese production today is Atlas Peak.

"Even though we have the Antinori connection, it took us a few vintages to fully understand the sensitivity of sangiovese grape growing," said Atlas Peak's general manager, Glenn Salva. Atlas Peak produces two wines which create a superior tasting when paired with two Tuscan counterparts from the house of Antinori.

The 1992 Atlas Peak Sangiovese (\$18) represents the culmination of six years' experimentation of growing and making sangiovese at

Atlas Peak. It is 100 percent varietal and aged 12 months in older French oak. There is no exact counterpart to a 100 percent varietal wine from the Chianti region, but the 1990 Badia Passignano Chianti Classico Riserva (\$32) originates from a property purchased by Antinori in 1988. The blend is 90 percent sangiovese with the remainder canaiolo, trebbiano and malvasia, aged 16 months in French oak. It epitomizes a traditional chianti style.

Atlas Peak 1992 Sangiovese Reserve (\$20) is another good wine, to consider. It can pair with the Badia Passignano discussed above or with 1990 Antinori Tignanello (\$50). Tignanello was first produced in 1971 and is considered the first Super Tuscan ushering in a new breed of Italian wines that are blended "outside" the Italian wine law. The 1990 Tignanello, a most complex wine, is 80 percent sangiovese, 15 percent cabernet sauvignon and 5 percent cabernet franc aged 22 months in French oak.

The Atlas Peak Reserve is an elegant and inviting wine full of raspberry flavors, great structure with a deliciously, soft, long finish.

See WINE, B3