

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Bathe foods in marinade to enhance their flavor

Now that the Jones Gang has a spiffy gas grill, we're finding ourselves on the back deck grilling during brisk fall evenings, a snowstorm, between rain showers and even more so on sunny days.

On Memorial Day weekend, yours truly visited friends in Lansing, and we got into a heated discussion over the benefits of marinating for tenderness.

Improving flavor

I distinctly remember reading somewhere that when it comes to cooking tougher cuts of meats on the grill, marinating does nothing to tenderize the meat.

Despite literally thousands of recipes that would have you believe they do, tests done by a major food magazine found that marinating meat, fish and poultry anywhere from 15 minutes to 24 hours made no discernible difference in tenderness. What they did find, however, was that marinating for several hours can greatly affect flavor.

All this talk about tenderizing came about because acids do break down the cell structure of protein. But according to Harold McGee, author of "On Food and Cooking," (Scribner's, copyright 1984) attempting to tenderize is "more like dissolving; it isn't a bad thing to do, but calling it tenderizing is stretching the truth."

McGee's study indicated that marinade doesn't penetrate more than a millimeter or so into the meat over a 24-hour period. "You're really just turning the surface proteins to mush," wrote McGee.

McGee claims we are tasting the strong flavors used in most marinades, even in fairly low concentrations. Further testing by "Cook's" magazine found that marinating meat and poultry for 15 minutes did not affect the flavor any more than brushing the food with a sauce during cooking.

And if that information isn't startling enough, additional testing indicated that after three hours of marinating, flavor was added to beef and lamb, but the taste of the marinade did nothing to affect the flavor of chicken.

Marinating overnight did wonders for the flavor of the chicken, but in that same period of time, an acidic marinade made with wine or vinegar overwhelmed the lamb. It turned the beef a purplish-brown color and camouflaged its taste.

On a recent trip to my favorite butcher shop I found a casserole of marinated chicken and shish-kebab with a small sign indicating the chicken and kebabs were marinated in a "flavorizer" making the food "fork tender." When I politely pointed out that no liquid, short of pounding, can produce fork-tender meat or poultry, my butcher assured me that "I would be surprised" at what his flavorizer machine could accomplish. Well, I hate to say "I told you so" but ...I'll admit, the flavor was there, but its ability to tenderize? Hardly.

So what are common folk like you or I to do when looking for anything less than a rubber chicken?

Choice cuts

If you want tender beef or chicken, buy good meat or chicken. Jack Ubaldi, in his book "The Meat Book" (MacMillan, 1987) claims that when it comes to buying chicken, you need to know what kind of a chicken you want for your recipe. Most of the chickens we buy at the grocery are called White Rocks. The smallest are squab broilers and the rest, averaging 2-3 pounds are dubbed "broilers." Needless to say, these are best broiled, fried, baked or roasted.

Roasters are 4-6 pounds and are best for roasting and braising. Any chicken more than 6 pounds, other than a capon, is best left for stewing or soup.

When it comes to choosing beef, there are more than seven grades, but Ubaldi says the first and most important grade should be the USDA stamp of approval.

The top-of-the-line beef is "prime," and less than 2 percent of beef make the "prime" cut. Supermarkets seldom carry prime, and you'll probably have to search out a "prime" butcher. The next grade is "choice," and it is usually best for grilling or roasting.

See Larry Jones' family-tested recipe inside. Chef Larry is a free-lance writer for the Observer & Eclectic Newspapers. To leave a voice mail message for him dial (313) 933-3047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1886.

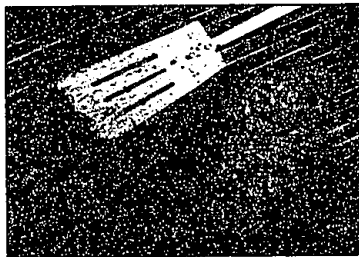
LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Rediscover Great German white wines.
- Oakland Community College presents Colonial Classic.

Dads really dig

MEAT POTATOES



BY MARY RODRIGUEZ
SPECIAL WRITER

Dads are still meat-and-potatoes kinds of guys.

We learned a lot what guys cook when we recently asked them to send a favorite recipe to us in exchange for tickets to the movie "Bye, Bye, Love."

More than 50 guys mailed or faxed their favorite recipe to us, and received passes to see the Twentieth Century Fox movie about divorced dads starring Randy Quaid and Paul Reiser.

Although there was an entry for summer pasta primavera featuring eggplant, roasted peppers and shiitake mushrooms, dishes like grilled lamb chops, chili and hamburger casserole were more the norm.

One man's recipe for meatloaf? Make two meatloafs - one large pan, one small pan. When the small one burns, the big one is ready. Thanks for sharing that, Steven Mondrow of West Bloomfield.

Some guys went ethnic, like Haroune Alameddine, who submitted a recipe for hummus tahini dip and Tom Hadjimarkos' Greek breakfast bogatzas. Both these chefs live in Farmington Hills.

Men like big food. We had

recipes for a monster sandwich and monster cookies. And we believed Jerome Weingarden of Westland, who said he made his favorite dessert recipe, chocolate peanut butter swirls, often for his kids.

The well-worn cardboard recipe he sent had the stains to prove it.

Here then is a sampling of what dads out there are cooking. David Kresky of Farmington likes to grill for his family, even in the winter.

"Cooking is a hobby," said Kresky, who prepares meals for his wife, Cyndy, and kids Chelsea, 11, and Chadwick, 10, both students at Flanders elementary.

"Cyndy and the kids prefer chicken, but I like pork. We do a lot of roasts. Marinade is the important thing," Kresky, owner of Final Design, an industrial process control company in Royal Oak, offered a recipe for one of his favorites,



Grilling: David Kresky cooks Whiskey Peppercorn Steak, a family favorite.

One man's recipe for meatloaf? Make two meatloafs - one large pan, one small pan. When the small one burns, the big one is ready.

bourbon pepper steak.

In Redford, project engineer Dan Sly enjoys making dinner for his family a couple of times a week.

"My mom taught me to cook when I was little," he said. Now grandma is teaching his oldest child, Alexandra, 4, how to make muffins and cookies.

"I like to make chicken stir fry, and marinade pork chops in Italian dressing to cook on the grill," he said. "I usually don't follow many recipes. I taste test everything."

His wife, Wendy, and kids Alex,

4, Zachary, 3, and Jordan, 1, enjoy his meals.

He says the recipe he faxed us, for chicken squares, is a special treat he might prepare once a month.

Jerome Weingarden of Westland says women like men who cook. While he was dating his wife, Juanita, he cooked for her.

"I started cooking when I was about 19," he said. "Cooking is fun and it's relaxing."

"I can do desserts, and I do main courses like roast beef and steaks."

His advice to other men cooks?

"Use the microwave. It's easier than the conventional oven."

Weingarden makes his chocolate peanut butter swirls with daughters Candace, 9, and Jennifer, 6, both students at Stottmeyer elementary in Westland.

See recipes inside.



Son spoils family with his cooking



Royal feast: Howard Dubin (center) gets treated royally on Father's Day by his son Art, who is carving turkey, and wife Susan.

BY KELLY WYGNON
STAFF WRITER

Comforting smells of dinner in progress greet Susan and Howard Dubin of West Bloomfield when they walk in the door after working all day at Dubin Optometric Clinic in downtown Farmington. Their son, Matt, who works at Alexander Hamilton Life in Farmington Hills, and attends Walsh College at night, follows close behind.

Son Art, a cook at Big Daddy's Parthenon, is in the kitchen preparing one of his specialties.

He works 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., and stops for groceries on the way home from work with his grandma, Clara Dubin.

"Then he comes home and makes marvelous dinners," said Susan, adding that all of her friends are jealous.

"His joy is making dinner," said Susan about her son Art. "He loves to wait on people. He's the ultimate host."

For special days, like Father's Day, Art spoils his family by preparing a feast that includes roast turkey with homemade stuffing, his famous green beans seasoned with Hoisin sauce, soy sauce and dill, acorn squash baked with honey, and salad. "I love to make soup," said Art who doesn't use a recipe when he cooks. "Nothing ever tastes the same thing twice at our house," said Susan. "His stuffing recipe was modified from a family recipe."

Cooking comes naturally to Art

who is an autistic savant. "Long before it was fashionable we bought a microwave oven so he could do things and not get hurt," said Susan. "He's been cooking since he was 7. I've always loved to cook, and Art helped me."

To fine tune his cooking skills, Arthur attended the Eton Academy in Birmingham, and studied culinary arts at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. During the summer he attended camp, and when he got older, started helping in the kitchen. He worked at the camp for seven summers.

Arthur, who is very slim, keeps his family healthy by preparing dishes made with natural ingredients, and in-season fruits and vegetables. They eat very little red meat, preferring fish and chicken instead. "We're not freer, cook ahead people," said Susan.

Arthur is also generous, and cares about other people. "You can't come to my house without getting something to eat," said Susan. And after Arthur finished carving and serving the turkey, he took the carcass over to a neighbor's house so she could make soup.

See recipes inside. Look for Super Soup on the second Monday of the month in Taste. Send recipes for consideration in this feature to: Kelly Wygnon, Taste/Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eclectic Newspapers, Inc., 38251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.