

MONDAY, JULY 17, 1995

TASTE

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TASTE BUZZ



CHEF LARRY JONES

Try grilled vegetables; they're sweet as candy

Americans are beginning to discover that vegetables, like beef, chicken and fish, take on a completely different character when cooked over wood or coals. The natural sugars in peppers, eggplants, zucchini, garlic and bell peppers, caramelize when grilled, imparting a depth and richness that no amount of sautéing could ever achieve.

Other vegetables, such as eggplant, acquire the same woody smokiness as a great grilled steak. And Portobellos, those giant mushrooms, taste like the finest filet when grilled and doused with a little Italian vinaigrette.

Methods vary, but almost any vegetable can be cooked on the grill. There are a few guidelines.

Cooking guidelines

Vegetables have no natural fat. They must be either marinated in an oil based mixture or brushed with oil, not butter which has a tendency to burn, so they won't stick to the grill.

To ensure even, thorough cooking, the grill chef must frequently turn the vegetables and carefully regulate the heat of the coals.

Finally, vegetables have a tendency to absorb off flavors, so the grill rack should be as clean as possible, and the coals free of chemical starters before beginning.

Several basic grilling techniques are all that is needed to bring out the full flavor of vegetables. Larger vegetables can be sliced or cut into chunks. These chunks are easily handled when threaded onto a wooden skewer that has been soaked in water for at least one hour to prevent burning. Some vegetables, like broccoli, cauliflower, and potatoes require some form of pre-cooking or they will dry out and burn on the outside before softening within. Of course, anytime you cook any vegetable in foil, it will cook perfectly on the grill, barring of course, any pre-cooking. Broccoli and cauliflower florets will cook perfectly when brushed with herb infused oil if you blanch them first in boiling water for 2 minutes.

Vegetable wrappers

Natural vegetable wrappers such as corn husks help keep vegetables moist and tender. Purists might wish to remove as much of the silk from cobs as possible, but yours truly simply fills a bucket of water and soaks the corn for at least an hour. Once a covered grill it goes, only to be turned about every 10-15 minutes until the kernels are tender.

For grilling vegetables such as green beans, pea pods and green onions can also be grilled. You can wrap them in foil, but personal experience suggests wrapping them in corn husks purchased from a Mexican grocery store, and then soaking for an hour before cooking. I'm not a big fan of wrapping my vegetables in foil because it has a tendency to steam the vegetables rather than grill them. A good grill rack with small holes allows me to "air grill" smaller vegetables.

When it comes to grilling vegetables, I rely a lot on my handy dandy grill basting brush. This large square of heavy metal has smaller holes drilled throughout the surface. It can be placed on any grill, and is especially helpful in keeping smaller vegetables from falling through the grates. They're available all over town wherever good cookware is sold. A word of advice: you get what you pay for. Cheaper grill racks will warp when heated and not lie flat on the racks. Expect to pay about \$15 for a good grilling rack, but with minimal care and careful storage, it should last for years to come.

For grilling vegetables or brushing on great taste, you can't beat a basic Italian vinaigrette or salad dressing. Bottled is acceptable, but homemade is even better. Herbed infused oils offer a richness that can't be duplicated. Being on a healthy eating regimen, my grilled vegetables are dressed with a good balsamic vinegar. Sometimes I'll add a few chopped fresh herbs from the garden, but for the most part, I rely on the flavor and taste of a great vinegar.

There are many vinegars out there, in addition to balsamic, that would be outstanding as grilled vegetables. Invest in a cheap spray bottle for citrus coverage; however, they have been known to plug when using vinegars with herbs and spices. A natural hair small paint brush (not plastic) also works well as a baster.

See Larry Jones' family-tested recipes inside. Chef Larry is a free-lance writer for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave a voice mail message for him dial (313) 953-3047 on a Touch-Tone phone, then mailbox number 1806.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- It's almost impossible not to love Blueberries.
- Chilly salads take bite out of dog days of summer.

A TASTE OF HISTORY

Whereas Greenfield Village, 20500 Oakwood Boulevard, Dearborn. Directional signs are posted along I-75 and I-94, the Southfield Freeway and Michigan Avenue.

Whereas Saturday and Sunday, July 22-23. Event hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Greenfield Village opens 9 a.m. and closes at 5 p.m.

Costs: Event included in Village admission, \$12.50 for adults, senior citizens, 62 and over, \$11.50, children 5-12, \$6.25; children under 5 free. Food samples range from 25 to 75 cents.

Call (313) 271-1976 or 800-825-5237 for information.

Tasting Menu

- Baked Bean Sandwich
- Hodge Podge
- Vinegar Pie
- Chester Pork Pie
- Indian Pudding
- Oira & Tomatoes
- Rice Corn Bread
- Leek & Oatmeal Soup
- Cauliflower
- High Stone
- Irish Apple Cake
- German Popper-Hats
- German Cakes
- Asparagus Soup
- Lemonade and Strawberry Dessert



Summertime sweet: Greenfield Village pastry chef Tom Prenickzy and Nancy Brinkerhoff of Westland with "Poor Man's Lemon Pie" inside the George Matthew Adams House.

Pastry chef sweet on old-fashioned recipe

BY RENEE SEGALUND
SPECIAL WRITER

Greenfield Village pastry chef Tom Prenickzy of Westland, hopes to satisfy a lot of sweet tooth as well as a bit of curiosity at the Village's "A Taste of History" weekend July 22-23. He and his staff are preparing over 15,000 sample-size servings of sweets once baked in wood-fired stoves and hearth ovens a century or two ago.

All of the foods offered at the event were selected for their historical significance and practicality.

"We don't alter the recipes a whole lot. We want to give people the historical experience, but we must make sure we give them good quality."

Given Prenickzy's credentials, quality is assured. He's a graduate of Schoolcraft College's culinary arts program, and has held his sweet trade at such notable establishments as the former Chez Raphael in Novi, Lee Auteurs in Royal Oak, and the Hyatt Regency in Chicago. At Greenfield Village in Dearborn, where he's worked for the last three years, he oversees both the Henry Ford Museum and Village kitchens.

"It's been a nice place to work. Never a dull day," he said adding that "A Taste of History" draws in quite a few visitors. "It's really getting to be a popular weekend, especially if we have nice days."

During "A Taste of History," culinary demonstrations representing America's cultural and ethnic heritage will take place throughout the Village.

"I guess the old saying, 'You are what you eat,' is appropriate," said Diane Thomas, Greenfield Village spokeswoman. "You can discover how people used the resources available to put food on the table. You can see how people brought their ethnic traditions to the table."

Prenickzy will be making "Poor Man's Lemon Pie" in the George Matthew Adams House, once a Baptist parsonage in the mid-1890s. Back then, when lemons were in short supply, inventive cooks substituted vinegar. But Prenickzy said there's no need to pucker your lips.

"We use apple cider vinegar, sugar, and a little lemon. You really can't taste a strong vinegar flavor," he said.

"It's mostly the cider and lemon. Just a small hint of vinegar."

Besides the pie, which is part of an old-fashioned church picnic menu at the Adams House, Prenickzy and his sweet-loving crew will prepare huge amounts of Indian pudding, rice corn bread, Irish apple cake, and German pepper nuts.

When asked if he ever overdoes on sweets, Prenickzy chuckled before answering.

"No," he finally said. "But that's a fun question. I just do a little taste test to test the quality of things. Really, my job involves checking the quality and overseeing the production."

Besides the fabulous sweets produced in Prenickzy's kitchens, sample-size portions of soups, stews, meat pies and vegetable dishes will be served in a tasting tent on the Village Green. Food samples cost 25 to 75 cents. Tickets are sold at the tent.

In addition to food sampling, "A Taste of History" offers lots of family activities including potato sack races, pie eating contests and an edible auction.

See recipes inside.

Beaulieu Vineyard is back on the fast track



According to recent statistics reported by Gombert, Prodrickson and Associates, wine industry analysts, table wine sales reached a record \$2.6 billion last year. Fueled by strong consumer demand for premium varietal wines, California table wine sales grew five percent, turning in the strongest performance in more than a decade.

The growing popularity of red wines and robust chardonnays were the key trends contributing to strong growth and revitalization for some California producers - Napa Valley's Beaulieu Vineyard is one of them. New releases from this legendary winery are turning heads. They turned ours too.

In late winter, the 1990 Georges de Latour Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon was released. As a labeled 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon wine, it has always carried a hefty price tag. This bottling was no exception at \$40, however the wine underwent substantial refinements. The addition of merlot as a blending varietal and aging in 50 percent French oak made this a stunning wine.

Beaulieu winemaker Joel Allen related some history about the Georges de Latour Private Reserve, a wine we had presumed was always 100 percent Cabernet and always aged in 100 percent American oak.

"When we did some research, we found out that

Wine Selections

Summer time is a perfect season for wine. Serve it with salads with pears, shrimp, oysters, crab, smoked fish, Mediterranean-style vegetable dishes or fresh goat cheese.

- 1994 Santa Rita 120 Sauvignon Blanc \$6
- 1994 Santa Rita Reserve Sauvignon Blanc \$7
- 1993 Gini Sauvignon Blanc \$9
- 1994 Iron Horse Fumé \$12

Early light-style pinot noir or young and juicy from a warmer time made with acid, meat, roast chicken or lamb kebabs.

- 1993 Charles Krug Camero Pinot Noir \$20
- 1993 Meridian Pinot Noir \$14
- 1994 Geyser Peak Gamay Beaujolais \$7.50

Other great and refreshing summertime options:

- 1994 Calumet & Churchill Dry Riesling and Dry Gewürztraminer, both \$10
- 1994 Preston Le Petit Fumé \$10
- 1993 McDonald Grenache Rose \$9
- 1993 Fortan de France Rose Merlot \$7
- 1994 Fortan de France Rose Syrah \$7

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First release: 1890 Thapstry is the first release in Beaulieu Vineyard's new Signet Collection wines.