

MONDAY, JULY 31, 1995

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

So long ketchup; more of us are choosing salsa

Quick - Can you name America's favorite condiment?

Ketchup? Used to be, but not anymore. Mayonnaise? Not with all that fat. Mustard? Mucky Duck might be the local favorite, but it's far from America's favorite. Salsa is the correct answer. Americans now spend more money on the sauce from south of the border than any other dip, spread or topping.

Chilies are the main ingredient. Among those frequently used, in ascending order of fire, are ancho, poblano, Anaheim, serrano, jalapeno and habanero. Tomatoes are the next basic ingredient, followed by onions and garlic. You're probably sitting there saying, "no way Chef Larry, tomatoes are the main ingredient in salsa." Unfortunately, that's what most of us think. Our Americanized version of salsa is something that comes out of an Old El Paso jar that we can purchase at the grocery store right next to taco shells and packaged taco seasoning.

Cookbooks

"Salsas are the Caribbean, Mexican and South American counterpart of Indian chutneys and chow chows, Eastern European pickles, North American relishes and Far Eastern ginger-mustard-soy sauce combinations," writes Irena Chalmers, author of the "Great Food Almanac" (Collins Publishers, copyright 1994, \$25). Salsas can also include fruit, fresh herbs, and spices, legumes and other vegetables.

There are at least 2,000 brands of salsa sold in the United States. Americans are spending over \$800 million a year on salsa, and industry experts expect this figure to double within the next five years. By the way, Americans still eat more ketchup than salsa, but salsa costs twice as much.

Chris Schlesinger and John Willoughby, co-authors of "Salsas, Sambals, Chutneys and Chow Chows" (Morrow Publishers, copyright 1993, \$20) write "the most important thing to remember about salsa is that, like the Latin dance that shares their name, the best ones are wild, loose and loud." They go on to say, "Now that Americans have become accustomed to the vibrant flavors and spicy, chile fueled edge of the table salsa of our southern amigos, we may be ready to move on to the many variations and permutations of the genre."

My interpretation of that heady last statement is that most of us are now putting salsa on tortilla chips and everything from steak to eggs, and even fish and seafood. Schlesinger and Willoughby also recommend adding salsa to steamed vegetables, rice, and even stirred into stews and soups to add flavor.

Flavor, not fat

Salsa is just about one of the healthiest condiments on the market. Pace Thick and Chunky salsa contains only 50 calories per four ounce (1/4 cup) serving.

I make my own low-fat dipping chips. I cut four tortillas into triangles, spray them with a little "I Can't Believe It's Not Butter," sprinkle on some Mrs. Dash's Table Blend and cumin, then toast under the broiler until golden and crunchy. You can make a big batch and store them in airtight containers.

One of the best selections of salsa I've seen is at Rocky Peanut Company in the Eastern Market area of Detroit. Also check out specialty food markets, including The Merchant of Vino.

Here are some cash order sources for salsa:

D.L. Jardine's, P.O. Box 1530, Buena Vista, Texas 78010, 1-(800) 544-1890; El Paso Chile Co., 800 Texas Ave., El Paso, Texas 79901, 1-(800) 27-45-HOT; Salsa Express, P.O. Box 3980, Albuquerque, N.M. 1-(800) 43-SALSA.

On these "dog days of summer" serve a blazing salsa at sunset with a Margarita as a cool companion. One of the best selections of salsa I've seen is at Rocky Peanut Company in the Eastern Market area of Detroit. Also check out specialty food markets, including The Merchant of Vino.

On these "dog days of summer" serve a blazing salsa at sunset with a Margarita as a cool companion. 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) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1886.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Eggplant has ancient roots, and is growing in popularity.
- Cold medal wines from Dry Creek Vineyard.



PHOTO BY BILL HANSEN

families pool together for supper

BY SANDRA DALKA-PRYSOV

These cooks can't stand the heat, so they get out of the kitchen and head to their family swim clubs. Skip and Linda Scully of Southfield, and their twins Jennifer and Joey, 12, have been eating Sunday dinner, weather permitting, at Cranbrook Swim Club in Southfield for a number of years.

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each other's company without being constantly interrupted by the kids. Most area swim clubs encourage families to picnic at their facilities. Many, including Cranbrook and Woodbrooke Hills Swim and Tennis Club in Farmington Hills, provide tables and grills for their members.

Tom and Mary Beth Wilkinson of Farmington Hills, and their two children, Courtney, 11, and Brad, 8, like to join other Woodbrooke members for Sunday dinner at the club because it's a relaxing way to end the weekend.

"We try not to get too elaborate, after all that would defeat the purpose," said Mary Beth. "We like to bring simple and good dishes, like chicken to grill, and a family favorite, black bean corn relish salad. When it comes to eating at the club, I believe in no fuss."

"No fuss" is also part of the Scully creed. Skip, who often does the cooking, says the simpler the better. "My Cajun steak, which always receives the compliments, is made in a cast iron skillet on the grill. I use prepackaged blacken steak seasoning, and whatever steak is on sale that week," he said.

His wife says that while they enjoy the steak, the kids have their favorite barbecue meal of hot dogs.

"That's what's nice about eating at the club. You can cook a number of different things on the grill to please everyone," Linda said.

While Skip is at the grill, Linda sets the table and toasts together a salad. "One of our favorites - and the choice of many of the other club members - is 'Grandma's (Shirley Yenta) Salad.' This salad just takes a few preparations at home," she added.

While the flavorful salad marks the Scullys, the MacCallums are known for their Taco Rice.

"I got this recipe from an American friend while we were living in Germany. It's a great recipe because even the kids are wild about it," said Mary Beth MacCallum.

"I make it up before going to the club and then put it in the oven to keep it warm. Right before dinner, Neil runs home and gets it. This is a good way of having a hot meal without having to eat in a hot house."

According to all the families, one of the best reasons for Sunday dinner at their clubs is that it's a good way to get the family together in one place. And that it's a wonderful way of "creating wonderful memories while the kids are still around."

See recipes inside.

In the swim:
Cranbrook Swim Club members (top photo, seated, left to right), Skip and Linda Scully, Mary Beth, Patrick and Neil MacCallum, (standing, left to right) Stacy Huszco, Jennifer and Joe Scully, Sean MacCallum and Michael MacCallum with some of their favorite Sunday supper dishes. Grill master: Skip Scully (above) grills one of his specialties at the Cranbrook Swim Club.



No-cook cereal has summertime appeal

When the mercury climbs, it's only natural to crave cooler, lighter foods. The challenge is choosing foods that deliver maximum nutrition along with great taste.

"Many people don't realize what a nutritional powerhouse a simple bowl of cereal can be," said Anne Rejent-Scholtz, a St. Louis area dietitian. "And especially in hot weather, a cool, no-cook cereal breakfast is appealing."

"Cereal can be a smart start to the day, if you're careful about the portion size," said Gail Pomeroy, of West Bloomfield, a registered dietitian. "Look on the back of the box to check the serving size, and measure it out. Without realizing it, some people eat two to three times more than they think they are. Cereal can be a great dinner too. Because it's cool, low in fat, and you're getting some calcium in your milk or yogurt."

Rejent-Scholtz notes that a bowl of cereal makes a smart start to a summer day for several reasons.

Cereals, especially whole grain cereals like oats, are important sources of carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and fiber. When topped with

skim milk, most cereals are reasonably low in fat. And, a cereal breakfast offers so many options for adding variety.

When pouring a bowl of cereal, look beyond the obvious milk and sliced banana, suggests Cindy Bishop, supervisor of the Quaker Oatmeal Kitchens.

Substitute vanilla or fruit-flavored low-fat or nonfat yogurt for the milk, sprinkle the banana slices with cinnamon, combine two different berries, or pair a fresh fruit with a dried fruit.

Experimenting with muesli and granolas is another way to keep summertime breakfasts cool and interesting. Muesli (MYOOS-lee) was developed by Dr. Bircher-Benner, a Swiss nutritionist, nearly 100 years ago. The classic muesli is made with oats and often contains dried fruits and nuts. The addition of fruit juice or yogurt, and refrigerating overnight, gives muesli its creamy texture.

Peach Muesli With Berries, developed in the Quaker Oatmeal Kitchens, uses both apple juice

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