

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1995

# TASTE

# ROOTS

GARDENERS CULTIVATE COMMUNITY TIES

## TASTE BUDD



CHEF LARRY JAMES

## Chicken soup, cookies are comforts of fall

■ Fall is one of my favorite seasons. I love watching leaves slowly change from green to yellow, orange and red. Apples are ripe for picking, and cider is flowing at local mills. As nights get colder we yearn for comfort foods — chicken soup and homemade cookies.

Speaking of soup, Donna Cash of Plymouth recently enjoyed a bowl of Greek Chicken and Rice Soup with Lemon at a local restaurant and wanted the recipe.

Well Donna, it doesn't get any easier than this and I hope you enjoy the result!

### AVIOLEMONO SOUP

2 quarts strong chicken stock or broth  
1/2 cup raw short grained rice  
4 eggs  
Juice of 2 large lemons (about 1/2 cup)  
Bring the stock to a boil and add the rice. Cook, uncovered, until the rice is tender, about 20 minutes. Remove the stock from the heat.  
Beat eggs with a beater until they are light and frothy, about 1 minute. Slowly beat in the lemon juice. Slowly beat in 2 cups of the warm soup, beating constantly until well blended.  
Add the egg-lemon-soup mixture to the remaining soup, beating constantly. Heat but do not boil. Serve immediately. Serves 6-8.

*Chef's secret: we made this at the James Gang dinner table and added some chopped chicken meat to the soup and it was great!*

■ Joanie Kimball of Birmingham is hoping to find the reason why all of her cookies turn out crispy and hard. Joanie says she'd treasure the secret for soft, chewy cookies.

Well Joanie, to answer that question, I called momma, and checked with the folks at Pillsbury who wrote "The Complete Book of Baking," (copyright 1993, Viking Books, \$25).

The word from the pros is that the softest cookies are made with a 60-40 blend of solid vegetable shortening (i.e. Crisco) and butter or margarine. Make sure the fats are "creamed" sufficiently with the sugars so the final product is light and fluffy.

The pros also recommend not using dark cookie sheets. They prefer "air cushioned" baking pans covered with a sheet of baking parchment for best results. Check your oven temperature, and make sure the racks are in the center of the oven for optimum results. Good luck!

■ Mary Fieber called with a question that gets repeated monthly. She wants to know the recommended apple sauce substitute for oil in a recipe. Anytime you see a recipe that calls for oil and is baked, you can easily substitute half the oil with real applesauce. For an even better taste, try a thicker fruit puree. The 50-50 ratio remains the same.

■ Rosalie Sea of Redford wanted a recipe for Key Lime Cake. Well, since Aunt Edna and Uncle Orin used to have a trailer in Marathon, just north of Key West, momma found this easy-to-make cake that's just perfect for an afternoon repeat.

### KEY LIME CAKE

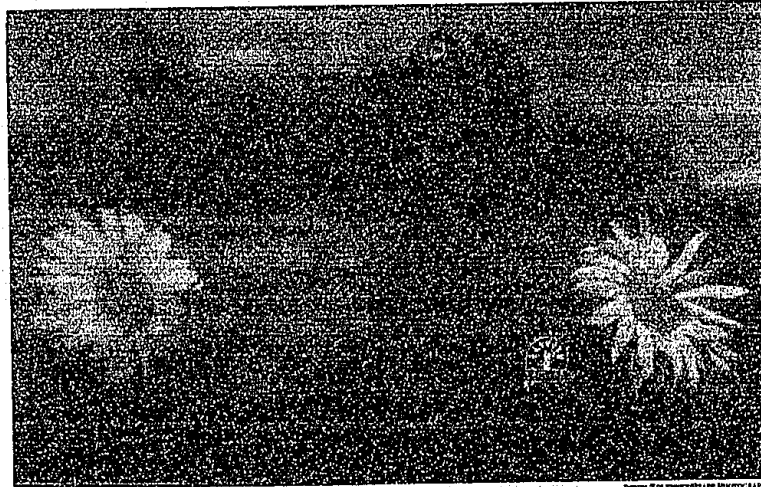
1/2 pound butter (2 sticks)  
3 cups granulated sugar  
5 egg yolks, beaten  
4 cups all purpose flour  
1 cup milk  
The grated rind and juice of 2 key limes, (about 1/3 cup of lime juice and 1 tablespoon grated rind)  
5 egg whites, stiffly beaten  
Confectioners' sugar  
Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Cream the butter, adding the granulated sugar gradually, until light and fluffy. Add the remaining ingredients except the egg whites and confectioners' sugar and mix until well blended.  
Gently fold in the beaten egg whites. Divide the batter between 2 loaf pans (9 by 5 by 3-inch). Bake for 1 hour at 325 degrees F. Remove from the oven and cool. Sprinkle with confectioners' sugar. Best when served with ice cream. Makes 2 loaf cakes.

See more reader-requested recipes inside. Chef Larry James answers reader requests in his column on the fourth Monday of the month. He is a free-lance writer for the Observer & Eclectic Newspapers. To leave a voice mail message for him dial (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1888.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- No need to squash the squash.
- Oregon wines and brews are in demand.



JOHN WEBB/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rooted: John Webb supervises the Southfield Community Gardens on the former Mary Thompson farm. Some gardeners have used the same plot for 20 years or longer.

BY JOAN BOHAM • SPECIAL WRITER

There's a common belief that modern society has "lost touch with its roots," and that cyberpace has replaced wide open space as our natural milieu.

But a look at the number of community gardens in the area proves that there are still a lot of people who could certainly afford to buy tomatoes and green beans growing vegetables for the opportunity to dig and weed and enduce with their neighbors.

While some of the gardens limit access to senior citizens, most of them are inter-generational, with gardeners of all ages swapping hints and vying for the earliest tomato. There are more people who "put food by" i.e., can or freeze their harvests than you might think. And the folks in West Bloomfield, Troy, and Southfield donate their extra produce to those who are less fortunate.

"Our gardeners have a wonderful time," said Sue Wagner, of the Livonia Department of Parks and Recreation. "There are no age restrictions so we have seniors and families with small children mingling and exchanging advice in the 250 plots. There are no fences, so it's a very informal family atmosphere." The Livonia community gardens are southwest of the Greenmead historical buildings at the intersection of Eight Mile Road and Newburgh.

The Southfield community gardens are on

the former Mary Thompson farm; Thompson willed the farm to the city of Southfield, to be used as gardens by senior citizens.

"There are just over 100 plots, and they're always fully used," said John Webb, who supervises the gardens on Evergreen, between 10 and 11 Mile Roads. "Some gardeners have been in the same plot for 20 years or longer."

Everybody agrees that the summer of 1995

pumpkins got ruined out, too.

"Tomatoes were good, though; they like heat and water. I grow a white tomato this year — it's traditional red on the inside, but white on the outside. They're very striking when sliced on a plate."

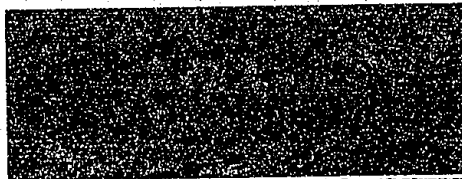
Webb also grows a yellow pear-shaped tomato, sweet, beautiful, and a lovely dish when sliced and arranged alternately with red tomatoes.

"I grow a yellow beet, but I haven't tasted it yet," said Webb. "The top of these beets looks like grass, and when they first came up, I pulled them out. Luckily, when I realized they weren't grass, I had enough seeds left to re-plant."

The Southfield gardens are adding a drainage system as insurance against another wet summer. "The ground was just saturated, and the roots rotted," explains Webb. "The cantaloupes that survived had no flavor. It's the worst year we've ever had for cantaloupes," he says sadly.

"But," he adds, with the optimism that every gardener needs, "I planted sweet potatoes, which don't usually grow this far north. The rain and heat were good for their growth, so I guess it's not a total disaster." Webb used to can, but now he, like many of his fellow gardeners, gives his surplus to

Roots continued inside



ART BRAWLEY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Gardening: Bob Kline, a master gardener, works in his plot at the Livonia community gardens.

was tough on gardeners, and, therefore, gardeners. The spring was long and cool. The summer was either hot and dry, or hot and wet. Weeds thrived, and so did bugs.

"The torrential rains and extreme heat just traumatized a lot of plants," said Webb, whose hobby is unusual vegetables. "The corn stalks were tall, but there were no ears. It just couldn't take the rains. And my white

## Recipe collection includes local cooks

BY KELLY WYGONIK  
STAFF WRITER



Seven local cooks are featured in "No Jacket Required" the latest in a series of cookbooks from Neiman Marcus. The collection of recipes submitted by the store's inCircle customers was chosen by five prominent American chefs.

From the 1,600 recipes submitted, the team of chefs collaborated to select more than 250 of the best in seven categories — breakfasts, hors d'oeuvres, salads, soups, entrees, breads and desserts.

The new cookbook is now available in all Neiman Marcus stores and in bookstores across the U.S. for \$25. A portion of proceeds from "No Jacket Required" will be donated to Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc., a national non-profit organization that teaches people to read through a network of community volunteer programs.

Here's a taste of recipes from Brenda J. Pang-

born, Rona L. Freedland and Charlotte A. Elwert of Bloomfield Hills; Jane Jobst, Rochester Hills; Gail L. Coleman, Farmington Hills; Linda Underdown, Birmingham; and Suzanne Mitchell, Southfield.

"I was determined to find a delicious, low-fat alternative to the common bran muffin," said Brenda J. Pangborn. She succeeded with her Fruit Bran Muffin recipe, a composite of several others she tried.

Jane Jobst's recipe for Little Cuban Sandwiches was also chosen. She discovered these tasty sandwiches made with Swiss cheese, ham and dill pickles, on vacation at Annabelle's restaurant on St. Croix in the Caribbean.

Friends ask for Gail L. Coleman's recipe for Black Bean and Rice Salad at parties. "So now I'll share it with Neiman Marcus and countless others who will enjoy the recipes in this book," she said.

The Freedland family is passionate about their ribs. "When my daughter became engaged, her fiancé, now our son-in-law, insisted on a pre-nuptial agreement that I would give him my recipe for Korean-Style Short Ribs," said Rona L. Freedland. "We all like to marinate it

overnight and cook it outside on the grill in the summer."

Charlotte A. Elwert shared her Banana Cream Pie recipe. "My family has long been engaged in the wholesale food business, and I have always had a great interest in cooking as an art," she said. Her pie is made with a no-roll crust.

Suzanne Mitchell's bachelorette neighbor loves her Plachio-White Chocolate Chip Cookies so much that he brings her white chocolate whenever he comes over for dinner, just so she'll make him a batch.

"Every year, a group of my high school friends meet for a reunion in Naples, Florida," said Linda Underdown. "It was there that I learned the recipe for French Fresh Fruit Flan, a delicious and colorful dessert. It's always the piece de resistance at any meal. Now, even my daughter, Amy, has made it for her high school French class."

The chefs who selected recipes for the book, and added favorites of their own, are: Joyce Goldstein of Square One in San Francisco, Matthew Kennedy of Matthew's in New York City, Mark Millif-

Book continued inside