

MONDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1995

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Fall is the season to enjoy squash at its best

This is certainly the season for enjoying squash. Produce markets, farm markets, roadside stands and grocery stores are brimming with them. My local grocer was selling a melange of squash for the relatively unheard of price of only 22 cents per pound. Last weekend at the Eastern Market crookneck squash, the shape and size of hula hoops, were 60 cents each. Hubbard squash, weighing at least 15 pounds, could be had for under two dollars. Pattypan the shape of small spaceships were 25 cents each while spaghetti squash (the James Gand personal favorite) were three for a dollar. There were also baskets of tiny baby zucchini and yellow squash not more than two days old commanding only 50 cents per basket when I know on the West Coast the same zucchini sell for about \$2.59 per pound. They sat rather contentedly next to their older, seedier and more mature cousins that were two for 25 cents.

So what makes squash "the" vegetable of abundance this time of year? Well, for starters, it has been a banner growing season, especially with the early rains and long hot summer days. There's no better time than now to enjoy zucchini bread, stir-fried pattypan, baked acorn, steamed Hubbard and grilled yellow squash. Don't forget squash sustained the starving pilgrims during their first perilous winters. History has it that though few ingenious ways were devised for cooking squash, the hungry colonists found them satisfying enough when there wasn't much else to eat.

Squash is divided into three main categories: summer, winter and inedible gourds. All squashes contain vitamins A and C. The deepest colored ones have the most beta carotene along with a trace of B vitamins. They are also excellent sources of fiber.

Summer varieties

The summer varieties that we know so well include the ever popular zucchini, pattypan, chayote, straightnecked or crookneck and marrow squash. Summer squash has what some call a mild (personally I find it more than bland) flavor. Stewed, grilled, stir-fried, baked or broiled by themselves and you too will agree with my taste sentiments. Stuff them with a meat or vegetable mixture, herbed rice or cottage and three cheese cheese blend and they take on new meaning and tastes.

Winter squash varieties have a more golden interior with a somewhat yellow flesh and deeper, darker skins. More popular varieties include butternut, turban, acorn, Hubbard and spaghetti squashes. All of the winter squashes keep remarkably well and could easily withstand a cold dark fruit cellar or an old Michigan basement.

The secret to long term storage is not to allow the squashes to touch each other whereas they could bruise and eventually rot at the bruises. Squash blossoms are over so trendy and if you just returned from either coast, you invariably saw them on some menu, lightly battered dipped and quickly fried.

The other squashes are of the gourd variety and are best used simply for decoration, table settings and holiday centerpieces. The settlers used the gourds as water vessels, birdhouses and candleholders.

And for the record, please note that I have made no mention of pumpkins. Pumpkins are actually fruits and belong to the melon family, and even though they grow alongside the aforementioned squashes, they are not one and the same.

Cooking tips

When it comes to cooking squash, the summer and winter varieties differ somewhat.

Summer squash can be baked, but is best broiled, grilled and when baked, stuffed with something with flavor.

Winter squash, on the other hand, can be boiled and baked, but I personally prefer to microwave it. Spaghetti, acorn and butternut squash can be weighed and then cooked on high power in the microwave for approximately six minutes per pound. Larger or more unusually shaped winter squashes like Hubbard and butternut can be split and placed in a microwaveable plastic bag and then microwaved to begin the cooking process. After the meat is tender, it can be removed and finished in the oven or under the broiler.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Local culinary arts students win national award.
- Chef Larry Jones shares family-tested recipes.



JERRY ZOLNERSKY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Blazing new trails: Buffalo cookbook author Ruth Mossok Johnston presents a few of the dishes featured in her book.

Calendar dates

I'll be signing copies of my cookbook at these events:

- October 29: Buffalo Roast and Cook-off at Macomb Community College. For more information, call Frank Ruggirello (810) 282-2090.
- November 5-11: Buffalo Week - part of "Game Month" festivities at the Fitz-Carroll, Dearborn. Lunch and dinners will feature recipes from "The Buffalo Cookbook." Call (313) 441-2000 for information.
- November 17: Taste recipes from "The Buffalo Cookbook" 7-11 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 11, at Borders on Southfield in Birmingham.

Where to get buffalo meat

- Alexander & Potos: 23239 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn, (313) 274-1350
- Buffalo Vics - Mail order (Buffalo "hot" Dogs), 1-(800) 840-VICS
- Butcher Boy Food Products: 13869 Herbert, Warren, (810) 779-0660
- Hill's Shopping Center Markets in West Bloomfield on 6433 Orchard Lake Road, and in Commerce Township on 39950 14 Mile Road, (810) 355-2122
- Market Basket: 32654 Franklin Road, Franklin, (810) 628-2503
- Mr. Meats at Papa Joe's Fruit Market & Deli, 2025 Rochester Road, Rochester, (810) 853-6263
- Quarion Food Market: 1744 W. Maple Road, Birmingham, (810) 644-5510

Buffalo meat

LOW-FAT PIONEER
A NEW FRONTIER

By RUTH MOSSOK JOHNSTON
Special Writer

Nothing could have been more dramatic for me than driving into the midst of a herd of buffalo on Harry and Madeleine Peterson's 3,500-acre Cheboygan bison ranch, appropriately named - LeGrande Ranch, late this August. This incredible visual sensation, the physical closeness, and the enormity of these bovine creatures was more breathtaking than I could imagine - for a moment, I placed myself in the century of the history portion of my own book - "The Buffalo Cookbook" - tears welled up in my eyes and I forced myself to mentally return to the company of our host, my husband David, and son Jordan.

In 1992, Harry Peterson, a resident of Birmingham, sought the advice of Cheboygan locals - what should he do with his town-sized acreage? Harry was determined to do something more productive than utilizing this land for hunting grounds - he began a new venture, a new adventure - Buffalo!

Harry refers to himself as being "hooked," and boy is he! "There's something special about bison," said Harry behind his bearded smile. He and Madeleine, partners in life - partners in buffalo - are committed to the industry and to the National Bison Association - committed to old Number 70 - a large bull you can hand feed, and the rest of their 400 head herd.

Kevin Costner's film "Dances With Wolves" and its nostalgia, was not the impetus of the buffalo resurgence, it's business - big business - the kind that even mogul Ted Turner can sink his teeth into (literally). Bison once considered a culinary novelty, is now considered just plain healthy. My family knows this first hand. They have experience a "billion" buffalo dishes in the past few years. Why buffalo?

Martin J. Marchello who has a Ph.D. and is a professor at North Dakota State University Department of Animal and Range Science has done extensive comparisons of the nutrient compositions in 25 species of domestic and game meat. Findings from the Marchello study indicate that bison meat compares more favorably (lower in fat) than beef, pork, or lamb. The analysis of muscle tissue in lean domestic and game meat established bison at 1.9 percent, beef at 6.5 percent, pork at 4.9 percent and lamb at 6.7 percent. The combination of lean meat and low fat gives bison a caloric value of 138 kilocalories per 100 grams (3.5 ounces). Additional findings indicate that bison is rich in minerals, low in sodium and high in iron content.

Buffalo continued inside

Oregon wines and brews are in demand



In the late 1980s, Oregon wine producers lamented that they were a segment of the wine industry waiting to happen, and wondered when it might all pull together. That time is now. Oregon pinot and pinot noir are in demand. The best ones are sold out a few months after they are released.

The northern Willamette Valley begins a short distance south of Portland, microbrew capital of the Northwest. Most of Oregon's wineries are in the northern Willamette Valley. Willamette Valley Vineyards keeps

company with such respected wineries as Adelheim, Bethel Heights, Domaine Drouhin, Elk Cove, Eyrie, Knudsen Erath, Oak Knoll, Penzi, Sokol Blosser and Rex Hill. The Willamette Valley region has become synonymous with great wine, especially pinot noir. The cool climate, similar to France's Burgundy region, offers grape vines a long growing season to mature fruit with full flavor development.

Giving credit where it's due, the nod goes to Elyria Vineyards David Lett who in 1966 had the vision and took the gamble as the first to plant pinot noir in the red hills of northern Willamette Valley. Much has happened since then. Even those who thought Lett was less than sane back then, have followed him to "them that hills." Today, many of the original fruit orchards have been pulled out in favor of grape vines.

Perhaps Lett's pioneering spirit rubbed off on Dornau, but whatever the root cause, Willamette Valley Vineyards wines and Nor'Wester brews are worth discovering.

1994 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris \$11 - is first-ratio with melon, peach, ripe pear and crisp apple aromas. Flavors mirror aromas in a wine that is rich and lengthy.

1994 Willamette Valley White Berry Pinot Noir \$11

Wine continued inside

Wine selections

According to Rochester Hills Va Oria Wine Shop's Donna Walsh, the people voted at his Great Wine Shootout and chose their favorites:

Sparkling Wines
1990 Iron Horse Brut Rose \$26
Domaine Carneros Blanc de Blanc \$25

White Wines
1993 Sanford Chardonnay, Barrel Select \$30
1993 Kunde Chardonnay Reserve \$22
1993 Kenwood Chardonnay Reserve \$21

Red Wines
1961 First Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve \$40
1991 Chateau Cabernet Sauvignon, Hilsdale Select \$50
1991 Joseph Phelps Insignia \$30

These are all great wines and they prove that palate preferences are anchored in character, Cabernet Sauvignon and price wines. Here are more popularly priced values to consider:

1993 Fattori Barrel Select Chardonnay \$11
1993 Chateau St. Michelle Cold Creek Vineyard Chardonnay \$19
1992 Sutter Knight Valley Heritage Red \$13
1992 Buena Vista Cabernet Sauvignon \$12
1992 Chateau St. Michelle Cabernet Sauvignon \$14
1992 Fattori Barrel Select Cabernet Sauvignon \$12
1990 Hoque Reserve, Washington \$28 \$19
1992 Mossack Cabernet Sauvignon \$20
1993 Napa Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon \$7.50