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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JAMES

Cooking experts write books to share, enjoy

Having been involved in one way or another with the food scene here in metropolitan Detroit just about all of my life, you probably know how much I love to cook. I'm often asked, "do you ever run out of story ideas?"

No, I never run out of story ideas. My cooking skills continue to improve, and I get great story ideas by interviewing some of the top chefs, and cookbook authors who frequently descend into town to push, plug, schmooze and generally talk about food and their latest work.

"Hot Wok"

Take for instance the fact that I was able to sit in on an enlightening cooking class recently when Hugh Carpenter, author of hit cookbooks "Hot Wok" and "Hot Chicken" (copyright 1995, Ten Speed Press, \$17.95) stopped by Kitchen Glamour in West Bloomfield.

"Hot Wok" and "Hot Chicken" are number one and two, respectively of a five-part cookbook series that will soon include "Hot Pasta," "Hot Barbecue" and "Hot Vegetables."

Series cookbooks must be the "in thing" right now because everyone from Williams-Sonoma to La Varenne doyen Anne Willan is doing them.

I found it interesting when Carpenter, flipping about a \$125 Calphalon wok and eschewing its virtues years before touted the fact that "you can use your wok as a planter and substitute any good 12-inch skillet."

When queried, Carpenter claims that "times change and you can still use a skillet, but a good heavy, 14 or 16-inch flat bottom wok can do more than any skillet."

Judging from Carpenter's class, intense, high heat (the hottest possible) is best for optimum "sealing in" of flavors and tastes. That, friends, is why you need a wok as a 12-inch skillet subjected to intense heat would be a sacrifice.

In my business, as a rule, cookbooks with big beautiful pictures are usually avoided by food writers mainly because the more pictures, the costlier the book, and the less the recipes. The pictures were done by Carpenter's wife Teri Sandison, and if the recipes taste half as good as the photography makes them look, it will be a hit.

Judging from the ooh's and ah's from the students in Carpenter's class, the recipes were a hit. Mary Ellen Morgan of Birmingham, who registered for all three of Carpenter's classes, claims Carpenter's class was full of great tips and he "showed how to elevate chicken from the common everyday ingredient to gourmet status using flavor ideas from around the world."

For today's cook

While Carpenter's books undoubtedly pose interest to cooks with Pacific Rim tastes, a new book by the editors of "Woman's Day" magazine — "The Woman's Day Cookbook" (copyright 1995, Viking Press, \$24.95) has hit the shelves. I spent a hurried lunch last week with Jane Chesnut, one of the six food editors who compiled this cookbook. It's full of great recipes, bright ideas and healthy choices for today's cook. I couldn't help but notice that the book contains more than 700 recipes, but just as impressive are the roasting charts, measuring units, spice suggestions, low-fat versions, and shortcuts. If you are a new bride, starting out in your new home, or just beginning to cook and need basic information this book is for you. It makes a great gift, and is sure to be used, copied, spilled on, dribbled over and stuck all over with Post-it notes marking favorite recipes.

Do I sound enthused? I queried Chesnut on the fact that the "book contains everything except information on changing the oil in your car" and she replied that "after three years in the making, the folks at 'Woman's Day,' who are known for their check-full harpings \$1.29 monthly magazine, wanted to offer the same with regards to food and cooking for today's busy cook."

At only \$24.95, this book will hold court on my kitchen shelf, and not be relegated to the downstairs library next to "The Joy of Cooking" and other perennial favorites that I always use for reference material.

"If all that isn't enough, the chapter on 'investment cooking' is worth its weight in gold for working cooks who need to 'make' time in the kitchen," said Chesnut, who with two kids and a full-time job relies heavily on recipes that save money and time. Yes, there's nutritional analysis, something I wish all cookbooks would include, double indexing for easy recipe retrieval, kid's choice recipes, microwaveable, one pot meals, low-fat recipes, make ahead ideas, vegetarian dishes and even casseroles.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Diet gable recipes.
- Thanksgiving dishes.

Making dinner for 1

Singles share cooking, shopping tips



Dining alone: Vicki Vensel dines by candlelight in her Southfield home. She prefers her home cooking to going to a restaurant. "Treat yourself as though you are special," she says, "because you are."

By Norman Prady • Special Writer

here are flowers on the table. The food is presented on "pretty little serving dishes."

Water is served in stemware. Is this the setting for a dinner party, or is Vicki Vensel dining alone?

"Treat yourself as though you're special," said Vensel, 38, of Southfield, "because you are."

A furniture salesperson, and now divorced three years following a four-year marriage, Vensel prefers her home cooking to going to a restaurant, "just because you have to eat."

Mostly, her dinners are in the dining room. Once in a great while, she confesses, she'll eat at the living room coffee table, "if there's a really good movie on TV."

In early post-divorce days, she says, some people don't care about things, and even get a bit sloppy. She's heard stories of people abandoning utensils and manners. Preparing and serving dinner to herself, she says, is a matter of self-respect.

As for shopping single, she says, "it's not much different than when I was married. I do spend less. I buy less meat and more dairy. Low-fat cheese, for example. "Sometimes on a Sunday I'll cook for the

week." Some of the meals yield lunches she can take to work "to save money, fat and calories."

Vensel grew up in Berkeley, one of seven children. "Dinnertime was family time. A chance to visit with each other. Mom made good meals. Nothing fancy."

But Edna McLaughlin, 76, of Canton, says, "It's difficult to cook for one."

A widow for 30 years, McLaughlin took care of her mother for a long time. Alone since her mother died in 1988, she's learned to shop in small quantities.

"I buy just two onions, because more will spoil. I buy just one tomato. I use frozen vegetables, because fresh spoil."

"I buy the smallest of anything so I'm not eating it for a week or throwing it away." A higher unit price on a smaller package is offset by the reduced waste, she says.

McLaughlin's favorites include meatballs, meatloaf, and various chicken dishes. Often, tonight's dinner will also be tomorrow's lunch.

At the Canton Senior Center, where she volunteers 20 hours a week as an office aide, she's known for the quiches she often brings to serve to the busy staff.

Her tollhouse cookies also get high ratings. "It's in the baking time," she says. "People over-bake. The package tells you to bake nine to 11 minutes. I use the nine."

For recent Madonna University graduate Kathryn Mulka, shopping for one is a continuing education.

As a child growing up in Alpena, she used to go to the market with her mother, who was shopping for the family of seven.

Mulka, 24, of Plymouth, who works in commercial and graphic arts, has been living on her own for the past three years. She shops for her version of best value, which is based on quantity, price and intent.

Something might be very appealing, but if she admits to herself that she's not going to use it, she doesn't buy it.

"I keep learning. What I eat. What I don't eat. When. What goes bad. Like lettuce. I don't buy it unless I know that I'm going to make a salad. Or it just gets moldy and gross."

She likes to make casseroles that can be a dinner and a lunch, and coleslaw, potato salad, and other cold salads.

• See recipes inside.

Vicki's Single-Person's Basic Pantry

- Garlic powder
- Salt & pepper
- Sugar and/or sweetener
- Onion soup mix
- Tuna fish
- Canned chicken
- Taco seasoning mix
- Canned tea mix
- Oatmeal
- Canned green beans
- Mushroom soup
- Sugarless Jell-O
- Canned peaches, pineapple
- Cake mixes
- Rice

Edna's Single-Person's Basic Pantry

- Pancake mix
- Syrup
- Spaghetti sauce
- Fettuccine or other pasta
- Egg noodles
- Rice
- Beef gravy
- Instant potatoes
- Alfredo sauce, package
- Mrs. Grass' soup mix
- Mushroom soup
- Tuna fish
- Miracle Whip
- Canned sweet peas, corn
- Bisquick mix
- Jell-O

Kathryn's Single-Person's Basic Pantry

- Salt & pepper
- Bread
- Pet food
- Baking soda
- Vegetable oil
- Sugar
- Brown sugar
- Flour
- Beverages: tea, coffee.
- Carved vegetables
- Cereal
- Soup
- Plastic bags, wrap, foil

New wine values come from southern France



Even if you don't know French, you probably understand the meaning of "bonjour." If you're a wine lover looking for value-priced

wines, you need to add Vins de Pays d'Oc to your French vocabulary and look for it on French wine labels.

Wines labeled Vins de Pays d'Oc (vins d'pay-oh-oh) are the country wines of southern France's Languedoc region. Bordered on the Mediterranean, this is France's largest vineyard area. Vines bear the name of the grape variety, such as chardonnay and merlot, on the label and are easy to understand, easy to drink and equally easy on your budget.

The newest brand to throw its hat into the ring from southern France is Jénard. To attract your attention, Jénard created the classiest bottles and labels of any of the wines from the Pays d'Oc. Using art from the Belle Époque (beautiful era) of the 1890s in Paris, Jénard has captured art and French wine in a manner uncommon to popularly priced, everyday, affordable wines.

Jénard de Toulouse-Lautrec is the artist of the Belle Époque era. To those who know art, his vividly colored poster lithography represents the period's history and have

Wine Selections

Lamb makes a perfect table mate for pinot noir and merlot. The following are super delicious:

- 1992 Hesse Select Pinot Noir \$11.50
- 1992 Acadia Pinot Noir \$11.50
- 1992 Mazzocco Merlot \$15
- 1993 Dry Creek Vineyard \$18
- 1993 Torrance Merlot, Veneto Italy \$0.50
- 1991 Mazzocco Merlot \$25 - great now, but very age-worthy
- 1994 Michelle Lynch White Bordeaux \$2.00
- 1991 Shiner Hill Select \$45

Best buys at or under \$10:

- 1992 Dry Creek Vineyard Fume Blanc \$9.25
- 1994 Fumé Blanc Select Sauvignon Blanc \$10
- 1993 Torrance Pinot Grigio \$6.50
- 1994 Mazzocco Merlot \$15
- 1994 Michelle Lynch White Bordeaux \$2.00
- 1993 Michelle Lynch Red Bordeaux \$6.50
- 1993 Shenandoah Cab-Sauv \$10
- 1994 Monterey Vineyard Classic Merlot \$5
- 1993 Monterey Vineyard Classic Cabernet Sauvignon \$5

become enduring symbols of that time. The Jénard bottlings with four different replicas of Toulouse-Lautrec's posters combined the concept of both wine and art for the people. If you're interested in wine and art, they cry out from the shelf saying, "Collect all four." However, don't just collect these bottles, drink the wine; it's meant for drinking, not for collecting.

These creative endeavors of wine

and art are the result of cooperative work between France's Maison Jénard and its U.S. importer Cannon Wines Limited of San Francisco. The wines have become an instant success, just as Toulouse-Lautrec became an instant hit when his Moulin Rouge poster went up in the Paris streets in the mid 1890s. An original 1895 projection of 10,000 cases of these wines for the U.S. market grew to 30,000 cases and it's anticipated that 75,000 cases will be sold in 1996. In the future, look for more Rhône varieties to be added to the brand.

There's no mistaking here, these are French wines and you'll taste this in the chardonnay especially, because it has better acid-fruit balance than many California wines at the same price. These wines are good everyday drinking French wines designed with food in mind.

Tasting notes: all wines are \$8

■ 1994 Jénard Chardonnay is floral with apple notes and hints of nutmeg spice. Its clean, fresh fruit unencumbered by oak is a palate delight and easily matched to a corn chowder that highlights the wine's slight sweetness balanced by good French wine acidity.

■ 1994 Jénard Merlot showcases black cherry fruit in a dry style well-suited for lamb dishes.

■ 1994 Jénard Cabernet Sauvignon sports blackberry fruit in a streamlined, light style perfect for barbecued meats, stews or a hearty pizza.

■ 1994 Jénard Syrah is a mélange of red fruits with notes of poppy seed, spice. With colder weather upon us, serve it with tomato-based comfort foods such as black bean soup, stews, cassoulet, grilled meats or a spicy chili.

Other news from France:

■ Beaujolais Nouveau arrives November 16. Exporter, Georges Dubouche, France's King of Beaujolais, promises that 1995 will be a serious vintage with wines that are robust, full, warm and rich. "The Beaujolais I've tasted (from the 1995 vintage) have that warm, convivial, and delicious character which always delights lovers of Beaujolais," Dubouche said. Prices will be as easy to swallow as the young, fruity Nouveau averaging \$8-\$9 for air shipments. Beaujolais Nouveau is a great accompaniment to the extraordinary number of flavors and spices on the American Thanksgiving table. Prices will drop about a dollar when boat shipments arrive December 1.

Grapple up your holiday menu:

■ Napa Valley's Sequoia Grove Vineyards will help you. A booklet with wine friendly main course, salad and dessert recipes is free from: Sequoia Grove Holiday Recipe Brochure, c/o Koberland Corp. Public Relations Dept., 184 East 40th St., New York, NY 10018.

• To leave a message on the Heald's voice mail - dial 953-2047, mailbox 1894.