

MONDAY, APRIL 15, 1996

# TASTE

## TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JAMES

## Cast off your fears about cooking fish

Fish and shellfish dominate the menus of better restaurants across the country, yet it is the food least likely to be made at home. Nutritionists say fish is high in everything we need, and want, and low in everything we don't need. Fish and shellfish have even been called "brain food" but to most of us, our weekly consumption of fish usually comes from a can of tuna.

### Memories

Growing up in Wyandotte, our only chance to eat fish was on Fridays when momma presented a tuna casserole made, of course, with canned cream soups, canned onion rings and crushed potato chips for a topping. Occasionally, if good report cards justified it, or dad picked up a little extra overtime, we would pile into the car and head for Frank's Bar (who to this day, I might add) continues to have Friday night fish fries. Frank's is at 602 Forest St. in Wyandotte (313) 281-8964.

Never before has seafood been so popular. A stroll past a supermarket's hot cold case, or a visit to a really good fish store reveals many species, different cuts and frequently unlabeled whole fish. No wonder the home cook feels so confused. What's even more confusing is the fact that the price per pound of fish generally exceeds that of good beef.

Momma belongs to the old school where it's much easier to properly cook a \$4.99 per pound flank steak than it ever would be to worry about an \$8.99 fillet of salmon being overcooked and dry. The main reason fish is a bit more temperamental to cook than say, red meat, is that fish is relatively low in fat. It can be way overcooked by the time you or I would begin to see the juices from the beef come to the surface.

### Buying fish

But before you cook fish, you have to buy it. My first bit of advice begins at the very source of it all. Know the fish monger. Talk to the person behind the counter. Questions like "when did this come in?" and "what do you suggest that is mild and flaky or great for grilling?" should be asked routinely. I believe you got what you pay for, and I'll drive clear across town to buy fish. Some of my favorite stores are Superior Fish in Royal Oak, Vic's World Class Market in Novi, and Papa Joe's in Rochester. Anyone who stands behind one of these counters, which offer premium quality fish, should know everything there is about fish quality, cooking techniques, and storage.

Trust your sense of smell. Contrary to popular belief, good fresh fish doesn't smell like fish. It smells like a cross between an orange and anethure. The fish should be displayed on lots of ice, and it should never have a dry appearance.

The minute I smell old fish when walking into a fish store, I'm out the door. I seldom purchase whole fish (unless I want to use the head, tail and bones for fish stock). I usually buy steaks or fillets. If I'm planning on baking or broiling the fish, I'll usually purchase a fillet. A firmer steak cut is better for grilling. For pan frying, I'll search for small varieties, and make sure I ask "has this fish or shellfish been previously frozen?"

There are a multitude of fish books out there which offer recipes and suggestions on how to cook fish. James Peterson, author of "Splendid Soups" has just penned the ultimate fish book — "Fish and Shellfish" (William Morrow, copyright 1996, \$40). It's a must for any reference cookbook library.

"Freshness is the single most important thing when it comes to buying fish," says the seafood expert. "It's not always easy to tell, but the secret begins with checking out the store for cleanliness and a good aroma." Peterson suggests, as a general rule of thumb, that small or flat fish and oily fish (i.e. mackerel) are the most perishable. Tuna, salmon and swordfish stay fresher longer after they have been caught. Peterson recommends you "watch for high turnover of the fish" because this is an indicator that the store is reputable and the fish is sold quickly rather than sitting around.

As a final piece of advice, Peterson recommends that buyers opt for freshness over familiarity, even if you've never tried cooking it before. I can hear momma now: "would this monkfish make it if I shaked and baked it?"

See Chef Larry James' family-tested recipes inside. Chef Larry is a free-lance writer for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. You can leave him a voice mail message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a Touch Tone phone, mail box 1888.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:  
Readers share peachy recipes



RAY HEALD

# Extremism for quality wine is not a vice

BY ELEANOR & RAY HEALD  
SPECIAL WRITERS

Matanzas Creek Winery in Sonoma County's Bennett Valley, is not yet two decades old. From the first production of its wines in 1978, in a dairy building converted to a barrel room and office/lab, to the modern facility producing today's stellar wines, Sandra MacIver, winery founder and president, has forged a path in California wine history that bespeaks highest quality.

"We did this by identifying world-wide examples of excellence, learning from them and incorporating the best of each in a wine style that appeals to us," MacIver said.

Sandra and her husband Bill MacIver have become established producers of world-class wines. Their extreme commitment to quality is unparalleled. Producing the highest quality wines at Matanzas Creek is a daily goal of co-winemakers Bill Parker and Susan Reed. "We have learned that extremism in the pursuit of quality is not a vice," Sandra maintained. "This is not idle talk. Dedication to quality is the most important factor at work. Co-winemakers Susan Reed and Bill Parker are not stars in the public relations and media sense. Yet, the outstanding quality of their wines suggests a star factor independent of public perception. Best known for superior bottlings of chardonnay, sauvignon

**WINE SELECTIONS**

Try the following with grilled fish, crab, shrimp or chicken. If your preference is meatless, potatoes and root vegetables are excellent matchmakers for chardonnay.

- 1994 Aecle Camerois Chardonnay \$17.50
- 1994 Eschol Chardonnay \$12
- 1994 Chateau Sovereign, Sonoma County Chardonnay \$12
- 1994 Iron Horse Chardonnay \$18
- 1994 Dry Creek Vineyard Reserve Chardonnay \$17

**Cellar Selections**

- 1992 Iron Horse Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon \$25
- 1992 Sandhill Vineyard Georges Calatour Private Reserve \$40
- 1992 Michel-Schlumberger Cabernet Sauvignon \$10
- 1991 Cabernet Meritage, Moon Mountain Estate \$25

blanc and merlot, Matanzas Creek and the MacIvers set shock waves through the industry when they introduced an ultra-premium bottling of 1990 chardonnay under the name Journey at \$70 per bottle about two and a half years ago. We applaud the good sense of the MacIvers for not labeling the wine with the overused and consequently meaningless term "Reserve." 1990 Journey did not remain a one-time benchmark illustration of Sonoma Valley chardonnay excellence with a price more than three times that of the Matanzas Creek Chardonnay. The current Journey release is 1993. "Without a doubt, it shows its breeding as a best love wines hav-

ing been created from 28 out of 700 barrels of chardonnay, then pared to 16 barrels before bottling. Wine earth shook again most recently when Matanzas Creek announced a November 1996 release of a 1992 merlot under the Journey label for \$128 per bottle, a tag more than twice the price of any other domestic merlot currently in the marketplace. "We don't enter U.S. wine competitions," said MacIver. "We have our wine compete in world competitions only. We want it to be considered among the world's best wines." Is this arrogance? Some may think so, but we've known the MacIvers for a very long time. The great wines of the world, produced

in limited quantity, are generally excellent and costly. And that's the short of it.

Sandra MacIver is tireless in her efforts to showcase her Sonoma County wine home. She is most giving of her time for charity wine events. She will give of her time in Michigan on April 27 as honorary chairperson of the Ann Arbor Art Center's annual wine auction and celebration titled WineFest. To further the cause of WineFest, Sandra has donated to the live auction a 6-liter bottle of 1993 Matanzas Creek Merlot, and a 3-liter bottle of 1999 Journey Chardonnay, very rare in this format. A two-night stay at Matanzas Creek winery guest facilities for four people is part of a wine country travel package. The lucky bidders will stay at an award-winning landscaped winery. It is akin to the heart of Provence in Sonoma County with two acres of lavender in bloom in the second half of June and early July.

Mark your calendar to meet Sandra MacIver, founder and president of Matanzas Creek Winery at the Ann Arbor Art Center's annual fund raiser, WineFest, Saturday, April 27 at the Ypsilanti Marriott, formerly Radisson-on-the-Lake in Ypsilanti. A wine and food reception starts 8 p.m. followed by a live auction at 7:30 p.m. For advance ticket information (\$85 per person) call the Art Association, (313) 994-8004.

Quality wine: Matanzas Creek Winery Chardonnay on location in the winery's Provence-like landscape in Sonoma County.

## Dietitian explains how to 'Be Good to Your Gut'

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO  
STAFF WRITER

As a registered dietitian for 15 years, Pat Baird had heard all sorts of ludicrous comments from people who seek her help.

"What I hear the most is people who say, 'I want to lose 20 pounds in three days.' They want the magic bullet. They want the magic potion, the diet, the drink, and the recipe, which is truly, completely unrealistic," Baird said.

"When they come back to planet Earth, they say, 'Oh, by the way, I wake up in the middle of the night and I have heartburn' or 'I have terrible constipation.'"

The second comment is far from goofy. A 1995 Gallup survey, revealed that more than half of adult Americans had symptoms related to gastrointestinal motility disorders within the past month. With that in mind, Baird wrote "Be Good to Your Gut: Recipes and Tips For People with Digestive Problems" (Blackwell Science; \$14.95 paperback), which is supported by the American College of Gastroenterology.

serious side effects and (B) it's really not a solution to their problems."

"I'm not against medication. I do know, though, if you have a motility problem you probably need a prescription. I also believe that three lifestyle factors — nutrition or diet, exercise, and stress — can alleviate the majority of problems." Each chapter in "Be Good to Your Gut" is devoted to a different motility disorder — heartburn, indigestion, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation and slow stomach emptying — and provides important background information that helps the reader understand what causes the condition, what aggravates it, and what can be done to avoid it.

Tips are offered to help the reader achieve variety, moderation and balance. These include a discussion of lifestyle factors such as exercise and stress reduction, and suggestions for food selection and menu planning, with recipes to help people minimize the discomfort of motility-related symptoms and create meals designed to help improve motility.

"Although I don't specifically state it in the book, it's kind of implied if you try these three (lifestyle) approaches and you have not had relief, it really is important that you see your physicians. Sometimes we overlook heartburn and constipation and say 'Oh big deal. I'll take a few antacids or I'll eat fibers.'"

"It could be an indication of something serious. Heartburn can be an early indication of heart disease or

stomach cancer. We can't overlook it."

Recipes offered in the book range from the exotic, including saffron risotto with scallops, to standard dishes like buttermilk pancakes.

Part of the battle of dealing with motility disorders is finding out what is triggering the problem. "I suggest that people keep a food diary and write down every single thing that you eat and drink and put in your mouth. In each chapter I give a chart of medications or prescriptions that might increase the likelihood (of getting a motility disorder) and see if you can begin to form your own connections," explained Baird, who also penned "Quick & Healthy" (Henry Holt), and "The Pyramid Cookbook: Pleasures of the Food Guide Pyramid" (Henry Holt).

"Is it related to the time you eat? The place you eat? If the only time you're getting indigestion is when you have lunch at your desk, there's a message there. It's probably too stressful."

While some have to stop eating the problem food, Baird said that others do well with moderation.

"I can tell people, for instance, in heartburn there are certain trigger foods — chocolate, caffeine, alcohol, fatty foods and nicotine. All of those can create heartburn. Now, it



Eating well: Pat Baird offers culinary delights for those with digestive disorders in "Be Good to Your Gut."

doesn't mean that you have to eliminate it either. You might want to have less caffeine or alcohol, or have it at different times of the day, or have a bagel with the coffee to neutralize the effect a little bit.

"It's been amazing to me. Everyone who has interviewed me had some kind of GI problem and said 'I read your book and you know something? I elevated my head of my bed and I've also pushed back when I have dinner. I have not woken up with nighttime heartburn for two weeks.'"

"They're always amazed at how these little techniques really work." See recipes inside.