

MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1996

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Mushrooms are among my favorite foods

Trying to label my favorite food would be nothing short of impossible. Listing the top 10, now that's something I can do, without any hesitation, as long as you realize the list is subject to change at any given moment.

Somewhere within the list would be ice cream, bread, veal, chocolate, leeks, cheese, potato salad, mamma's dumplings, wine and mushrooms. Just by reading the list, you can tell why I'm always trying to stay in control of my weight. But of all the items listed, none give my taste buds more pleasure than mushrooms.

Exotic

The heartiness of a fresh roasted Portabella, the richness of a fresh sautéed Morel, the peppery Chanterelle or a meaty Porcini, anyway you serve mushrooms, I'll be first in line. Of course, it probably doesn't hurt that I've sampled the mushroom plate at the Golden Mushroom in Southfield, and have purchased exotic mushrooms for years from Don Schneider of Plymouth, the self-proclaimed "Mushroom Man."

You'll find him under the bird mural at Detroit's Eastern Market.

Anyone who reads this column knows of my mushroom forays in the north woods with Morel hunter extraordinaire, Aunt Phyllis. Friends in Okemos and Wellston have led me on mushroom hunts, and even though I have yet to really train my eye on where to look and what to look for, I now feel that I can venture into the woods with a more secure and confident attitude. Just how did this metamorphosis occur? I've just received a copy of "The Mushroom Book" by Thomas Laessle, Anna Del Conte and Gary Lincoff, (copyright 1996, DK Books, \$29.95) and I can honestly say that I haven't found time to put it down.

This book catalogues more than 450 rare and common fungus species and includes more than 2,000 annotated photographs and illustrations supported by notes on appearance and occurrence. Anyone interested in learning how to identify, gather and cook wild mushrooms and other fungi will certainly appreciate this book.

Exotic mushrooms have come a full about face within the last 10 years. There was a time when the only fresh mushrooms available were those milky white moonlight mushrooms sold on masse in every grocery store in town. Last weekend, Don Schneider offered fresh Morels, Chanterelles, Porcinis, Trumpets, Marabell and dried cloud ears (Chinese) for sale at his stand in Eastern Market. My local grocer carries Enoki, Portobellos, Criminis and Moerlights.

The ability to farm raise mushrooms, and ship them overnight via air freight has really opened up the exotic mushroom market. But if you, like me, think nothing of spending \$5 to \$20 per pound on exotic mushrooms, there are a few rules that should be followed so that you can truly enjoy their taste.

Storage tips

First proper storage is tantamount to great tasting mushrooms. Fresh exotic mushrooms are best cooked and eaten within 48 hours of purchase. Since they are a fungi, you can imagine what happens when they are not used, cooked or stored properly.

Remember that it is very important that the mushrooms be removed from any plastic bag they are placed in. Mushrooms need air to circulate around them and if left for anything more than 3 hours in a plastic bag, they begin to rot. I store my mushrooms in a colander in the vegetable crisper of my refrigerator.

Lastly, and I'm sure I'll rile a few feathers over this suggestion, fresh mushrooms should never be washed in water. If you must purchase dirty mushrooms, they should be brushed clean with a damp cloth or mushroom brush. Soaking them in water only makes them absorb more liquid than they need to.

Even usually sandy morels should be sliced and then rinsed. To those still worried about dirt, if you know what most mushrooms were grown in, you could soak them in bleach and never remove all the dirt. Nonetheless, fresh exotic mushrooms are one of the trendy, hot now gourmet foods and if you're looking to learn more about them, you'll enjoy "The Mushroom Book."

To leave a message for Chef Larry Jones, dial (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1888. See recipes inside.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

■ Savoring herbs.

PUMPKIN PATCHES

Pick your own pumpkin

Before the frost settles permanently on the pumpkin, you better pick one. Whether you plan to cook it or carve it, a plump pumpkin fresh off the vine is a fall tradition in Michigan. Here's a list of some of the best pumpkin picking patches around town:

■ Davies Orchard & Cider Mill, 40026 Willow Road, New Boston, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., Mon.-Sun., (313) 654-8893.

■ Apple Charlie's, 38035 South Huron Road, Huron Township, 8 a.m.-dark, Mon.-Sun., (313) 753-9380.

■ The Pumpkin Patch, 32285 Sibley Road 1/2 mile west of Monticello, Huron Township, 9:30 a.m.-dark, Mon.-Sun., (313) 753-4586. Petting barn. Pony rides and hayrides on weekends.

■ Bird's Berry Patch, 16750 Hannan Road, Romulus, 9 a.m.-dark, Mon.-Sun., (313) 941-1037. U-pick raspberries in addition to pumpkins.

■ Wilson Barn, 29350 W. Chicago at Middlebelt, Livonia, Noon-8 p.m., Mon.-Sun., (313) 427-4311. Animal barn. Hayrides on weekends.

■ Pumpkin Hollow, 23503 Otter Road, New Boston, 10 a.m.-dark, Mon.-Sun., (313) 753-9148. Animal barn.

■ Plymouth Orchard & Cider Mill, 10685 Warren Road, Plymouth, 9 a.m.-8 p.m., Mon.-Sun., (313) 455-2290. Petting farm. Wagon rides on weekdays from Noon-5 p.m. and on weekends from Noon-6 p.m. U-pick pumpkins on weekends only.

■ Alexander's Farm Market, 8 Mile & Pontiac Trail, South Lyon, 10 a.m.-7 p.m., Mon.-Sun., (810) 437-6360. Hayrides.

■ Erwin Orchards, 61090 Silver Lake Road, South Lyon, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Mon.-Sun., (810) 437-4704. Free wagon rides. Children's Spooky Story daily and some evenings Adults' Barn of Horror, Thurs., Fri., Sat. evenings.

■ Long Family Orchards, Bogie Lake Road, 1/3 mile north of Wise Road, Commerce Township, (810) 360-3774. U-pick apples in addition to pumpkins.

■ Kensington Metropark Farm Center, Milford, Sat. and Sun., Noon-4 p.m. Weekends. Hayrides. Children's activities.

■ Symantek's Pumpkinland, I-75 North, Exit 206, Goodrich, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Mon.-Sun., (810) 636-7714 and 636-2775. Hayrides daily.

■ Foreman Orchards, 7 Mile between Beck and Napier Roads, Northville, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m.-8 p.m. weekends, (810) 349-1256.

■ Meyer Berry Farm, 48800 W. 6 Mile Road (4 1/2 miles west of I-75), Northville, daylight-dark, (810) 349-0289.

■ Blake's Orchard & Cider Mill, 17985 Center Road, Ardena, 8 a.m.-6 p.m., Mon.-Sun., (810) 784-5343. Hayrides Village, train rides, haunted, and petting farm.



QUAKER OATS

Marvelous muffins: Celebrate autumn's arrival with a freshly baked pumpkin muffin.

Harvesttime muffins

BY RENEE SHOGLUND
STAFF WRITER

Chilly fall days are perfect for baking up batches of moist, tender muffins. They're quick to make and a delicious breakfast, after-school or bedtime snack.

Fortunately, now you can have your muffins and eat them, too. Thanks to the health benefits of whole grain oatmeal and moisture-adding ingredients such as pumpkin puree and applesauce, muffins can be a guilt-free treat.

For generations, savvy bakers have been substituting oats for some of the flour to give their muffins a wholesome flavor and texture. Quick or old-fashioned oats work equally well, but the old-fashioned will give the

muffins a heartier texture.

Muffin recipes are wonderfully adaptable. You can use regular, chunky or unsweetened applesauce, and if you're a purist, you can bake and puree your own pumpkin. It's easy.

To prepare a pumpkin (or a butternut squash, which yields a more delicate flavor) just split the vegetable in half, remove seeds and place cut-side down in a baking pan.

Fill pan with about an inch of water, cover with foil, and bake at 350 degrees F. for approximately 1 1/2 hours, or until a fork or toothpick easily pierces the skin. When done, scoop out flesh and mash.

Less patient bakers can streamline the

process by skinning the pumpkin or squash, cutting the flesh into cubes, and steaming the vegetable in a steamer or in a little water in a saucepan until tender.

Bakers devoid of any patience can microwave their pumpkin or squash according to directions.

Who says there's no such thing as a perfect muffin. These tips will bring you as close to muffin perfection as possible.

Thoroughly combine dry ingredients in one bowl and liquid ingredients in a separate bowl. Add liquids all at once to dry ingredients and stir just until dry ingredients are evenly moist. Overmixing can make lower-fat muffins tough and rubbery.

Fill muffin cups almost full and bake in a preheated oven just until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out with a few moist crumbs clinging to it. Overbaking will make muffins dry.

Let muffins cool 5 minutes in the pan on a wire rack. Remove muffins from pan and serve warm. Cool leftover muffins completely, wrap airtight and freeze. To reheat, place one muffin on microwave-safe plate and microwave on HIGH about 30 seconds.

While the muffins are baking, put on a pot of coffee and invite over a few friends. Then enjoy these great fall treats.

See recipes inside.

Oregon's King Estate wines here at last



When we first tasted Oregon's King Estate wines two years ago, we were disappointed to learn that they were not available in our area. After we visited in summer 1995 and saw the ultra-modern, state-of-the-art vineyards and winery, we were even more frustrated that the wines were not available. It has taken some time, but there is finally sufficient wine supply for the winery to open up this market. The wait has been worth it because the current releases, 1993 Chardonnay \$13, 1993 Pinot Noir \$19, 1994 Reserve Pinot Gris \$15.50 and 1995 Pinot Gris at \$13 are outstanding, delicious, lush, rich and balanced.

There's been significant hype about Oregon pinot noir, but in many years, due principally to less than ideal weather during the growing season, the premium has not been delivered. At King Estate, located southwest of Eugene, literally

tens of millions of dollars have been spent on developing top-quality pinot noir on a 650-acre estate with elevations between 800 and 1,100 feet. Grafted to eight different phylloxera-resistant rootstocks are 16 clonal selections of pinot noir growing along sloping hillsides on well-drained soils.

The estate is solely owned by the King family of Kansas City who amassed its earthly fortune in founding and operating King Radio Corp. which designed, manufactured and marketed navigation, communication and identification equipment, including auto-pilots and radar for both military and private aircraft.

Frequent travels to France and Italy sparked Ed King Jr.'s wine interests. He took on the wine entrepreneurial challenge with his son Ed III and other family members. A visit to the 100,000-square-foot winery, architecturally designed to replicate a French chateau, showcases the seriousness with which the wine challenge is being met. Maxed out as vineyards come into full bearing, the winery will produce a little more than 160,000 cases, which is large by Oregon stan-

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Estate: King Estate Winery near Eugene, Oregon was built to replicate a French chateau.