TASTE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1996

TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Forget the house, make gingerbread

The my dughter was two years old I began making gingerbread on an almost weekly basis. Little children seemed to love it—the spicier the better. For special occasions, I would ice this gingerbread with chocolate or lemon frosting. Some days, I split it into layers and would slather raspberry jam all over it. The recipe I used was a nice, traditional one from "Charleston Recipes," the classic cookbook created by the Junior Lengue of Charleston, which I picked up at a book store just down the street from Mother's Restaurant, with a fried oyster pobog dripping from my lips.

If you ever visit Charleston, pick one up as all good cookbook collections should have a copy.

Seeking perfection

good cookbook collections should have a copy.

Seeking perfection

A few years later, I decided to branch out, and after a while, I realized that I was on a quest for the perfect gingerbread. Like most heroic quests, this search has not turned up any ultimates, but I have discovered a few worthy efforts that would definitely fill the void this holiday season.

It is amazing how many people are hooked on gingerbread. People who like it love it and crave it. These people are extremely easy to please, and they are more than willing to help taste the results of your experiments. I generally try out recipes on my kids (confirmed gingerbread fiends, especially when covered with a citrus glaze high in sugar content). I've also made and shipped gingerbread to another victim, Norman Weinstein, a professional food demonstrator and culinary arts teacher who lives in Brooklyn, New York. His idea of heaven is a good science fiction book, and a warm piece of gingerbread.

The sad fact is that gingerbread is on the decline, although it is alive and well in children's books of the 1950s where cheerful housewives als June Cleaver wait at home for the arrival of their children (i.e. The Beav) at 3 p.m., ready with a great big pan of gingerbread and some ice cold milk. I must have been deprived because I grew up in the 1950s, but my momma never wore pearls and never made gingerbread.

You do not have to be a housebound mother (or father) to make gingerbread. All you need is to put aside an hour or so to mix up the batter and bake it, and then, provided you do not have a huge mob waiting to devour it, it will pay you bust for a few days because gingerbread gets better as it ages. I myself never have any arround long enough to age, but my English cookbooks assure me that a few days make all the difference in the world.

Sweet conclusions

difference in the world.

Sweet conclusions

After years of hands-on experience, I have come to three conclusions about gingerbread: First, the ground ginger must be absolutely fresh. If you, like me, have a quarter-consumed small can of ground ginger must be absolutely fresh. If you, like me, have a quarter-consumed small can of ground ginger covered in dust or other spices from the rack, throw it out. Ginger loses its power after it has been sitting around for nine months or so. If you have access to an ethnic market that sells spices, buy your ginger there or better yet, contact the folks at Rafail Spice in Detroit's famed Eastern Market. (If you plan on doing any holiday cooking this season, refresh your spice cabinet with new spices from Rafai, it's well worth it. Rafail's is a 1221 Russell in the heart of the bustling Eastern Market area, and is open Monday through Saturday (the best time to shop is during the week when the crowds aren't there.) Of course, you can purchase a fresh jur of ginger at the supermarket and it will work just fine.

Second, most recipes are very timid about the quantities of ginger. You can start out mild and end up doubling or tripling the amount. I prefer a heaping tablespoon, which may be too much for the timid, but not enough for others. This is a matter of trast. I suggest you tast to the batter before baking. It is still fun to lick the spoon!

Third, never use ordinary molasses. It is simply too bitter, and you don't want bitter ginger-bread. Pure cane syrup is the name of the game.

I whole heartedly endorse pure cane syrup made by C.S. Steen Syrup Mills of Abbeville, Louisiana. Four of their twelve ounce cans can be purchased for \$10 plus \$4.61 shipping (call them at (319-893-1654). I'm not talking Karo syrup here folks. This is the best. You can also use blacker light treacle, a British ingredient available at local fancy food sheps or at The Irish Baker, 6472 Schnefer in Dearborn (313) 534-2444.

Chef Larry Jance is a free-lance urriter. He welcomes your calls and comm

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

Make many cookies with just one dough. Laura's Fat-Free kitchen.

FILMOUS THE S. S. E. S.

By Ruth Mossok Johnston Special Writer

diday parties mean different people — gatherings can be from the most elaborate to just coffee and cake with a few friends. A wonderful party, whether small or large, elegant or simple, is where you enter the home of your host, and feel welcome.

The moath of December does lend itself to going all out — a time of celebration, excess, and indulgence, especially in the area of food. It seems a time when effort is effortless ... or can be made so, by orchestrating properly planned parties and menus.

We would all like to think we have the ability and confidence to serve a surfeit of courses to 50 with case and elegance. The reality is, not all of us do, or do we care to . Entertaining is as personal as our style of dress. Parties, dinners, and get-togethers should feel comfortable for the host and guests. Everyone has their own traditions and talents — feel a freedom to do what is comfortable.

Three area women share their holiday party plans:

Paula Dore-Duffy, Ph.D — research scientist, professor of neurology, chief of the Division of Noure-Immunology at Wayne State University's School of Medicine, and a resident of Bloomfield Hills, is also a mother of three, and married to Dr. Michael Duffy.

In her apare time, she is a gournot cook, takes her kids to a variety of activities, sews skating costumes for her daughter, works on many committees, plans olaborate holiday decorations for her home (we are talking a Christmas Tree in every room — trees that all have themes; a Nautical Tree, a Pink Tree, Allidrenta Trees — one in each of the kid's rooms, to name a fewl), and organizes the Duffy's annual Christmas Day Bash for 50.

This holiday fête on the 25th of



Tropical twist: Polynesian Holiday Shrimp Kebabs are a festive appetizer sure to please guests. They are also easy to eat, since shrimp and kebab-sized vegetable and fruit pieces need little or no cutting, and can be prepared ahead of time.

December (begins mid-afternoon, and goes through the dinner hour) is not only a sit down event, but formal. Hosts and attendees are properly dressed in feative-dressy-holiday attire.

Ronted tables for 6-8 (per table) are delivered days alead — then elaborately decerated throughout several rooms. Set upon each plate, is a gift, especially chosen for the individual who will be seated in that spot. These beautifully wrapped gifts are hand-picked throughout the

year so the "right choices" can be

rade.

After cocktails and champagne.

Christmas carols are sung and accompanied by piano— the children present little piano recitais and then, the cluborate buffet is st.

"Dinner is done with traditional recipes" says Paula. "Spiced meat pate, duck or goose, a rack of lamb or a filet mignon roast (depending on which year), cran-

See DECK THE HALLS, B2

Great finds for the holidays ~ right to your door

right to your door

Want to here you tables sat perfossionsly—THE TALENTED TABLE—an
entertainment closing team of Dario
Miller, Jamet Stein, Amy Millier Weinstein and Arteen Miller (Done mom, two
daughters and a daughter in lew respectively) have established a new
sorvice, passed in Bloomfeld Mills,
or and the stein stein stein stein and Artee of the
sorvice, passed in Bloomfeld Mills,
or arrangement for any special occasion,
Trose four have talent, tasto, and
great stuff.
What started out as Mom's compusion in
boying art, cookery items, liners,
and a unique business concept. I loved
Janet's comment regarding her mother
— the dosan't buy one, she buys. 3
dozen't To contact this talented foursome call (810) 932-1863.

Bacha de Nold (Yule leg) delivered

some call: (810) 932-1893.

Bloch de Nobl (Yule log) delivered right to your door - Let Le Bistro du Leo bake a delicious traditional Yule Leo bake a delicious traditional Yule Leg cake for you. This authentic French restaurant will have their Pastry French restaurant will have their Pastry This yellow cake is decorated with chocatals forsiting to look like bank - meningue mushtooms and candy holly caves growing out of it. Each log-sing and holl production of the control of the service growing and out of it. Service 1955-4100, Fax: (207) 655-2472, or E-mall your order: Blatricha-Gaol.com

mall your order: Blartoux-Gool.com

Berchergie; Sameked Tukers statight
fram Tenas to your front door in a mintter of days. The Greenberg's have been
smoking only one thing for the past 58.
These wonderful smoked birds are had
nubbed inside and out with a secret
nubbed inside and out with a secret
nubbed inside and out with a secret
publish fooked to perfection over hickoty wood in the Greenberg's bird,
croke houses, and force to maintain
held freshness – there are no preservatives! Your beautifuly completely
completely of the completely of the complete of the
newly for the internalitys. Plees I in your
refrigerator until ready for use, II not
using six to gift days after its artivel,
you can keep it frazen in your freezer
for six months.

using als to eight days after its artival, you can keep it frozen in your freezer, for als months.

The smoket mey skin is not usually the smoket mey skin is not usually the smoket mey skin is not usually most acceptance of the smoket delice, or coid.

Greenberg's amoked turkey; not grown temperature, or coid.

Greenberg's amoked turkeys are available year round - they weigh between to 10 15 pound - you get the entitle bird - not soid as breasts only. The coid is 3.10 per soil is 3.10 per soil

PERTALNING TIPS

- In planning your party determine: what type of party you plan to have will it be a small intimate affair, a large buffet, a at down formal dinner for 12, or grating for 25? Organization is essential! What is your budget? Do you want a caterer or waltstaff?
- or waitstaff?

 If hiring a conterer, book your party for enough in advance to have the party carofully planned.
- carafully planned.

 Interview your potential cateer ask lots of questions discuss menus and total of questions discuss menus and the control of the co
- on your own.

 State actualing price and stick to it don't try to negatiate after you've
 exceeded your badget, if you add
 extras, expect to pay for them. Rem
 ber to add tox and graduity to get an
 accurate figure.
 If one catter ductes you a price far
 below the others, it usually does not

- Indicate that you are getting a bargain, but a questionable result. (Reflect back to the contractor that gave you that low bidl)

 Carefully look over rental equipment, make aure it is what you want, and it pood condition, you want have to be a sool condition, you want have to pay for breaking you or your guests didn't couse.
- couse and you have enough a laft pre-sant it you wunt help general rule of thums: one wollet for eith guests, two waiters for 10-12. If you are having a bar, one component barender should be able to handle up to 50 guests. If hilling for a majer holder, pelan on poying dou-ble time. There is nothing written that you let you would be a some of the pro-gramment or the sound of the pending of your level of comfort.
- your level of comfort.

 Run through the ovenings events with the caterer and or waitstelf time of arrival, departure, dress, duties and pay, Usually if the caterer has aupplied the servers, they will have had training check to make sure. If hilling outside servers, not hough the evening with them prior to the arrival of the guests and be specified as to what you expect.
- It's always polite to introduce the walt-staff to your family members and to the guest of honor (if there is one) this way

- the server will know who is to be served first.
- first.

 A Aways treat your employees with respect never spook to them in a discourdeous or peremptory tone poor behavior of that sort is a clear indication that you are the ametour.

 It is appropriate to give an additional gratuity to waitstaff if you are well pleased.
- Bregardiess if you are having help or not, you need to be well organized. Determine how many guests will be invited do you went to send invitations or extend invitations by phone.
- Plan your menu devolop a grocery list for food and spirits.
- ion room spriits.

 Before cooking, set out dishes you will use for serving get linens, dishes and slivenwere ready. Determine what accessory pieces or decorative items you will need.
- you will need. I have you beverage set-up planned make sure you leave adequate space for beverages surf. Set the sure to beverages surf. Set the sure to be sure to the surf of the surf

- alternatives. Be considerate of those on special diets and those that don't drink slooked.
- elcohol.

 In planning your menu, keep dietary considerations a fector. If serving a multitude of food liems, it's not necessary to check with your guest to see if there are any dietary restrictions or allegion. Keep in mind—there are a list of diegotal and the service of the
- tions, aflorgies or sociute dishies when I invite them!

 Be careful when incompling must into year and the properties of the properties of
- Make sure you have enough tables and chairs always have more than you need, just in case you have a few extra friends drop by.

Morton's pays attention to wine details

BY ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

BY ELEMOR & INV HEAD

SPECIAL WITTERS

As consumers elevate expectations for both wine and food in restaurants, Morton's of Chicago Steakhouse is paying attention.

Five months ago, the Morton's corporation formed a four-member wine team with the mission of improving wine quality, its service and becoming more innovative in merchandising wine, "and Jake Hiekton, member of the wine team and Maitre d'Generul Manager of the Southfield Morton's.

Morton's values partnerships. Because the company buys \$10 million in wine annually and wine prices or merchanding, we're looking at long-term agreements with producers, nego-ciants and shippers, not only to give our 34 nationwide restaurants well-priced wines, but

also to guarantee sufficient supply. Essentially, we're locking venders into year-long pricing." Morton's is becoming a shrewd wine buyer and perception of value is important. They've always claimed that each of their properties is a model of consistency. Now, they're reaching out further to be consumer friendly, particularly with well-priced wines by the glass. The focus is varietal wines, following an American wines and American steaks theme, and an informed waitstaff to serve them.

Since Hicknet came to the Southfield Morton's at the end of January, he created a 170-page wine training manul and each staff person goes through a four-week training period. "On regular tests, the average score of wait-

NEW WINES: For readers who called our Voice mail loculating about small points of some good 1993 flurguinders and write told "the bat own size and the state of the bat own size and the state of the bat own size and the state of the state o

For your collar or special holiday ###: 1993 Beringer Mertot, Bancroft Vineyard \$40

See DETAILS, B2