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TASTE

B

HOME SENSE



LOIS THIELEKE

Cookware is safe
when you take care

With the new cookware, out with the old! The best choices for new cookware depends on who you ask. Everyone has a favorite type of pan or kind of material they think is the very best for cooking.

The number one consumer cookware choice is aluminum, number two is stainless steel. There are also other materials available such as copper, anodized aluminum, non-stick coatings, cast iron, and ceramic, each having advantages and disadvantages.

Tips

- Always follow the manufacturers directions for care and cleaning of cookware.
- Avoid hard abrasives on cookware.
- Always transfer food into plastic or glass containers after the cooking or heating is completed.
- Do not store food in any cookware.
- Avoid scratching the surfaces with metal utensils.



will clean this cookware. If it has darkened, fill the pan with water and vinegar or lemon juice and boil 15 minutes. The aluminum cookware will look just like new again.

Stainless steel

Stainless steel is durable, won't corrode, is hard, tough, and resistant to wear. Stainless steel is a poor heat conductor so usually the bottom is coated with copper or aluminum. Do not allow acidic or salt foods to remain in stainless steel for long periods of time. There is no apparent health problem, but this will pit the steel surface. Generally, hot soapy water and a nylon scrub pad will clean stainless steel cookware.

Copper is an excellent conductor of heat and most cooks have at least one copper pan to make delicate sauces.

Food barely sticks to anodized aluminum which has been altered so it cleans better. The "darling" of the cookware department has combined hard anodized aluminum with a nonstick coating. The non-stick surface on cookware is coated with Teflon or Silverstone and is not toxic, any chips that flake off and are ingested will pass harmlessly through the body. However, if these pots and pans start peeling seriously, replace them. Most can be wiped clean with a sponge and hot soapy water. The advantage of these pans is that food can be cooked with little or no fat.

Cast Iron

Cast iron absorbs heat slowly and evenly, and are good for baking, browning or frying. New cast iron pans need to be seasoned with unsalted cooking oil before using, follow manufacturer directions. Retain the seasoning by wiping cookware clean with a paper towel, scrub gently and let thoroughly dry after using and before storing.

Ceramic is a poor heat conductor, but a good heat retainer, suitable for baking. Glass ceramic cookware can go from the freezer to the oven without breaking. Most ceramic pans are dishwasher proof and easy to clean.

Lois M. Thieleke of Birmingham is a home economist with the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service. For answers to food questions, call the MSU Food and Nutrition Hotline, (313) 858-0904.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Holiday ham
- Santa snacks

CHAMPAGNE ADDS HOLIDAY

STORY BY
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Iron Horse Vineyards in Sebastopol, Calif., began producing sparkling wines in 1980. Today's superior sparklers under the Iron Horse label bring great satisfaction to founder-partners Audrey and Barry Sterling. Iron Horse winemaker Forrest Tancer and his author wife Joy Sterling, who is winery sales, marketing and public relations director. The Iron Horse project was initiated in 1976 after the Sterlings searched for a winery site in Europe for many years. It's on a roll today with both still wines and sparklings.

Of the seven Iron Horse sparklings produced, five are available locally. They include 1991 Brut \$26, 1993 Wedding Cuvée (Blanc de Noirs) \$28, 1990 Blanc de Blancs \$28, 1989 Brut LD \$53 and 1991 Brut Rose \$28. It's impossible to pick a favorite from this stellar line up, but we're impressed with the elevated quality of the 1991 Brut, as it compares to previous vintages.

An inquiry brought this response from Tancer. "In the early years, we followed the French model where grapes are picked at lower sugar levels. We left the wine on the lees after the second fermentation in the bottle about the same length of time as French champagne makers. What we've discovered is that it's important for us to pick grapes at higher sugar levels and allow the wine to rest in the bottle on the yeast lees for a longer time before we disgorge. Grapes picked at high maturity offer more flavors and they gain greater complexity and creaminess by longer time on the yeast lees. It's as simple as that."

Iron Horse does something that no other California sparkling producer does. Tancer puts the disgorging date on the label. Therefore, when you pay a lot of money for a wine of excellence such as Iron Horse's top-of-the-line 1989 Brut LD (Late Disgorged), you can tell easily whether the wine has been on the store shelf for a long time or whether it's fresh. Champagnes and sparkling wines are released by the producer when they are ready to drink. With Iron Horse, recently disgorged wine can be in the hands of consumers within four or five months after disgorging. That's about as perfect as it gets.

In Joy Sterling's recently published book "Vintage Feasting," (Pocket Books, 1996, \$24, a great gift for any wine lover) she says she doesn't get hung up on the use of "champagne" as a synonym for sparkling wine. She discusses



French tradition: Bollinger Champagne epitomizes the French champagne tradition.

More
superior sparklings
for the holidays

California:

- 1991 "J" \$25.50
- 1988 "J" Late Disgorged \$33
- From Malson Deutz there's Brut Cuvée \$15, Blanc de Noirs \$13.50, Brut Rose \$20 and 1992 Brut Reserve \$23
- From Mumm Cuvée Napa Valley Brut Prestige \$14 and Blanc de Noirs \$14
- 1991 Roederer Estate L'Ermitage \$33
- Gloria Ferrer Blanc de Noirs \$15 won sweepstakes award at the 1996 Sonoma County Harvest Fair

French Champagne:

- 1989 Champagne Deutz Blanc de Blancs \$49
- Champagne Deutz Brut \$20
- Louis Roederer Brut Premier \$27

sparkling wine styles and their food matches and writes, "Most people do not think of sparkling wine with food. They think of it as an aperitif or an after-dinner drink, something to be enjoyed standing up. I drink sparkling wine with almost everything. Brut is rich and creamy, which is the reason it goes so well with clear soup. The taste and mouthfeel of sparkling also seem to respond to ginger and lemon grass. Ironically, it works with everything you can think of that goes with beer — peanuts, popcorn, anything salty, sushi, deep-fried and hot, spicy food, sweet-and-sour dishes, and all the cuisines like Caribbean and Chinese that feature a melange of different flavors."

She also says that Blanc de Noirs is one of the few sparklings that's delicious with chocolate, provided the chocolate isn't too sweet. Going on to Rosé, she refers directly to Iron Horse and writes, "Ours is actually the driest of our sparklings and my favorite food with it is steak. I love to serve it in a big burgundy glass — it is primarily pinot noir — so you get a bath of bubbles down your throat. It makes me feel like I'm Diamond Jim Brady." Domains Chandon's Chef do

Cuisine Philippe Jeanty recommends smoked fish, foie gras, lamb shanks, roast pork tenderloin and deep-fried foods such as spicy onion rings or vegetable tempura especially with Chandon's newest release Cuvée 490 \$18.

Champagne Bollinger

Champagne Bollinger, rooted in France's Champagne region since the 16th century, is one of the few remaining family-owned and managed Grandes Marques houses. Bollinger is singular in several ways. Fruit is sourced exclusively from grands and premiers crus vineyards with an overall rating of 98 percent on the famous échelle (ladder) ranking of Champagne vineyards. Family-owned vineyards contribute 70 percent of the grapes. Vintage-dated champagnes are exclusively made from chardonnay and pinot noir (other houses also include the lesser red grape pinot meunier). It is one of only two houses (the other is Krug) that continues to ferment all vintage-dated champagnes and some non-vintage in small oak barrels. In the dosage, Bollinger uses reserve wines that are impeccably stored in cork-finished magnums.

Bollinger Special Cuvée Brut \$35 represents the house style which Guy Biot, great-nephew of Lily Bollinger and company marketing director, described as "consistently styled and determined by the grapes. The backbone, richness and body stem from 60 percent pinot noir." The wine has a "touch of age" coming from the reserve wines in the dosage. Acidity in this wine is perfect and makes it a superior food accompaniment.

Bolled out in time for the holidays is one of Bollinger's best. Grand Année 1989 \$95 was 100 percent barrel fermented and is a blend of 61 percent pinot noir and 39 percent chardonnay.

"This vintage had excellent maturity and very ripe grapes," Biot explained. "In this wine you have both the Bollinger style and vintage character. If a person wants to age one of our champagnes, this is the one I'd recommend. Under good storage conditions, it will retain its freshness for one or two more years."

Bollinger RD \$120 is made exclusively from the 1992 vintage. The bottle sampled was disgorged November 7, 1995. Its aromatic and toasted sourdough bread notes portended richness that was delivered on the palate. Recently disgorged (RD) champagnes don't get better than this. To savor its toasty richness and finesse, we recommend a light fish course such as sole with a delicate, creamy sauce.

Look for Focus on Wine on the first and third Monday of the month in Taste. To leave a voice mail message for the Herald, dial (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1864.

Treat friends and family to no-guilt sweets

The holidays are a time of delicious temptations — buttery homemade cookies and candies, creamy eggnog, salted nuts and other once-a-year treats. This season you can make the gifts you bake for friends and family just a little bit healthier without sacrificing their great flavor.

The secret to healthier holiday baking is a simple one: Use more healthful ingredients and keep portions reasonable in size. Healthier baking ingredients include: low-fat and skim dairy products; egg whites; unsweetened cocoa powder; canned pumpkin, applesauce and other fruit purees; vegetable cooking sprays; whole wheat flour, rolled oats and wheat germ. Wheat germ, for example, can be substituted for up to one-half cup of the flour in recipes for cookies, cakes, muffins and quick bread loaves for a boost of nutrition.

In addition to using healthier ingredients, keep portions

small. Instead of jumbo muffins, bake mini muffins. Individual quick bread loaves encourage smaller tastes, and a small cookie can be just as satisfying as a large one. After all, part of the fun is trying several cookies from a cookie assortment, and smaller cookies let you do that without feeling guilty.

Chocolate Caramel Cheesecake Bites are miniature treats with all the goodness of a full slice of cheesecake. Light cream cheese, unsweetened cocoa powder and egg whites trim fat and calories but not flavor, and the wheat germ "crust" is easier to make than a traditional crumb crust. Simply coat the inside of the mini muffin pan cups with margarine and sprinkle with wheat germ until evenly coated. The crunchy wheat germ crust complements the creamy, chocolatey filling.

To give as a gift, arrange 10 or 12 mini cheesecakes on a plate

(shop garage sales for interesting, inexpensive plates) and add a small, decorative glass jar filled with fat-free caramel topping from the supermarket. Wrap in clear cellophane, top with a festive bow and be sure to include storage instructions and a copy of the recipe.

A spicy ginger cookie is another gift from the kitchen that's sure to be enjoyed. Molasses, ginger, cinnamon and cloves impart a spicy-sweet holiday flavor to chewy-crisp Ginger Crackles. Unsweetened applesauce replaces some of the fat while wheat germ adds an appealing crunch. For a festive, sparkly topping, the dough is rolled in granulated sugar and wheat germ. To make the cookies ahead, cool them completely, wrap airtight and freeze. Thaw at room temperature before packing in tins or gift bags for giving.

See recipes inside.



Holiday treats: Chocolate caramel cheesecake bites make the perfect gift for your favorite sweet-tooth.