

## FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD



RICK HALBERG

## Put your heart into one really spectacular dish

Being a chef and restaurant owner is no picnic. You work long hours, weekends and holidays. But I love food, I love to eat it, and prepare it. Sometimes, when I'm really in a groove, a dish will come to me like a tropical breeze floating across my body, and I know I just have made that dish - now!

Recently I was preparing the menu for a dinner I donated to Channel 56 for a fund-raiser, along with my friend Roy Shelef, a fellow food and wine lover. Roy was donating the wines, and I was supplying the dinner and restaurant - Emily's, of course.

I was sitting at my desk looking over the wines and thinking about the menu when pow! I got hit with that breeze, inspiration, an inner-sense that what I was about to prepare would be a true gastronomic masterpiece.

All through the day an electric charge seemed to be running through my body. I was so certain about this dish that I didn't even try a test run. I could taste it in my mind and it was driving me crazy. As I was explaining the menu to the staff at our pre-opening dinner, I felt like I was a kid falling in love when I described "the dish." Now the rest of the menu was really fine too, but this dish was going to be amazing, I just knew it.

## "The Dish"

It's 7:30 p.m., and the guests are arriving. We are doing seven courses and "the dish" is number two. The rules in a tasting menu are simple, the flavors and foods should be progressive. Will the rest of the menu be overshadowed by "the dish"? Will the guests feel the excitement I feel? "I'm not nervous," I tell myself, I've done these dinners many times before, but somehow, this was different. It was like I was bringing out something way more personal, like I was showing a deeper side of me.

First course: fresh lobster and mango salad with vanilla mango vinaigrette. They loved it, a great start, light, flavorful, the juices are flowing. And now it's time, it seems too soon, "the dish" needs more of a build up. Here we go, I am going crazy. I can't remember feeling this alive in awhile.

Michael, my co-sous chef, is heating cannellini beans in a little truffled chicken broth, and Sharon, my other sous chef, is searing the pristine natural diver scallop until it is still slightly translucent inside. Sound good so far. This is where it gets exciting. We poach quail eggs in a little lemon water until the whites are just set; pour the beans and broth into a bowl, set the scallop on top, then top that with the quail egg. Now, for the finishing touches - a few drops of lemon juice, a drizzling of white truffle oil, some chopped black truffles, chives and cracked pepper.

I insist on taking this dish out to the dining room myself. The aroma is overpowering, the truffles, the scallops, it's too much. As I set the first bowl in front of a guest and start to explain the components, I tell them about the ethereal fragrance of truffles, the briny, sweet taste of the scallop, and the rich, gamy flavor of the quail egg. I am almost in tears. This is getting really personal. I step back and watch as they start to eat, my mouth is watering, my hands are shaking, tears are in my eyes. Have you ever watched one of your children when they are very young, getting on stage to perform for the first time? That's what I felt.

Not to worry. First I hear some moaning "mmm," I see a certain smile, a nod, and hear a "wow!" More tastes more "mmm's." They are blown away, they want to pick up their

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## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- Living Better Sensibly



Good cooks: Rose Kentros (left) and Ann Morrin, members of the Ladies Philoptochos Society at St. George Greek Orthodox Church, present Pastichio, Spinach and Rice, and Moussaka. These are just three of the family-tested dishes featured in "Yassoo: An Adventure in Greek Cooking," a cookbook published by the society.

# Grecian Flavors

TRIED AND TRUE

If your mom wrote a cookbook, she'd probably have this to say about it - "all the recipes in there are perfect. They're interesting."

That's how Georgia Sekles describes "Yassoo: An Adventure in Greek Cooking," written by the Ladies Philoptochos Society (Friend of the Poor) at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Bloomfield Hills.

This is their second book, the first was published five or six years ago. "All of the women in St. George's brought in their recipes," explained Sekles who worked on both cookbooks. "These recipes are tried and true."

Rose Kentros of Bloomfield Hills helped compile and test the recipes in the book. "It's got all different kinds of things in there," she explained. "One lady bought a book and went home and tried a lamb recipe for her and her husband. He was crazy about it."

From their home to yours, "Yassoo: An Adventure in Greek Cooking," is the kind of cookbook that's sure to get a workout in your kitchen. If Opal Fleming Greek Cheese, Greek Salad, and Moussaka, are not your idea of what's for dinner, don't put this paper down yet.

Members of the Ladies Philoptochos Society put a lot of time and

**Where Can I Find?**  
WHAT: "Yassoo: An Adventure in Greek Cooking," published by the Ladies Philoptochos Society of St. George Greek Orthodox Church.

**HOW TO GET YOUR COPY:** Call (248) 335-8869, or send a check for \$15, plus \$2 for shipping and handling payable to Ladies Philoptochos of St. George Greek Church to St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Attention: Ladies Philoptochos/Cookbook, 1515 South Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR:**  
Fall Holiday Fantasy Arts and Crafts Show - 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 23 and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24, at St. George Greek Orthodox Church.

effort into this book, and you're sure to find something pleasing. Each recipe was kitchen tested.

There are 10 chapters in the book, everything from appetizers and salads to soups, vegetables, fish, poultry, meat and casserole, pilaf-pasta-pitas, breads, and desserts.

"A lot of people make spinach and rice," said Kentros. The Mixed Vegetable Casserole is one of her

favorites. She made it for friends, "they all went bananas. They ate every bit of it."

Baked Macaroni and Cheese, Corn Bread, Baked Fish Fillets, Coney Island Sauce and Barbecue Sauce are some recipes you'll find, but wouldn't expect to, in "Yassoo," which translates "to your health."

"It's not just a traditional Greek cookbook," said Ann Morrin of Rochester Hills who also worked on the book. "These are recipes from families associated with the church. They're recipes that have been passed down generation to generation - family recipes compiled into a book. The Greek recipes are authentic."

The mother of two boys ages 10 and 13, Morrin cooks nearly everyday. "With some of the recipes

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## It's summer in the city, time for make ahead salads

Dinner in the fridge is like money in the bank - it takes away some of your worries. There's no reason to sweat about what's for dinner when you know it's ready and waiting.

Hot Chicken Salad and Make-Ahead Salad are two of Rose Duganne's "very favorite anytime recipes."

Hot Chicken Salad can be made ahead, and takes only 20-25 minutes to bake. "I usually serve it with Make-Ahead Salad and a Cinnamon Apple Pie," said Duganne who lives in Livonia.

## HOT CHICKEN SALAD

- 4 cups cooked chicken
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 4 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 pimientos, chopped fine
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon minced onion
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Accent, if desired
- 1 can sliced mushrooms, drained, (use as much as you like)
- Topping
- 1 1/2 cups crushed potato chips
- 1 cup grated cheese (mild Cheddar or your favorite)

2/3 cup toasted almonds

Combine all ingredients, except topping ingredients, and put in greased rectangular baking dish. Combine potato chips, cheese and almonds to make topping. Top casserole with topping mixture. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Uncover and bake at 400°F for 20 to 25 minutes. Serves 8.

## MAKE-AHEAD SALAD

- 1 small head lettuce, torn into pieces
- 2 ribs celery, chopped
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced and separated into rings
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen peas, cooked
- 1 can (8 1/2 ounces) water chestnuts, drained and sliced
- 2 cups mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 3 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 8 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled

In a 9- by 9-inch baking dish, or wide mouth bowl, spread lettuce pieces evenly. Layer with celery, onions, cooked peas and water chestnuts.

Spread mayonnaise evenly over top of salad. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and crumbled bacon. Cover and refrigerate allowing at least 3 hours or overnight to "season" before serving. Makes 6-8 servings.

Pretty soon you'll be wondering what to do with all those tomatoes flourishing in your backyard garden. Anne Deising's Herbed Tomato Cheese Bread is a tasty solution for people wondering what to do with all their tomatoes, or people who simply love tomatoes, and can't get enough of them.

"I've had the recipe for 20 years, and my mom had it before me," said Deising, a Plymouth resident. "I had an abundance of tomatoes, but you can only eat so much of them. This bread is delicious. It's pretty healthy, too, unless you eat the whole loaf, which I sometimes do."

Deising serves this bread with soup on Saturdays, or cuts it up into small pieces, and serves it as an appetizer.

## HERBED TOMATO CHEESE BREAD

- 2/3 cup milk
- 2 cups Bisquick
- 3 medium tomatoes, peeled and sliced 1/4-inch thick
- Paprika to sprinkle on top of bread
- Sour Cream Topping
- 1 medium onion, minced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3/4 cup sour cream

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