

2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

Napa Valley also known for olive oil

I recently returned from a wonderful food, wine and more trip to northern California. I had the good fortune to eat in many of San Francisco's unique and fine restaurants including: Zuni, Chez Pannisse, Millennium, The Blasted Door, and Bix. After eating my way through San Fran, I headed toward wine country with no particular agenda. It being my first time in northern California, I knew I wanted to experience, as many wineries as time would permit. Upon my arrival in wine country I landed in Calistoga, famous for its natural hot springs, mud baths and general spillo environment. Calistoga is nestled at the north end of the Napa Valley. I set out on my mission to find the most unique "smaller vineyards" Napa had to offer.

Cycling

As luck would have it, I happened by the Get Away Bike Shop. My usual six or seven day exercise routine had been compromised many days and months before, so I decided to investigate vineyard cycling tours. I ended up helmet in hand the next morning with our bike leader, Dave, ready to go, and taste it all! Off we went, up and down the steep Napa countryside touring some of the interesting smaller vineyards.

On the tour we were introduced to wine from vineyards whose product never sees distribution. Only insiders know how to find it.

Trees

From the very first vineyard we entered I noticed olive trees, and lots of them. As the wine tasting and tours progressed so did my questions to winemakers about their olive trees and what they do with all those olives.

Many of the vineyards are squashing grapes and pressing olives side by side. I learned that winemakers are very proud of their alively branched olive trees and often will run out of their first press of olive oil before their latest wine release.

While my bike buddies were looking for their second glass of wine I was asking someone to pass the bread and spill some oil. At almost every vineyard from where I purchased wine, I also picked up a bottle of their glossy green finest. At some vineyards, I left the wine behind and opted for olive oil only.

In addition to northern California's

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Olive facts & lore

- The history of olive is said to date back 8,000 years to carbon remains found in Spain.
- Some say the trees appeared on the California landscape in 1769. Trees were propagated from seeds brought by the Mexicans. Others cite 1785 when the trees were brought from Europe.
- Average olive trees are 50 feet wide with a 33 branch spread.
- Olives are rich in tannin (the same component that makes red wine stain your carpet).
- While the 90 percent majority of olives harvested are used for oil, the remaining 10 percent are used to create over 850,000 tons of table olives.
- There are over 750 million trees world wide with a steady yearly increase.
- Olive oil is said to have many health benefits.
- The greatest oil the most pure and rich in flavor (these varieties are best used in cold food preparation).
- Reference to the symbolic and practical use of olive oil is cited throughout ancient literature.
- Hippocrates, founder of the therapeutic and healing medicinal properties of olive.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- America's melting pot

deep sea DINING

It's 'reel' good to introduce fish into your diet

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

Think back to your childhood. How often did your family have seafood?

Perhaps it was fish on Fridays. Or maybe an occasional tuna sandwich. If your experience cooking fish is limited to those sticks or a can of tuna, it's time to explore new waters.

Knowing that fish and seafood are healthy and delicious, it is a good idea for all of us to include more of it in our diet. There are over 1,000 different species of fish and shellfish harvested from the wild or raised by aquaculture. These can become a part of everyone's diet both at home and in restaurants. Many of us don't eat fish at home because we think it is tricky to cook. But most seafood is easy to prepare and can be cooked to be appealing to even the pickiest little eaters.

Kids and fish

The National Fisheries Institute says that seafood intake for the younger generation (35 to 50) are lacking. An NFI commissioned study reported that fewer than 30 percent of younger consumers identified themselves as moderate seafood users. Since fish can be a wonderful source of protein and nutrients, it is a good idea to introduce fish to our children.

A neighborhood in Clarkston looks forward to its annual visit from Uncle Dick, an Arizona relative of one of the residents. Uncle Dick has instilled the love of fishing in all the neighborhood kids. They can hardly wait for him to help bait their hooks and untangle lines. At night he fries up a mess of pan fish and the kids (and parents too) gobble them up.

If you don't have an Uncle Dick in your neighborhood, you can still introduce fish to your kids. The milder varieties of fish and seafood are usually better received.

To begin, let kids try fried shrimp or fried clams dipped in red shrimp sauce. Offer them a shrimp or two from the adult's shrimp bowl when you serve them for a

Seafood Buying Guide

Approximate amount of raw seafood needed per adult serving (3 ounces cooked)

- Whole fish
3/4 pound (12 ounces)
- Breaded or pan-fried fish
1/2 pound (8 ounces)
- Fish fillets
1/4-1/3 pound (4-6 ounces)
- Fish steaks with bone
1/2 pound (8 ounces)
- Fish steaks without bone
1/3 pound (6 ounces)
- Live clams and oysters
6 to 8 each
- Shucked clams and oysters
1/3-1/2 pint
- Live lobsters and crabs
1-1 1/2 pounds
- Cooked lobsters and crabs
1/4-1/3 pound (4-6 ounces)
- Scallops
1/4-1/3 pound (4-6 ounces)
- Shrimp, headless, unpeeled
1/3-1/2 pound (8-8 ounces)
- Shrimp, peeled and deveined
1/4-1/3 pound (4-6 ounces)

party. It may be easier to get children to try other varieties after they "discover" these delicacies.

Kids may reject fish that has stronger flavors, is smoked or smells too fishy. Bones can be a problem for young children too, so even after filleting the fish, remind them to chew slowly.

Spectacular seafood

The "10 minute rule" is a good guide to perfectly cooked fish. It applies to baking at 400° F, broiling, grilling, steaming, and poaching. (It does not apply to microwaving.) Measure the fish, whole, steaks, or fillets, at its thickest part. Figure 10 minutes of cooking time for each inch thickness of fish.

For example, a 1-1/4-inch thick fish steak would be done after about 12 minutes of baking. For frozen fish, do not thaw, but double the cooking time. Add five minutes cooking time for fish cooked in foil or in a sauce.

When boiling shell-on shrimp, use a steamer pot (a perforated pot stacked inside a stock pot) so that the shrimp can be lifted out quickly. Immerse in boiling water for no more than two minutes. Lift out and dunk in ice water to stop the cooking. Set shrimp aside to drain. The shrimp will be succulent, juicy and firm.

Poach oysters in lightly boiling water for about a minute - until the edges just start to curl. Remove them immediately and you'll know you haven't overcooked them.

The omega-3 advantage

Scientific evidence suggests that omega-3 fatty acids can help reduce the risk of heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States.

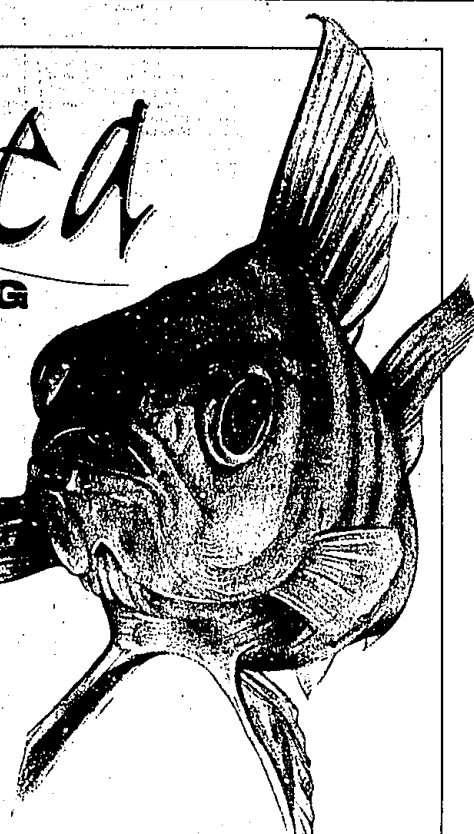
Omega-3 fatty acids can make blood less likely to clot and block blood vessels. Consuming omega-3 fatty acids can decrease levels of some blood fats and possibly cholesterol. Omega-3 fatty acids are found almost exclusively in aquatic organisms, although smaller amounts are found in some plants and plant oils. Seafood is considered the best dietary source of omega-3 fatty acids. All fish and shellfish contain some omega-3 fatty acids but fatty fish generally contain more.

(See related story on the relative amounts of omega-3 fatty acids in various fish and shellfish.)

Cholesterol

Most animal foods, including seafood, contain cholesterol. Shellfish contains about 100 milligrams of cholesterol per 3-ounce serving.

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Omega-3 Fatty Content of Fish and Shellfish

Based on 3.5 ounces of raw edible portion

Most fatty (Over 10 grams)	Least fatty (Less than 0.5 grams)
Anchovy	Carp
Atlantic bluefish	Channel catfish
Atlantic salmon	Cod
Coho salmon	Flounder
Herring	Grouper
Mackerel	Haddock
Pitchards	Mahi mahi
Pink salmon	Pacific halibut
Sablefish	Ocean perch
Sardines	Orange roughy
Sockeye salmon	Pike
Spry dogfish	Tuna
Whitefish	Pollock
	Rockfish
Moderate fatty (0.5-9.9 grams)	Sea bass
Chum salmon	Snapper
Pompano	Whiting
Rainbow trout	Clams
Shark	Crab
Smelt	Crayfish
Spot	Eastern oysters
Striped bass	Lobster
Swordfish	Mussel
Pacific oysters	Scallops
Squid	Shrimp

Lean stuffed, baked peppers are full of flavor

MAIN DISH MIRACLE



MURIEL WAGNER

When I was growing up, fall was stuffed pepper time. Green peppers were bountiful and cheap, and so was the ground meat they were stuffed with. It was the meaty flavor that I wanted the most. I can still see the layer of fat surrounding the peppers in the loaf pan in which they were baked. The relationship between fat and nutrition-related diseases was ill defined in those years. Saturated fat had not yet become a household word.

I set about to create a stuffed pepper that reminded me of past autumns with its flavor, yet better suited my nutrition goals with its low-fat components. I tried a traditional recipe, substituting lean ground beef and turkey, but I found the filling dry and crumbly. After two other versions, this was the result. See what you think.

The ground beef that I used was top round of beef trimmed and ground once. With 1.7 grams of fat per ounce, it's lower than anything in the meat counter, including ground beef labeled extra lean. It's almost as low in fat as skinned chicken breast.

I omitted the usual rice, because I wanted the meaty flavor that I remembered. The problem with using really low-fat ground beef is dryness. So I added my favorite pasta sauce to the meat for moistness.

I used green and red bell peppers of medium size and blanched them. The prepared spaghetti sauce is one of my bows to convenience. The one that I use is Paul Newman's Sockeyeoni. It's relatively low in fat (2 grams per serving), but rather high in sodium (590mg) per 1/2 cup serving. If sodium is a concern, select a lower sodium sauce, of which there are many.

The peppers can be frozen after stuffing and before final cooking in the oven. I like to serve this dish at informal dinner parties.

STUFFED PEPPERS

- 1 pound beef top round, trimmed and ground once
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 4 medium bell peppers (I like to use a variety of colors)
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 egg white
- 4 ounces reduced fat mozzarella cheese (2 grams of fat per ounce)
- 4 fresh tomato slices
- 1 (32 ounce) jar spaghetti sauce, your favorite

Cut tops off peppers and remove membranes. Blanch peppers by precooking in boiling water until tender, crisp. Drain.

Brown meat, onion and garlic in non-stick pan over low heat. Break up lumps. Add 3/4 cup spaghetti sauce, Worcestershire sauce, blend and then add egg white. Use mixture to stuff peppers.

Place 1 cup spaghetti sauce in 2-quart

baking dish. Place stuffed peppers on top. Cover.

Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes, uncovered. Sprinkle top with one half of the cheese. Place tomato slices on top. (Even remaining cheese. Return to oven and bake until cheese melts.)

Serve remaining spaghetti sauce with pasta as a side dish to the stuffed peppers. Serves 4.

Food values per serving: Calories 277. Fat 8.5g. Sat. Fat 2.7g. Sodium 302mg. Cholesterol 82mg.

Food exchange: 4 lean meat, 1 vegetable.

Look for Main Dish Miracle on the second Sunday of the month in Taste. Muriel G. Wagner is a registered dietitian and nutrition therapist with an office in Southfield. She publishes "Eating Younger," a quarterly newsletter with recipes and nutrition tips. To subscribe, send a check for \$13.50 to "Eating Younger," P.O. Box 69021, Pleasant Ridge, MI 48065.