

## TWIST ON TRADITION



CHEF RANDY EMERT

## Thanksgiving can be an adventure

Even though I am a firm believer in tradition - Super Bowl Sunday, Batman & Robin, Maize and Blue - I feel Thanksgiving sometimes needs a boost. Don't get me wrong, turkey, stuffing, corn, cranberries and mashed potatoes all are my favorites. But there's nothing wrong with adding a twist on tradition.

This Thanksgiving, it's my turn to cook dinner. For years my family has taken turns cooking the 15 pound turkey and the vat of stuffing, but this year I am going to try it differently. Starting with the family favorites and transforming them into something unique is quite the challenge. My family shouldn't be too concerned, as I'll still cook a small turkey for those non-adventurous types!

You may ask yourselves, why the change? Well, why not? Cooking is my passion, but creating is my love. This Thanksgiving, I'm trying something new and hope you enjoy adding these dishes to your Thanksgiving menu. Hey if the Pilgrims hadn't, where would we be now?

## SEARED TURKEY MEDALLIONS WITH MUSHROOM-PEAR STUFFING AND NATURAL SAUCE

SERVES 4

For Turkey:  
1/2 (two pound) fresh turkey breast cut into 2 1/2 ounce medallions  
salt and pepper  
Olive oil spray

For Stuffing:  
1 pound of mushrooms, julienne (a mix of shiitake, oyster and button mushrooms are recommended)  
4 slices stale and dried, large diced, fat-free bread  
2 pears, cored and diced  
3 egg whites

1/2 cups chicken broth, fat free  
1 large onion, small diced  
2 stalks celery, small diced  
3 large shallots, minced  
3 cloves of garlic, minced  
4 tablespoons of fresh sage, chopped fine  
salt and pepper to taste  
1/2 cup toasted walnuts optional

## For Natural Sauce:

1 pound Turkey bones  
1 quart chicken broth, fat free  
1 onion, rough cut  
1 stalk celery, rough cut  
1 tablespoon of fresh chopped thyme  
3 bay leaves  
6 cracked black peppercorns  
Salt and pepper to taste

## For stuffing:

In a large sauté pan add onions, celery and mushrooms and cook over low heat, covered for about 6-8 minutes. Add the shallots, garlic and sage and cook another 6-8 minutes until everything is cooked. Add the pears and walnuts and remove from heat. Let cool. In a bowl mix in the egg whites, bread, vegetable mixture, chicken stock and salt and pepper. Put mixture in an oven safe pan and bake at 350 degrees F. for 30-35 minutes.

## For Turkey:

When the stuffing has only about 20 minutes left you can start on the Turkey medallions. In a hot large non-stick pan, sprayed with olive oil, place the seasoned medallions and cook over medium high heat about 4-5 minutes on each side. Cook until an internal temperature of 165 degrees F. or until white all the way through.

Please see TWIST, B2

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Cheers for Beer
- Thanksgiving treasures



Family favorites: Samira Yako Cholagh presents some of her favorite Middle Eastern Dishes, Fried Syrian Kibbie (front to back), Saffron Rice, Chick-Pea Dip, Stuffed Dates, Pita Bread Crisps, and Toasted Bread Salad.

## MOM SHARES MIDDLE EASTERN TREASURED DISHES

BY KEELY WYCONIK  
STAFF WRITER  
kwyconik@coe.homedomain.net

Growing up in Baghdad, Iraq, Samira Yako Cholagh, like her mother and grandmother, never measured ingredients when she cooked. But when she decided to compile some of her favorite recipes for a cookbook, she had to.

For a year, Cholagh's West Bloomfield kitchen was like an experiment lab where she worked on recipes, remeasuring ingredients and writing down the steps to create her "Treasured Middle Eastern Cookbook."

"I always liked to cook and collect recipes from here and there," said Cholagh explaining why she wanted to write a cookbook. "These are recipes passed from generation to generation. I want to keep these traditions."

Her 14-year-old daughter, Valerie, was another reason she wanted to write her treasured recipes down. "I have so many recipes, and I always think about my daughter," she said. "I wanted these recipes for her to keep. She always offers to cook, now she's very happy. 'That's it, mom,' she said. 'I don't have to ask for your recipes anymore.' She's very proud of the cookbook."

As a young girl, Cholagh said she used to sneak into the kitchen to try some recipes on her own. "In every house you would see the moms cooking in the kitchen making three meals a day. If I went to my aunt's house, it was the same. Cooking was something you must do. Every woman made homemade

meats, bread and yogurt too."

The oldest of seven children, Cholagh enjoyed experimenting in the kitchen, even then, trying to cook the dishes her mother made. Sometimes they turned out, but sometimes they didn't. She kept trying.

In college she earned an engineering degree, and moved to the United States 18 years ago with her husband Nabil. Married 20 years, they have three children, Valerie, Lars, 18, a student at Wayne State University, and Vincent, 8.

The cookbook was their project too. Valerie helped with typesetting, Lars helped design the text, and edit. Vincent and Nabil were supportive too. In the book, printed this August, Cholagh thanks them all for their help with shopping, cleaning and tasting, and also for their patience and cooperation.

The book, she says, is "your invitation to experience a taste of the Middle East."

Shelving the 400 recipes, divided into 10 chapters, easy enough for beginners to follow, and carefully wrote down all the measurements. There are also pictures so she can see what the dishes look like. The cookbook is like a menu in a Middle Eastern restaurant. You'll find recipes for all of your favorite dishes including hummus, turnip pickles, stuffed grape leaves, tabbouleh, fattoush, chicken kabobs, spinach pie, and baked kibbie.

Cholagh recommends mixing your own spice mixes to enhance the flavor of Middle Eastern dishes. There are also helpful definitions, which explain what each spice is, and the flavor they impart.

"Baking is my favorite thing to do," she said. "If I'm bored I'll get out some flour and make bread. I make all kinds of bread, and every kind of dessert." The cookbook includes Cholagh's recipes for pita and flat bread. There's also a chapter on desserts and drinks to accompany them such as rich Turkish coffee and tea spiced with cinnamon and cardamom.

After a day at work as a substitute teacher in Farmington Hills, Cholagh was busy making dinner for her family - lentil soup, chicken breast, salad and pita bread. She enjoys making all kinds of dishes.

"Treasured Middle Eastern Cookbook" is the second cookbook she wrote. The first is an Arabic language cookbook, exactly the opposite of this one, of international recipes for people who want to learn how to cook many of the dishes that are popular in the United States.

Both cookbooks are available by calling (248) 975-6500. "Treasured Middle Eastern Cookbook" is \$24.99 plus \$4.99 shipping and handling.

Look for it at Borders in Farmington, and downtown Birmingham, Jacobson's, Kitchen Glamour stores, Merchant of Vine/Whole Foods Market stores, and Middle Eastern markets.

See recipes inside.

## Cooking Hints

Here are some tips from Samira Yako Cholagh's Kitchen to yours:

- When using raisins and nuts with batter, coat them well with flour. This will prevent them from sticking to the bottom.
- To figure out whether baking powder is still active, place 1 teaspoon in 1/2 cup cold water. If the water bubbles or foams immediately, the baking powder is still good.
- To be sure eggs are fresh, place them in a bowl of cool water. If they are fresh, they will sink. If they are medium-fresh, one end will be sticking up. If they are bad, they will float. The color of the egg has no significance.
- Orange juice can be substituted for water in yeast breads. Yeast works well with fruit sugar.
- Milk gives a brown crust when used in dough. It makes a soft crust if brushed on the outside before baking.

- Preheat oven for at least 15 minutes before baking.
- Plastic wrap is ideal of the first rising of yeast bread. It keeps the moisture in.
- To prevent eggplant from absorbing any oil while frying, salt sliced eggplants and leave for 1-2 hours. Then dry each slice with a paper towel. Another option is to soak the slices in salted water and let stand for 1-2 hours, then dry.
- To prevent cauliflower florets from discoloring, add salt after cooking. For a milder flavor, cook cauliflower in an equal amount of milk and water.
- To prevent yogurt from separating when cooking, stir on low heat with a wooden spoon in only one direction.



## Celebrate the 1998 harvest with Beaujolais

BY ELEANOR & RAY HEAD  
SPECIAL WRITERS

The third Thursday of November (the 19th this year) is cause for Beaujolais harvest rites around the world. At the stroke of midnight, Beaujolais Nouveau is introduced in France and then flows all over the world to be enjoyed.

Beaujolais is not only the most

## Wine Picks for Thanksgiving

■ Beside Beaujolais, there are some recent wine releases that complement turkey: 1996 Silverado Sauvignon \$20, 1995 Marzocco Merlot \$20, 1995 Ferrari Cavano Merlot \$23.50, 1997 Santa Julia Pinot Noir (Argentina) \$7, and 1995 Santa Julia Malbec \$7.

■ Great white spend it on first course wines: 1998 Rosemount Semillon Chardonnay \$8, 1997 Domaine du Muge Vie de Pays Cotes de Gascogne France \$7, 1997 St. Supery Merlot White \$20, 1998 Venezia Meritage White \$20, 1997 Ferrari Cava no Fume Blanc Reserve \$18.

■ Cellar Selections for holidays in the future: 1995 Silverado Cabernet Sauvignon Limited Release \$53. Since 1981, only seven vintages marked the limited Release label. This is the first to be blended with cabernet franc and merlot and it's a winner!

■ Two new Cabernets from Cabernet show distinct variety and differences. The French call this terror: 1995 Cabernet Three Saters Cabernet Sauvignon \$65 and 1995 Cabernet Bencland Select Cabernet Sauvignon \$65. Very different from each other, we give the edge to the Bencland! sauce to sweet potatoes like Beaujolais.

In Paris restaurants and bistros, Beaujolais Nouveau is welcomed like a film star. With one exception. It makes its appearance in all of them at the same moment. There is a wild, celebratory atmosphere as people vie to be the first to drink the

Please see HARVEST, B2



Wine museum: Georges Dubouef's "Le Hamneau du Vin" (The Hamlet of Wine), an extraordinary wine museum in Romanche-Thorins, France in the heart of Beaujolais is open to visitors year round.