

Sunday, March 4, 2001

FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

'Mayo's clinic' wins awards in Sonoma

Last Autumn, we were wine judges at the Sonoma County Harvest Fair. Of the 650 wines entered in the competition, only 51, or less than eight percent, were awarded gold medals. Assessing the winners, we realized that one small, Sonoma County winery earned five gold medals and three best of class awards - Mayo Family Winery, which produces about 6,000 cases annually.

Henry Mayo was one of the most prosperous realtors in Sonoma County. In 1984, he discovered a beautiful parcel of land on the Keiser Ranch Estate in Sonoma County's Sonoma Valley appellation near Kenwood. "It was love at first sight," he said. With his wife's approval, Henry purchased the land with the thought of building a family dream home. In 1987, the couple and their three children moved in.

Wine Picks

Tired of too much oak in California chardonnay? Wines from the Chablis area of northern Burgundy in France offer some of the purest chardonnay flavors without oak. It's hard to beat Domaine Roger Seguinot Chablis, Try.

■ 1998 AOC Chablis \$16 rested on its lees for eight months in tank to create a fuller, richer (mouthfeel) than most AOC Chablis on the market.

■ 1998 Vieilles Vignes (Old Vines) \$17 are 64 years old. Richer and more generous than the AOC. A lively, bright finish is very creamy.

■ 1999 Fourcheume \$20 is deliciously fruity with citrus, lime, apple and some typical mineral notes. A wine with great balance and creamy texture.

wine.

With the help of friends and family, Henry made the first bottles of chardonnay in 1993 and established the Mayo Family Winery using the estate name Laurel Hill Vineyard with vintage 1994. In 1995, Henry asked his son Jeff, a real estate developer in Southern California, to manage the winery.

In 1998, Chris Stanton joined as winemaker to practice his craft in the new, modern winery recently built on the Mayo Family estate.

Until 1996, Mayo's production was limited to a Sonoma Valley Estate Laurel Hill Vineyard Chardonnay, principally from grapes grown on the valley floor and an ultra-premium Sonoma Valley Barrel Select Laurel Hill Vineyard Chardonnay from a hillside parcel with low yields. Understanding from experience that special vineyard sites made special wines, Mayo's next goal focused on wines from select Sonoma County vineyards with proven high-quality track records.

Single-vineyard-designated wines including a Ricci Vineyard Russian River Valley Zinfandel, Sangiovese Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir, Loe Chabizal Vineyard Sonoma Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and Sonoma Valley Merlot were added to the wine portfolio.

"We have a minuscule production," said Jeff Mayo. "In the new winery, we can produce 10,000 cases, but over the next few years, we'll keep thinking small, focused on quality from very special vineyard sites."

Please see WINE, D2

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- National Nutrition Month
- Spring cleanup



Rolling hills: Today's Irish cuisine captures the freshness of herbs, produce and meat from the rolling hills of Ireland. Inset is Noel C. Cullen, author of 'Elegant Irish Cooking.'

By KEN ABRAMCZYK
STAFF WRITER
kabrancyk@oe.homecomm.net

B oiled corned beef and potatoes will fill American plates everywhere on St. Patrick's Day.

But forget those preconceived notions about Irish cuisine as you get ready to celebrate Ireland's patron saint.

Irish cooking can be, well, elegant. "It's really about the quality of the food and seafood which emphasizes freshness," said Noel Cullen, author of the newly released, "Elegant Irish Cooking" (Lebanon: Friedman Books, \$35). The book dispels many of the stereotypes about Irish cooking consisting of boiled beef and potatoes. "The dishes are beautiful. (Irish chefs) have a passion to do the best they can with food."

"They don't dress up foods with rich sauces, rather they rely on the freshness and goodness, in a variety of ways," said Cullen, a certified master chef and president of the American Culinary Federation. "Elegant Irish Cooking" is his sixth cookbook. He also an associate professor at Boston University's School of Hospitality.

Gerald Maloney of Southfield noticed the fresh aspect of Irish cooking on one of his

visits to Ireland.

"(The Irish) shop almost every day, where we might shop (at markets) once a week," Maloney said. "Things tend to be fresher. That would be the primary difference, the closeness to the market and the freshness."

Julie Demery of Beverly Hills raves about Irish cooking. Demery and the Maloneys are active members of the Metro Detroit Chapter of the Irish American Cultural Institute.

"They have so many fresh ingredients that a lot of dishes are just so simple," Demery said. "Young lamb is popular, and they love pork, along with beef to a lesser degree."

Land of plenty

The Irish enjoy poultry, duck, dairy products and seasonal vegetables like lettuce and tomatoes. Dover sole, flounder and plaice, a flatfish, are plentiful off the coasts of Ireland. And yes, they enjoy potatoes or what they affectionately call "murphys or praties."

Lamb is prevalent. "Irish Stew is a classic dish, thickened with potatoes and served with root vegetables," said Cullen. "They serve rack of lamb or leg of lamb."

They don't complicate dishes with big, fancy sauces, Cullen said. To help emphasize the freshness of the dishes, they use a few herbs, namely sage, rosemary, lemon grass, dill and salt. "They also use nettles, which is a spicy mint leaf that is pungent and strong," Cullen said.

They enjoy bacon, but it is not the fatty version familiar to Americans. "It's similar to our Canadian bacon," Demery said. "It's very mild, it's wonderful."

Maloney raves about John

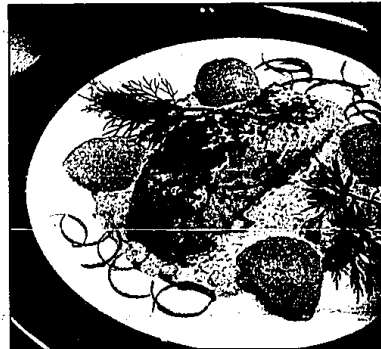
Please see IRISH, D2



Fresh produce: One of the great features of Irish cooking is the freshness of the produce. See inside Taste for a recipe for pureed rutabagas with garlic.

FRESH, SIMPLE, ELEGANT

Cooks dispel myths about Irish cuisine



Salmon and relish: This roasted peppered salmon flavored with lime and dill attains a succulent balance with tomato-and-basil relish.

ROASTED PEPPERED SALMON WITH TOMATO-AND-BASIL RELISH

1 pound salmon fillet, trimmed
1 tablespoon cracked black peppercorns
1 teaspoon chopped dill, divided
1 whole lime
oil for greasing
2 shallots, diced fine
1 tablespoon finely shredded basil leaves
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 cup dry white wine
2 cloves of crushed garlic
6 large plum tomatoes, skinned, seeded and chopped roughly into large chunks

Preheat oven to 350° F. Remove pin bones from salmon using tweezers or long needle-nose pliers. Cut salmon into 4 equal parts. Coat salmon with cracked peppercorns and 1/2 teaspoon dill. Grate a little lime zest over salmon. Place on a lightly oiled sheet pan. Bake in preheated oven, 6-8 minutes.

To prepare relish, place 1 teaspoon olive oil, garlic and diced shallots in small pan. Sauté over medium heat one minute without coloring. Add white wine and juice of the lime. Reduce by half. Add tomato chunks and basil leaves. Mix and gently heat one minute.

Recipe by John Coughlan of Dublin in "Elegant Irish Cooking" by Noel Cullen. More recipes inside.

Your chili, red or green, may be a winner



KEN ABRAMCZYK

Quick, what's red and green and hot all over?

It's the 6th Annual Great Lakes Regional Chili Cookoff Saturday, April 7, in Trenton. Chili creators will compete that day to create concoctions that taste the best in both red chili and chile verde (green chili) categories. Salsa makers can enter their own category.

Applications to compete will be accepted through April 1. Winners will advance to the World Competition in Reno, Nev., Sept. 30.

"It's so much fun watching the cooks cook and goofing off," said Annette Horn of Plymouth, who chairs the cookoff. (Some cooks sometimes wear costumes and set up props and decorations to promote their chili.) "You see the same cooks and they are having so much fun. It's exciting and it's just a real good time."

The chili must be created on site, that



■ 'It (the cookoff) is exciting and it's just a real good time.'

—Annette Horn
Cookoff chair

Chili Society-sanctioned event, the "no bean" rule applies. Entries are judged on the flavor of the chili's sauce and the meat's texture, whether it is mushy or tough.

"They should all look pretty much the same, but not taste the same," Horn said.

Horn said the cookoff schedule was revised after last year's October Great Lakes Regional Chili Cookoff was scheduled only a week before the World Championship. This year's fall Great Lakes Regional cookoff in Plymouth is still scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 7. Winners from that competition will advance to the 2002 World Championship.

For information or an application, call Horn at (734) 455-8838.

What: The 6th Annual Great Lakes Chili Cookoff
When: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, April 7.
Where: Kennedy Recreation Center, 3101 West Road (between Allen Road and Fort Street) in Trenton during Walleye Week.
Fees to compete: \$35 for red chili, \$25 for green chili and \$15 for salsa.
Prizes: First place, \$500; second place, \$150; and third place, \$75, for red chili. First-place winners for chili verde, \$175; and salsa, \$100. Trophies will be awarded to these winners. First place finishers qualify for world championship.
Admission: Free. Samples available after 2 p.m. for 50 cents a bowl with proceeds donated to the Penickton Center & Leader Dogs for the Blind.