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FOCUS ON WINE



RAY & ELEANOR HEALD

Zin odyssey shows passion

It's rare that we devote an entire column to a single newly-published book. But we're doing that with *A Zinfandel Odyssey* by Rhoda Stewart, published by PWV, Inc., 2002, \$60, ISBN 0-9716820-0-9.

Have you ever developed fondness for a wine because you've met the winemaker at a tasting or visited a winery and learned the story behind passionate winemaking? If you have, then essentially, you don't care what wine critics think about the wine. These are your wines, personal finds with which you identify. They are treasured each time you pour them into a wine glass.

Stewart's book is like that. She's not a wine critic, nor does she pretend to be one. In her book, you will not find wines rated by numbers. There are no lists of "the best" anywhere in the book. Stewart uses words to entice you while she tells California's zinfandel story through the passionate eyes of its producers.

Over her years living in San Francisco and driving to north coast California wine country, Stewart developed a passion for zinfandel and a personal attachment to the wineries that produce it. She has been a professor of English at Napa Valley College since 1978 and along with her love of words, she honed a photographer's eye. All photos in her book serve to enhance her "romance with zinfandel," as she calls it. A romance, she reveals that began in autumn 1977.

A passion unfolds

"Inspired by the beauty of the vineyards," Stewart writes, "I began to sample many wines. More and more often, I would ask for zinfandel (the red stuff) in tasting rooms... Yet the more zinfandels I sampled and zinfandel winemakers I talked to, the more aware I became of symptoms that a deep ambivalence toward zinfandel had developed in the marketplace."

The late 1970s is the time frame for those remarks. Wine critics of the era considered most zinfandels to be alcoholic monsters and tannic wines that were very out of balance. Critics disliked depressed sales. Old vines were saved for today's zin lovers because Sutter Home "invented" white zinfandel.

In the last few years, zinfandel has exploded on the wine scene. Growers are bent on preserving old vines and a zinfandel that boasts "old vines" on the label, literally runs out the door in the arms of zin lovers around the country.

Get to know the producers

In case you haven't guessed already, we too, are passionate about zinfandel. So rather than tackling Stewart's book from beginning to end, we started with the producers we like. Since the Amador area is

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Wine Picks for Passover

Australia's forward wine style has been met with great American enthusiasm. Produced at Norman's Winery in Australia, Teal Lake wines are now available to accompany Passover celebrations, beginning March 27 this year. Wine has long played a part in Jewish ritual. Teal Lake wines, like other kosher foods, are made under strict rabbinical supervision and according to Jewish religious and dietary laws. After the grapes were picked, only strictly Sabbath-observed Jews handled the wine and the winemaking equipment. The wine is flash-pasteurized making it mevushal.

From Teal Lake, we like: 2000 Chardonnay \$13; 2000 Shiraz \$13; 2000 Pinot Noir \$16; and 2001 Cabernet Merlot \$13.

From California, we recommend two Herzog Special Reserve kosher wine: 1999 Russian River Valley Chardonnay \$27 and 1998 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon \$35.

New mom tackles 1st Easter dinner

BY SANDRA DALKA-PRYSEY
SPECIAL WRITER

Why did we agree to have Easter dinner for the whole family? Karie Pasternak of Rochester Hills has asked herself this question many times these past few weeks as she pours over cookbooks and looks through magazines in search of food recipes and table decorations. "I want everything to be perfect!" she says.

Married in Hawaii last year, Karie and her husband, Peter, became first-time parents on Christmas Day when 10-pound Nicholas was born.

"Christmas wasn't like I had planned," Pasternak said. "I was going to decorate a cake and make some new food dishes for the family celebration at my aunt's house. Instead, I spent the day giving birth to my son." Because she missed this holiday with family, she offered to have Easter dinner.

A Martha Stewart devotee, Pasternak likes to do a multitude of crafts, including painting personalized children chairs, and enjoys cooking and baking. The latter two interests are the other reasons that led to Easter invitations to 12 family members.

"I'm excited, but I'm also nervous. This is my first experience in entertaining such a large group! I want everyone to enjoy the day, especially the food."

New traditions

According to Pasternak, she is especially excited about the fact that since she and her husband are the hosts, they can establish their

own Easter food traditions. "We can serve whatever we want!"

Pasternak has chosen to serve some Polish dishes to honor her husband's heritage. Also on the menu is a colorful, layered gelatin salad to mark the traditional dish that her grandmother, who passed away two years ago, always made for Easter.

"But the main dish - apricot glazed pork tenderloin - is my addition to the meal. I wanted to get away from ham and try something different. And the recipe I found is really easy to make."

Also different this year is the dessert the young mother has planned. "Usually someone in the family brings the dessert. This year, however, I am going to decorate a cake for Nicholas' first Easter and make this a yearly tradition."

Pasternak is a self-taught cake decorator who has garnered rave reviews for her creations. "This hobby, for me, is more fun than work. I like turning a plain frosted cake into a work of art."

Bunnies, flowers and other symbols of spring will find their way onto Pasternak's Easter cake.

"I like to use candies, colored frostings and other sweets in my cake decorating. I like everything to be edible." She admits, however, that there have been times when she had had to use plastic figures to create certain cake



themes.

All about family

Pasternak has discovered that caring for a baby and preparing for the Eastern celebration may be a little more difficult than she anticipated. "I thought I could clean, cook, bake and decorate the cake when Nicholas takes his long naps," she says. "But now he's into little catnaps and I can't seem to get anything done."

Pasternak said she's isn't too worried about this. "The baby's grandmothers - Pam Pasternak of Sterling Heights, and Kathy Barton of Troy - have agreed to help me make this a great Eastern celebration. And, luckily, they both love to baby sit for Nicholas."

Everything will turn out just fine, she keeps telling herself. "How could it not? I have a great baby, a helpful husband, and a wonderful family!"

Easter menu incorporates Polish family favorites

New mom Karie Pasternak of Rochester Hills plans the following dishes for her Easter day menu.

KIELBASA AND SAUERKRAUT

- 2 jars barrel cured Viissic Sauerkraut
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 pint fresh mushrooms, chopped
- 3 to 4 pounds kielbasa
- 2 teaspoons caraway seeds
- salt and pepper to taste
- flour

Drain and rinse sauerkraut thoroughly. In skillet, melt butter. Add onion and brown.

Put sauerkraut in large soup pot. Add browned onion, mushrooms, cut-up pieces of kielbasa, caraway seeds, salt and pepper. Cover with water. Cover and simmer approximately one hour until meat is cooked. Thicken sauce with flour.

Serves 6-8

STUFFED CABBAGE CASSEROLE

- 1 pound ground round or ground sirloin
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- salt and pepper to taste
- 3-4 cans (10 1/2 ounces each) tomato soup
- vegetable oil spray
- 1 small head cabbage, rinsed and shredded.

In skillet, brown meat and drain off all fat. Add onion, salt and pepper and cook approximately 10 minutes, stirring often. Add 3 cans soup.

Please see FAVORITES, B2



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN STORMZANO

Admiring: Karie Pasternak of Rochester Hills puts the finishing touches on the frosting of an Easter cake, while husband Peter, and son Nicholas, 10 months, look on.

Shopee's frosted bunnies take the cake

BY SANDRA DALKA-PRYSEY
SPECIAL WRITER

So cake decorating isn't your thing! No problem!

The Cake Shoppe in Westland will do all the work - the baking and the decorating - for you.

According to owner Mary Denning, the sculptured, stand-out bunny cake is an Easter favorite. "The coconut and frosting-covered bunny, which comes in white, pink, blue, whatever color the customer chooses, makes a

great centerpiece for the table. It's surrounded with jelly beans and kids just love it!"

She adds that with a special order, the cake batter flavor can be the customer's choice. Although for most of our customers, it's chocolate.

To satisfy her customers' passion for anything chocolate, Denning has an egg-shaped cake that is coated with butter cream frosting and then dipped in chocolate fudge. The cake

Please see BUNNIES, B3

Enjoy food, exercise, for a healthy tomorrow

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

Eating is one of life's greatest pleasures. National Nutrition Month® is celebrated each year in March to remind us of the link between food and good health. This year, start today for a healthy tomorrow.

The news stories are full of confusing and conflicting nutrition information. Sometimes the scientific studies contradict each other. It is often difficult to believe or trust these stories because

one never does know when something to the contrary may become in vogue.

A few basic truths about food and nutrition have withstood the test of time. The most logical advice is to eat a variety of foods, in sensible portions,

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and get some daily physical activity.

Americans of all ages benefit from making healthful eating, physical activity, and lifestyle choices. This means that there is no one right way to eat or to stay healthy. Each of us has to make

choices on a meal-to-meal basis. "Diets" with complex or restrictive food choices that lead to frustration, hunger and the feeling of being punished are not healthy for anyone.

"It took me some time to find the diet that worked for me," said Jason Klein of Royal Oak. "Once I changed some basic bad habits I had, such as eating too late at night, I began to lose weight."

Trying new foods and new physical activities can jump-start your plans for health.

Brandy Sereno of Ferndale likes to spend lots of time in the produce section of the grocery store. "It seems like I can always find some new or unusual fruit or vegetable to take home to try."

Many restaurants offer "healthy"

choices, but also look at their "specials" for items that use lean meats, low fat cooking techniques, or have grains or vegetables as the foundation.

Finally, with warmer weather just around the corner, it's time to shed those thick layers of clothes and go outside. Enjoy the way it feels to move your body. There are dozens of ways to add movement to your day, but they all take time and a commitment to keep it up. Remember these simple guidelines regarding exercise...it should be -

Fun - If it's not playful and feels like drudgery, you will not be inclined to keep it up. Choose an activity that you enjoy and one that gives you options in

Please see HEALTHY, B2