

## In the kitchen with ...



KEELY KALESKI

Here's a taste of what you'll be reading about soon

**H**i, I'm Keely Kaleski, your new Taste editor. If you're thinking to yourself that there's something very familiar about this, you're right. Many of you have known me for a long time. Being promoted to Taste editor in 1990 was one of the happiest days of my career.

In addition to my role as editor of the O&E Taste section I am also the assistant managing editor of features, a job I've held for the last two years. I'll be working with Lana Mini, one of our reporters, to introduce you to some new tastes and culinary experiences.

Lana has been a reporter with the O&E for the last three years and has been writing about food for nearly 10 years. She's thrilled about covering the Taste beat in Wayne and Oakland counties — especially with the multitude of cultures that make-up the communities we serve.

Lana believes cooking can enhance cultural understanding. Whether it's making old-fashioned American blackberry jam, learning to make fresh Sicilian pasta or how to roll a Syrian grape leaf, awareness of food origins and the unique way different cultures prepare food can make help make our world a little smaller.

In the months ahead you'll learn what's in season and where to pick farm-fresh produce, meet some Hometown Gourmets — people who love to cook, and visit interesting ethnic markets you've driven by a million times and always wanted to visit.

Lana and I enjoy shopping for food and get excited by seasonal changes knowing it's an opportunity to enjoy new foods — asparagus in the spring, melons in the summer, apples and squash in the fall, beets and pears in the winter.

I do most of my grocery shopping in the communities the Observer & Eccentric Newspaper serve, and have gotten some of my good ideas talking to people while waiting in the check-out line. If you see us, don't be shy, we want to meet you, and hear your ideas.

Eating and food preparation should be a celebration, not a chore. A lot of us have fallen victim to what sociologist George Ritzer calls "McDonaldization." He talks about it in this month's edition of *The Sun*.

Ritzer argues that fast food restaurants have turned eating into something you want to be done with as quickly as possible so that you can get on to the next activity.

In most cultures, meals are something to be savored, to be enjoyed communally, to be lingered over. Food brings people together. The best way to get to know someone is to break bread with them.

I'm looking forward to getting to know you again, and maybe even share a cup of coffee, or a meal.

Please send me your favorite recipes, and tell me about your favorite markets. I know I'm not the only one hungry for new ideas.

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STAFF PHOTOS BY JIM JARDYFELD

**Berry good:** Livonia Italian Bakery offers many strawberry delights including strawberry strudel sticks with cream cheese (left to right), strawberry bear claws, strawberry sorbet and strawberry cheese cake.

## Succulent strawberries

*U-pick season is late but 'good things come to those who wait'*

BY LANA MINI  
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The evenings were cold in May and that's why strawberries are late this year.

But now they're arriving. Finally.

At Rowe's Farm east of Ypsilanti the berries should be ripe for pickin' today. At Long Family Orchard & Farm in Commerce Township they should be ripe later this week.

The point is, if you want to pick them yourself, call the farm first. This year's spring weather was erratic, making the readiness of local crops a bit unpredictable.

Strawberry season is short and sweet, just a few weeks long. And if you miss the chance to pick strawberries yourself, there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy them anyway.

Francis Petrucci, owner of Livonia Italian Bakery, 39615 Seven Mile Road, showed us some delicious treats that can be made with this sweet red fruit.

"Strawberry Danish and strudels. Strawberry sorbet. Strawberry cheesecake," Petrucci said as he discussed everything berry. "They're all great. They're all popular."

Sorbet can be made by pureeing strawberries with

maple syrup and sugar. Homemade strawberry jam is a thoughtful holiday gift. Even with the lateness of the season, it'll still be possible to find a great berry.

"The first batch of strawberries are the Early Glows," said Bill Verellen of Verellen Orchards on Van Dyke in Romeo. "Great for eating, canning and pies. They're a sweet berry — worth the wait."

Chef Josef Foreman of Gino's Fine Italian Dining in Clarkston understands the popularity of strawberries. He uses them in pastries and also in unexpected dishes. Exotic fried strawberries, strawberry

relish for chicken and an interesting strawberry salad are just a few of his choices.

Delores Brown, of Coon Creek Orchard & Cider Mill in Armada said look for berries that are red, of course. A green tip is okay because it will ripen overnight. The stems should be a healthy shade of green.

Strawberries mold quickly, but can be frozen to enjoy later. When you pick strawber-

ries, don't overfill the containers; if you do, the berries on the bottom will be smashed.

On the drive home, keep your strawberries out of the sun, and refrigerate them immediately. They should last up to four days. Wash strawberries right before you eat or use them. Finally, be a considerate fruit picker and be careful not to destroy plants if you kneel.

See recipes inside.



**Almost ripe:** The strawberries at Verellen Cider Mill in Romeo, and all the other area strawberry fields, were still green last week. However, they should be ready to pick this week.

### Where to pick berries

- **Rowe's Produce Farm and Market** — 10570 Martz Road, east of Ypsilanti off I-94 at Exit 187, u-pick strawberries; (734) 349-0289
- **Ward's Country Fair and Orchards** — 5565 Merritt in Ypsilanti does not have u-pick strawberries this year, normally it does. Call about cherries in July and pears in August; (734) 493-7744. Or visit [www.wards.com](http://www.wards.com)
- **Verellen Orchards and Cider Mill** — 63260 Van Dyke, Romeo, u-pick strawberries; (586) 752-2989
- **Deneweth's Greenhouses** — 16125 22 Mile Road, Utica, strawberry plants, but no u-pick strawberries this year; (586) 247-5538
- **Coon Creek Orchard & Cider Mill** — 7877 Coon Creek Road, Armada, u-pick strawberries "any day now." Call to ask about raspberries in early July; black berries and black raspberries in late July; (810) 794-5082
- **Long Family Orchard & Farm** — on Bogie Lake Road, north of Was Road, Commerce Township has asparagus for about another week. U-pick strawberries should begin within the next week or so; (248) 860-8774
- **Blake's Big Apple Orchard** — North Avenue at 83 Mile Road, Armada, u-pick strawberries later this week if the weather stays warm; (586) 784-9710
- **Blake's Orchard and Cider Mill** — 17885 Armada Center Road, three miles west of Armada between Capac and Romeo Plank roads, u-pick strawberries later this week, weather pending; (586) 784-5343

*(Always call ahead to verify crop availability and picking times)*

## High in flavor, buttermilk makes food better

Low in fat and high in flavor, buttermilk is a refreshing change from other dairy products. Its flavor and special features in the kitchen are valued by both home cooks and professional chefs.

Initially, buttermilk was the liquid residue left behind when the cream was churned into butter. Today's buttermilk is a cultured product, commercially made by adding beneficial bacteria to skim or low-fat milk, but with the body, flavor and tang of the original version.

In America, buttermilk first gained popularity in the South when, without refrigeration, its acidity kept it fresh days longer than regular milk. Buttermilk was used extensively both as a beverage and as an ingredient in such regional favorites as biscuits and pancakes.

Buttermilk isn't just for baking. You can use it for sauces and marinades where yogurt or sour cream might otherwise be used. Used in place of regular milk, it gives a tangy flavor to mashed potatoes and a delicious twist to custards. Try it in place of whole milk or cream as a thickener and flavoring in soups. To avoid curdling during cooking, be sure to add buttermilk at the end of the cooking time, away from the heat and at a temperature no higher than 180 degrees. Do not allow the mixture to come to a boil once the buttermilk has been added.

Use buttermilk to make a tangy salad dressing. In a small jar, shake 2/3 cup buttermilk, 1 tablespoon cider vinegar, 1 tablespoon finely chopped shallot, 1/4 teaspoon each salt and sugar, 1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper

(cayenne) and 2 tablespoons snipped fresh chives, parsley or dill (or a combination). It's delicious tossed with greens such as spinach or watercress.

Buttermilk has many features useful to those who love to bake. It aids in the rising of many types of bread and has a natural tenderizing effect on dough. Buttermilk helps baked goods brown evenly and it also extends the freshness longer than regular milk up to three weeks in the refrigerator.

If keeping fresh buttermilk on hand isn't practical, dry buttermilk is a good alternative. It can be found in the baking section of most supermarkets. Follow directions on the packaging to substitute dry for fresh buttermilk.

Information from the American Institute for Cancer Research. See recipe inside



**Homemade:** Fresh dill, oregano, basil and thyme season Buttermilk Quick Bread.