

taste buds
chef Larry
Janes



Dorm cooking quells hunger

Beluga caviar is the finest

With all the recent hoopla about Soviet-American arms reduction and treaties, did you read an interesting tidbit about the case of caviar Gorbachev gave Reagan?

True Caspian Sea caviar with the Russian moniker sells in the United States for more than \$280 per pound, and a case of caviar comes in at more than 10 pounds. That totals about \$3,000 worth of fish eggs, a whopping \$4 per teaspoon. Of the caviar that arrives in North America, 95 percent is Iranian, and a mere five percent is Russian.

With all due respect to the up-and-coming American caviar market, anyone who has sampled true Sevruqa or Beluga caviar has, to put it simply, indulged in one of life's better moments.

Ah, but with the Caspian Sea evaporating at an alarming rate and forming vast salt plains, the troubled Caspian sturgeons are disappearing faster than ice cream cones in July.

STURGEON ARE generous, with the female fish providing a full 20 percent of her weight in precious roe, and both sexes offering flesh that, when smoked, is sought after throughout the world. The sturgeon are then taken to a processing plant. There the roe (eggs) are removed rapidly, from belly to tin, in a series of delicate operations that takes 20 minutes.

After the fish is opened, the roe is removed and washed carefully in salt water. Ideally, caviar should contain little salt but without it, the caviar would go bad before reaching the market place.

Malasso caviar (the name indicates that a minimum of salt has been added) contains 4-9 percent salt. For the North American market, salt is the only preservative allowed. Caviar prepared for European markets may taste sweeter because borax can be substituted for a portion of the salt as a preservative.

UNFORTUNATELY, EVEN the most ardent devotee may never have the opportunity to taste the rarest of all caviar, the golden roe of the sterlet sturgeon, said to be reserved for the Kremlin. Only about 40 pounds of sterlet is produced annually, and it, of course, is priceless.

Yours truly has sampled fresh caviar twice in my career, and both times it was unadorned and downed with a single shot of top-shelf vodka. Of course, this procedure has a tendency to mask the taste buds after a few tries.

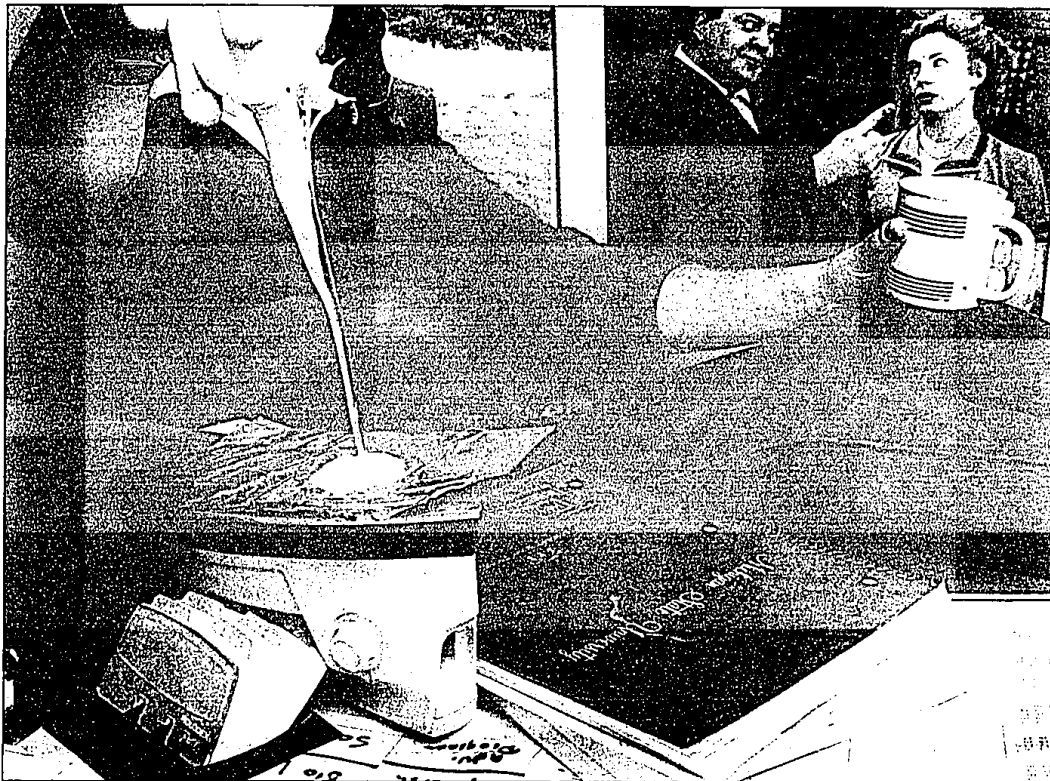
Once opened, caviar should be consumed immediately or kept tightly sealed for at most two days in the fridge. Try it mixed into a baked potato or swirled into cream cheese and spread on a plain bagel. Tossed with fresh steamed pasta and a light cream sauce, it is sheer delight.

CAVIAR THIMBLES
1 loaf unsalted white bread
1/2 cup margarine, melted
8 oz. swiss cheese
6 oz. caviar

Trim all crusts from the bread and cut into 1-inch cubes. Hollow out the center of the cubes and brush or dip all surfaces in melted margarine. Fill cavity with tiny snips of swiss cheese. Arrange on a cookie sheet and bake at 325° until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Cool, then just before serving, top each with a tiny spoonful of caviar.

CAVIAR A LA SCALORA
1 large cucumber
8 oz. cream cheese
1 cup sour cream
1 tbs. Worcestershire
3 tbs. chopped chives
2 hard cooked eggs, seived
1 large jar caviar

Cut cucumber in half. Remove the skin and seeds from half and chop fine. Set other half aside. Combine cream cheese, sour cream, Worcestershire sauce and 1 teaspoon of lemon juice. Mix well. Place in a serving dish 2 inches wide and at least 1 inch deep. Slice the other half of the cucumber, unpeeled and scored with fork lines. Arrange the slices around the edge of the serving dish, standing if possible. Sprinkle chives around the edges of the serving dish close to the sliced cucumber. Place a small strip of sieved eggs next to the chives. In the center, spread a jar of caviar and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon of lemon juice. Serve with crackers or cucumber slices.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Frying an egg on a hot iron is one of the innovative ways for a college student to prepare a snack without violating house rules about cooking meals in the dormitory. Here a student tries out the technique in his dorm on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills.

Be creative with use of kitchen appliances

By Carolyn DeMarco
staff writer

Lois Thieleke starts every talk on cooking in dormitory rooms with this disclaimer, "Don't do it."

- You're already using your meal ticket to the fullest.
- Burger King and Taco Bell are not within walking distance.
- Your money and your stomach are both on low.
- You're sick of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.
- You don't have a snack bar or community kitchen available.
- Your handbook and/or resident adviser approve.

Thieleke, a home economist with the Michigan State University extension service in Pontiac, spends most of her time showing food stamp recipients how to get the most from their food budget and maximize their skills by cooking from scratch.

She also gives lectures to groups on request. In her repertoire of topics: "Little Meals for Little Kids," "Nutrition in the Fast Lane," "Healthy Eating After the Holidays," and "Cooking in the Dorm."

She recently spoke about dorm cooking to a West Bloomfield High School group of predominantly male juniors and seniors in a Survival Skills class aimed at those who will be living on their own after graduation.

While she advised against turning the dorm room into a kitchen, as the mother of four who attended college, she recognizes that it's done anyway and it might as well be done right.

Remember, she told the class, there are four parts to the process — grocery shopping, preparation, cooking and cleaning. "This is not just fun and games, especially when it comes to the cleanup. Maybe you ought to stick with crackers and cheese, the kind of cheese that can be kept on a shelf."

It helps if you have a compact refrigerator, and many dorms now rent them to students. When it comes to other equipment, she said, remember the six "somethings":

- something to cook on,
- something to cook in,
- something to cook with,
- something to put it in,
- something to eat it with,
- something to clean with.

Your cooking plans will fit the appliance on hand, Thieleke said. Microwave ovens are usually no-nos in dorms, so you'll have to improvise and be creative with those approved in your dorm.

Got a toaster oven? You can make pizzas or at least a reasonable facsimile using

bagels, refrigerator biscuits or English muffins — or in desperation even soda crackers — as a crust.

Less creative? Make yourself some toast. More adventurous? Make a meal in a peel kind of a deal, with a baked potato and toppings. Foods can be baked in a toaster oven just as they can in a regular oven.

You can make a baked casserole in a toaster oven by combining only four ingredients — meat or fish, noodles, rice or macaroni; a vegetable, and a can of soup.

If you have no toaster oven but do have a

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hot plate, you can still create the four-ingredient meal in a saucepan.

Other saucepan/hot plate suggestions: heat hot dogs, warm soups and other canned foods, make hot cereals, and cook spaghetti, macaroni or rice. You can also use the appliance combination for melting cheese sauce, poaching or hardboiling eggs.

Use a hotplate and skillet for preparing tacos, French toast, omelets, grilled cheese sandwiches, pancakes and fried potatoes.

If you're lucky enough to have an electric skillet — approved, of course — you can adapt all the above ideas, and add chop suey, sloppy joes, hamburgers and biscuits.

Stuck with just a hot pot? It's no surprise that you can still enjoy some instant drinks as hot chocolate, coffee, tea and soups, but you can also cook hot dogs or make hot cereal.

These recipes may provide student aid

Survival means adapting special skills and equipment for existence. It is no different when it comes to survival cooking in the dormitory, said MSU extension home economist Lois Thieleke. She offers these recipe adaptations:

TOASTER OVEN PIZZA SNACKS
1 can pizza sauce or tomato sauce
1 can refrigerator biscuits, English muffins, bagels or soda crackers
shredded cheese, sliced hot dogs or other topping
oregano, garlic salt

Spoon sauce on baked biscuits or other "crust." Sprinkle with cheese. Top with spices. Place in toaster oven until cheese melts. Watch closely so they don't burn.

FOUR INGREDIENT CASSEROLE
RICE, NOODLES or macaroni cooked according to package directions
1 can tuna, chicken or luncheon meat or 1 pound browned ground beef
1 can, drained, or 1 small box, frozen, of green beans, lima beans, peas, corn, carrots or broccoli
1/4 cup milk with 1 can cream of tomato, mushroom, celery or chicken soup
1 teaspoon salt

Mix all ingredients in a saucepan and heat on a hot plate. Or bake in a greased oven dish in toaster oven. Top with crackers or toast crumbs, dry cereal or crushed potato chips.

CHILI
1 pound hamburger or ground turkey
2 small onions, chopped
2 tablespoons chili powder
1 cup water
2 1/2 cups canned tomatoes
1 1/2 cups canned kidney beans
salt and pepper to taste

Cook hamburger, onion, chili powder and salt until meat is brown. Add tomatoes, beans and water. Cook on low for one hour. Makes approximately seven cups.

MAYONNAISE JAR ORANGE JULIUS
1 small can frozen orange juice
1 cup milk
1 cup water
1 teaspoon vanilla
8 ice cubes

Pour all ingredients into mayonnaise jar. Store in refrigerator.

CHEESE SAUCE
4 tablespoons margarine
1/2 cup flour
2 cups milk
1 1/2 cups processed cheese, cut into cubes

Melt margarine in a saucepan. Remove from hot plate. Add flour; stir until smooth. Add milk to flour mixture a little at a time. Stir until there are no lumps. Cook sauce over medium heat until thick, stirring constantly. Cut cheese in small pieces and add to sauce. Stir until cheese is melted. Pour over baked potatoes, rice, spaghetti, broccoli or nacho chips.

Now for the bad news. Closet cookers also must be cleaners. There is no room in the dorm to clean up after mess makers and mold grows quickly. "Cooking time after time on leftover crust is not healthy," Thieleke said.

To minimize the cleaning chores, use a minimum of equipment — eat from the pan or use paper plates. You'll still need a basic supply of utensils. Among them:

- can opener,
- pancake turner or spatula,
- large mixing spoon,
- sharp knife,
- flatware,
- paper plates,
- mugs,
- aluminum foil,
- measuring cups,
- dishwashing detergent.

In addition, you may want an empty quart-size mayonnaise jar to shake/mix pancake batter and prepare instant puddings, milk shakes and fruit juices from frozen concentrate.

Fertile minds will come up with their own creative ideas and substitutions, Thieleke said. She has heard of students frying eggs on steam irons and cooking bacon with curling irons.