

Taste buds
Chef Larry Janes

New Year starts off with verve

For those of you still a tad hung over from all the New Year's revelry, you have time to get your resolutions in order for 1989.

I love resolutions. They're something you strive for two weeks to think up and exert three weeks of energy trying to keep but always end up forgetting by the fourth week of February. If by then the resolutions haven't gotten to you, the winter doldrums will.

So, trying not to sound too pessimistic, here's my list of New Year's resolutions that will surely end up on the heap by February.

- I resolve to loose that double chin that I have been plagued with. The way I figure it, if the everlasting diet won't help, \$25,000 worth of plastic surgery should do it.

- I resolve to immediately get rid of all those silly kitchen appliances that are clogging up the fruit cellar and cupboards. That means goodbye to the salad shooter, the salad spinner, the electric doughnut maker, the mini deep fryer and about 1/2 dozen of those tacky kitchen witches that I'm sure had something to do with the burnt Christmas cookies this year.

- I resolve to find lids for all the Tupperware, Popetees and Rubbermaid containers that are reproducing themselves under the kitchen sink. Ditto for the cottage cheese containers and the empty potato salad containers from the Farmer Jack's.

- I resolve to get a Q-Tip and clean out the corners and little holes inside my microwave. Just by that statement, you can guess what fingers within.

- I resolve to clean out my car and, probably most important, to stop calling in it. I am sure my car is to blame for my double chin and Ronald Reagan checks.

- I resolve to, if not totally read, at least glance at the more than 15 food and cookie magazines I get every month. I'm getting so many mags delivered by an unknown person who slips them in a plastic bag and hangs them on my screen door that I sent that little elf a Christmas card this year.

- I resolve to put shelf paper on all my shelves. Nah, forget it, no one really notices, do they?

- I resolve to spend at least a day (if not more) down at Momma's so that I can learn her secrets when making meat strudel, sliders and, god forbid, fruitcake.

- I resolve to dust the top of the refrigerator. But then again, why would I? I'm the only one tall enough to see it anyway.

- I resolve to cook something from scratch at least once a week and let one of the kids do it with me.

- I resolve to change the box of baking soda that has been sitting in the back of the fridge for the last four years every three months like I'm supposed to.

- I resolve to "do my part" for the environment. That means no more plastic bags at the grocery store, no more aerosol sprays, and to save the glass and plastic disposables for recycling.

- Last but not least, I resolve to help all the fund-raisers and charitable organizations I can with a mention of what we, the readers, can do to help. I'll start right now with a promo for a new cookbook that has crossed my desk entitled "The Joy of Greek Cooking," which includes recipes, feast and fast day menus, historical information, cholesterol guides, microwave tips and cooking charts. It's being promoted by the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in downtown Detroit, and the book can be ordered at any Kitchen Glamour store by calling 965-2206. It's only \$10 and it's a jewel of a cookbook. (That's one resolution I know I'll keep.) Attention, all food-related fund-raisers: read me the info on your product, and I'll include it whenever I can.)



By Larry Janes

When I'm feelin' blue,
 all I have to do
 is take a look at you,
 then I'm not so blue.

These are the words to a popular song, breaking the charts on today's Top 40 record scene.

Unfortunately for me, they couldn't be further from the truth.

When I'm blue, I eat. Yep, I realize it's a problem. Usually, however, when I get uptight, I don't rely on my favorite recipe of tofu-lasagna or a package of Weight Watchers' Black Forest Cake. I want comfort food.

The food my momma made for me when I was a kid and filled my mind with such thoughts that food would really make things better. Food like tuna-noodle casserole that called for cooked noodles, a can of drained tuna, a can of Campbell's soup, topped and sprinkled with a can of onion rings or, better yet, some crushed, stale potato chips.

I still love things that are tossed together and thrown in a greasy yellow Cornishware casserole with green flowers painted on the sides and baked at 350 degrees for one hour. What better a way to relieve anxieties and frustrations than make a batch of biscuits from the back of a Bisquick box top them with a box of

partially frozen, sugar-laden strawberries that defrosted in a dishpan of hot water while the biscuits were baking and finish with eight or 10 squirts from a Reddi-Whip aerosol can. For the time being, heck with the ozone, I want comfort.

I REMEMBER "city chicken," chunks of veal skewered on a thick stick and cooked in canned mushroom sauce and more Campbell's cream-of-something soup. And the only accompaniment was a plow of the best-tasting lumpy mashed potatoes (mashed by hand, of course) and flavored with a lot of butter, a little milk and far-too-much salt for today's health-conscious bodies. Desert was a red-colored Jell-O, usually loaded with bananas that were easily removed. It was a special

treat to find a can of Reddi-Whip behind the Miracle Whip (which to this day I still call mayonnaise). The last of the white spray ended up on the flower-laden oilcloth table cover, in little blotches that had us using our fingers to get the last drops.

People desperately want to eat something familiar. Even though today's kitchens would seem bare without the Kitchen Aid mixer and Cuisinart food processor, it's hard to feel cozy about something prepared by a famous young chef still green behind the ears known for his dirty portions, squid pasta and high-fat/low-price tags. In today's age of anxiety, the middle-class soul food we grew up with reminds us of safer times. A lot of '80s food was good, even better than we were willing to admit, especially in this age of fresh goat

cheese, baby vegetables and sushi. When food fashion turned away from cheeseburger pies and cake-mix cakes, most home cooks remained faithful. Now the fashionable food world is paying attention . . . again.

Can you still buy a blue-flower laden oilcloth table covering? Is there a restaurant that can make me fried chicken that was rolled in crushed Ritz crackers and fried in 3 inches of lard? Will someone please invite me to a dinner party that has a macaroni and cheese casserole made with Velveeta instead of blue-corn polenta shaped like a cornucopia?

All of a sudden I've got this insatiable urge to go home, also a hot dog and stuff it with a slice of processed cheese, then wrap in a Poppin-Fresh dough triangle. I'll turn off the con-

vection switch on my stove, and while that's baking, I'll open a can of cream-style corn and simmer it till it looks like soup and partially sticks to the bottom of the Farberware saucepan I bought last summer at a garage sale.

Trying to watch my weight, I'll skip the strawberry shortcake but will get a fresh can of Reddi-Whip and a package of Graham crackers, plopp down on the sofa in front of the TV with a 12-ounce glass bottle of Grape Nuts and watch reruns of the Homeymooners.

Now that's comfort!

COMFORT FOOD

Send recipe to contest

What's your favorite comfort food? What's the dish that reminds you of your childhood, that makes you feel cozy, that tastes so good? Send us the recipe, and if yours is one of the ones selected, it will be published in Taste.

Letters should be postmarked by Monday, Jan. 16, and addressed to: Comfort Food Contest, The Observer & Eccentric, 36231 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48105. There will be prizes for the readers whose recipes are chosen.