

taste buds
chef Larry
Janes

Chicken cooks up any style

When it comes to cooking, I can think of only one food that lends itself to just about every style of cooking.

You can bake it, fry it, stew it, char it, microwave it, barbecue it and do just about anything to it except eat it raw. You can find it on the menu at the best restaurants in the country in addition to the nation's soup kitchens. It's more popular than hamburger and, in most instances, just as inexpensive to prepare. I'm talking about chicken.

Prior to 1930, chicken meat was mainly the by-product of egg production. Birds who were no longer producing eggs at a satisfactory rate were sold for meat purposes. In 1934, almost four billion broilers were produced, 115 times as many as 45 years earlier.

Today, broiler production is so concentrated and so highly commercialized that the industry can now be classed as a poultry factory rather than a farming operation. The United States alone produced more than seven billion tons of poultry in 1980.

Today, processors sell about 54 percent of their broilers as whole birds, with 38 percent as cut-up and a measly eight percent further processed into nuggets, canned products or whatever.

WHILE GROWING UP in Wyandotte, Momma usually reserved chicken as a Sunday main-course entrée. It was served with the proverbial potatoes and green beans that you could eat without teeth in your mouth.

Today's yuppie kitchens serve chicken as a main entrée on the average of two times per week. Momma always roasted or baked the bird and usually served it whole, with Dad serving as the carver a la Thanksgiving dinner.

Today, chicken can be seen not simply as an entrée by itself but also stir-fried in woks with assorted vegetables or baked in numerous casseroles with rice, vegetables and the ever-popular Campbell's soup. Restaurants are serving the bird stuffed, grilled, smoked and garnished with sauces that range from sweet Vidalia onions in a light cream to a dried Michigan cherry sauce that sweetens up an otherwise too-bland-tasting product.

Prior to cooking, it's important to remember to store and handle chicken properly. You can store chickens in the refrigerator for a few days (no more than three) with temperatures between 35-40 degrees.

Keep the birds in the coldest part of the fridge, preferably in the meat keeper. Wrap poultry properly for refrigeration. The plastic wrap that is on the chicken when purchased is designed to control moisture loss in the refrigerator. Raw poultry wrapped in paper should be unwrapped, placed on a platter and then re-covered with plastic wrap for refrigeration.

CARE AND CLEANLINESS should always be used in the preparation, cooking and serving of chicken. Momma always reminded us to wash the poultry thoroughly before cooking. It's best to cook the chicken completely at one time rather than cook, store, and finish cooking at a later date.

Restaurants and homemakers alike should be concerned about cross-contamination when cooking any type of poultry. Simply put, never prepare chicken on cutting boards and countertops without a complete clean-up before preparing other foods. Today's mass production of the birds can literally make them a haven for bacteria and food contaminants.

Always cook chicken until the juices run clear. Period. As with any meat or fish, chicken is at its prime no matter how it is cooked when it is not overdone. Remember that the breast cooks more quickly than the dark meat, so it is often removed from the pan or the skillet first, or added later.

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Tea hostess Pauline Palazzolo serves tea to Geraldine Granfield of Birmingham (left) and Elizabeth Hartigan of Royal Oak in the charming lobby of Birmingham's Townsend Hotel. The English ritual is presented in the authentic

British manner — with the proper tea service and several delightful courses. Tuesdays-Saturdays 3-5:30 p.m., are the times reserved for tea.

Tea time: A civilized custom

By Cathie Bradenbach
staff writer

DETAILS MAKE the difference. The Townsend Hotel in downtown Birmingham across from Shain Park, attends to the multiple details that go into serving an authentic tea in the English manner.

"A lot of little things make it right," said tea hostess Pauline Palazzolo. Tea, of course, has come to mean more than the bracing brew favored by the English. It's a light meal served in the afternoon to stave off hunger until the late, English dinner hour.

Through generations, the tradition of afternoon tea has evolved into a ritual pleasure that not only satisfies the appetite but nourishes the civilized spirit as well.

PALAZZOLO SAYS before the hotel began serving tea in the lobby three months ago, the staff spent several months perfecting the details — combing English cookbooks for traditional recipes, taking tea at restaurants and hotels in Canada and Chicago, and shopping for the china, silver and linens they would need to order to serve an authentic English tea.

With abundant polished brass, rich wood-paneled walls and gracious service, the 87-room Townsend recreates the style of European hotels. The lobby captures the ambience of an English drawing room, with plush rose-colored sofas, a large flowered rug and a scattering

of English floral-print pillows.

STEPPING INTO the dark-paneled room with its elegant, but comfortable furniture clustered near the fireplace is like stepping out of the harried present into an older, more refined era. The decor sets the tone

for tea as respite from the day's hubbub, as a time-out to savor the soothing comfort of gracious tradition.

Following the pattern of most European hotels, the Townsend serves tea in the lobby, 3-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays. During tea time a pianist plays easy-listening music on

the grand piano. Tea is priced at \$6.50 per person, and the lobby comfortably accommodates 22 guests. Because tea has become so popular, the Gallery adjacent to the lobby is being expanded to offer increased teatime seating.

Brewing a proper pot of tea is an

art which the Townsend staff takes pride in having mastered. The pot must first be thoroughly heated with hot water. The water must be at a rolling boil because connoisseurs insist that only boiling water brings out flavor properly.

THE TOWNSEND uses large silver samovars that not only look splendid as they heat the water but eliminate the problem of water losing its heat in transit from the kitchen. Tea leaves must be loose, and the pot should be china because those who know tea say metal teapots and teabags taint the tea's pure flavor. At the Townsend, guests choose from imported loose teas such as Earl Grey, Darjeeling, English Breakfast, Jasmine, Cinnamon, Chamomile and Ceylon.

Tea is served in bone china pots and teacups in assorted English china patterns, with their characteristic preference for roses and other cheerful blossoms found in English gardens.

Embroidered linen napkins come from Ireland, and the utensils used are all silver — down to the strainer to catch loose leaves when tea is poured. As a concession to diet-conscious guests, the Townsend provides artificial sweeteners as well as sugar. Sweetener is served in old-fashioned silver salt cellars with tiny silver spoons.

THE ENGLISH say cream over. Please turn to Page 2

Other places for a spot of tea

By Cathie Bradenbach
special writer

Besides the Townsend Hotel in downtown Birmingham, other restaurants in suburban Detroit that serve classic, English-style afternoon tea are the Sweet Alfons Tea Room in Plymouth, the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Dearborn and Monchelle l'Amoreur Chocolate Shop in Birmingham.

The Sweet Alfons Tea Room, named after the river in Scotland made famous by Bobbie Burns, serves tea Wednesdays-Sundays, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. (reservations required from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.) in the intimate, smoke-free tea room, guests may order a Comm Tea, which includes tea of their choice served with scones and Devon cream delicately flavored with fruit (below the name Cream Tea) and costs \$5. As a la carte

menu offers other teatime favorites including Finger Sandwiches (six assorted for \$3.99), Tea — choose from 11 loose teas — brewed in a bone china pot at \$2, and a Scone Plate — warm scones served with Devon cream and jam at \$2.55.

The Ritz Carlton Hotel, off Southfield Road at Hubbard Drive, serves tea Mondays-Thursday, from 2:30-4:30 p.m., and Fridays-Sundays, from 2-5 p.m., in the tea room off the hotel lobby. Tea, at \$9.95 per person, features savories — a selection of canapés and finger sandwiches, among them cucumber and cream cheese, smoked ham and English mustard and Scottish smoked salmon.

Warm scones accompanied by Devonshire cream and preserves follow the savories, and sweets include a selection of tea cakes and custard and fruit tarts. Guests may choose from 11 loose teas, in-

cluding low-caffeine and caffeine-free varieties.

At Monchelle l'Amoreur Chocolate Shop, tea is served every afternoon, from 2:30-5 p.m., and on Saturdays, from noon to 5 p.m. On Thursdays, the shop serves scones and offers High Tea (selection food more like a supper) from 4-6 p.m. The intimate shop, a few steps down from the sidewalk of Plaza Street, offers 8-10 varieties of tea, freshly brewed and served in English bone china.

Guests select two finger sandwiches, including such delicacies as crab meat, eggs and olives, and ham with pineapple chutney. A plate of scones is served with the required Devon cream and preserves, and Monchelle l'Amoreur includes fresh fruit (usually strawberries) and cream with the \$6.95 tea, which is capped by a chocolate truffle because the store specializes in gourmet chocolates.

You can be picky about strawberries

By Anne Lehmann
special writer

Whether you're a gourmand always searching for the freshest ingredients for the finest fare, a do-it-yourselfer who enjoys home canning, or a family on the lookout for a fun outing, rejoice. It's the height of Michigan's strawberry picking season.

According to John Sherman, owner and operator of the Strawberry Patch, a U-pick farm in Milford, the crop of these fragrant and robust morsels is bountiful, and the picking is great, thanks to a relatively frost-free season. Happily, the opportunity to pick your own abounds in Wayne and Oakland counties.

Besides providing a morning of outdoor fun, picking your own strawberries has definite advantages.

from the garden will attest to their ambrosial qualities. Sherman attributes this to the fact that the shipping berries one often finds on store shelves are usually picked 40 percent green.

If you are one to use large quantities of the fruit, it makes economic sense to pick your own. You get quality goods at reasonable prices. Sherman said it is not uncommon for pickers to take away a hundred pounds of the fruit, many of them people with big freezers or restaurant owners hand picking for their discerning clientele.

Finally, picking your own strawberries is the ultimate in quality control, assuring that there will be no surprises at the bottom of the quart. You know what you are getting down to the very last berry.

If the taste and visual appeal of this versatile fruit hasn't yet sold you on an excursion to one of the local U-pick farms, consider this — strawberries are low in calories and rich in vitamins. Ten large fresh strawberries contain 37 calories and

a whole day's quota of vitamin C. How much better can a food get?

SOME TIPS for strawberry pickers:



At the Strawberry Patch U-pick farm in Milford, owned by John and Eleanor Sherman, their granddaughter, Yvonne, picks ripe, red berries.

• Call ahead before going to a U-pick farm, for hours of operation, picking conditions, prices and what

age children are permitted to join in the fun.

• Plan to pick in the cooler hours of the morning. Berries that are picked after it gets hot remain hot in the container and spoil quickly.

• Bear in mind that strawberry picking can be a messy affair, so stick with old, sensible clothes that will also protect you from the sun and insects.

• Select firm, dry, shapely, glossy, dark red berries that have green caps. Avoid berries that are pale in color or that have white shoulders. Immature berries such as these won't ripen after they have been picked.

• Don't wash or hull berries until you are ready to use them. Berries will stay fresh and delicious up to one week in the refrigerator.

U-PICK FARMS

Wayne County
Blessed's Fruit Farm, 49601 Powell
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