

taste buds

chef Larry Janes

Learning to love escargot

Let me preface this story by admitting that escargot, commonly known as snails, should usually be enjoyed during a festive time.

You probably would have enjoyed this story and the accompanying recipes for the holidays. However, the holiday this year at the Janes Gang house was spent in the hospital because Dad broke his hip and encountered complications. Now that Dad Janes is well on his way to recovery, I thought that now is as good a time as ever to do some celebrating.

You have to understand that I'm not much of an escargot fan. And until last week, a snail had never crossed paths with my wife. As a matter of fact, most of the folks I talk to feel the same way.

The thought of eating something slimy, yet chewy, direct from its shell, which served as a home, should be reserved for the nouveau riche or those with palates that identify with the consumption of thymus glands and sweetbreads.

UNTIL LAST WEEK, every snail I ever consumed was chewy. As a matter of fact, the only redeeming quality of my experiences in eating snails was the delicious garlic butter that could be mopped up with a hunk of French bread. The garlic butter and French bread was like a 7-Up chaser after a shot of hard liquor.

So in the midst of the holiday season and dealing with Dad's illness, my best friend from Ann Arbor invited my wife and me over for an evening reprieve of good food, good wine and great company.

When he asked me to bring along some escargot plates and tiny forks, I knew immediately the appetizer course wouldn't come close to appealing my wife and me, but I dutifully obliged and emerged from the fruit cellar with the requested equipment. Was I in for a surprise.

After cracking the first of many bottles of wine, I offered my help (as I usually do) in the kitchen. It was there I learned the background to the recipe I'm about to share.

My friend had picked up a copy of an old cookbook from an unknown place called "Frog Hollow," and while thumbing through, discovered the recipe. As you will see for yourself, the recipe isn't anything special, but there was a paragraph preceding the recipe that stated how the author (a chef at some big-city eatery) prepared this snail recipe, and that whenever he was invited to friends' houses for an eating orgy, was told to bring along this recipe for escargot.

LIKE ME, his friends knew that the chef excelled, and fortunately for you and me, I requested the recipe book on a trip to the washroom, fortunately, with a pencil and paper hidden in my pocket.

When the tray was passed and my wife saw the snails, she opted to pass, but after a little prodding (much to our chagrin) she sampled. It could have been another six snails between us, but she asked for more. The recipe is that good. As a matter of fact, it's not just that good, it's one of the best appetizer recipes I've ever bitten into.

And my New Year's gift to you, taken from a piece of scratch paper written on a toilet tank in Ann Arbor, I'm sure, will be one of the best you will ever try. So enjoy!

Trust me on this one, folks. You won't be disappointed.

See recipe Page 2B.

Computers come into the kitchen

By Bridgette M. Daniels
staff writer

TECHNOLOGY IS invading every aspect of our lives and the microwave is not the only intruder in the kitchen. Recently home computers have begun making an appearance.

Today's personal computers (PCs) not only supply recipes on data bases, but also adjust serving, give nutritional tips and do the grocery shopping for you.

Prodigy, a database created by Sears and IBM, is the latest to hit the market and the home. In the Detroit area, Great Scott! has joined with Prodigy executives to provide a shopping service to customers.

ANYONE OWNING a PC and the Prodigy software can do all their grocery shopping at home and either pick up the order or have Great Scott! personnel deliver it.

Prodigy is hooked up to several businesses in this area including Sears, NBD, Comerica and Great Scott! With the package a person can make all their travel arrangements, get weather forecasts, follow the stock market, send electronic mail all over the world, read news headlines, read ads or play interactive games.

On Oct. 2, 1989, the first Great Scott hook-up was made in the Detroit area in the home of Westland residents Harvey and Judie Walker. Judie Walker said she uses Prodigy up to four hours a day, and does almost all of her grocery shopping with the computer.

She said Prodigy has changed her buying habits.

"I tend to order more in bulk now because I don't have to carry it," she said. "It's cheaper that way and I save money."

PAUL COLEMAN, Great Scott! head of advertising, said Prodigy helps customers save time as well as money. The program allows the user to visually walk down the aisles and formulate a shopping list, which can be saved for future weeks. The user then sends in the order and sets the delivery time.

"Once you develop a shopping list, you save a lot of time, seeing that many customers order the same products week after week," Coleman said. "The entire process is more efficient as far as time goes on. You can pull up old shopping lists and update them . . . It's an efficient use of one's personal time."

Delivery costs for grocery orders are \$7.50. An order also can be picked up at the store for a fee of 10 percent of the order up to \$5.

While Prodigy does not release data concerning the numbers of people using its system, Marty Habalowsky of Prodigy Services Co. said the metro-Detroit electronic supermarket has been successful, with higher dollar amounts being purchased here than in the other four trial areas of New York City, Washington D.C., Atlanta and San Francisco.

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Adventurous carryouts make a difference

By Arlene Funkh
special writer

Kick off your shoes, put up your feet and let Anna Stebbins prepare a delicious, innovative dinner.

The menu? Let's have fresh salmon, jazzed up with fresh thyme and lemon and a topping of bread crumbs. We'll serve that with a pasta-and-fresh-vegetable blend lightly drizzled with olive oil.

Dessert will be freshly baked apple pie.

If that dinner sounds good, you might want to visit a new gourmet carryout food store in Plymouth called Savory Fare Ltd. The shop is the brainchild of caterer and food enthusiast Stebbins.

"We don't carry three-bean salad or macaroni and cheese," said Stebbins, a Plymouth resident. "It's designed for people who want a little more adventure in their meals — people who like to try different things."

SAVORY FARE Ltd. occupies a rear section of the Wine and Cheese Barn in downtown Plymouth. The food is prepared in the shop and sold by the piece or pound for carryout.

"I feel Plymouth has grown up enough," said Stebbins. "We have enough working couples who can come in and pick up dinner. It's a viable concept. People are too busy to think about cooking."

Stebbins, who was born in Australia, brings a rich and varied background to her venture. Her mother came from New Zealand and her father was born in Texas. As a child, Stebbins gravitated toward unusual, ethnic food tastes.

"At that time Australia was a melting pot," Stebbins said.

When she was 21 Stebbins came to the United States and lived in Hawaii, San Francisco and Phoenix before moving to Plymouth 12 years ago. While in Hawaii she fearlessly sampled such exotic fare as squid and pig's brains.

"I think it was at a luau, the time I ate pig's brains served directly out of the head," Stebbins said, with a laugh. "I pretended a lot and left fast."

Although Stebbins has held a variety of jobs, she derives her greatest satisfaction from preparing and serving delicious and eye-appealing food that live up to the shop's name — Savory Fare Ltd.



JIM JAGDFELD/staff photographer

Anna Stebbins shows Nicolae Saled (left) and Vegetable Melange from her shop, Savory Fare, at the Wine and Cheese Barn in Plymouth.

SHE STARTED a home-based catering business in late 1988, using many organizational skills she learned while working as catering secretary and, later, catering director at the Plymouth Hilton Inn. Stebbins opened the shop last June. Catering parties still make up a large chunk of her business.

Stebbins likes to create excitement by combining different textures, tastes and colors in her food.

One particularly delicious salad pairs chunks of smoked turkey and strips of Swiss cheese with sliced red delicious apples and roasted hazelnuts with a creamy tarragon dressing.

"I can sense the taste in my mouth," Stebbins said of her ability to predict whether these combinations will be compatible.

Another favorite is a chicken broccoli salad. It combines red grapes with sweet red onions, toasted walnuts and chunks of chicken and broccoli, covered with a creamy dill dressing. Or the bow-tie pasta salad, which Stebbins mixes with baby shrimp, snow peas and red pepper strips drizzled with a sherry vinaigrette dressing.

Salad dressings are homemade. Some of the dessert choices are pina colada cheesecake, apple pie, brownies and giant cookies and orange streusel muffins.

Stebbins, who employs two part-time employees, does approximately 50 percent of the cooking herself. She scours cookbooks and magazines, takes cooking classes and attends chefs' demonstrations to come

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