

## taste buds

**chef Larry Janes**

## No-buzz coffees terrific

I'm still green behind the ears when it comes to the coffee market. I've drank the best (Royal Kona Hawaiian and Jamaican Blue Mountain) and have made the worst.

Probably two of the major changes that have hit today's coffee market is the decline in regular coffee drinking contrasted by a skyrocketing rapid rise in the use of decaffeinated and gourmet coffees and the transition from wishy-washy decaf to actually great tasting non-buzzing brews.

As we speak, the coffee market is undergoing yet another major change, greatly improved decaffeinating processes, which are chemical free.

Removing the caffeine from coffee beans has been around for the last 30 or so odd years. Sales of decaffeinated coffee, however, never rose to expectations because usually the decaf process left a coffee that was watered down with hardly any flavor and almost no aroma. Couple the lost flavor and aroma with the fact that the decaffeinating process involved using a chemical solvent (methylene chloride) employed in direct contact with the beans and you had not just a crummy-tasting cup of coffee but also one that had somewhat questionable health standards.

**THE METHYLENE** chloride used in most over-the-counter brands of coffee you and I purchase has reportedly caused cancer in laboratory animals and is considered a "possible human carcinogen" by the EPA and FDA. Because of these findings, methylene chloride was banned last summer for use in hair sprays and cosmetics. It is, however, still used in most lesser-quality decaf coffees because the EPA and FDA claims that "the residual level of methylene chloride in the final product is very low and therefore considered safe." Yea, OK, and someday I'm going to win Lotto 47.

So off you run to your can of coffee and with a sigh of relief, you read that your decaf coffee is processed with ethyl acetate. Coffee decaffeinated with this solvent is often called "natural" because ethyl acetate exists in some fruits. It does, but only in minute quantities like 10-20 parts per million.

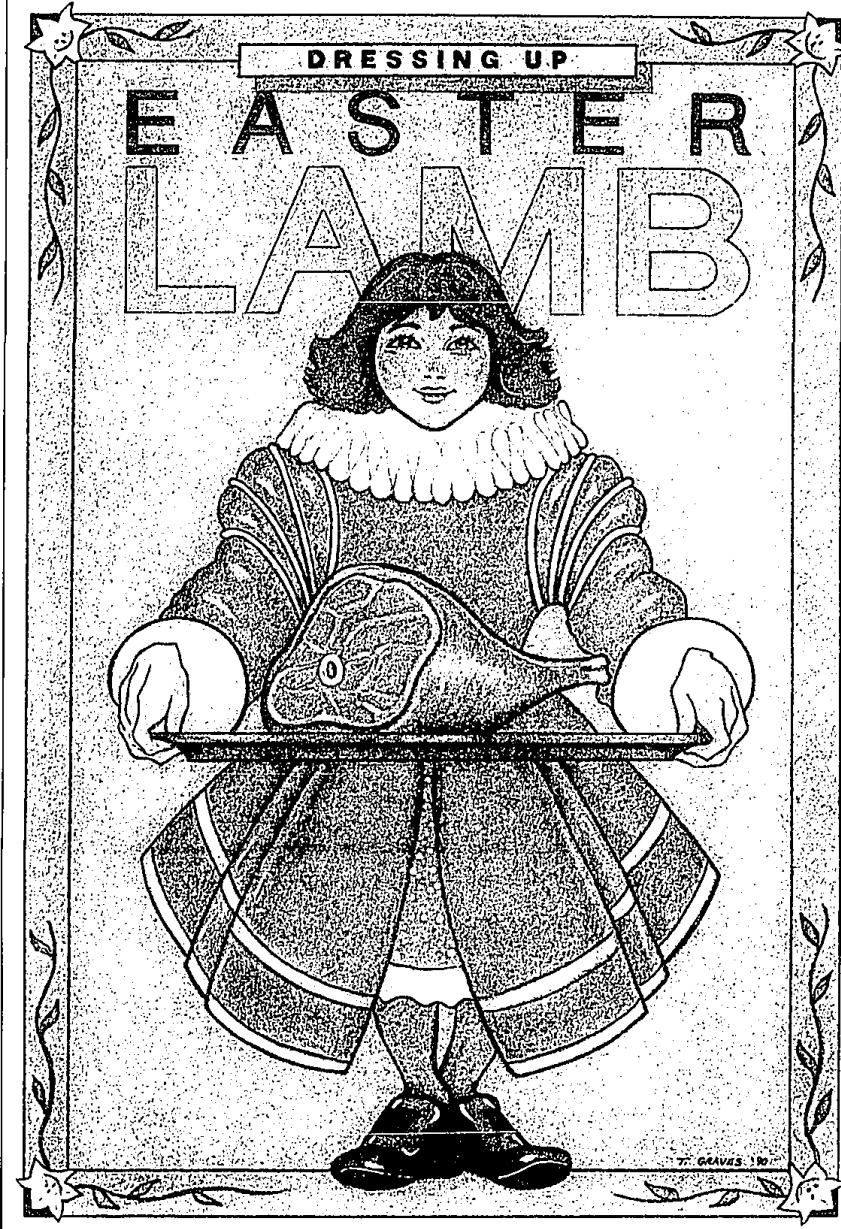
Ethyl acetate is used industrially as a solvent in lacquers and varnishes and in the manufacture of artificial leather. Guess what? The FDA says that it, too, is considered safe, in the quantities left as a residue on the beans after the decaf process. And they say, "Trust me!"

But there are alternatives for those of us who really don't wish their coffee be treated with industrial solvents. Two methods that produce a great-tasting decaffeinated cup of coffee are the Supercritical Carbon Dioxide method and the Swisswater method.

**IN THE SUPERCRITICAL** CO<sub>2</sub> process, coffee beans are first saturated in water and then treated with carbon dioxide that has been compressed to 200 times normal atmospheric pressure. This method is used by more upscale and slightly more expensive decaf brands, such as Sanka.

Companies boasting the Swiss water method have discovered newer technology that has the green coffee beans first soaked in water to remove the caffeine. The caffeine-laced water is then run through a series of carbon filters used to purify drinking water. As the water cycles between the beans and the carbon, the concentration of coffee solubles in the water increases until it equals that of the beans.

Once at this point, these flavor components are no longer removed from the beans because they are in balance with the bean's water mixture. Therefore, the final product is a full-flavored coffee with only the caffeine removed.



## Lamb is flavorful and tender

**By Larry Janes**  
special writer

**M**OMMA ALWAYS served a whole ham at Easter, completely studded with cloves, rings of canned Dole pineapple slices and bottled-in-red-dye-number-three maraschino cherries. We ate Easter ham all week and then found it tucked between Wonder Bread in our school lunches and, finally, almost cooked beyond recognition in a large pot with great Northern beans and vegetables.

We never ate lamb. Not at Easter, never at Christmas. In my maturation years, my experiences with lamb were based solely on visits to the Detroit Zoo.

Contrary to what some say, age does have its benefits. Being all of 18, I had just been flown (my first airplane ride) to the Culinary Institute in Hyde Park, N.Y., for a short-ened summer session. The first night's dinner was, and to this day I can remember it like it happened yesterday, a roast sliced leg of lamb. Tasting that lamb was like a first ride in a convertible. I wanted more. Lamb has long been noted for its delicate flavor and tenderness. Pick up the menu at any fine dining establishment around the world and lamb will be featured in one way or another. Sliced leg, crown roasts, braised chops, broiled rack, rolled breast, you name it, and just like beef, you can accomplish it with lamb.

**SURPRISINGLY, HOWEVER,** we don't eat a lot of lamb in the United States. According to American Meat Institute figures for 1988, Americans eat 1.4 pounds of lamb annually, quite a difference from the 62-plus pounds of pork and the whopping 76 pounds of beef.

Granted, most butchers in the United States seldom carry all three varieties (beef, some won't even carry lamb because it's a slow mover), but the three basic types of lamb are milk fed, spring and mutton.

Baby milk-fed lamb, traditional for people of many cultures for the Easter holiday, is the most delicate, sought after and, of course, most expensive. These are annually less than three months old when slaughtered and are, because of their size, sold whole, halved or quartered for full roasting on either a spit or a very large oven.

Spring lamb can be anywhere from three to nine months old. Until the end of October, it will be stamped "genuine spring lamb." From November on, it becomes winter lamb.

Jack Ubaldi, author of "The Meat Book," Macmillan, 1987, actually comes forward and says in his book, "The worst time of the year for lamb is January to April, when the majority of lambs available to buy are yearlings, which fall into a sort of lamb limbo, too old for lamb and too young for mutton." Comments like that kind of squelch the reasons for cooking an Easter lamb, eh?

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## Matzoh — it's special at Passover

**By Nechama Bakst**  
special writer

Tonight, on the first night of Passover, children in Jewish households around the world will be reciting the traditional four questions.

First of all, they will ask, why is it that on all other nights of the year we eat leavened bread and unleavened bread (matzoh), while on Passover we eat only matzoh?

Actually, it's food for thought. After all, matzoh, traditionally made of flour and water with no eggs, salt, sugar or fat, is a wholesome, low-calorie carbohydrate sold in supermarkets throughout the year. And matzoh balls (round balls made of matzoh meal) served with chicken soup are a year-round staple on Jewish menus.

**SO WHAT** makes matzoh so special on Passover?

Eating matzoh throughout the year is strictly a physical experience, according to Rabbi Elimelech Silberberg, spiritual leader of the Bais Chabad Torah Center in West Bloomfield.

"Matzoh is characteristically called the bread of affliction and humility," Silberberg said. "By eating matzoh on Passover we ask God to imbue us with the selflessness and modesty so necessary in carrying out our mission as Jews."

**THESE SPIRITUAL** implications are

only relevant during the Passover holiday when God charged the Jews with this commandment, Silberberg said.

"It's not that you couldn't do it (eat matzoh) during the year," said Southfield resident Vera Silverstein. "But it just doesn't taste the same. There's nothing like Pesach (the Hebrew word for Passover)."

An innovative cook, Silverstein said her family of seven uses "tons of matzoh" not only for eating but in cooking and baking.

**ONE REASON** her matzoh tastes different on Passover is that Silverstein uses only "shmurah" matzoh, a darker, coarser matzoh than the kind usually packaged year-round.

"Shmurah matzoh means that the wheat has been watched from the time it was cut . . . to protect it from becoming leavened," said Avraham Plotnik, co-owner of Splitzer's Hebrew Book and Gift Center in Southfield.

Plotnik sells close to 3,000 pounds of matzoh of different kinds during the Passover season, which starts about a month before Passover.

The store carries shmurah hand matzoh (plural for matzoh) at \$10.50 a pound that are mixed, rolled out and baked completely by hand.

These — the traditional round matzoh — are the coarsest. There is shmurah machine matzoh, round or square, but also dark and coarse, at \$6.95 a pound, and regular matzoh at \$3.25 a pound.

**SOME FOODS** taste better with the coarser matzoh, said Silverstein, who uses shmurah hand matzoh for eating and shmurah machine matzoh for cooking.

Take stuffed cabbage, she said. Because rice is forbidden on Passover in some Jewish households, Silverstein makes sweet-and-sour stuffed cabbage with matzoh.

"Stuffed cabbage Pesach time comes out better than the rest of the year," Silverstein said.

**FOR ABOUT** three pounds of ground beef, she uses about one to 1½ cups of matzoh ground coarsely in a food processor.

She adds three eggs to the processed matzoh and stir fries the mixture in a little oil in a frying pan, turning it until it is sautéed. Then she adds two diced onions, salt and seasoning to taste, along with the ground meat.

The mixture is used to fill cabbage leaves, which are then cooked, with tomato juice diluted in a little water and sugar, on top of a low flame for 1-1½ hours.

"It's delicious," Silverstein said. "The matzoh gives it a very special taste. My kids love it better than during the year."

**BUT SILVERSTEIN** doesn't stop at giving traditional foods a Passover twist. Some of her recipes are pure creativity.

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer  
Michael Glasman (foreground) and Michael Rosen eat matzoh they made at Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield.