

taste buds

chef Larry Janes



Muffins pick up morning

My idea of breakfast is usually a cup of coffee. When I feel the need to be healthy, I down a glass of juice. When I'm "with the guys" and this usually means on a fishing trip, bring on the eggs over medium, hash browns, bacon, crisp and dry whole wheat toast.

When I'm constipated, it's a big bowl of Grape Nuts. But when I'm in the mood to create, nothing satisfies the morning taste buds like a batch of homemade muffins.

Even the airlines and Dunkin' Donuts are getting into the muffin swing of things. Gargantuan blueberry muffins with a streusel top adorn just about every doughnut shop shelf while their hockey-puck-shaped cousins do their best at bringing on gut aches on red-eye flights.

Talk to just about anyone about muffins and you are likely to receive an earful on what they think makes the best muffin. Momma has been on an All-Brin kick ever since she discovered that bran was good for you, even if it is coupled with two cups of white granulated sugar.

GRANDMA LORY will always be remembered for making cake muffins that would give Betty Crocker a run for her money with her boxed cupcakes. These never needed frosting, although when we wanted to be decadent, a box of Jiffy chocolate frosting always suited the bill. If Grandma Lory knew this, she would probably roll over in her grave.

Contrary to popular belief, muffins need not be stuffed with \$2.99-a-cup blueberries or inoculated with bran. Cinnamon and raisins add a morning/brunch feel while snack muffins could be made with a mixture of nuts, currants and other fruit. Plain muffins usually have the shortest life span and should be eaten immediately after baking.

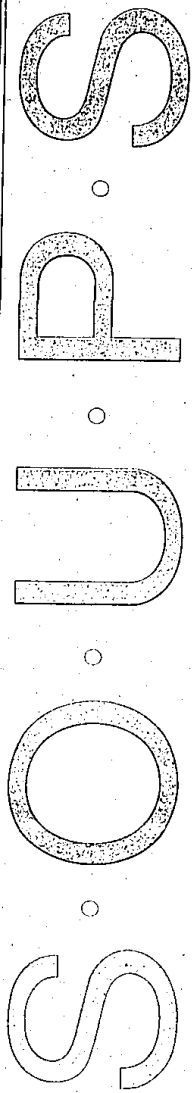
Muffins with fruits and vegetables and those made with oil stay moist longer. Keep them out of the refrigerator as they will quickly dry out. Muffins freeze extremely well, especially when placed in a plastic bag and frozen. They are best reheated, wrapped in foil in a hot oven for 15 minutes or so. Microwaving will toughen them and should be used solely as a last resort.

The only problem I see when starting the morning with fresh-baked muffins is that you have to sit around and drink coffee for 30 minutes while they bake. This, of course, is in addition to the sink full of dirty dishes that usually accompany the recipe. One way to make muffins in a hurry is to freeze the batter unbaked and bake frozen just before serving. Simply spoon muffin batter into muffin pans lined with foil-type cupcake liners. Freeze, uncovered, until solid (this usually takes 8-10 hours). Remove muffins from the pan and package airtight in foil or plastic bags. Label and date and freeze for up to two months.

TO BAKE: do not thaw. Return muffins to their prepared cupcake pans and bake at 375 degrees until they test done, about 30-35 minutes.

Muffins are quick bread batters and really are best when baked right after mixing. In addition to freezing, which works well, you also can whip up the batter the night before and simply omit the eggs. While the coffee is brewing, take the batter that was previously blended and well covered in the refrigerator and simply beat in the eggs. Prepare as usual.

As far as most muffin recipes are concerned, the only thing you need to watch out for is overbeating. Muffins should have a breadlike texture but when overbeaten will have tunnels caused by the carbon dioxide and peaked tops.



Homemade soups chase winter chills

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

A WINTER SOUP PARTY brightens up February at the Observer & Eccentric each year. Everyone in the Livonia newsroom brings something for the party, which is highlighted by an assortment of delicious, hot soups.

All morning the soups that have been prepared the night before simmer in crockpots, hinting at the noon meal. One large table is spread with salads, homemade and store-bought breads of all kinds, and other food to accompany the soups.

On another table go the soft drinks, along with the desserts. When it's time to eat, the staffers serve themselves, buffet-style. Usually everyone samples more than one soup, so bowls or mugs may be only half-filled. Gang back to the table several times is expected.

It's always a pleasure to see what the soups will be. There's a sign-up sheet, and those who choose to bring soup generally try to pick one different from the others.

THIS YEAR, one cook again made her favorite healthy and hearty black bean soup, which is always popular with staffers. Another cook made a minestrone soup she enjoys, taken from a recipe in a vegetarian cookbook.

An easy-to-make corn chowder, from a cookbook of microwave recipes, was tried for the first time by another cook. One cook said his recipe for potato soup also was a first-time effort, but he changed the recipe, as he always does.

In years past, the soup party was more of a soup-only effort. Those who didn't bring soup brought bread, and there was usually a salad and maybe a dessert or two. But each year, the fare has become more varied. The number of desserts seems to be on the rise, and this year a half dozen included everything from no-bake cheesecake to chocolate pound cake.

There are still many cold days ahead. Perhaps a soup party would be a way for you and your co-workers, or family and friends to share a warming meal. You could even make an interesting weekend family party by having members of the household make soups at their leisure, put all the soups into the fridge or freezer, then bring them out for sampling at the same time.

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TIMMY GRAYES

Coney Islands are Keros family tradition

By Anne R. Lehmann
special writer

To some they are franks, others owners, some sausages and for most hot dogs. But for metropolitan Detroiters they are Coney Islands. This Detroit-area phenomenon was the brainchild of Greek immigrants Gus and Bill Keros, who after visiting Coney Island amusement park in New York, recognized endless possibilities for this tasty and interestingly shaped blend of meat.

They left the mustard, eliminated the ketchup and chili, and christened it with the name of the place which inspired it. They opened the Lafayette and American Coney Islands downtown. The doors were open 24 hours a day, and people frequented the restaurant around the clock, including before and after games, theater or family outings.

That was 80 years ago. Since then, Coney Islands have become as much a part of Detroit's restaurant landscape as fast food burgers. It is Kerby's Koney Island, however, established in 1958, which many claim serves the Cadillac of Coney Islands. This has become popular knowledge, so much so that many visiting celebrities, former Detroiters and out-of-towners alike, are known to wait in their cars while their chauffeurs come in to pick up an order of Coney.

A FAMILY BUSINESS run by

three Keros brothers — Van, Tim and Bill (nephews of Gus and Bill).

Kerby's boasts 11 restaurants throughout Southeastern Michigan, with many located in area malls. They opened their first store at Tel-Twelve, in 1958. The business took off in unexpected ways, and the rest is history. "Coney Islands," says Tim Keros, "are as Detroit as cars, Sirah's beer and Vernor's."

What many patrons don't know is that Kerby's makes quality its number one priority. Consequently, many of the items served in the restaurants are custom made. "We created the recipe for our hot dog, which we manufacture," says Keros. The chili, which is sold wholesale to other businesses, and Greek salad dressing, are homespun recipes, which they produce as well. Actually the Detroit Chili Co., the factory which manufactures the chili, is owned and operated by the Keros as well.

The only item they market to the public is the distinctive dressing, used on several Kerby's menu items besides the Greek salads. "The truth is we are not in the dressing manufacturing business, but as a courtesy to our customers who kept asking to buy dressing to take home, we started to bottle and sell the dressing at our restaurants," says Keros. A 16-ounce squeeze bottle sells for \$1.75 and can be purchased at all Kerby's locations.

The menu has grown, especially in recent years with a health-minded public asking for a wider variety of



THOMAS L. LAY/Staff photographer

menu selections. "When we started out the options were koreys, bottled Coke and chili in a bowl," recalls Keros.

Greek salads, soups, grilled chicken sandwiches, vegetable stuffed pitas, as well as the ever-popular yeros, are some of the items growing in popularity. Yeros, referred to by others as gyros, are

Tim Keros with Greek salad and their bottled Greek dressing, at Kerby's Koney Island in Farmington Hills.

this one at home.

Desserts including the famous Sauer's hot fudge sundae, another Detroit favorite, are becoming hot menu items for Kerby's, two of which are housed in former ice cream parlors. Greek desserts including baklava and rice pudding also are available.

Catering is another facet of the Coney Island business which has been developing over the last few years. Kerby's transport, its restaurant wares to many catered affairs, including one held in the lobby of the Fisher Theatre in Detroit. "We once served 1,000 people when the owners of an office complex held a tenant appreciation day," Keros says, beaming.

Besides being original and distinctive in their taste, Kerby's koreys are unique in their spelling. "My uncle coined the term 'Coney Island,' but everyone began using it. We wanted people to know that our koreys were different from all the rest so we recreated the spelling to convey the message," Keros explains.

The third generation has joined the Kerby team with many cousins already training and waiting in the wings to further the success of this growing family business. Will we be seeing Kerby's koreys and chili in supermarkets in the near future? "We don't have any immediate plans," says Keros. "But one thing, I've learned in this business is never to say never."

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