

taste buds

chef Larry Janes



Beans are special in cooker

Since I have rediscovered the joys of pressure cooking, beans have taken precedent in the Janes Gang kitchen and end up swimming in soups, baking in burritos and getting rebashed in refried bean dips.

For the longest time, beans were considered a peasant food. The only time Momma made them was after a baby shower or funeral when there was a Jiffy ham bone to cook with. Aunt Phyllis always had a peasant touch with a crust-laden baked bean casserole embodied with brown sugar, ketchup, onions and enough bacon to harden King Kong's arteries. Then there was something called chili which lacked the va-va-voom, probably because it had more of those canned red kidney beans than any other ingredient. Other than that, our exposure to legumes came from the buffet line at the local all-you-can-eat emporium.

One of the reasons I never came to know beans is the most basic reason that everyone agrees with: time. In order to make most good bean dishes you start with dried beans and they have to be soaked and washed, and picked over and soaked again. Try to cross off a whole day to wait for beans. When I want to cook I want to cook now. Not tomorrow.

THEN, OUT OF THE BLUE, I get this new pressure cooker. With it comes a book by Metro Detroit's grande dame of culinarianisms, Toulia Patsalis, now spreading the word that I can make black bean burritos in 30 minutes or less using a pressure cooker. Saints be praised.

Now, the March 1991 issue of Gourmet magazine brings forth another reason, for those of you still scared to death that a pressure cooker will explode and blow your armpits off. This is called "the quick soak dried bean method" and is explained in detail. In a nutshell, simply rinse and pick over the beans and cover them with enough cold water to cover by two inches. Bring them to a boil and boil for two minutes. Remove the pot from the heat source, cover and soak for one hour.

Beans are second only to grains as fuel for the human body and have recently been proclaimed by medical researchers to be a near-perfect food. Well, almost as near-perfect as you can get. I guess, mainly because these flegolets bring with them a great desire to reek havoc with one's digestive system bringing forth undeniable flatulences. (That's fancy writing for beans being on gas.)

The folks at Akpharma in Pleasantville, N.J., have developed a new product called Beans. What we're looking at here is an enzyme derived from food grade mold that works on complex sugars, breaks them down to make them more digestible and, in the long run, lowers the power of the gas in dramatic proportions.

Four or five drops of this new miracle additive sprinkled over your gaseous foods (not just beans but broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and the like) and the ability to propel is literally aired out the window. The manufacturer says any store should have it but the product is most noticeable in health food markets. Suggested retail: \$1.95 for a 12-serving jar, \$8.95 for a 75-serving jar.

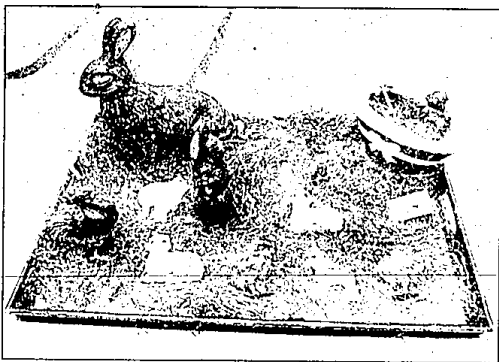
Isn't technology wonderful?

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Dora Higbie of Beverly Hills enjoys molding and decorating chocolate for Easter.

STEPHEN GANTRELL/staff photographer



These are some of Higbie's creations. She melts store-bought pellets of coating chocolate and then uses candy molds.

Making molded Easter candy

By Phyllis Kreger Stillman
special writer

THE CANDY in the stores around Easter is a child's fantasy — ornate chocolate baskets filled with small candies; molded chocolate bunnies, chickens and lambs; chocolate Easter eggs decorated with colored chocolate. All of it looks intricate and difficult to make.

Dora Higbie of Beverly Hills has been making chocolates for years. She says molding and decorating chocolate isn't nearly as hard as it looks. "I do it for fun. It's a very relaxing hobby for me."

Chocolate is, in fact, a family tradition. "My mom made hand-dipped chocolates and all kinds of things like this when we were growing up. I guess that's where I got it," she says.

Higbie starts with pellets of coating chocolate bought at candy supply houses or kitchen stores — her favorite is Kitchen Kinsman in Redford. The chocolate comes in white, milk and semisweet, along with white chocolate which has been tinted many different colors. (You can color white chocolate yourself, but you must use special coloring agents which are not water based.)

THE CHOCOLATE is melted, over low heat, and molded into different shapes, using candy molds. Higbie has hundreds of molds in all different types and sizes, ranging from tiny chickens to big bunnies and baskets. "I collect molds everywhere I go," she said.

You don't have to buy molds, though. You can mold chocolate in things you have around the house. You could use a plate, for example, to make a chocolate plate to serve dessert. You could use mini-muffin pans to make chocolate cups for after-dinner liqueurs. When looking around the house for things to mold chocolate in, choose plastic because you can twist plastic and the chocolate is easier to remove once it sets.

Before you mold the chocolate, you can add nuts, crystals, or flavorings like peppermint or raspberry. "You can do whatever you want with chocolate. It's very versatile," Higbie says.

Chocolates can be made either solid or hollow. If you want to make a hollow bunny, pour chocolate into the mold and let the outside shell harden to the desired thickness, then pour out excess chocolate.

One nice thing you can do for Easter is to fill a large, hollow shape, such as a bunny or egg, with tiny molded chocolates or other candies. Make a hollow front and back of the shape of your choice and let it harden. Add whatever candies or treats you want to the middle, and then glue the front and back together using small quantities of the same shade of chocolate.

THE FUN PART, for Higbie, is painting and decorating the chocolates. Molds may be painted with colored chocolate before the milk, dark or white chocolate is poured in. Using a small paintbrush, you can paint different colors over different portions of the mold.

Higbie demonstrated using a chicken mold. She melted several different colors of chocolate in custard cups placed in warm water in a frying pan. Using the empty mold, she painted the feathers with yellow chocolate, the grass with green, and the beak with red. After the colored chocolate set (since it was a thin coating, it only took a few minutes), she filled the mold with milk chocolate and put it in the refrigerator to harden.

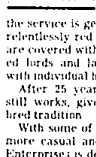
Another way to decorate chocolates is to paint molded chocolate after it has set. Instead of the smooth, glossy finish you get when you paint the mold first, the finish is rough and textured. Higbie likes the results. "It looks more realistic, not so smooth."

If you want to get really fancy, you can allow the colored chocolate to cool, to pipe on flowers, stars, or whatever shapes you can think of.

Food's all-American at Machus Red Fox



Chef Leopold of Machus Red Fox makes a flaming dessert, bananas Foster.



At odd moments, the craving for a certain brand of outdoor food overcomes us. We can't live another day without comfort food — good old expense-account-style American cuisine done best by places like Machus Red Fox in Bloomfield Township.

The menu favors beef, the white tablecloths are spotless, the service is generally faultless, and the decor is relentlessly red and horsey. The Red Fox's walls are covered with murals and pictures of red-coated lads and ladies in pre-and-post-hunt, along with individual horses.

After 25 years, the full-tilt hunt club setting still works, given Machus' solid food and well-bred tradition.

With some of the elite restaurants resorting to more casual and less expensive dining, Machus Enterprises is decidedly determined to hold on to the formal, exclusive — and expensive — end of the business. Its longtime customers like the tradition — the respectful service and the non-too-daring menu. Others see the Red Fox as a place to celebrate a special occasion, a place to be

pampered if only for a few hours. Indeed, if you don't feel like dressing for dinner, don't bother with the Red Fox. Suits and ties are a must.

EXPENSIVE IT IS, with lunch entrees averaging about \$13 (aside from the \$7.25 burger or sandwiches) and dinners priced in the \$30-\$35 range. With drinks, appetizers, desserts, coffee, the tab quickly runs much higher.

Although the management says that seafood entrees are most popular, the Red Fox offers more red meat than you can find almost anywhere other than a steak house. From Chateaubriand to London Broil, from sautéed tenderloin tips in Bordelaise sauce to Tournedos Oscar with bear-naise sauce, Machus knows how to treat beef right.

We found the Beef Pallard, sirloin that was pounded thin, seasoned (lightly) with pepper, grilled and topped with butter and crisp mushrooms to be well prepared and delicious. For a sweeter taste, an entree featuring a shrimp and leek sauce poured over beef medallions was good. Seafood entrees include excellent Dover Sole, broiled trout and the ever-popular cold water, broiled lobster tail, priced at \$32.50 for an 8-10-ounce tail. A dinner favorite is rack of lamb

cooked with herb-flavored bread crumbs. \$27.50. The Machus salad is a tradition of its own. A mixture of greens, it is always served icy, cold, tossed in the restaurant's special creamy and sweet salad dressing and topped with bleu cheese, bacon bits, purple onions, cherry tomatoes and a little fresh ground pepper. Delicious and distinctive.

MACHUS RED FOX • • •
6676 Telegraph, Bloomfield Township 626-4200

Hours: Monday-Wednesday 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday-Saturday 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m., Sunday, 4-8 p.m. Reservations accepted.
Prices: Lunch \$7.95-\$17.50, Dinner \$17.50-\$32.50. All major credit cards.

Value: Quite good, as long as you are prepared to pay as much for the ambience and service as for the food.

RATING GUIDE
★ Average (lots of places with similar quality)
★★ Good
★★★ Very good
★★★★ Excellent
★★★★★ Consistently superb — a rare honor