

taste buds
chef Larry
Janes

Ham it up Easter — and later

Anyone who thinks that the traditional Easter ham Momma prepared, studded in glory with cloves and dripping with a glaze of brown sugar and molasses was something "thrown together" hasn't visited a good butcher shop or deli lately.

Nowadays, consumers are faced with the choice of buying a ham either fresh or smoked, canned or country, sliced or boned, glazed or glazed, steak or built.

Barring game, pork is North America's oldest meat. Pigs came with the earliest settlers, and were set loose to fatten in the woods.

Most pork comes from pigs less than one year old, so the meat is naturally tender. Ham is a processed pork product. Smoked hams can be fully cooked, ready-to-cook or country style.

THE FULLY cooked ham can be simply heated and served cube it and throw a handful into the scalloped potatoes or enjoy a paper-thin slice slathered with mustard on a fresh slice of rye.

Ready-to-cook ham can be glazed, covered with pineapple and cloves and then slowly baked. These less costly varieties are generally cured by injecting brine into the blood vessels and then are lightly smoked over sawdust.

Country hams hail from the hills of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, and come complete with a strong smoky taste.

It's been said that beef is beef and pork is pork wherever they hail from, but a Virginia ham is about as different from most other hams as chalk is from cheese.

UNLIKE THE pinkish soft meat of ordinary hams, the truly aged Virginia ham has a rich mahogany color, is firm and highly flavored. To get even more technical, a Smithfield Virginia ham is one of the most prized hams in the world. Seems that a fellow by the name of Arthur Smith owned a big farm, and, because the soil was too poor for raising tobacco, he farmed peanuts.

The early settlers let their hogs roam wild and it didn't take them long to discover the richness and intense flavor came from hogs raised on peanuts.

If that wasn't enough, the curing process involving salt and slow smoking over smoldering hickory wood added the final touches that made this ham a favorite of Queen Victoria who was said to request 10 hams from every voyage from the New World upon their return.

IF ALL these different varieties and cuts haven't confused you, wait until you hear about the pork shoulder. A ham is a whole back leg of a pig, but a picnic ham comes from the shoulder. Add to this the Boston butt, which is really the remainder of the shoulder.

The muscles in the shoulder are separated by membranes and fatty tissue which makes the meat juicy and flavorful. The fact that it has the same uses as ham, but if you prefer your pork lean, you will prefer the meat from the ham. Boston butts are great for making sausage and grinding.

A good ham can be one of those dishes that grace an Easter buffet and can keep on giving all week long. Budget stretchers can use whole bone-in hams long after Easter has departed. A great budget stretcher that won't remind us of "loftover ham" is scalloped potatoes laced with ham chunks.

Another great budget stretcher is soups made of the ham bone, which should be simmered for hours with beans, onions and carrots. Leftover ham can be ground and tossed with pickle relish, mayonnaise and finely chopped onion for a great sandwich spread.

Imported and specialty hams can be expensive but never underestimate the cost-cutting abilities of preparing a whole ham or pork shoulder from a reputable market.

See recipes inside.



BILL BREGLER/staff photographer

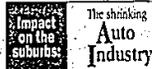
Pretty dishes, tablecloth and an Easter basket filled with colored eggs create a festive setting for a holiday brunch. Kristin Moran, 6, pours orange juice in glass garnished with a strawberry and orange slice to help her sister, Katelyn, 2, and mom, Bridget, get ready for company.

Brunch on a budget can be elegant

Editor's note: Weathering the recession worsened by the auto sales slump and planned closing of the Willow Run assembly plant in Ypsilanti, is not easy, but we'd like to help. Our series continues with ideas for brunch on a budget. Next week, we'll go shopping at a warehouse club.

By Ariens Funke
special writer

A delicious egg-and-sausage casserole accompanied by muffins and fresh fruit can be an economical, yet



festive, Easter brunch. "Brunch doesn't cost as much as dinner," said Bridget Moran of Canton Township. "You can set a real nice fancy table and feel really good."

Moran and her husband, Pat, are in their early 30s, with two daughters, ages 2 and 6 years. Moran has entertained both small

and large groups at brunch. The typical brunch period — late morning to early afternoon — is a time when both hosts and guests are fresh. "You accomplish a lot and you still have the rest of the day," Moran said.

BRUNCH CAN be economical because eggs and bread, the foundation for many brunch dishes, are cheap and plentiful.

A casserole with a little bit of meat can be stretched to serve many people. Sausage and bacon cost less than a fancy ham, a large turkey or a beef roast.

Holly Giannola, 34, of Farmington prepares a rich, oven-baked french toast when she has guests for brunch. Giannola's recipe called praline brunch toast, is made with eggs and thick-sliced bread. It is enriched with maple syrup, chopped pecans, butter and brown sugar.

"I cut it out of a newspaper a long time ago," Giannola said. "I like it because you do some of the preparations the night before."

The praline brunch toast has been a big hit with husband, Lance, and the couple's two sons, ages 7 and 10 years. Giannola has taken the dish to church functions as well.

While some people stick to breakfast fare, others branch out to other dishes, such as shrimp-and-rice casserole, or chicken in cream sauce.

Moran especially likes to serve a breakfast quiche, made with sausage, cheese and refrigerated crescent rolls. But she is flexible.

"IT'S ALWAYS whatever I am in the mood for," Moran said. "If I want to go 'all out' I fix shrimp. I have even had lasagna or macaroni and cheese."

The menu for this Easter brunch

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Spring for turkey meatloaf

Can we talk turkey, that is. Until recently, aside from Thanksgiving Day, this feathered fowl was served infrequently in most American homes. But that has all changed in the past few years as turkey has gobbled its way into the meat department.

Because turkeys are low in fat and calories, it is easy to understand why turkey producers jumped on the heart-healthy bandwagon and began to offer turkey in many different ways and for everyday meals, rather than exclusively for holiday fare. Whether roasted, grilled, sautéed or baked, turkey, in any form, is so good it makes you want to bow your head and give thanks.

This week's Winner Dinner, submitted by Ann Wassell of Livonia, offers a delicious, low-fat, low sodium menu that includes a favorite recipe for turkey meatloaf.

WASSELL HAS worked as a registered renal dietitian in the Kidney Center at Grace Hospital in Detroit for eight years. Married and the mother of two grown children, Wassell went back to school part-time for seven years while her children were in high school.

She earned her undergraduate degree in foods and nutrition at Madonna College in Livonia and then continued her studies at Eastern University where she received a master's degree and became certified as a registered dietitian.

During this busy period of her life, Wassell shuttled her children to and from soccer games, attended their school activities, studied hard and worked part time counseling diabetics for two and a half years at what was then called Mt. Carmel and has recently been renamed Grace Hospital.

Part of her job as a renal dietitian involves working with chronic, long-term dialysis clients who need to have an occasional reminder that



JIM JAGGELD/staff photographer

Ann Wassell's low-fat, low sodium springtime menu features turkey meatloaf, baby new potatoes, fresh asparagus, and a strawberry arbor for dessert.

low sodium food can be tasty and attractive.

Wassell offers the following tips: Eat regular meals, reduce the amount of fat, sugar and salt in your diet, get more fiber into your diet, eat a variety of foods, have your blood pressure checked regularly and if you have diabetes, be sure to closely monitor your blood sugar

level. Submit recipes to be considered for publication, to Winner Dinner, P.O. Box 3503, Birmingham, MI 48012.

All submissions become the property of the Observer and Eccentric Newspapers. Each winner receives an apron with the words, "Winner Dinner" on it.

RECIPES

TURKEY MEATLOAF

With only 160 calories and seven grams of fat per serving, this recipe is tasty and economical to make as well as heart healthy.

- 1 1/2 pounds ground turkey
- 2 eggs or equivalent amount of egg substitute
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup dry oatmeal
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper, or to taste
- 1 onion chopped, about 1/2 cup
- 1/2 cup chopped green pepper, optional
- 1-2 tablespoons dry parsley flakes

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix all the ingredients together. Pat into a greased loaf pan. Bake at 350 degrees for a 1/2 hour, add topping and bake an additional 1/2 hour.

TOPPING

- 1/2 cup catsup
 - 2 tablespoons brown sugar
 - 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
 - dash of onion
- Mix ingredients together and spread evenly over the meatloaf after the first 1/2 hour of baking time.

BABY NEW POTATOES

Wash the desired amount of small baby new potatoes. Place them in a covered casserole dish with a tablespoon of margarine and parsley, salt and pepper to taste.

Cover and bake alongside the meatloaf. Stir once during baking to distribute the margarine.

FRESH ASPARAGUS

Trim the woody ends of desired amount of asparagus spears.

Place in a steamer and cover and cook at medium-high heat for 5-7 minutes until the asparagus spears are tender but crisp.

FRESH STRAWBERRY SHERBET

From "The French Chef Cook Book" by Julia Child, this recipe offers a refreshing and colorful end to any meal.

- 2 quarts fresh strawberries, washed and hulled
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 egg whites
- 1 cup chilled, heavy cream

Puree the strawberries in a blender or food processor. Add the sugar and lemon juice, beat for a few minutes until the sugar has completely dissolved and no granules can be felt on the tongue.

Beat the egg whites in a separate bowl until they form soft peaks. Then beat into the strawberry puree. (Egg whites discourage large ice crystals from forming.)

Cover and freeze about four to five hours until the puree has almost set.

Beat vigorously with a wire whip for several minutes to break up ice crystals and to lighten the texture. Add the cream and beat just enough so that the mixture holds its shape in a spoon. Cover and freeze.