

MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 1992

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Summer the season to be sweet on corn

Mention summertime cooking and immediately you conjure up thoughts about corn. Plump, juicy sweet corn, dripping with butter. Whether it be steamed, boiled or grilled, corn is one of the delights of the summer season.

Corn is indigenous to America. When it comes to culinary heritage, corn belongs right up there next to old glory. During the 13th century in southwestern United States and in Mexico, corn or maize meant life itself, and the cultivation of corn was an act of worship. From birth through death, the economic, social and religious activities of the Hopi Indians of Arizona were bound to the growing of corn. No child could be born with security and survived the first 20 hazardous days of life without corn. For this reason, a special ear of corn was dedicated to each newborn baby as its "corn mother."

No one in Europe knew about corn until Columbus sailed to America in 1492. On Nov. 5, 1492, two Spaniards whom Columbus dispatched to explore the interior of Cuba returned with a report of "a sort of grain called maize which is very well tasted when boiled, roasted or made into a porridge."

Explorer's discovery

Later explorers to the new world found corn being grown by the Indians in all parts of America, from Canada to Chili. The Indians grew all the main types of corn that are raised today. They prized corn with colorful kernels — red, blue, pink and black or with bands, stripes or spots. The kernels ranged in size from as small as grain of wheat to as large as a quarter. The Indians frequently used corn patterns to decorate pottery, sculpture, and other works of art.

The colonists used corn as money; with it, they paid their rent, taxes and debts. They even traded corn for marriage licenses. In many settlements, corn kept people from starving in difficult times.

Although corn is grown throughout the United States, the greatest production is in an area of the Midwest called the "corn belt," consisting of the seven states of Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Ohio. This year, almost 5 billion bushels will be grown in this area alone.

Corn products

If this sounds like more corn than one could handle, figure that of the 94 assorted supermarket items that go into most grocery carts, over a quarter contain one or more ingredients from the corn processing industry. Not to mention the corn derived feed ingredients that are so important to our animal economy. Add to that the fact that many industrial products ranging from cast metals to automobile tires depend on the use of specially designed corn starches.

The Janes Gang is a frequent user of corn and its products. A week doesn't slide by without utilizing corn meal, canned or frozen corn, corn syrup, corn flakes, cornstarch or corn oil in our culinary regime. In addition, corn is used as the major fermenting ingredient when processing whiskey.

Corny memories

With summer winding down and corn prices dwindling as local markets reap locally grown products, you'll be seeing corn soon at the familiar dollar per dozen price. At those prices, it would behoove the price watching cook to take advantage of this pricing boom and to "put some up" whether it be canned or frozen to enjoy throughout the upcoming winter months. Don't forget to use those husks and cobs in the compost heap!

Growing up in Wyandotte, corn was a frequent staple in the Janes Gang household. Momma utilized corn in everything from simple side dishes to hearty soups. One of the dishes that is most memorable was her stewing muskrat in corn in the old Nesco roaster for dad. Although us kids never were interested in sampling it, the corned muskrat was usually supplemented with hot dogs. The family cottage was right off Pointe Pelee and I can remember taking walks between swims to local farmers right down the road who grow and sold fresh corn to the Heinz factory in Leamington.

I would hand the weathered farmer a dollar bill and with "ah" and a grocer bag in tow, we would venture into the fields where the corn was twice as tall as us and fill the bag in minutes with fresh corn on the cob.

Dinner that night was corn in its true and simple form, dripping with oleomargarine. Ah, those were the days!

Don't allow summer to slip past your kitchen without enjoying the great taste of corn.

See recipes inside.



Michigan sampler: Made with pride, Michigan's small food producers make their products in small batches using only the freshest ingredients. Here is a sampling of food products made by companies who belong to the newly formed Michigan Specialty Food Manufacturer's Association. Products compliments of Merchant of Vino, Birmingham

By KEELY WYGNONIK
STAFF WRITER

In the Houlihan's Culinary Traditions Ltd. kitchen, Caroline watches her mom Elaine like an eagle. Elaine cooks like her Italian mother did, with her hands and eyes.

Not a problem if you're cooking for one, but a big one if you're cooking for the masses.

"We're standardizing all our recipes," said Elaine Houlihan of Bloomfield Hills who started Houlihan's Culinary Traditions Ltd. about 2 1/2 years ago. Houlihan's, based in Auburn Hills, makes preserves, applesauce, pasta, tomato pasta sauces and olive oil pasta sauces. The Italian gourmet products are under the name Elena's.

When they were making a new line of Elena's olive oil pasta sauces with fresh herbs, Caroline stopped her mom to weigh ingredients, so if push came to shove, she could get the orders out on time.

"The time came. Mom had to fly to New York unexpectedly when her mother became ill. Caroline and her siblings who help out at the family business, made the sauce and got the orders out.

This kind of attention to detail, quality, and caring make Michigan food products special.

"Most of us are family owned businesses," said Elaine Houlihan. "We're giving the country the absolutely best quality. We don't know any different."

Businesses like theirs are growing

Made with PRIDE Made in MICHIGAN



Made by families like yours, Michigan specialty food manufacturers like Elaine Houlihan of Bloomfield Hills, are gaining a reputation for outstanding products. "We're giving the country the absolutely best quality," she said. "We don't know any different."

and starting up everyday. Houlihan's employs 10 people. Caroline, a graduate of Michigan State University, is her mother's assistant and takes care of marketing. Her sister Jill, who earned a bachelor's degree in finance, and now attends Detroit College of Law, takes care of the books. Her brother John who will be attending Oakland University in the fall to study education, helps out in the summer.

Last year, Elaine Houlihan started the Michigan Specialty Food Manufacturer's Association to promote and help manufacturers of specialty foods in Michigan.

To be eligible for membership in the

association, companies must be in business at least six months and have six wholesale accounts. Membership is \$125 a year. For membership information, call Michele Marshall of Mucky Duck Mustard Company at (313) 683-5750.

Many of the people who started these companies did so with encouragement from family and friends who raved about their products. Besides Houlihan's here are the other charter members.

Michaelene Hearn makes gourmet granola. She's contributing a portion of the profits from her Rain Forest Gatherings, a granola made with pu-

paya, pineapple, mango, banana chips, cashews and Brazil nuts to the preservation of rain forests.

Celiarose Varner (Celia's Sweets) began making pizzelles (an Italian cookie) 10 years ago when her mother-in-law gave her a pizzelle maker. Now her daughter, son, and husband help her make 10,000 pizzelles a week.

Jack and Kristin Trabue of Word of Mouth Foods in Plymouth developed their business from their small butcher shop in Plymouth. They began to sell their pasta sauce in the shop, and customers bought it, and told their friends to do the same. The company also makes barbecue sauce and seasonings.

Judy McKinnel of Wenchow, Ltd. makes Jerbel Sauce, a sweet hot sauce, hot chili mustard, natural herbal vinegars, herbal blend and mulling spices.

First cousins Jacquie Ridley and Gail Jacob started making tea breads for Jackie's husband at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle. Soon a wholesale business developed. In 1990, they bought a retail muffin shop and developed muffin chips, available in six flavors, and distributed across the United States.

Michele Marshall of the increasingly famous Mucky Duck Mustard Co. in Franklin uses a family recipe to make Mucky Duck Mustard. She recently published a cookbook with 170 recipes. With the exception of the first chapter of all chocolate desserts, each dish is made with Mucky Duck Mustard. The cookbook is available at Merchant of Vino in Birmingham and Troy. See recipes inside.

Innovative wineries toast of our state

FOCUS ON WINE



ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

Selections:

- L. Mawby Blanc de Blancs \$15
- '90 St. Julian Chambourcin \$11
- '91 Good Harbor Vinyards Pinot Gris \$12
- '91 Leclanau Cellars Tall Ship Reserve Chardonnay \$13
- '91 Fern Valley Gewurztraminer \$3

It's not status quo in Michigan's most progressive and innovative wineries. Even the national press recognizes this. Earlier this year, "The Wine Spectator," America's most widely-read wine periodical, mentioned St. Julian Wine Company as one of the best wineries outside California in an article discussing wine across America.

Singled out for special mention were St. Julian's 1990 Barrel-Fermented Chardonnay (\$14), 1989 Chambourcin (\$10.75) and Solera Cream Sherry (\$13.80). Barrel-fermented chardonnay is a new wine for St. Julian and the 1991 available now is in very limited supply.

Solera Cream Sherry from St. Julian was cited in "USA Today" as one of the best tastes of the region and one of the best wines made in the United States. Since its debut in 1975, this sherry has garnered 28 gold medals and brought a national reputation to the winery.

"I'm conservative," St. Julian's President David Bragonni said. "When I was a little kid, I wasn't the first one to jump into the water. The American palate is geared to a more sophisticated style of chardonnay,



STEPHENS CASTRELLI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Wine selections: Several Michigan wines were singled out for special mention.

and we can make that style from grapes grown in southwest Michigan in the Lake Michigan Shore appellation."

"To meet the growing demand for Michigan chardonnay, St. Julian is planting a national acreage. Bragonni also wants to plant more Cabernet sauvignon won't ripen in our climate," he maintains.

In our opinion, the best sparkling wine in the state is produced by Larry Mawby at L. Mawby Winery in Suttons Bay. The 1986 Bien de Village (\$30), a sparkling blend of 70 percent pinot noir and 30 percent pinot gris is a classically produced rendition with toasty and yeasty notes over cherry-like fruit. It's creamy and delicious with all the style and elegance of a rich French champagne.

A bargain at \$15 is Blanc de Blancs, the other bubbly from Mawby. Produced for 52 percent sylvan, 37 percent vignoles and 11 percent chardonnay, it's lighter and crisper than the Bien de Village. In a blind tasting of world-class Blanc de Blancs, this wine would show at the top.

Mawby's innovations are showcased in his 1991 Pinot Gris (\$10.20) from 100 percent estate-grown grapes. Also 100 percent barrel fermented, this wine was aged on the lees for added complexity. It is in limited production and represents the very best in Michigan winemaking.

Doug Welch, winemaker for his family's Fern Valley Vineyards in Fennville, is excited about a new grape named chardonnay resulting from the cross of sylvan by chardonnay originating at the New York State Agriculture Experiment Station in Geneva. The 1991 Fern Valley Chardonnay (\$9) is a good rendition and shows much promise for the future.

Also impressive is the 1991 Fern Valley Gewurztraminer (\$9) full of floral spice with a delicate palate impression.

The ever-gregarious Bill Skolnik, winemaker at Leclanau Cellars in Omens has pulled out all stops with reserve-style chardonnay and two new blends named Via a Vis.

See WINERIES, 2B