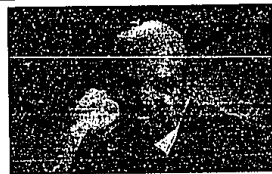


TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Fork-tender stew hearty winter meal

Invited some good friends over last weekend, and while on the phone extending the invite, was asked the usual "what are you preparing?"

When I responded "stew," the phone went silent for what seemed to be forever. Let's face it, most folks don't go to a chef's house to sashay.

But the stewing rage is resurfacing again. Personally speaking, I can't say I remember it sinking. The James Gang was raised on stew. Later on, in cooking school, stew was called ragout, paprikash and goulash. Now again, "stew" seems to be the proper colloquial term to identify a savory blend of potatoes, vegetables and the most tender meat you can sink your teeth into.

Think about it — what else can be made ahead, reheated, mistreated and still come out tasting lovely? Most folks think that just because stew is so reliable that it doesn't belong on the tables of the food connoisseur. To them I say — "let them eat liver!"

Momma's method

Momma used to get out the old pressure cooker and precook an English blade cut roast that couldn't have set her back more than about \$2 then, and with a few vegetables and potatoes, and the best bread-soakin gravy ever, a hearty meal was offered to all.

Some nights we dined "fancy style" and served the stew over rice or noodles. My fiancé was when she made a pie crust and wrapped the stew in pastry for what we would thankfully call a "shepherd's pie."

The French are noted for their excellence in stew making. Their process utilizes two main French ingredients that have fallen by the wayside in this day of microwave and boxed cake mixes, namely — wine and time.

While interesting herbs and spices, fresh vegetables and the discreet use of wine can make a fabulous stew, the true success lies solely in the method of cooking. A stew that has boiled on high power with as much agitation as a washing machine will cook no faster than one gently urged on the simmer setting.

Everyone knows that boiled meat will prove to be tough and stringy and the gravy will be muddy with the flavors "boiled out."

Always simmer with wine for several hours so that the true taste of the vino can "marry" the remaining flavors into a rich, happy family.

Of course, other liquids can be used for braising, such as beer, cider, broth and fresh vegetable juices.

The right pot

Now, I'm not talking crock-pot cookery here folks, however, such an electric preparation is acceptable when you just can't get your hands on a big, old, heavy cast iron Dutch oven.

Le Creuset makes an affordable enameled cast iron Dutch oven that not only makes the best stews but can double for just about anything from a casserole to a soup pot. Smaller families or singles can even cook great stew in ovenproof casseroles like Pyrex. The secret here is keeping it covered so that all the flavors and juices stay intact.

When preparing stew, a "skin" that usually forms on the top of the pot while cooking can be removed. Allowing a large pot to simmer for hours will not only produce this so-called "skin" but also will surface an oil or greasy slick.

A heavy ladle or bent ovensized kitchen spoon works best to remove this without the overmixing that could turn a tender pot of stew into barbecue helper.

Thickening stews

When it comes to thickening, I personally don't feel the need to make everything as thick as 20W 50 motor oil. Some people like a substantial sauce and use a roux to accomplish this.

Mamma sufficed with dissolving flour in milk and whisking through a sieve so as not to get any lumps. I guess if it was truly necessary, I would thicken the stew with some cooked, pureed vegetables or incorporate the silky-rich taste of cream and egg yolks.

Whatever your preference, fork-tender meat and vegetables in a luscious sauce can be an easy accomplishment to a busy cook.

And the only way to serve a homemade stew is with some crusty bread that is ripped apart with the hands rather than sliced by a machine.

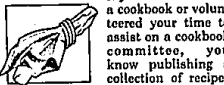
I like those inexpensive baguettes from some of the major grocery store's bakeries that are brushed with an egg white, then sprinkled with salt and warmed in the oven until crisp on the outside yet still flaky tender on the inside.

See Larry Janes' family-tested recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1888.

TEEN HAS APPETITE FOR healthy food

It's the new year, and a lot of people are resolving to eat healthier foods this year. High school senior Amy Underwood will help you get started.

By GERRI RINSCHLER
SPECIAL WRITER



If you've ever written a cookbook or volunteered your time to assist on a cookbook committee, you know publishing a collection of recipes is no easy task. Now picture yourself in high school, captain of the varsity women's tennis team, member of the lacrosse team, editor of the school yearbook, an all-around busy teenager and publishing a cookbook. Well, in the summer that's exactly what Amy Underwood of Birmingham, a senior at Detroit Country Day School, accomplished.

"The No Red Meat Cookbook — a low fat approach to healthy eating," was not a project which Amy took lightly.

"I'm into healthy eating and I love to cook," she said. These are two good reasons for writing a cookbook, but Underwood was also looking for a project that was fun and worthwhile.

Independent of her family, she made a decision to start cooking red meat while in the sixth grade after learning that a dear friend of her dad's had died of a heart attack.

Her dad's friend loved "junk food," she said. The experience redefined her lifestyle.

I stopped eating red meat and ice cream lessened my intake of fatty foods. I ate more fruits and vegetables and read lots of literature on eating healthy."

As she researched, she kept her family informed of the latest information on eating healthy.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Cookbook author: Amy Underwood, a senior at Detroit Country Day School, features healthy dishes like Black Beans and Rice in the newly published "Eat No Red Meat Cookbook."

In the forward of her cookbook, she credits her Mom, Linda, who encouraged her to cook when she was young.

"She has inspired me to create new and different recipes while finding healthier alternatives for others," she said. As you page through the book, you'll notice contributions from a number of Underwood's extended family.

"My relatives have spent hours looking for old family recipes."

All of the recipes in the book have been tested, and with the assistance of a friend, Tammy Dowd, a nutritionist, include calculated nutrition information.

The calorie, fat, protein and carbohydrate calculations included with each recipe were based on Jean A. T.

Pennington's Food Values of Portions Commonly Used, nutritional information from food product labels, and the computer software program "Diet Analyzer 2.0.1," by Natural Software Limited.

The recipes focus on poultry, fish and dried beans as tasty alternatives to red meat. She says the Cream of Carrot Soup is her favorite and suggests East Indian Chicken Curry and Confetti Cheese Ravioli to folks buying her book.

Not every recipe is low-fat, and they can, for the most part, be found in the dessert chapter. Because of her interest in children, she selected the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation as the beneficiary of proceeds from the sale of the book. The book is available at a

variety of stores including Borders Bookstore in Ann Arbor, Birmingham and Novi, Barnes and Noble in Rochester, and the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation in Southfield. She will be signing books: noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30 in the kitchen shop at Jacobson's in downtown Birmingham. The book costs \$12.

Linda Davero, a registered dietitian at St. Mary Hospital in Livonia is enthused about high school students like Underwood taking a serious interest in healthy eating.

But on the flip side, she is concerned about the increasing number of eating disorders.

See TEEN, 2B

Gourmet cuisine-to-go shop is dream come true

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Dreams do come true, if you believe in them, and work to make them happen. Such is the story of husband and wife team Anastasio "Tasso" and Carol Bozadzis of Farmington Hills who opened Tasso Epicurean Cuisine, Inc. in November 1991.

The gourmet cuisine-to-go shop at 6887 Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield has been successful, and Tasso is thinking about his next projects.

"I would like to write a cookbook with recipes for flavorful dishes made with healthy, natural foods, and develop my own cooking school to train chefs to work in exclusive restaurants," he said.

Bozadzis is a dreamer, and a doer. Born in Greece, he moved to the United States and studied chemical engineering at Wayne State University in Detroit.

"I've been cooking since I was four," he said.

"This was the long-term goal: Get an education, become independent, and open my own business." His job took him, his wife, Carol, and their youngest son, Christopher, to Saudi Arabia for 8 1/2 years. "In Saudi Arabia the only form of entertainment was to entertain friends at home. We offered cooking classes, and would have a sit down meal afterward," they said.

Shortly after, Tasso decided to pursue the Grand Diplôme from Le Cordon Bleu Ecole de Cuisine et de Pâtisserie in Paris. Carol also attended Le Cordon Bleu and studied patisserie (pastry) cuisine.

With their training completed, the couple moved back to the metro Detroit area, and began making plans to open their own shop.

"We prepare food here the way we do at home — something nice without being expensive," said Carol Bozadzis.

The menu reflects Tasso's Greek heritage and features new versions of French and continental dishes such as Spinach Cheese pie, Tarte Provencale, Chicken Dijon and Vegetarian Moussaka.

There are also a variety of dishes that have been authored by Henry Ford Hospital as "Healthy Smart," including black bean salad, lentil salad,



DAN DEAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Epicurean cuisine: Carol and Anastasio "Tasso" Bozadzis present Vegetable/Basil French Tart, Mosaic of Vegetables and Rice Royale, available at their shop.

and Orange Roughy baked with fresh tomato, vegetables and herbs.

With its European café atmosphere, marble topped tables, and wrought iron bistro chairs for those who can't wait to sample the delicious entrees, salads, and pastries, Tasso is gaining a reputation for quality food. They cater weddings and parties, and have participated in numerous area fund-raising events. Store hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays. For information, call 599-0110.

Family:

Tasso and Carol have two grown sons. Nicholas lives in New York and attends the Rochester Institute of Technology. Christopher attends Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills, and helps out part-time at the shop.

What's a normal dinner at your house?

"We eat a lot of fruits and vegetables, and combinations of seafood. For dinner we might have chicken breast with a nice sauce, salad and a glass of wine," said Tasso.

Cooking philosophy

"Food is one of the most pleasant experiences. We associate it with pleasant events, gatherings with close friends and family. Food shows the character of the individual. It's a way of expressing your feelings," said Tasso.

What's your favorite food?

"I like bouillabaisse," said Tasso. "It's excellent."

How have food tastes changed?

"People are asking how much oil, cheese, butter. People are more knowledgeable about food and choosy," said Tasso.

Cooking advice

"Utilize products that Mother Nature gives us without any artificial flavors. Everything is available. Leave the imagination free to develop the flavors of food."

See recipe inside. Tasso said his "Blanc De Turbot Aux Aronnes" (Filet of Sole with Aromatic Vegetables) is an excellent dish that's low in fat. Yet it's very tasty so you wouldn't think you were dieting.