

MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 1993

# TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

## Cooking with soul on the newest holiday

Stuck with the midwinter blahs? Maybe it's time you ventured into the kitchen for some creative cooking. Why not do some cooking with soul in honor of one of our lesser known national holidays, Martin Luther King Day on Jan. 18?

Soulful cookbook

I can't think of a better reason to try out some recipes from "Sylvia's Soul Food" by Sylvia Woods and Christopher Styler, (Hearst Books, 1992, New York, \$17). Ample warning: This is no diet food cookbook.

If you've ever been to New York or possibly read Gael Greene in the New York Times, you've probably heard of Sylvia Woods, also known as the "Queen of Soul Food."

Woods has been barbecuing, smothering, baking and frying New York City's legendary soul food for 30 years in her world famous Harlem restaurant. You have to understand that I'm a big fan of the locally produced Steve's Soul Food restaurant on Grand River in Detroit, but being a Yankee from Wyandotte, I've tried to prepare lip-tingling ribs, sweet potato pie and greens with minimal success.

That is, until I got a copy of "Sylvia's Soul Food" within finger-lickin' reach of my kitchen stove. Before now, I had to rely on a takeout from Steve's.

Comfort food

The simple term "soul food" conjures up stick-to-your-ribs delicacies like fried chicken, corn bread, black-eyed peas and cobbler.

Even though we never called it as such, momma could whip up a batch of fried chicken, giblet gravy and biscuits as light as a cloud faster than you could clean a chitlin'.

We called it "comfort food," but little did I know that it was nothing short of good old down home cooking. This down-to-earth cookbook featuring recipes that lack the necessities of a Cuisinart is a sure to inspire and give new meaning to your basic corn bread, fried chicken and steamed lima beans.

You don't have to be a fan of "soul food" to enjoy this book; simply reading the recipes for secret ingredients like cane syrup instead of pancake syrup will certainly add new dimensions to what you and I love to eat — just good old basic food, simply prepared and served with love.

Preparation tips

And if the so-called secret ingredients won't tempt you, you'll certainly enjoy the preparation tips like rubbing down your ribs and pots with salt, pepper and crushed red pepper and then allowing them to sit overnight in the refrigerator to develop a flavor all their own.

There's even a recipe for barbecue sauce that uses a 16-ounce bottle of Red Devil Hot Sauce (I tried the recipe and my lips tingled for a week!) that recommends never boiling or the sauce will turn dark and thin out.

If you're thinking of expanding your kitchen repertoire to include some great soul food the book is a must-have, but there are local soul food aficionados that do a pretty remarkable job.

Sweet potato

In addition to Steve's restaurant in Detroit, you can check out a company called Sweet Potato Sensations in Detroit, 532-7996.

I met the owner at a recent cooking demonstration in Rosedale Park. She sells her family secret sweet potato pie, cookies and sweet potato cheesecake at the Western Market, the Char-Broiler and the Majestic Market in Southfield, and Savon Super Foods in Detroit.

Cassandra Taylor, who dubs herself the Detroit area's sweet potato sensation, wouldn't share her secret recipe, but rumor has it that it's relatively close to the one in Sylvia Woods' cookbook.

Good soul food restaurants are virtually non-existent in the suburbs, and if you haven't yet tried Steve's in Detroit, you might also want to check out the New Detroler on Jefferson between downtown and Bello Isle.

Good ribs are available at the Bone Yard locally, but if you're looking for something to really tickle your lips and reek of soul, it's worth the drive to Steve's or the New Detroler.

Kitchen folk who are looking for soul-food-like alternatives for Martin Luther King Day can easily whip up a batch of corn bread, macaroni and cheese, and steamed greens. All of which are great accompaniments to traditional soul food dishes.

See recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry Janes, dial 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mail box number 1888.



## CELEBRATE THE YEAR OF THE ROOSTER

Join the party; celebrate Chinese New Year. Cook Chinese food at home, or eat out at area restaurants which are planning special dinners.

By KEELY WYGONIK  
STAFF WRITER



Most of us are taking down holiday decorations, but area Chinese-Americans are unpacking theirs to celebrate the new year. Join the party, celebrate the Year of the Rooster at area restaurants which are planning special dinners and events Jan. 22 to Jan. 30.

Unlike our New Year's Eve which is always Dec. 31, the Chinese New Year, based on the lunar calendar, is celebrated on the first day of the first moon, which is different every year.

According to the Chinese zodiac, the current lunar year is the Year of the Rooster," said Yin-Fen Pao of Farmington Hills. "Before the Western calendar was transmitted into China, the lunar calendar predominated Chinese people's life. For Chinese farmers, the lunar calendar was used as a guide for sowing and harvesting."

Each of the 12 years of the Chinese Zodiac falls under a different animal sign.

"Each animal in the Chinese zodiac has its own character and personality. A certain year of birth picks up the certain animal in the zodiac, and thus assumes the distinctive traits of that particular animal," said Pao.

People born under the sign of the Rooster — 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981 and 1993 — seek wisdom and truth. They have a pioneering spirit.

"The person born in the Year of



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

New Year fare: Jack Dai and Linda Parker of Hunan Palace show crispy whole fish, a traditional Chinese New Year dish. Other dishes on the table include sesame beef (left to right), crispy shrimp, sesame shrimp and General Tsou's chicken.

the Rooster should be a person of steadiness," said Pao. "The rooster is regarded as a symbol of luck and auspice."

Marco Chin of Mon Jin Lau Restaurant in Troy said that people born during the Year of the Rooster are hard workers, shrewd, and definite in decision making, often speaking their mind.

If you guessed this is a good year to set new routines, and resolve to be on time, you're right.

"In China, the new year celebration is just like Christmas is here," said Shen Yu of New Peking Restaurant in Garden City. "People are off work for two weeks. Family and friends get together and visit. The children receive money in red envelopes."

lopes. Red means good luck."

Before the feasting and celebrating there is much work to be done. "We pry our bills, and take care of problems so everyone can relax, and get off to a good start in a brand new year," said Linda Parker of Hunan Palace in Farmington Hills.

All sweeping and cleaning must be done before the holiday. "To sweep after the new year begins is to risk sweeping away good fortune," said Chin.

"My mother and grandmother would cook for three days to get ready," said Parker. "The family gathered for dinner around a round table. There would always be special foods like whole fish that you don't cook everyday. You must have whole fish at a traditional Chinese New Year dinner. It means good wishes for the new year, and good things to last forever."

The crispy whole fish prepared for Chinese New Year dinners by Chef Jack Dai at Hunan Palace is a feast for the eyes and palate, and a lot of work to make.

Dai, who has more than 20 years of experience, debones a whole grouper, reassembles it to look like a whole fish, and cooks it. Served with a sauce, the fish is crunchy on the outside and moist inside. You don't have to worry about biting into a bone because there aren't any.

If you want to learn more about Chinese New Year celebrations, here are two options to consider.

The Chinese American Educational and Cultural Center of Michigan is hosting a Chinese New Year Festival, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 23 at Oceania Inn Restaurant, 68 N. Adams, Rochester Hills.

There will be more than 50 types of Chinese cuisine, workshops and cooking demonstrations, food sculpture.

See RISE, 2B

## Check label to see who imported wine

FOCUS ON WINE



ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

This may be the most important bottle information attached to the label or the neckband.

Over the years, we've come to respect the knowledge of Robert Haas and his son Dan at Vineyard Brands in Chester, Vt. Bob Haas made his first trip to France to select wine in 1984.

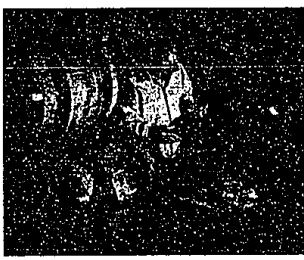
"When I visit in spring, the smell of the smoke coming from the burning vine prunings in the vineyards of Burgundy remind me of how some things have not changed," he said.

"Many things have changed, however," said Dan Haas, who now selects the Burgundies imported by Vineyard Brands. "The economies of grape-farming in Burgundy have improved dramatically in the last decade, and the purchase price of a grand cru vineyard has escalated to a million dollars for a 2.50-acre parcel. There was something slightly off about each of the better vintages in the decade of the 1980s, but 1990 may be described as a perfect vintage. Buy 1990 or don't buy red Burgundy."

With the high cost of land in Burgundy, many producers are overcropping and we believe there's a

WINE SELECTIONS OF THE WEEK

Available in this area about Feb. 1 are the latest introductions from Vineyard Brands. Marquis de Chasse (red and white) are the new wines from the Bordeaux proprietors Chateau Chasse-Spleen. The red is a blend of 65% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot and 5% other varietals. The white is 60% semillon and 40% sauvignon blanc. Both tasty pours retail around \$7 to \$8.



VINEYARD BRANDS

Wine importer: Robert Haas of Vineyard Brands inspects wine in the cellars at Domaine Trapet in the heart of Burgundy, France.

lot of high-priced junk on the market masquerading as top-quality 1990 Burgundy. Recently, we tasted 11 estate-bottled red Burgundies imported by Vineyard Brands. All the wines were superior to exceptional and worth your consideration.

Look for the following Domaines: Mongard-Mugneret, Trapet Pere et Fils, Rossignol-Trapet, Henri Gouges, Joseph Matrot, Jean-Marc Boillot, Pierre Bitouzet and Eneane Sautet. Expect the starting price of the best estate-bottled Burgundies to be around \$25. They quickly escalate to between \$50 and \$100.

How can you tell the Burgundy is estate-bottled and not a negotiant wine? In addition to the French phrase "mis en bouteille au (or par) domaine," the words *proprietaire* or *proprietaire-recallant* must be on the label. The translation is "bottled at (or by) the property" with the additional words roughly meaning "by the owner" or "by the winemaker."

"In a great vintage such as 1990, the terroir (a French word denoting the sum total of site, soil and microclimatic influence) is showcased and more pronounced differences are evident among the specific sites," said Haas. "The wines have deep color and supple fruit; they are drinking well now, but will also age well for 10 to 20 years."

Cloverleaf Market in Southfield sells more estate-bottled Burgundies than any other retailer in the nation. Jim Lutfy of the Cloverleaf agrees with Haas' assessments.

"Negotiant Burgundies carry the stamp of the producer," he said. "Among negotiant bottlings, there's very little taste differences between a Fom-

See CHECK, 2B