

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1993

TASTE

B

TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JAMES

Make friends, bread
with sourdough starter

It bubbles contentedly in the refrigerator, needs a steady diet of sugar or flour and an occasional stir. It is often called by name. No, it's not the furry mold growing on top of the holiday leftovers hiding in back of the fridge. It's sourdough bread starter. Just a cup of it often starts a great chain of great friends and great breads.

Sourdough starter is dough in which free yeast has begun to grow. Wild yeast spores flourish in the air around us, and if given a comfortable medium in which to live warm water, flour, sugar, potato flakes — they will multiply and produce a distinctive sour, winy taste faster than 2-week-old tuna.

Then if the starter is placed in the refrigerator for three to 10 days, it will develop an even better flavor.

Why this trouble when yeast comes readily available in everything from a small package to hermetically sealed jars?

Once starter is used for baking bread and cakes, the user usually gets hooked on pleasantly sharp tastes and rich textures never enjoyed before.

And because starters must be fed and used, the "owner" routinely has to bake bread and share it or measure out a cupful and pass it along to someone.

American tradition

Let's face it, giving food has long been a cherished American tradition.

Bread starter is one of those quirky food lots that will never be seen in a grocery store shelf. The only place in town that I know that carries starter is someone who has starter — you either use it or lose it.

Replenishing starter with added stock is always acceptable, but it gets to the point very quickly that as the starter grows, so will its holding vessel. Since only about one cup is needed per recipe, weekly additions grow fast. It would be nothing to end up with 18 cups of starter after just a few weeks.

By the way, there are starter mixes available, but as anyone who has starter knows, it's much cheaper to start the starter yourself than to buy prepackaged mixes that will end up taking the same amount of time.

Basic recipes

There are a wide and varied selection of basic starter recipes from which to choose. Probably the most well known is the classic sourdough starter that can turn a basic white bread into a San Francisco treat.

A second close favorite is a recipe called Herman starter that is slightly sweeter than the traditional sourdough starter.

Then there's the version of a gourmet Herman starter that with a few additions, makes the basics for a friendship cake starter whose tradition calls for passing along a jar of starter with the cake.

For the uninitiated, cultivating a batch of starter requires little skill, but ardent timing.

Secret tips

One of the secrets that I have discovered when making starter is to use a crock or glass Mason-type jar rather than metallic or plastic bowls.

Wooden spoons are a must as the starter just hates being touched by any kind of metal. Starter enthusiasts boast that a good starter is white and has a sharp yeasty smell and is filled with tiny bubbles.

If the starter is grayish or yellowish, the flour was too soft and pro's recommend the use of a harder flour, something like a good durum wheat.

Yours truly thinks starter has a yeasty odor but some rookie baker might think the smell is closer to rotten. Forget the smell as it all bakes out during the baking process.

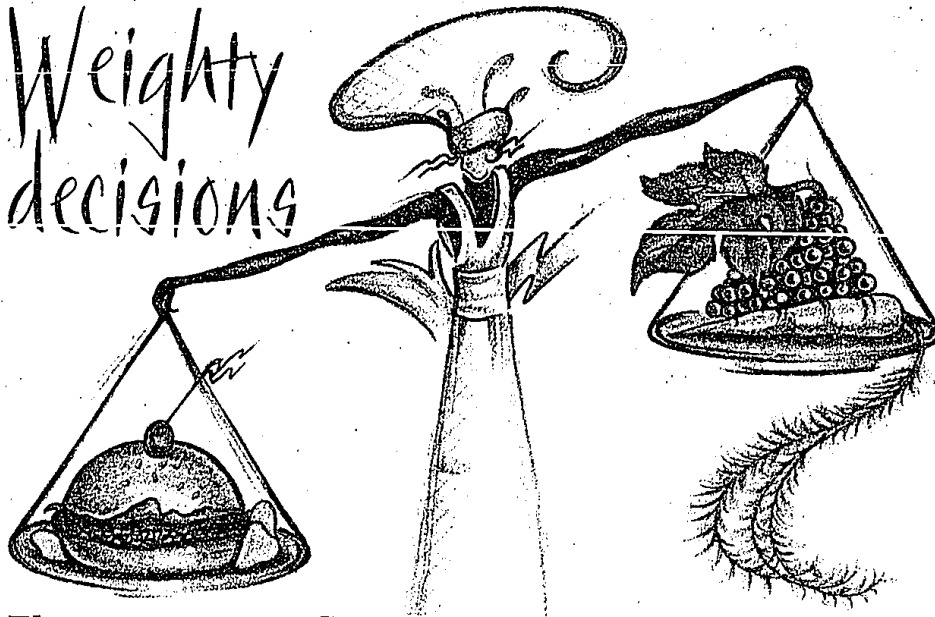
Starter is best when made five to 10 days in advance. It does freeze well although in all honesty, half the fun is making it and watching it grow. It you have kids, make a science lesson out of it and delegate the authority to make additions and for stirring daily.

If the starter is not stirred, a yeast type mold may form on the top after 48 hours.

If you do intend to start a starter and find yourself with too much, raw starter has been known to keep a septic tank working properly when flushed down a toilet on a monthly basis.

But trust me on this one folks, once you taste the sharpness in your basic bread and cakes, you won't want to stop using it. Bon Appetit!

See Larry James' family-tested recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1886.

Weighty
decisionsFlex your muscles
to take pounds off

Stop putting it off. Lose those extra pounds before bathing-suit weather begins. You can do it. Flex your muscles, make the weighty decisions that will help you take pounds off. Learn how to cut calories in your diet.



Anne Meek

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Saying goodbye to fatty friends — ice cream, bacon and eggs, potato chips, butter, fast foods, candy bars, and juicy steaks is difficult. They comfort us when we're feeling blue, satisfy hunger when we don't have time to eat — and taste good too.

Choosing low-fat foods over fatty ones isn't easy, unless you've got a pretty good reason.

Dick Perry of Birmingham began changing his eating habits after he had open-heart surgery in 1990. Turning 40 motivated Karen Kopke of Beverly Hills to lose 40 pounds. Anne Meek of Southfield was very overweight, 184 pounds, a tight size 18, when she started making the weighty decisions that changed her life.

"For me it was sheer vanity," said Meek, who does fitness testing and screening at the Birmingham YMCA, and lost 60 pounds. "I wanted to get a guy, and I knew I never would because I was 20 and

HEALTHY SUBSTITUTES

Instead of ...	Use ...
1 ounce baking chocolate	3 T cocoa and 1 T polyunsaturated oil
Flour for thickening soups and stews	Dry instant potato flakes
Cracker crumbs for topping or breading	Wheat germ
1 cup regular mayonnaise	1 cup plain low-fat yogurt
1 cup sour cream	1 cup plain low-fat yogurt or 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese, blended
1 cup whipping cream	2/3 cup chilled evaporated milk, whipped
1 egg	2 egg whites
1 cup cream cheese	1 cup low-fat cottage cheese blended with 1/4 cup margarine
Buttermilk	Low-fat plain yogurt in equal amounts

very overweight. I started to cut back on fats. It's easy — you know you shouldn't eat french fries. Then I started exercising."

Her efforts worked. Today, Meek is a size 8, slim and trim, someone people look up to for inspiration. She is married, and the mother of a 9-year-old son. In addition to her screening duties at the Y, she teaches "Easy Does It," a fitness class for seniors.

Meek also helps people skim the fat from their favorite recipes with the help of an IBM compatible computer software program called "Health and Pro Diet," by Digital Systems Research, Inc. She uses the computer to analyze diets to help people cut calories.

The software is being revised, and isn't currently available on the market. There is a similar program, "Diet Pro" by Lifestyle Software Group. It's available for \$39.99 at Egghead Software which has stores in Livonia, Southfield and Troy.

If you want, Meek will analyze your recipes and diet at the Birmingham YMCA, 400 E. Lincoln, Birmingham. The cost for Birmingham YMCA members is \$4 per recipe, \$15 for diet analysis; non-members \$5 per recipe, and \$20 for diet analysis. For information, call Meek at the Y, 644-9036, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Meek can help you reduce the amount of fat in your diet, but she says there's really no secret to losing weight — it takes motivation, and discipline. Dick Perry, and his wife Winnie will be married 48 years in August. They were in pretty good shape before Dick had open heart surgery. Dick, retired from a career in financial planning, coached collegiate fencing for 50 years at the University of Detroit. He teaches economics part time.

Winnie loves to cook, and has been diet conscious all her life. Her mother is 101½. "I was one of five kids. It was my mother's nature not to

See WEIGHTY, 2B

Take the plunge, cook fish for dinner



BETSY BRETHEN

We've come a long way from frozen fish sticks as heightened interest in eating "light" has resulted in increased sales and improved selection at fish markets.

Yet many people hesitate to prepare fish at home, fearing that it won't turn out right. It is, in fact, one of the simplest and quickest meals to make.

Take the plunge this week; shake off those midwinter blues and go fishing.

Nick Tringali of Westland is no fish out of water. He's manager of Jack's Seafood Market, 33224 W. 12 Mile, Farmington Hills.

Tringali has been in food service for over 10 years, and said he learned different things from each of his jobs. He credits his love of cooking to his mother, Janice Tringali, a master baker and graduate of the culinary arts school on the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills.

It is no surprise that preparing seafood is his specialty. Nothing brings him more pleasure than cooking for friends who drop in for dinner.

In his spare time, Tringali lifts weights, loves to downhill ski, scuba dive, listen to jazz, and spend time with his friends. His plans include returning to college to earn a degree in



ANN HEALEY

Fabulous fish: Nick Tringali serves up quick and easy baked ocean catfish, lemon pilaf, and colorful spinach salad with red pepper and onion.

either marketing or business management. Single and unattached, it sounds as if his recipes aren't the only catch of the day.

Submit recipes to be considered for publication in this column or elsewhere to: Winner Dinner, P.O. Box 3603, Birmingham, MI 48012. All winners receive an apron with the words "Winner Dinner Winner" printed on it. To leave a Voice Mail message for Betsy Brethen, dial 953-2047 on a Touch-Tone phone, mailbox number 1851.

OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

Winner Dinner Recipes



BAKED OCEAN CATFISH

1½ pounds ocean catfish cut into four 7-ounce portions
Marinade:
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
½ teaspoon tarragon
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

Combine marinade ingredients and whisk well. Marinate fish in a non-aluminum dish for three hours. Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Place fish in baking pan. Bake uncovered, and baste occasionally, 12 to 15 minutes (figure 10 minutes for every inch of thickness). Fillet will be uniformly opaque throughout when done. Serves 4.

LEMON PILAF

¼ cup olive oil
¼ cup butter
1½ cups chicken stock
¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 cup white rice
2 medium shallots, minced
1 teaspoon freshly chopped chives
zest from lemon

Combine olive oil and butter. Sauté shallots and chives until transparent (3-4 minutes). Add rice, coat with oil. In a saucepan, combine chicken stock and lemon juice, bring to a boil, add to rice mixture. Stir for 1 minute. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes or until liquid is absorbed and rice is tender. Serves 4.

SPINACH SALAD

½ bag cleaned spinach, torn
½ head lettuce, torn
1 sliced red pepper
1 sliced red onion
½ cup mandarin orange segments
¼ cup sliced mushrooms
Dressing:
¼ cup raspberry vinegar
¾ cup olive oil
2 tablespoons sugar
½ teaspoon chopped parsley
½ teaspoon fresh basil, chopped
salt and pepper to taste

Toss greens, vegetables and fruits in a bowl. Combine dressing ingredients in separate bowl. Whisk together. Serve on top of salad. Serves 4.