

# TASTE

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MONDAY, MARCH 8, 1993

**TASTE BUDS**



**CHEF LARRY JONES**

## For memorable meals, cast an iron on the fire

**M**ention the term "cookware" to a group of people who enjoy cooking and you'll probably get personal reviews on everything from the cheapest Teflon to the most expensive copper-clad aluminum money can buy. People frequently ask me what my favorite cookware is, and my answer is always the same.

I have an eclectic collection of pots and pans that range in price and size from the cheapest to the best money can buy. But one thing is for certain, I do love my cast-iron fry pan and Dutch oven!

Cold, snowy weather and cast iron seem to go hand in hand, especially when making hearty stews and one-dish meals.

**Frypan memories**

Momma frequently cooked in cast iron, and to this day, still hauls out a frypan and could iron from the fruit cellar for impromptu Sunday morning egg fests and tummy warming pots of chili. Those of you who remember a story that ran a few years back in Taste know it called for preparing the "ultimate brownie" in a large cast-iron frypan. I'll admit that when I tested the recipe for that brownie, I had to venture on down to Wyandotte to borrow momma's frypan.

Unfortunately, the diet I'm on now will forbid me from making the brownie recipe in my cast-iron cookware, but nevertheless, I look forward to testing slow cooking recipes in cast iron.

**Cooking qualities**

So why all the hoopla on cast-iron cookware? Cast-iron cookware is heavy; it absorbs heat slowly and evenly, retains it like no other, and is a good conductor of heat as well — all excellent qualities for a cooking vessel to possess.

Unfortunately, there is a negative side too. Cast iron is rather brittle. It rusts, stains and becomes pitted on exposure to air, dampness and some foods, and tends to become distorted when too high a heat is applied.

Food purists will either applaud cast iron for its ability to impart certain minerals into the food while cooking or cravify it for its inability to withstand the pitting that occurs from cooking foods high in acidity.

From a professional standpoint, you just can't beat cast iron's ability to slowly cook a stew or chill, seldom with burning.

Sunny-side up eggs take on a distinctive crust that I still remember from the days when momma cooked up a pound of bacon and then plopped in a half-dozen or so eggs into the molten bacon grease.

She would use the special steel spatula that doubled as a dreaded disciplinary tool to splash the grease onto the tops of the eggs to just barely cook the yolks. It wouldn't take an expert to see and taste the difference from an egg made in a plastic-handled non-stick frypan compared to one made in a cast-iron frypan.

**Pan pointers**

There are, of course, a few pointers that all owners of cast-iron cookware should heed. First off, cast-iron cookware is particularly likely to become warped if subjected to high heat or sudden extremes in temperature. Therefore, never place cast-iron cookware directly on a high-heated burner or in a hot oven.

Place cookware on a cold burner or in a cold oven and allow the heat to raise gradually. Common sense should prevail when cooking with cast iron because of its heavy heat conduction. You can cool, and get the same results over a medium-low heat compared to high heat.

After using the cookware, it should be washed, dried and seasoned immediately. Never place the cookware filled with food in the refrigerator, freezer or dishwasher. If the food has burned or stuck on the bottom or sides, scouring will remove some of the seasoned coating, but a light scrubbing with table salt and a dry paper towel will remove any leftover food residue with minimal effort.

If the pan must be washed, dry it immediately and place it on the stove under low heat. Add a little oil and gently heat the pan. Turn off the heat and allow the pan to cool to room temperature. Then, using a dry paper towel, rub the seasoned oil over the entire inside and outside of the pan to prevent rusting and pitting.

Even in this best of all possible worlds, there is no such thing as the perfect metal for pots and pans. Each possibility has its own pluses and minuses but if you have a gas or an electric stove you'll notice a difference when cooking with cast iron. If nothing else, it will remind you of the days of old before the Calpans and non-sticks.

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



ART EMANUELE

**Better brew:** Harry Patsalis of Kitchen Glamor inserts the frothing nozzle of a Gaggia Espresso machine into a chilled metal pitcher filled with milk to make cappuccino.

## ESPRESSO, CAPPUCCINO

*not your daily grind*



■ You don't have to go to a cafe for a cup of espresso or cappuccino. Many people are making their own. Learn how to brew a cafe-quality cup.

BY GERY RINSCHLER  
SPECIAL WRITER

A \$300 cup of coffee? Why would anyone spend \$300 on a machine to make a cup of coffee? Well, not everyone who loves espresso and cappuccino is spending \$300, but some people are.

At Kitchen Glamor stores, the popular automatic espresso machines range from \$69 to \$499. You'd think that achieving a cafe-quality cup of cappuccino from these fully automatic, electronically monitored pump system machines would be a snap. Well, it is when you have some help.

Harry Patsalis, vice president of Kitchen Glamor, enjoys selling espresso machines at his specialty shops, and drinking espresso. His favorite machine is the sleek, Gaggia Espresso, which at \$250 is priced "middle of the road" in the Gaggia line of home espresso machines. When shopping for an automatic espresso/cappuccino machine, Patsalis recommends a system that is pump-drive as opposed to one which relies on steam for brewing. Also look for those with the heaviest filter baskets because they will retain the most heat during the brewing process.

So often, the instruction book which accompanies espresso machine explains how to use the machine, but doesn't explain how to make a five-star cup of coffee.

"It is important to use a top quality coffee, ground especially for making

See ESPRESSO, 2B

## Elegant dish named for 'daddy's girl'



BETSY BRETHEN

Imagine having an elegant chicken dish developed exclusively for you, and named in your honor. That is exactly what this week's Winner Dinner is. Rodger Langley, did for his daughter, Annie, when she was 10 years old.

Although his daughter is all grown up and a college graduate living and working in Boston, Langley is always eager to prepare his daughter's favorite menu when she returns home to visit.

The recipe for Brussels sprouts was developed to make an unpopular but nutritious vegetable irresistible. Sweet potato pie is still one of the most requested family comfort foods.

Langley is a chef for a retirement apartment complex called Waltonwood in Rochester. Each day he prepares meals in a full-service restaurant in a separate food facility on the grounds of this complex. Feeding people who range in age from 60 to 90, Langley designs menus and prepares meals that are well-balanced and low in salt.

Langley's wife, Marilynny, proudly nominated him for the Winner Dinner column, and cited his fine cuisine as helping to keep her well fed and happily married for many years.

When asked what his favorite Winner Dinner was, Langley laughingly admitted that he didn't care what it was, as long as he didn't have to cook it. Can't we all relate to that!

found on the golf course. Thus it seems most appropriate to hope that he keeps cooking up lots of birdies — both on and off the links.

Submit recipes to be considered for publication in this column or elsewhere to: Winner Dinner, P.O. Box 3509, Birmingham, MI 48212. All winners receive an apron with the words "Winner Dinner Winner," on it. To leave a voice mail message for Betsy Brethen, dial 953-2047 on a Touch Tone phone, mailbox number 1861.



JIM RIDER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**Elegant meal:** Rodger Langley presents *Supremes De Volailles Anais*, with vegetables. This delicious chicken entrée is named after his daughter.

OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC  
*Winner Dinner Recipes*

**SUPREMES DE VOLAILLES ANAIS**

3 chicken breasts, boneless, skinless, pounded to scallops

Boursin or Allouette cheese

4 Macintosh apples, peeled, cored and coarsely chopped

flour, eggs, bread crumbs for breading chicken

¼ cup apple cider

¼ cup heavy cream

3 tablespoons Calvados

salt and pepper to taste

butter and olive oil for browning chicken

Place approximately 2-3 tablespoons cheese on each side of chicken breast, spread 1-2 tablespoons apples over cheese. Fold to seal. Bread the chicken breasts, let dry.

Saute in butter and olive oil to brown on both sides over medium heat.

To make sauce, place cream, Calvados, cider and rest of apples in pan with chicken. Reduce mixture over high heat until thickened. Spoon over supremes. Serves 3.

**SHREDDED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH BACON AND PINE NUTS**

3 pints Brussels sprouts

¼ pound bacon, diced

¼ cup pine nuts

2 minced scallions

¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

fresh black pepper to taste

Core the Brussels sprouts and place them in a food processor to shred coarsely. Fry the bacon in a large skillet until it's crisp. Remove and drain on paper towels. Add the pine nuts to the fat remaining in the skillet and stir over medium heat until lightly browned, 2-3 minutes. Add shredded sprouts, scallions and nutmeg. Cook, stirring over medium heat until sprouts are cooked through, but still crisp, 6-8 minutes. Stir in bacon and pepper. Serves 4.

**SWEET POTATO PIE**

2 medium-sized sweet potatoes, boiled and mashed

1 cup sugar, more or less, to taste

3 eggs, well-beaten

¼ cup melted butter

¼ cup milk

1 teaspoon vanilla

pinch of nutmeg and cinnamon

1 tablespoon flour

1 9-inch pie shell, unbaked

Mix all ingredients together and pour into an unbaked pie shell. Bake at 400 degrees about 35 minutes, until browned.