

MONDAY, MARCH 15, 1993

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Muster up courage to make some mustard

Whoever came up with the old adage — "You can't cut the mustard" never realized that someday my pantry shelves would be about ready to collapse under the weight of several dozen varieties.

Mustard varieties

Remember when the only choice was which brand of yellow prepared mustard to buy? Nowadays, you are driven to choose between a musky flavored green peppercorn mustard from Brussels or a herb and spice loaded Mustard de Meaux from France.

Even in jolly old England, the pubs are dispensing an infamous hot pub mustard made fresh every day and served with the traditional bangers, (English sausages), chops, meat pies and pickles.

Probably one of the foremost, and mildly respected, of the imported flavorful mustards is the Dijon. Needless to say, this mustard is named after the famous French town that has been synonymous with fine mustard for centuries.

Would you believe that there is a shop named the "Grey Poupon" that is now part museum and part retail establishment? They have mustard containers that date back to 1400 on display.

Being an apprentice in the homemade mustard department, I came across a few interesting mustard recipes. They fared quite well when served as a base for salad dressings, enriching a hearty stew or just slathered on a thick slice of pumpernickel bread with pastrami.

Storing mustard

If you're thinking of making homemade mustards, don't be afraid to face the challenge. The recipes are quite simple.

Homemade mustards should be tightly sealed and stored in a cool, dark place. A fruit cellar is perfect! They will keep this way for months, and will last indefinitely if stored in the refrigerator.

To alleviate the dryness that usually forms around the mouth and bottom of the jar, try storing your mustard upside down in the fridge. This creates an airtight seal that will prevent blackening and drying on the rim.

If you want to be adventuresome, and try a few of my homemade recipes, use both the yellow and black variety of mustard seeds and powder. Each will impart its own interesting character to the finished product.

I have found that when bottling homemade mustards, those neat little bottles available at most cookware shops, hardware stores and chemical distributors work well. I like to use the small clamp-type, wide mouth jars.

Making mustard

A word of advice from someone with delicate sinuses. If you endeavor to make your own mustards at home in a small, non-ventilated kitchen, keep a window open and, if you have an exhaust fan, turn it on.

Yours truly kitchen-tested the recipe for English pub mustard. When I took the top off of the food processor, I was almost knocked off my feet with an overpowering whiff of the good stuff.

It reminded me of another experience I had making mustard. A long, long, time ago, I took a Chinese cooking class from a lady named Madame Woo. While preparing the egg rolls, I was given the job of making the mustard sauce for them.

In a small glass bowl about ¼ cup of powdered yellow mustard was poured. To that a few tablespoons of white vinegar was added. Then I was ordered to stir.

"Stir more," was the order shouted by Madame Woo as my arm began to make backward overtures from boredom. "Faster! Faster!" she shouted.

"When will I be done?" was the question of the evening. Even the other students who noticed my arm beginning to flop and writhe with muscle spasms started to ask — "When will he be done?" "When you can't tolerate the smell," was the answer from the little lady who was on her second bottle of Sake. How true.

The more powdered mustard is processed, the stronger it becomes. So beware of those food processor blades traveling 2,600 rpm's. They make potent product!

If making homemade mustard proves a little too hard or time consuming to tackle, the Merchant of Vino with stores in Southfield, Birmingham and Troy has more mustards than you can shake a breadstick at.

Personal favorites include locally made Mucky Duck Mustard.

Nestled in neat little crocks with cork tops is the imported Mustarde de Meaux which is coarse. When this mustard is stirred into cream and reduced, it makes a great sauce for fish and fresh vegetables.

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 1886.

Irish fare:

PLAIN
OLD
GOOD

First cousins Kevin Brennan and Michael Connery are chefs who demonstrate how tasty and satisfying Irish cooking really is.

BY JOAN BORAM
SPECIAL WRITER

Ireland is a small, rock- and sea-bound nation, never a prosperous land in the classic meaning of the word. And yet, Ireland seizes the imagination, perhaps with an image of little people, or smiling eyes, the gift of gab, or Olympian dramatists.

But when it comes to food, Ireland gets a bad rap, for what seizes the imagination is potatoes and green beer. Yuck! It's as off base as thinking of French cuisine as pommes frites.

Happily, two first cousins, Kevin Brennan, executive chef of Orchard Lake Country Club, and Michael Connery, executive chef of Bloomfield Hills Country Club, have appeared on the scene to demonstrate how tasty and satisfying Irish cookery really is.

They should know: Their mothers, Rosalind Brennan and Fatsy Connery, who are sisters, were born and raised in County Kerry. The cousins enjoyed the best of Irish cookery as children.

"It's a peasant style of cooking," said Kevin Brennan, "You have to enjoy it for what it is. Freshness is everything. There are no finer cy-

sters or salmon anywhere in the world than in Ireland, and that's true of the seafood generally.

"The growing season is very short, so they don't have the variety of vegetables that we do here. Irish turnips are a golden yellow, like our rutabaga. And they do have an infinite number of ways to cook potatoes, often combined with other vegetables, perhaps puréed with parsnips, or scalloped with leeks. Typically, in an Irish meal the emphasis is on vegetables, with a small amount of protein."

Brennan said the St. Patrick's Day theme dinner — roast leg of lamb, scalloped potato with leek, puréed carrots and parsnips, with an apple tart for dessert, that he made when the club opened in 1992, was almost identical to the dinner he had at his aunt's house in Kerry this past fall.

Brennan's aunt and uncle own a farm in Kerry, and the chef had the opportunity to meet real sheep, outside of the kitchen. It turned out that picking up a live sheep and lifting him into the back of a truck is a sheep of a different color. "About the only part of a sheep I'd seen before was a leg," he said.

And the breads!

Traditionally, Irish breads are quick breads, calling for baking powder and baking soda. The reason is partly because oatmeal and potato flours were more commonly available than wheat flour, and because

most Irish cooking was done over a hearth. Breads were baked in a three-legged pot over a peat fire. Ovens were not common in Irish homes until the 1940s.

"Coming from the cooking field, I really appreciated the breads," said Brennan. "I've been to Germany, but the Irish breads were the best I had ever tasted. Besides soda breads made from wheatmeal and grain, or a sweeter soda bread made with white flour, there were scones and biscuit bread, a sort of spoon bread, and yeast breads, as well."

Brennan and Mike Connery each have fond memories of "goody," a sort of bread pudding that was a

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Fortant de France wines affordable, enjoyable



ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

People who drink wine, as opposed to collecting it, enjoy browsing wine shops in search of that elusive bargain — a tasty, inexpensive pour.

Experience can be a tough teacher, since quality and price frequently go hand in hand. As with most things, you soon learn that you get what you pay for.

If you are open to a suggestion, remember the name Fortant de France. This brand of vins de pays (French country wines) is new to the Detroit metro area and includes five 100 percent varietal wines: cabernet sauvignon, merlot, syrah, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc.

The chardonnay is priced at \$7 while the others can be purchased for \$8 per bottle at most local wine retailers. Rather than using French place names such as Corbières or Minervois, familiar varietal (grape) names appear on the label.

All are solid, warming, generously fruity wines intended to be consumed, not aged. At these prices, it is possible to enjoy wine in the middle of the week with everyday fare of fish, chicken, beef stew, ham, sausage or hamburgers.

We were particularly impressed with the 1992 Fortant de France Sauvignon Blanc and 1991 Merlot. The sauvignon blanc is fresh and fruity with aromas of melons and grapefruit with a delicate touch of grass, the characteristic smell of fresh sauvignon blanc grapes. The 1991 Merlot is soft and velvety with good length.

"We want our merlot to be a drinkable, approachable wine for current enjoyment," said winemaker Philippe Tollere.

Our question for Tollere was how can you make these wines in France, ship them to the United States and charge only \$6-\$7 per bottle? He explained that the wines of Fortant de France are grown in the Languedoc-Roussillon where the weather is warm and vineyard land is cheap.

The Languedoc-Roussillon (pronounced LON-gwuh-doo-roo-see-YOHN) is 250 miles long and 60

miles wide extending along the French Mediterranean coast from the Spanish border to the Rhone River. "Within this very large region there are 800,000 potential vineyard acres, one-third of the vineyard acreage in all of France," said Tollere. "This is five times more vineyard area than in Australia."

Within the Languedoc-Roussillon there are three major climates. The hot, humid Mediterranean zone is planted to chardonnay, merlot and cabernet sauvignon. Sauvignon blanc, syrah and grenache are planted on chalky, gravelly slopes in a cooler region that benefits from the warming influence of the sea. Other varietals are planted in the foothills of a mountain range known as the Massif Central. Here there is a warm, summer drought preceded by cold springs and followed by low autumn temperatures.

Beside making wine, it has been Tollere's responsibility to encourage growers to plant new varietals and determine the adaptability of the vines to the region's varied climates and soils.

"We work with 120 growers," he said. "We tell them what grapes to plant and exactly how to grow them. We reward the growers who follow our method and produce ripe flavorful fruit that goes into our wines."

To do this, growers had to be persuaded to rip out old, traditional varieties and plant the grapes that Tollere requires for his 100 percent varietal wines. He convinced them to restrict their yield and stress quality.

See FORTANT, 2B

WINE SELECTIONS

French wine law requires that when the grape name is printed on the label, the wine inside the bottle must be made 100% from that named varietal. For \$6 to \$7 per bottle, you can taste well-made cabernet sauvignon, merlot, syrah, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc from Fortant de France and experience the taste differences.

WINE SELECTIONS

Wine selection: Fortant de France, French wines with varietal names, are affordable, fruity wines.

JIM RUDEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER