

TASTE

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MONDAY, APRIL 5, 1993

TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

For cleaning, cooking, the answer is a lemon

Pucker up, sweet! They say that spring has finally arrived. Although I've yet to put away the old snow blower, I firmly believe that winter has pretty much passed us by. Now is the time to begin enjoying the fruits of spring and summer, especially fresh lemons.

In all honesty, I enjoy using lemons year-round. I douse sautéed flank steak with lemon juice when creating a Janes family favorite — fajitas, and even marinate chicken in it for Chinese stir-fry. I relish the smell of freshly grated lemon rind, and use it to perk up cheesecakes and Caesar salad.

I wouldn't think of not inserting a few slices of lemon when pan-frying fish, and I relish the lemony aroma that fills the kitchen after I shove a lemon down the garbage disposal.

July history

Lemons were grown in Italy as early as the first century. We know this because lemons are depicted in certain Roman artworks of that period. After barbarians invaded Italy in the fourth century wide destruction of lemon orchards virtually stopped all lemon agriculture. They popped up again in Spain around the start of the 11th century.

Christopher Columbus brought lemons to Haiti in 1493, and Spanish explorers, including Ponce DeLeon, brought them to Florida in 1512.

Medicinal value

By 1600, some of the naval physicians of the major world powers were aware that daily rations of lemon juice prevented outbreaks of scurvy among sailors of long sea voyages. Lemons were used because they stayed fresh for up to six months whereas oranges usually spoiled within three weeks.

The California lemon industry began shortly after the Gold Rush of 1849. Miners also ate lemons to prevent scurvy caused by the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables.

By the time railroads were put into place in the 1850s, transportation to populated East Coast cities made California the world's leading lemon producer.

Rivalled by the Italian lemon industry, California still leads the nation, and even beats out Florida, for the best lemons produced anywhere. With more than half the North American lemon crop being processed into lemon juice and frozen concentrates, you can visit any market and see an abundance of fresh lemons in the middle of a cold winter as well as on a hot summer's eve. Store lemons in the refrigerator in a plastic bag for up to two weeks.

The peel, pulp and seeds are sold throughout North America and used to make lemon oil, lemon wax, fragrances, biologically active substances and cattle feed ingredients.

Cleaning up

Yours truly likes to make real lemonade, (see recipe inside) and frequently uses lemon juice in place of vinegar when making salad dressings. With the industry leaning away from wood cutting boards toward the newer, and harder to clean, Polyethylene, I've taken to rubbing a cut lemon over my chopping board at least once a week.

Not trying to sound like helpful Heloise, I don't have a fan in my bathroom, and the wall paper is getting a little moldy in the corners. I didn't want to use bleach for cleaning because it would have whitened the paper. I took some bottled lemon juice, poured it onto an old rag, and wiped the mildew away. Not only did it not bleach the wall paper, but the old bathroom smelled great! Caution, test a small unnoticeable area before trying to do this at home.

Here's another tip from the Old Farmer's Almanac "Hearth & Home Companion, 1993" — to remove cloudy mineral deposits from drinking glasses, put one tablespoon of lemon juice in each glass and fill with hot water. Let stand for several hours, then wash.

One of the neatest tricks I ever saw using a lemon was when Guiliano Bugialli, the famed Italian chef, was conducting a class at Kitchen Glamour. He needed about 1/4 cup of fresh lemon rind, and placed a sheet of kitchen parchment paper over the fine grating side of a hand grater.

The rind was easily removed from the paper and the grater never needed a wash as the parchment was never cut, but acted as a grating surface.

With spring knocking at our doors, now would be a great time to pick up a few lemons and create something that reeks of warm weather. Bon Appetit!

See Larry Janes' family-size recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-3047 on a Touch-Tone phone, then mailbox number 1898.



STAFF PHOTOS BY JIM JACQUELLO



Easter bread: Sylvia Kaptantzis of Grecian Tower restaurant in Livonia shows off her freshly baked sweet, braided Easter bread decorated with an egg. Greek families dye hard boiled eggs deep red for Easter to symbolize the blood of Jesus.

Celebrate Easter

FOCUS ON WINE



ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

(W.W. Norton & Co., New York) got us thinking with their subtitle, "Wine, Pasta, Olive Oil, and a Long Healthy Life." Late last year, "The French Paradox and Beyond," by Perdue, Merton, and Shoemaker, (Renaissance Publishing, Calif.) triggered the same reaction with the subtitle "Live Longer with Wine & the Mediterranean Lifestyle."

There's probably no better time than Easter to take a broad look at a classic Mediterranean diet. The specific Mediterranean focus is Greek food and wine for an authentic Easter menu. There may be no better authority on the subject of Greek feasting than Diano Kochilas who has authored "The Food and Wine of Greece" (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1990).

Kochilas grew up in the United States, but now lives in Athens. She was in the United States earlier this year for the 1993 International Conference on the Diets of the Mediterranean at the Harvard School of Public Health.

The optimal, traditional Mediterranean diet consists of the following foods in decreasing quantities eaten daily — breads and grains, including pasta, rice, couscous, polenta and bulgur; fruits, vegetables, beans (or other legumes and nuts), cheese, yogurt and other dairy products, olive oil and olives.

Following the Mediterranean tradition, one to two glasses per day of wine can be enjoyed primarily with meals. Again in decreasing amounts — fish, poultry and eggs and sweets are eaten a few times

per week. Lean red meats are consumed a few times per month.

GREEK style



Greeks invented the Olympic Games and their Mediterranean diet is lean and healthy. There's no better time than Easter to discover some classic Greek dishes.

WINE SELECTIONS OF THE WEEK

For Greek wines of quality the not too old J. Boutari & Son for three wines all priced at \$7: 1991 Boutari Kretikos, a delightful crisp white wine; 1990 Boutari Naoussa, a very dry, flavorful red that will harmonize with lamb; and 1990 Boutari Nemea that is full and robust, but with soft tannins to pair it well with spinach pie.

A traditional Greek Easter meal would include fresh lettuce salad, classic spinach pie filled with fresh spring herbs, colored eggs, roast leg of lamb or spit-roasted lamb or goat, roasted potatoes, Easter bread, and for dessert, Kaitounia Cretis (sweet cheese pastries from Crete) or Mellitina Santorinis (sweet cheese tartlets from Santorini).

In Greece, the preparation of Easter foods begins on Holy (Maundy) Thursday. Coloring eggs is part of the tradition. "In fact," says Kochilas, "the day is sometimes called Kokkinopesti, or the day on which the red falls." Greek Easter eggs are dyed the color of blood, deep red, a practice that began in Byzantium. Once colored, they are polished with a cloth dipped in olive oil.

The color symbolizes the blood of Jesus Christ, but the egg itself is symbolic of life, rebirth and spring. The eggs are eaten to break the Lenten fast, after the midnight Mass on Holy Saturday.

They are also used to decorate the Tsoumeki or Lambropasmo, traditional Greek Easter bread which is made from three long dough ropes, symbolizing the Holy Trinity. The dough is braided and sometimes sprinkled with sesame seeds or almond slivers or decorated with dough designs.

Arni/Katekaki Souvlas (spit-roasted whole baby lamb or goat) is synonymous with the classic Greek Easter meal. "It's more common on the mainland than on the islands," Kochilas said. "In the Aegean, generally, the classic Easter lamb or goat dish is stuffed whole with rice and herbs, and baked slowly, usually in the village wood-burning bread oven."

"Wine is a custom during meals in some Mediterranean countries," Dr. Dimitrios Trichopoulos, chairman of Epidemiology, Harvard School of Public Health said. "Drunk in moderation with meals, it reduces risk of coronary diseases about as much as the regular taking of aspirin." Asked if the Mediterranean diet might be just as healthy if wine

See CELEBRATE, 2B

Jewish community cookbooks feature Passover

BY KEELY WYGNON
STAFF WRITER

If you're looking for something new to serve during Passover, throughout the year, the National Council of Jewish Women and Sisterhood of Shaarey Zedek can help. Both groups recently published cookbooks filled with recipes for traditional favorites, and lots of new low-fat ones too.

Passover is an eight-day celebration of the liberation of ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt some 3,000 years ago. Tonight, the first day of Passover, Jewish families will celebrate with a feast called a seder. It is a ceremonial dinner marked by the retelling of the story of exodus from Egypt through prayers, songs and ceremonial foods.

No leavened bread is eaten during Passover. Other foods containing yeast or leavening agents are forbidden by Jewish law to be eaten during Passover. This is to remind Jews that they were forced to leave Egypt in a hurry, and couldn't wait for their bread dough to rise.

Although there are dietary restrictions, Passover is a happy time spent with family and friends reflecting on what it means to be free, and to practice your religion without fear.



DAN DEAR/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Passover foods: The Seder plate (left) contains matzo, hard-cooked egg, bitter herbs and roasted lamb shankbone, foods which recall the Jews' lives as slaves and escape to freedom. Crispy Potato Chicken, is one of the entrees featured in "Still Fiddling in the Kitchen."

"When I make the holiday dinner, I put so much love and attention into it that it's the richest, and most satisfying meal," said Devia Shwartz, who contributed to "From Generation to Generation," a 400-page, hard-covered cookbook of more than 700 kitchen-tested

kosher recipes by members of the Sisterhood of Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield. The book is available by mail for \$20, plus \$3 postage and handling — Congregation Shaarey Zedek Sisterhood, 23735 Bell Road, Southfield

48034. Make checks payable to Sisterhood, Congregation Shaarey Zedek. For information, call 357-5544. "This is not the usual charity cookbook," said cookbook committee

See JEWISH, 2B