

MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1993

TASTE

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Get your nets ready for spring smelt run

It will happen soon. The phone will ring. The time and date will be set. We rendezvous at midnight — sharp! The orgy begins. Before you know it, thousands of folks living in the vicinity of the Great Lakes will begin their yearly ritual — the smelt search. I can still remember the days we visited my folks' summer cottage just off Pointe Pelee in Ontario. We would descend upon the still frigid beaches complete with our Coleman lanterns, Eddie Bauer waders, Mort Neff seine nets and cases of Labatts Blue. It was a private beach just west of the point, but during the smelt run, the bonfires lighted up the blackened sky like klieg lights at a Hollywood premiere.

First pass

We drew straws to see who would be the first to "make a pass." It was always the guy with the deepest waders. The guy with the high galoshes stood on the shore. No one really wanted to make the first pass because if a smelt was netted, the catcher would have the ceremonial duty of biting off and swallowing the head of the doomed creature. God, we were so macho then! I can remember filling 5-gallon garbage bags with just one sweep. We would try and pass them off to customs agents at the border. When we got home we'd begin the relatively easy cleaning process. Only about 5 percent of the catch would make it to the fridge. The remaining 95 percent ended up as garden fertilizer.

Freezing smelt

If you are lucky enough to get some, they do freeze easily. You can freeze them individually on a baking sheet and then drop them into freezer bags. Or you can do what the Janeses do — fill a plastic milk jug with smelt and then top off the jug with water and freeze. For the uninitiated, smelt look like giant minnows. They can be anywhere from 5 to 8 inches long. However, any good smelt fisherman will swear that the smaller ones are the best eating! Smelt found in the Great Lakes region are really immigrants that were originally transplanted here from New England coastal waters. Eastern smelt, as they like to be called, are migrating saltwater fish.

The finest smelt in the world are rumored to be had in the Columbia River. This might be true to folks who like saltwater smelt, but yours truly has tried them and compared. There's nothing that beats a fresh mess of beer-battered smelt from Pointe Pelee. Eastern saltwater smelt are somewhat fatter and have a higher oil content than freshwater Great Lakes smelt. Did you know that Columbia River smelt have an oil content so high, and were so plentiful, that Indians used to dry them in large quantities and then burn them for light?

Good eating

If you're lucky enough to net some of these beauties or must rely on the local fishmonger, figure on about 14 to a pound if they are dressed, and about 11 per pound whole. The smaller smelt can be prepared for cooking by pinching off the heads directly behind the gills and exerting light pressure on the belly cavity to expel a relatively small amount of innards. There is no need to bone them because the bones soften when cooked and can be eaten. Some smelt aficionados swear the removal of the head and innards is a sacrifice and prefer to batter fry them whole. Call me a wimp, but I prefer them headless and gutless, however, I do enjoy the crunchiness of the tail. Get ready folks, all we need is a few more warm days and equally warm rains to make the little suckers swarm, and I do mean swarm. But be prepared, as fast as they come, so they shall leave, never again to appear for another 345 days. Smelt are usually prepared battered or pan fried in a light seasoned bread crumb coating but they also can be baked and broiled for the diet conscious. A splash of lemon or slathering of tartar sauce is all that is needed to enjoy. Bon Appetit!

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.

■ Treat yourself and someone special to a leisurely afternoon of good food and conversation. Catch up over cups of tea served in china cups.

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER



Tea seems to draw mothers and daughters and friends to gather. "It's a nice thing to do in the afternoon," said Julia Hogen of Plymouth. "It's time off, a chance to reflect and enjoy each other's company before making dinner." Hogen remembers going shopping with her mother, grandmother and great grandmother and having tea afterward. "They would go over their lists and purchases. It was like a reward. They'd have cakes with their tea." Hogen will celebrate Mother's Day with her daughters, mother, grandmother and great grandmother. "My grandmother is from Canada. In my family, especially during the holidays, you get to choose the china cup to your liking for tea. Everyone has a favorite cup. We reminisce over tea."

Afternoon tea became a national pastime during Queen Victoria's reign in the 1840s.

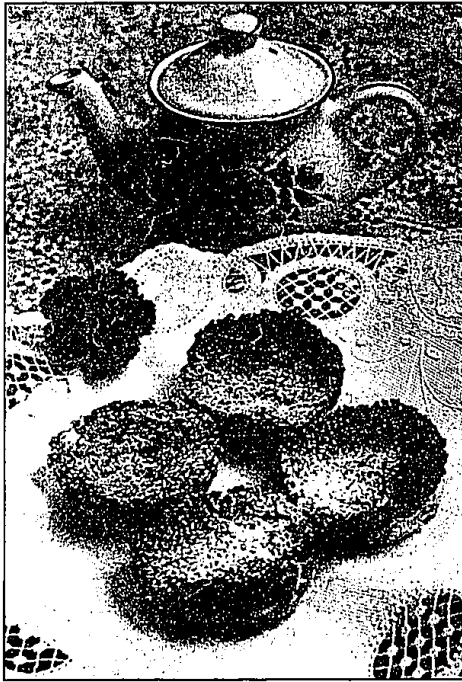
"I always think of tea as a comfort drink," said Carol Avery of Livonia who was enjoying a cup with some friends at Sweet Afton. Tea Room in Plymouth. "It's usually served in a dainty fashion."

Sweet Afton, which seats 32 people, is peaceful. The pink flowered wallpaper, crocheted table coverings, lace curtains, fine china cups and soothing music create an elegant yet soothing atmosphere. A 100-year-old cash register rings up in English pence.

Recently, a troop of Brownies visited Sweet Afton to earn their etiquette badge. "I've always fussed over children. I like to see them have a good time," said Sylvia Thacker who opened the tea room five years ago. She's hoping to offer basic cooking classes this fall. "I like people to be happy. Over the years over 60,000 people from all over the world have visited the tea room. A

See RELAX, 2B

Relax with friends OVER A CUP OF TEA



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BRUNER



Tasty tarts:
Butter Tarts
(top) are a
Sweet Afton
specialty.
Kat (left),
Sylvia, and
Shelly
Thacker en-
joy afternoon
tea.

Whistle STOPS

Sweet Afton Tea Room
985 N. Mill
Plymouth
454-0777
Hours: Tuesday through
Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Reservations recom-
mended: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Townsend Hotel
100 Townsend Street
Birmingham
642-7900
Afternoon tea served
Hours: Wednesday
through Sunday, 3 - 5 p.m.,
cost \$13.50 per person.
Reservations recom-
mended

Rose Cottage Tea Room
505 N. Center
Northville
349-0505
Hours: Tuesday through
Saturday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.;
Sunday brunch, 10 a.m.
to 2 p.m. Reservations
recommended

Ritz-Carlton Dearborn
300 Town Center
Dearborn
441-2000
Hours: Afternoon tea
served every day 2 - 4 p.m.,
cost \$12.75 per person.
Reservations recom-
mended.

Home economist pioneer for working moms

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Being recognized by your peers is the highest honor anyone can achieve. Even now, two months after she was named Outstanding Home Economist of the Year by the Michigan Home Economists Association, Irene Cameron gets goose bumps talking about it.

"It's one of the most exciting experiences I've had since getting married and having children," said Cameron who serves on the cable commission in Livonia and hosts "In Good Taste," which airs on City Channel 8 in Livonia, 7:30 p.m. Thursdays. "She was totally surprised," said her longtime friend Pat Albright, coordinator adult program for the Dairy Council of Michigan. "I've known Irene for 32 years. She's dynamic, the truest friend I've ever had."

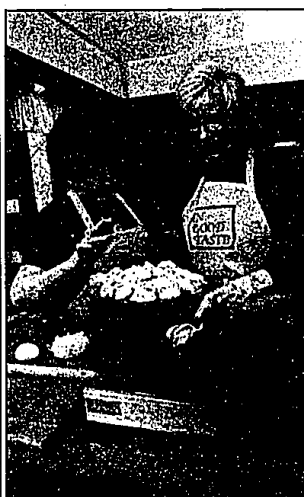
Collecting Cameron's credentials to nominate her for Outstanding Home Economist of the Year was not easy. To be nominated you need three letters of recommendation from members of the Michigan Home Economists Association, and three letters of recommendation from people outside the association. You also have to explain why that person is deserving of the award.

Albright called Cameron's daughter Wendy Gregor who is a dietitian and lives in Omaha with her husband Clark, a dentist, and daughter Hailey, 18 months.

When they visited during Thanksgiving, Wendy asked her mom to write down her work experience so when Hailey grows up she'll know everything her grandma did. Gregor put the information in resume form and sent it to Albright.

"I couldn't believe it. My own daughter was in cahoots with them. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would get the award," said Cameron. "I wasn't planning to attend the state convention. A friend said you've got to go. I had to change an eye appointment."

Reflecting on her career, Cameron, who moved to Livonia 31 years ago with her husband David, said she remembers being criticized for working outside



Cooking show: Guest Chef Christine Liu (left) shows Irene Cameron how to prepare a traditional Chinese dish before the cameras roll for Cameron's cable cooking show "In Good Taste," which airs on City Channel 8 in Livonia.

the home. Wendy was six months old when the family moved to Livonia. Son Scott, is an emergency medicine doctor in Sacramento.

"I always worked one or two days a week since I graduated from college. Not full time. I never had a job that didn't utilize my skills. I was a pioneer. Now it's accepted. Couples share household tasks, but if the home isn't neat, the blame is laid at the women's feet."

"I strongly think women should work. I don't think children are faring bad because their mothers are working. There are good moms and bad moms. You can be a bad mother whether you spend your day in the home or out."

Cameron said she told both of her children that they must get at least a degree in college. Her practical outlook was fostered early when she had to make a career choice that changed her life. She was a member of a synchronized swim team in her teens, and dreamed of being a swimming teacher.

"It was 1948, and I found out there were very few schools with swimming pools. I wasn't interested in other sports. My high school economics teacher suggested home economics. I have never been sorry I got the degree, it's always served me very well."

After graduating from Pennsylvania State University, Cameron went to work as a home economist at Pennsylvania Power Co. in Sharon, Pa. Throughout the years she's used her skills in a variety of ways. She worked for McCall's Pattern Co. and traveled across the state presenting programs to junior and senior high students. Topics included "Creating Line and Design," and "Coordinating Your Wardrobe."

She was a fashion coordinator at Hudson's, freelance food stylist, and managed consumer affairs for all kitchen appliances, and provided demonstrations in Consumer's Power Cooking School. She was coordinator of communications and media relations for the Dairy Council of Michigan/United Dairy Industry of Michigan for 20 years.

See HOME, 2B