

TASTE

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TASTE BUDDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Tips help beginners tackle slab of ribs

Any novice cook attempting to tackle a slab of ribs certainly has their work cut out for them. Not that ribs are difficult to prepare, but a stroll by the butcher case finds baby backs, spare ribs, beef ribs, pork ribs and country ribs.

How's a cook to know the difference? There are so many questions to be answered. What is the best way to cook ribs? Do you parboil, parbake, soak, marinate, trim or just throw them on the grill and pray for a miracle? Here's a primer on everything you ever wanted to know about ribs.

Rib vocabulary

First off, let's tackle the different kinds of ribs. Regular spare ribs are from the front of the rib cage and are held together by the sternum bone, and in most cases are the most difficult to cut and eat, mainly because of the attached sternum bone.

Most supermarkets carry only pork ribs. Beef ribs can be up to two feet long and would require a meat cooler all by themselves. Also, most slaughterhouses trim the beef ribs so well that there really isn't much meat left on the bones to make it worth your while.

Regular pork barbecue ribs are spare ribs with the sternum bone removed. Baby-back ribs are generally cut from the loin, are about 2 inches wide, and have more meat on them than either of the other two. Expect to pay about 20 cents more per pound for barbecue ribs over regular spare ribs and about 40 cents more per pound for baby backs over barbecue ribs.

Country ribs are really not ribs at all. They are the meaty section of the rib end of the loin split in half and then cut into chop-like strips. All of the above mentioned ribs are delicious, especially when finished with a sauce under the grill. The lighter-weight ribs cut from small hogs have a tendency to be more tender than those from larger animals.

For portioning purposes, the general rule of thumb is to allow at least four ribs per person, with two full racks of ribs being enough to feed six average people.

"The Joy of Cooking" recommends allowing about 1 pound of ribs per person.

Prep work

Is parboiling or parbaking the ribs before cooking really necessary? All of the cooking manuals I researched for this article indicate parboiling or parbaking is necessary for the tenderest and least-fatty ribs. Parboiling ribs for five minutes in my estimation boils away some flavor. Momma always soaked her ribs in about two cups of vinegar to break down the tough fibers and then parbaked them, drained and uncovered in a 400-degree oven for about 30 minutes.

Many soul-food cookbooks suggest parbaking in the vinegar, and I have done both, finding that the parbaked ribs actually baked in vinegar have more of a "bite" because of the vinegar.

Through experience, I have observed many rib aficionados "mopping" their ribs with vinegar seasoned with paprika, garlic and onion during the cooking process to keep them moist.

In my estimation, this mopping during the cooking process is by far the most critical step when making ribs because it is important to keep the ribs moist during the cooking process. All publications used as sources for this story indicate that this step should be repeated every 10 minutes during the cooking process, whether in the oven or on the grill.

Cooking times will vary. Allow at least 1 hour of actual cooking time on the grill or in the oven for ribs. Here's a tip from "Jack Daniel's Old Time Barbecue Cookbook" to tell if the ribs are done — "Pinch the meat between the ribs; when it's done, it will give under your fingertips." It is a matter of personal preference whether or not to sauce ribs during the cooking process.

Sauce

Personally, I have found that slathering on a sweet sauce loaded with brown sugar, molasses or honey has a tendency to burn when added directly during the cooking time. Therefore, I prefer to wait until the last five minutes to slather on some sauce, and pass more sauce on the side. Occasionally, I prefer to forgo sauce and eat the ribs with a dry rub of salt, pepper, spices and herbs. Again, this step is usually done during the last 5 minutes of cooking. Ribs cooked in the oven should be cooked at 350 degrees on a rack to allow the fat to drain.

When grilling, it is imperative that coals be kept gray and that a squirt bottle of water or broth be kept handy to avert any flare-ups that might happen from the dripping fat.

If necessary, ribs can also be broiled in the broiler, again on a rack and frequently basted, as you would ribs on an outdoor grill.

See Larry Janes' family-tested recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then dial mailbox number 1888.

HIRAM WALKER PUTS

Spirit

INTO COOKING

Hiram Walker is working with area chefs, including Lorraine Platman of Sweet Lorraine's, to get liquor out of the cabinet and into the pantry.

By KEELY WYGNON
STAFF WRITER



Many cooks sneak into their liquor cabinet for spirits to enhance favorite dishes. Chefs who have access to bars stocked with lots of different kinds of liquors do it too. Now Hiram Walker & Sons Inc., the Windsor-based Canadian distiller whose Midwest office is in Farmington Hills, wants to stop all this sneaking around by taking liquor out of the cabinet and into the pantry.

Consumers got a taste of Hiram Walker's Culinary Collection, comprised of 12 premium brands of spirits that lend themselves to use in cooking, at the Michigan Tastefest in Detroit's New Center area July 2-5. Fifteen chefs from some of metro Detroit's finest restaurants including Sweet Lorraine's, Excalibur, Restaurant Di Modesta and Morels; a Michigan Bistro, prepared new recipes featuring spirits and liquors from the Hiram Walker Culinary Collection.

Informally called "Chefs in a Bottle," spirits in the Culinary Collection will be sold to consumers in 3-ounce size bottles, available individually for about \$3 each or in a rack that holds eight bottles for about \$25 this fall.

Consumers will be able to pick and choose flavors, and the company will add new ones depending on demand. The prototype we saw contained cream of banana, anise, creme de menthe, ginger brandy, cherry brandy, triple sec, creme de cassis, and amaretto.

"If we're going to encourage people to cook with spirits we have to make it available in smaller quantities," said company president Donald Coe of Birmingham. "We want people to think of these liquors as spices that enhance cooking. The cost is comparable to what you pay for a bottle of spice. These liquors are concentrated essences of fruits, roots and vegetables."

It's no secret that liquor sales in the United States have been steadily declining over the past 10 years, about 19 percent, with increased emphasis on healthier living. The mar-

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STAFF PHOTOS BY JERRY ZOLYNSKY



CHEF'S SECRETS

By LARRY JANES
SPECIAL WRITER

Anyone who lives in the western suburbs, and loves to cook, has probably heard of chefs Chili Joe Wnuk and Chef Curtis Rellinger of Westland.

They co-host, write and produce the award-winning "Microwave Today — The Cooking Show of Tomorrow" on the Omnicon cable network serving Plymouth, Canton and Northville. Their show is also shown on Metrovision in Livonia.

Both chefs also claim the title "Champion Chili Cooks," and have been recognized by "The Guinness Book of World Records as inventors of "The World's Longest Chili Recipe," assembled with a mind-boggling 1,000 different ingredients.

During the day, they both work as engineers. After work, they don chef's toques and head for the kitchen. They just finished writing their first cookbook — "Excuse Me Walter, There's A Fly in My Soup," (Enterprise Publishing, \$12.95).

"We were getting hundreds of letters a week for our television recipes, and people were looking for fun-to-make recipes," said Wnuk. "We said 'let's write a cookbook.' It took us one year and six months to organize the recipes. It's a collection of old-time classics and recipes from relatives. These are recipes that people will use."

I agree, this is a cookbook that everyone will enjoy. If you're a beginning cook, you'll appreciate the explicit diagrams and recipe directions coupled with basic and gourmet recipes.

If you view cooking as something "you have to do," you'll enjoy the recipes that are fast, easy and tasty. There are recipes for lasagna, pepper steak,

lobster Newburgh, chicken piccata and Kiszka sausage.

Partners for 10 years, Wnuk and Rellinger first joined forces to produce a championship chili recipe at the annual National Kidney Foundation Chili Cookoff.

Known to their viewers as a zany cooking duo, their weekly show resembles a local spin-off of "Saturday Night Live," coupled with no-nonsense facts and cooking hints that one might see on a PBS cooking show.

It's evident after spending some time with them in the kitchen that these guys love to cook and do so in harmony. For a copy of their book, send a check or money order for \$12.95, plus \$3 for shipping and handling to — Chili Joe and Chef Curtis Enterprises, 7527 Berwick, Westland, Mich. 48186-1414.

What's your favorite restaurant?

Both chefs love Mexican food and frequently mull over an afternoon taping of their show at Xochimilco on Bagley in Mexicantown, Detroit. Margaritas and Botanas are their favorites. The all-you-can-eat fish and chips at Bode's in Plymouth are another perennial favorite.

Do you have a favorite cookbook?

Wnuk enjoys the "Jack Daniels Cookbook," by Pat Michamora and Lynne Tolley, while Rellinger is never without his prized copy of "The Joy of Cooking," by Irma Rombauer.

See ZANY, 2B

Flavor enhancers: Donald Coe of Hiram Walker displays a prototype of the company's new Culinary Collection. Lorraine Platman of Sweet Lorraine's presents Rio de Janeiro Chicken made with spirits from the collection.

Zany cable TV chefs write cookbook



ART EMANUELE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

TV chefs: "Chili Joe" Wnuk (left) waits for Chef Curtis Rellinger to tell him when to add soy sauce to the pepper steak.