

MONDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1993

TASTE

TASTE BUDDS



CHEF LARRY JAMES

Squash of any variety vegetable to fall over

Visit any farmers market this time of year, and you'll undoubtedly notice an abundant array of squash.

Hubbard squash that could easily resemble pod people vie for table space next to obscenely shaped crookneck squash.

Acorn squash of all sizes — ranging from bright orange to brackish green — about next to pumpkins. Turbans, as colorful as the rainbow, are displayed gracefully next to blandly colored butternuts.

If you're lucky, you might see some zucchini or yellow summer squash.

But the James Gang's two fall squash favorites, by far, are the little pattypan and bright yellow spaghetti.

James Beard once said that the pumpkin was the most famous of all winter squash varieties. Not wishing to contradict one of the best cooks of the century, I would probably agree.

Beard would probably argue that the pumpkin would be considered the most versatile, but normally used pumpkin in its former pie period.

We would have squashed any and all attempts to make pumpkin soup in Wyandotte, let alone stir it into a quick bread. Even an attempt at steaming and mashing and plopping it on a plate next to meatloaf would have been looked upon with disdain.

I remember being served acorn squash and butternut squash once a year. They were usually baked upside down on a cookie sheet then right-sided and topped with butter and brown sugar, which led to a quick trip under the broiler.

We were mainly a meat-and-potatoes kind of a family, and if a vegetable ever did appear, it usually took the form of a wedge of lettuce gracefully topped with a dollop of Miracle Whip and garnished with a slice of canned pineapple. This was usually served only when company was coming.

Nowadays, the James Gang heralds the harvest season with an almost daily ritual of squash in some form. Tonight for instance, noticing three lonely pattypanes that resemble small spaceheaters hiding in the vegetable crisper, yours truly decided to run them through the grater on my Cuisinart and press them into a hot skillet sizzling with butter. A firm press with the back of a spatula and a generous sprinkling of salt and pepper was all that was needed to transform an otherwise bland vegetable into a hash brown look alike.

Microwave squash

Last night the family enjoyed a spaghetti squash, steamed in its entirety in the microwave and then seeded and tossed with some Parmesan, pepper, a sprinkling of bacon bits and some caramelized onions. I'm probably more apt to lean toward cooking a spaghetti, acorn, butternut or turban squash than any other simply because all that's required is a few jabs with a knife and the press of a few buttons on the microwave.

I prefer to cook them whole, in their shell and can readily do so in the microwave by simply remembering the squash-in-the-microwave-rule-of-thumb, which is simply put: 6 minutes per pound on high. Nuking the squash simply because stove space, and I don't have to dirty a pot. If you don't have a scale and can't estimate the weight, just cook it till it feels like a deflated basketball.

If you're cooking for one or two, half a squash can be cooked by covering tightly with microwave approved plastic wrap. Again, I would question the cooking of a half a squash simply because even if you have leftovers, the cooked squash can easily be stirred into soup or made into a quick bread or better yet, tossed with a few eggs and spices and made into a pie.

The pattypan is probably the most flavorful of all the winter squashes, and in my opinion, gets sweeter as it cooks. All the other varieties are noted for their bland taste and would definitely require the addition of some salt, pepper, brown sugar, cheese or herb. You can expect to see all of the above mentioned squashes readily available throughout the winter, probably because they keep so well. The pattypan and crookneck, in addition to the zucchini, are classified as summer squashes, and they will be fizzling out soon, but the others should be available way into spring.

Dieters will especially appreciate fresh squash as it can be chunked and steamed, boiled, microwaved and baked with nary a hint of fat.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

■ Howard Hamerick is smoking this fall, sausage that is. Chef Larry James visits Hamerick at his smokehouse in Romulus.

■ East side attorney turned brewmaster, Tom Burns is turning out 60 gallons of dairy-brewed beer at Traffic Jam and Snug Restaurant.



Blue-ribbon cook 'loaves' around kitchen



Every year, Evelyn Dugal rises to the occasion and enters her delicious breads and cookies in contests at the Michigan State Fair. She wasn't always a prize-winning cook. Dugal learned by doing, and we all know — practice makes perfect.

By KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

This has been a blue-ribbon year for Evelyn Dugal of Troy. This year she entered 10 cooking contests at the Michigan State Fair, and took home eight ribbons.

"We all love to try her baked goods and homemade jellies when she brings them into work," said Linda Parsons who works with Dugal at the Troy Police Department. "Evelyn is a talented and energetic individual, who besides being a great baker, is also a wonderful cook."

Dugal won first place ribbons for her white bread and oatmeal raisin cookies; second place for her French, wheat, rye and gingerbread; third place for potato bread; and fourth for molasses cookies.

Forty years ago, Dugal was a blushing bride who didn't know much about cooking. "My mom always cooked. My sisters and I cooked a little," said Dugal who is department

secretary in the crime prevention section of the Troy Police Department. Newly married, she had a problem — her husband Chuck hated store bought bread.

"My grandma used to bake bread and we had it every Sunday for dinner at her house," said Chuck who grew up on the East side of Detroit in the Assumption Grotto parish area — Six Mile and Grand. "My mom was never a baker. We got freshly baked bread once a week at grandma's. It was special."

Encouraged by her husband who told her "you can make bread," Evelyn studied cookbooks. "I started reading a Betty Crocker cookbook and looked at the pictures to see how it's supposed to look. I realized I had the capability. I still have that cookbook."

She started baking bread in 1959, entered her white bread recipe in the Michigan State Fair in 1969, and won second place. After her son, Charles

III was born, she stopped entering contests, but kept baking bread.

Two daughters followed — Susan who is married to Darren Whitecher and lives in California, and Andrea, who is married to Jim Edwards and lives in Royal Oak. Evelyn recently became a grandmother, her grandson, Myles lives with his parents in California.

When the family moved to Troy in 1968, Chuck had a double oven installed in the kitchen so Evelyn could bake the family's bread. "I used to make eight loaves at a time when the kids were little. Four loaves on top, four on the bottom," said Dugal.

With her children grown, and settled, Dugal started thinking about entering cooking contests again. She's been entering her delicious baked goods in contests at the Michigan State Fair for the past four years. She still doesn't buy bread, she makes it, and gives a lot away to her appreciative friends and neighbors.

Over the years she perfected her techniques, and developed a feel for bread making. By the touch of her hand she can tell if water from the faucet is the right temperature for dissolving yeast, and if there's enough flour to work the dough.



Best bread: Chuck Dugal prefers homemade bread to store bought. He encouraged his wife, Evelyn, to give bread making a try 40 years after they got married. Over the years, Evelyn perfected her baking skills, and won numerous ribbons at the Michigan State Fair, including a blue ribbon this year for white bread.

She still doesn't buy bread, she makes it

"White bread is the easiest to make," she said. "Wheat and rye bread are made with heavier flours that don't rise as well."

She enjoys experimenting. "She's got hundreds of recipes," said Chuck who enjoys helping Evelyn make breadsticks. He likes to put red hot pepper seeds on the dough and bake them for a zesty treat.

Some of Evelyn's recent creations include — bread made with fresh spinach, onions and garlic, and dillweed and cottage cheese.

Her favorite tools for bread making are a Kitchen Aid Mixer for mixing and kneading dough, and a marble rolling pin.

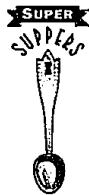
"I used to have a wooden pin, but I like the marble one better. It helps you get air bubbles out of the dough. It was on sale, I tried it and liked it."

Here's a tip she passes along for making cookies — "take them out just before they're completely cooked, they continue to cook after you take them out of the oven. Put the cookies on racks to cool."

See recipes and bread making tips inside.

Keely Wygonik is editor of the Taste and Entertainment sections of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Working mom dashes from car to kitchen



By EILEEN ONLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

Many youngsters have busy working moms who can whip up a batch of brownies or hurriedly mix a meat loaf for dinner, but 11-year-old Emily Sibthorp is a little luckier than most. Her mom Sally is a prize-winning cook.

Sibthorp, a single mother who lives in Rochester Hills with Emily and older daughter, Sharon, 17, has entered numerous recipe contests over the years. She's often won, including the time she entered the 1989 Crisco Baking Contest, and was named the Michigan winner for her "Secret Blueberry Pie" that featured the flavors of cinnamon and orange rind.

Recently, she entered six of the eight recipe contests held during the Michigan State Fair, and walked away with three awards — first place in the Blueberry Creation Contest sponsored by the Michigan Blueberry Growers, second place in the Cherry Pie Baking Contest sponsored by the Cherry Council of Michigan, and third place in the Sure-Jell Contest for her homemade orange marmalade which she used to create the delicious prize-winning stir-fry dish she calls "Company Chicken."

"It has a sweet-and-sour tang because of the oranges," she explained.

During the week Sibthorp dashes off to her job as a technical writer at Phoenix Group, Inc. in Farmington Hills after Emily's school bus has left at 7:10 a.m. She doesn't make it back to her cozy mobile home until 6:30 p.m., so Sibthorp has to race from her car to her kitchen as soon as she's parked.

"I have to. I have a hungry 11-year-old waiting for me," she laughed.

Sibthorp is bright and cheery as she prepares one of her family's favorite quick, but delicious meals



PHOTOS BY WILLIAM HANSEN

— Quick Beef Pasties. While she browns a pound of ground beef she "nukes" some cut-up carrots in the microwave.

"I usually use frozen peas and carrots, but I don't have any right now," she said as she sprinkled some onion powder over the browning beef.

After Sibthorp adds some cut-up leftover roast potatoes and canned gravy to the beef and carrots, she cuts six rounds from some pastry she's mixed up quickly, seals the edges of each pie and pops them into the oven where they will bake "just until the crust is done."

A delicious and easy cheesecake-like dessert, Peach Mousse Parfait, which can be whipped up

Delicious delecton: Emily Sibthorp, 11, tries to decide which Peach Mousse Parfait to choose for dessert. Sally Sibthorp rolls dough to make Quick Beef Pasties, one of Emily's favorite dinner entrees.



See WORKING MOM, 2B