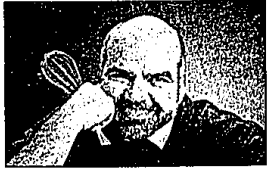


MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1993

# TASTE

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## TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

### Bake great cookies with love in your heart

This column will certainly appeal to you if you have children in school; you are a room parent; you have grand children; you plan on sending a goody box for the holidays; or you love cookies. Anyone who enjoys cookies will certainly appreciate the following information on cookie baking. If you have ever experienced the thrill of having to send three dozen cookies with your child to school for the class party, this information will probably save you from having to experience the all-night check-out at Meijer's.

For the best tasting cookies, I offer the following tips:

The amount of air incorporated into the creaming process is directly related to the volume of the finished baked goods. In basic terms, when the recipe says cream the fat with the sugar, cream it and cream it again. The mixture should be light and fluffy. How long is till "light and fluffy?"

I made three batches of cookies and creamed for 1, 2 and 4 minutes respectively. There was a difference, and the cookies creamed for almost 4 minutes were noticeably lighter.

Avoid whipped butters and spreads, and for the best tasting cookies, combine equal parts of shortening with butter.

#### Dry cookies

Dry cookies can be traced to two factors, either you added too much flour or baked them too long. Use dry measuring cups when measuring. Never pat or thump the flour into the cup, simply level with the straight edge of a knife or spatula.

Always set the timer for 1-2 minutes shorter than the time called for in the recipe. Oven temperatures vary. You can always cook for another minute, but you can never take it away.

For optimum results, use baking powder and baking soda within one year of purchase. If you use a new box of soda, freshen the drain with the old box and get a new one. Baking powder should be stored in an air-tight container and generally loses its strength to use after 12 months.

In order to get the leaveners working properly, and to avoid thin cookies, always preheat the oven at least 10 minutes before baking cookies.

#### Proper equipment

Contrary to popular belief, cookie sheets do make a difference. The best cookies are made on shiny aluminum pans and cookie sheets. Shiny pans brown lightly and evenly. Dark sheets may absorb heat and cause over-browning on the bottom.

Chef's secret if you're using these new insulated cookie sheets remember that cookies may not brown as much on the bottom, and they may take slightly longer to bake. For professional results, I recommend covering the sheet with parchment paper; cookies slide off, it's reusable, and the pans are a breeze to clean.

If you grease the pans before baking, always use shortening as butter tends to brown quickly and spray-on coatings sometimes cause sticking.

When you have a recipe that makes 4 dozen cookies, it's difficult to bake one at a time. For optimum results, one sheet in the center rack works best, however, you can place racks on the top and bottom thirds of the your oven.

Halfway between baking times, rotate the pans, and you'll still achieve good results. Another secret, use only cool cookie sheets. Dough dropped onto hot cookie sheets will melt and spread before baking.

We never had this problem when baking cookies with momma because we ate them as fast as they came out of the oven. The best cookies are allowed to rest for at least one minute on the sheet after baking, and then transferred to a wire rack for complete cooling. Steam from cooling cookies needs to evaporate, this prevents them from becoming soggy.

Cookies are done when they are firmly set and browned according to the recipe directions. When you touch them lightly with your finger, almost no imprint should remain.

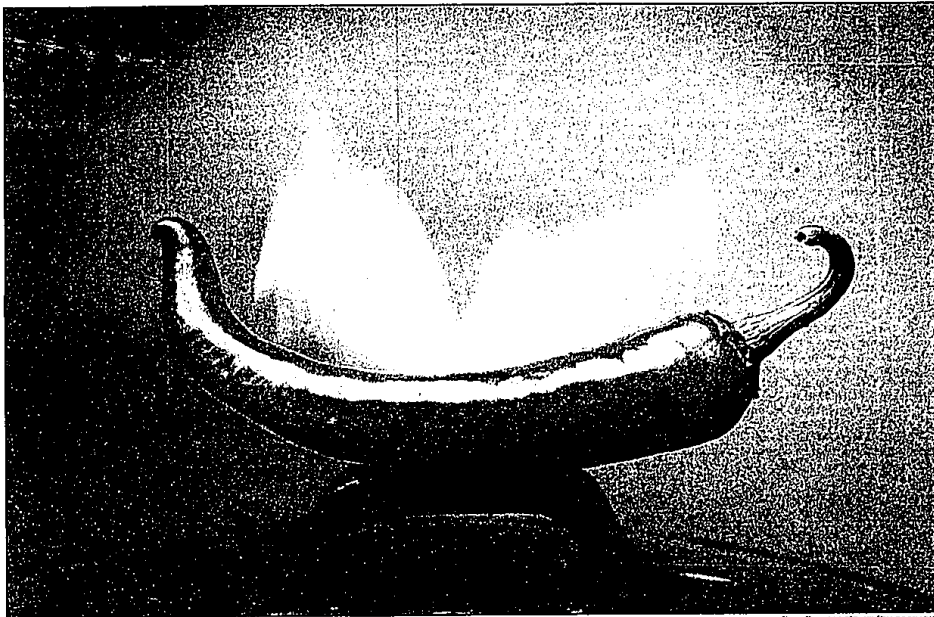
It would be cruel to joke to send a copy of this article to Aunt Mabel in Tallahassee knowing darn well her cookies double as snowman eyes and buttons, but baking cookies is an art in itself, and whenever you bake, always do it with love in your heart. Trust me, it does make a difference.

See Larry Janes' family-tested recipe inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-2041 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1896.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Just because you're a diabetic doesn't mean you can't enjoy fabulous desserts.
- Chefs Vera Ambrose and Kelli Lewton, owners of "2 Unique," a catering company, share tips and recipes.



DILL HRESLI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# CHILIES

## FIRE UP THE FLAVOR

### FIRE-EATER'S TIPS

Fabrito Cassini of Shopping Center Markets, offers the following tips for using chilies:



The heat in chilies is not contained in the seeds, although they may have some heat. Some 89 percent of the capsaicin, responsible for the heat, is located in the interior ribs of the pepper. There are uneven spots throughout pepper, but this is the main hot spot.

Every single chile has a different bite, even those that come from the same plant. Add peppers to a dish a little at a time, to control heat.

Sample hot peppers before deciding how to use them. Halve the pepper (don't forget rubber gloves!) and taste a sample from the section that doesn't have ribs. You can control the heat in a dish by discarding the seeds and cutting off the ribs.

If you ever overestimate your (or your guests') capacity for spiciness, don't try to put out the fire with soda or water or beer. Offer dairy products, starchy foods, such as bread, plain table sugar, or hard candy.

By JOAN BORLAM  
SPECIAL WRITER

In his search for a new route to the spice-laden Indies, Christopher Columbus had a different pepper in mind than what he found in the New World. When he returned to Spain, he described his find as "pepper more pungent than that of the Caucasus." Spice-hungry Europeans quickly adopted the new vegetable, which quickly spread to Asia and Africa. The world's cuisines were never the same!

Americans have developed an enthusiasm for spicy foods in the past few years - just witness the proliferation of Thai restaurants - and spicy menus hot peppers.

It's inevitable that cooks would want to serve spicy dishes at home, and produce departments, which only a year or so ago were stocking a few jalapenos, are now offering a representative choice of chiles, ranging from mild to mescalito.

According to Fabrito Cassini, produce buyer and merchandiser for Shopping Center Markets, "Spicy fat results. I carry about 15 kinds of chilies, fresh and dried, and customers are beginning to experiment with the hotter ones.

"Really, chilies are fairly new on the

market. A few years ago, they weren't generally available, except in certain ethnic markets. But now that they're on the market, we're seeing new varieties. Recently, we got two kinds of habaneros, yellow and red, from California. They're very hot. We also got a new mild chile, called Tequila, from Mexico. All Shopping Center Markets' chilies are prewrapped and labeled as to degree of heat."

Kon Horgan's fellow Livonia firefighters are no fire eaters, if Horgan's prize-winning chili is any indication of their tolerance for heat. Most recently, Horgan took first prize at the Michigan State Fair, but he's entered his fiery concoction in 12 other chili cook-offs and walked off with several awards.

Horgan makes his firehouse chili with fresh jalapeno, habanero and cayenne chilies, because "They usually take break out in a sweat when they eat it. But it's not really that hot," said Horgan, "I cut the chilies in small pieces, and they cook down, so you could never identify the peppers, or take a bite out of one."

Horgan said he started by adding small amounts, but the amount increased as the guys became accustomed to heat.

See CHILIES, 2B

## Switch to low-fat one product at a time



LAURA LETOBAR

JoAnn Jones of West Bloomfield is in a very common predicament. She knows that she and her husband Doug would benefit health-wise if she decreases their daily fat intake. But, like most of us, JoAnn has had a few bad experiences with fat-free and low-fat products.

When "fat-free" products first became available, many companies rushed to have their products on the shelves first. Unfortunately, taste sometimes was sacrificed. But, once food companies noticed that consumers were not continuing to buy their products, they realized that the benefits of low-fat did not compensate for a decrease in flavor.

JoAnn has decided to give low-fat products another try. She wants to learn how to shop wisely, and overhaul their eating habits. Like many of us, she feels she tends to be sporadic in her low-fat choices.

Instead of trying new low-fat substitutes, JoAnn tends not to try new products. This probably is due to the few bad experiences she has had in the past. It can be frustrating and expensive to try a new product, and be disappointed with the flavor or texture.

But remember, food companies are competing for the "fat-free market." They must make their products taste as close to the real thing as possible to remain competitive. The days of fat-free cheeses that never melt, and tinned like plastic are over!

JoAnn's recipe for Brunch Quiche was a challenge. I knew that it had to be close to the original in taste if I was going to make a believer out of her. So, instead of using all fat-free cheese I mixed low-fat and fat-free cheese in equal proportions.

See SWITCH, 2B



### Brunch Quiche Original Recipe

- 1/2 of a 1-pound package elbow noodles, uncooked
- 6 to 8 slices bacon, chopped
- 2 cups shredded American cheese
- 2 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 cups soft bread cubes
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 small green bell pepper, finely chopped
- 4 eggs, separated
- 2 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 6 to 8 drops bottled hot pepper sauce
- Red salsa (optional)

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Prepare noodles according to package directions; drain. In medium bowl, combine macaroni, bacon, cheeses, bread cubes, onion and green pepper. In medium bowl, beat together egg yolks, milk, salt and hot pepper sauce. Add to macaroni mixture; mix well. In large bowl, beat egg whites until stiff. Fold into macaroni mixture. Pour into buttered 12-inch quiche dish or 13 by 9-inch baking dish. Place a shallow baking dish with 1 to 2 inches water on lowest rack of oven. Place quiche on center rack. Bake until set and knife inserted in center comes out clean, about 1 hour. Let stand 5 minutes before cutting. Garnish as desired. Serve with salsa. Refrigerate leftovers. Makes 10 to 12 servings.

## RECIPE MAKE OVER



### Brunch Quiche Reduced-Fat Recipe

- 1/2 of a 1-pound package elbow noodles, uncooked
- 2 tablespoons Baco's imitation bacon bits
- 2 cups Kraft Healthy Favorites shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cups Healthy Choice fat free shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cups fat-free bread cubes (cut from 2 slices of fat-free bread)
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 small green bell pepper, finely chopped
- Egg Beaters egg substitute equal to 4 eggs
- 2 cups skim milk
- 6 to 8 drops bottled hot pepper sauce
- Red salsa (optional)

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Prepare pasta according to directions on package; drain. In a large bowl, combine macaroni, bacon bits, cheeses, bread cubes, onion and green pepper. In a medium bowl, beat together Egg Beaters, milk and hot pepper sauce. Add to macaroni mixture; mix well. Pour into 13 by 9-inch non-stick baking pan and cover with foil. Place a shallow baking dish with 1 to 2 inches of water on lowest rack of oven. Place quiche on center rack. Bake until set and knife inserted in center comes out clean, about 1 hour. Let stand 5 minutes before serving to allow excess liquid to evaporate. Serve with salsa. Makes 10 servings.