

# TASTE

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1993

### TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

## How to pick, store and cook potatoes

Responses on my voice mail are any indication, quite a few of you love potatoes. The big question was "what are Yukon Gold potatoes?" For the uninformed, Yukon Golds are specialty potatoes with a slight golden color. You can find them at most better grocery stores. I have seen, and bought, them at Kroger.

Reference was made to the mashed potato story in the November/December issue of "Cook's Illustrated" magazine that claims Yukon Golds make the "ultimate mashed potato."

Without doubt, Yukon Golds are tops, especially with their high starch content and rich flavor. Common Russets, also known for their starch, will suffice. Don't underestimate the Yukon Gold for baking. It doesn't need a ton of butter. Just a warning though, the best potato also comes with one of the best price tags. Yukon Golds aren't cheap; they're not something you would choose to use too frequently. But once you taste them, you'll be a convert and will search them out whenever you grocery shop.

Yukon Golds aside, personal favorites are also the sweet potato and yam. These are two rather distinct types of potato. Both are tubers and hail from the morning glory plant. What you know as a sweet potato is a rather dry type with pinky-yellow flesh.

A yam, on the other hand is sweeter, softer, much more moist and vividly orange colored. Generally speaking, a sweet potato will look like an orange potato with a point for a bottom. Yams generally have a more rounded bottom and more closely resemble an Irish potato.

Sweet potatoes and yams can be baked, boiled, fried or roasted like Irish potatoes. The sweet potato lends itself a little more to casseroles that are sweetened with brown sugar, honey, molasses and marshmallows, especially during the holidays.

There are two other basic choices, other than canned, frozen or dehydrated for potato lovers. The two types generally found in most markets are the one that is the skin, rounded whites and the oblong russet Burbanks or Idahos.

The potatoes with the highest starch make the best all around cooking potatoes, so russets top the list of Janes Gang favorites. A little-known fact you might be interested in regarding potatoes is that the older they are, the better they are. Seems that the older potatoes have a tendency to freeze in cold storage, making them starchier.

New baby red skins should be boiled only and can be lightly roasted if parboiled.

### Storing and choosing

When it comes to choosing and storing potatoes, you should avoid potatoes that are green, or have a green tinge. The green tinge means that those potatoes have been exposed to a lot of sunlight. Never eat the sprouted eyes or the green tinge of a potato because those parts are poisonous. Also, if you have ever cut into a potato and noticed a black ring under the skin, those potatoes have been frost-bitten and, again, should not be used.

Potatoes do not lend themselves to freezing very well. To store potatoes, keep them in their mesh bag you bought them in. Never attempt to store potatoes in those plastic deli-type bags as they do need air to circulate. The cooler the temperatures, the longer the potatoes will stay fresh. A garage or cool sunporch inside a potato crate from your local produce store is best.

Last, but certainly not least, it's best not to attempt to store any leftover potatoes. "The Joy of Cooking" says that potatoes lose their meanness and their subtle down-to-earth flavor and at best, leftover potatoes should be incorporated into a soup base. Not one to disagree with the likes of Irma Rombauer and Marion Becker, I always save the leftover mashed potatoes for potato pancakes and any leftover baked potatoes always make it into the frypan for fried potatoes. Yes, I have, on occasion, thickened a soup with leftover mashed potatoes and when stirred into milk or buttermilk, those instant potatoes make for rich thickening agent. They dissolve without the slightest hint of a lumpy and add a stick-to-your-ribs heartiness that you'll enjoy.

Also, if you love baked potatoes as much as we do, never wrap them in foil as the foil inhibits flakiness because too much of the moisture is retained. The best baked potatoes are often placed on a bed of rock salt to draw out the moisture.

So when it comes to planning your Thanksgiving dinner, you now have all the facts about potatoes you'll ever need.

See Larry Janes' family-tested recipes inside. To leave a message for Chef Larry, dial 953-2047 on a touch-tone telephone, then mailbox number 1886.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Find out who won our Thanksgiving turkey-stuffing contest.
- Laura Letolnar shares more low-fat recipes in her Recipe Makeover column.

# FEAST

on festive  
meatless

dishes

Meet some people who will be serving a delicious variety of dishes on Thanksgiving Day. Vegetables are the centerpiece of their meal.

BY SANDRA DALKA-PRYSBY  
SPECIAL WRITER



It's time for the Thanksgiving feast. The table is laden with such traditional dishes as stuffing, potatoes, gravy and, of course, sweet potatoes. Also, there's something with pumpkin, and something with cranberries. Now for the piece de resistance. Waiting to be carved - make that "cut" - is a large, nicely browned, meatless loaf.

Meatless loaf? Did someone say "meatless loaf?"

That's what Lorraine Lane of Livonia said she plans to serve for Thanksgiving dinner, much to the delight of her husband, Dick. The Lanes, like a growing number of others, are vegetarians to whom the traditional "Thanksgiving turkey is taboo."

"We're vegetarians because it's a healthy way to eat," said Dick, retired hospital administrator. His wife, a public health nurse in Oakland County, agreed. "When I used to eat meat, I felt sluggish. On a vegetarian diet, I feel better and more alert." Lorraine prepares the Lanes' meals, and Dick cleans up. "I like cooking vegetarian dishes," she said. "I find this type of cooking to be more creative, worthwhile and a timesaver compared to normal meat-and-potatoes fare. And frankly like the tasty recipes that result from using combinations of nuts, grains, fruits and vegetables," she said.

Dick, a vegetarian for 30 years,



Family favorite: Dick and Lorraine Lane will feast on this delicious meatless loaf made with healthy ingredients on Thanksgiving Day. They are among those people whose holiday celebrations do not include meat.

said that although he enjoys the taste of vegetarian food, it's the health factor - and it alone - that keeps him committed to his lifestyle. "Certain types of cancer have been found to have a direct link to animal meat, and animal fat is a culprit in heart disease," he said. "Besides, a healthy vegetarian diet has allowed me to maintain my proper weight over the years."

Jennie Weaver is also concerned about health. That is one reason she and

her family are vegetarians. Another reason stems from their religious beliefs. "Some Seventh-day Adventists, like us, believe that we should follow a vegetarian lifestyle," she said.

Weaver is chairman of the sixth annual Vegetarian Holiday Tasting Extravaganza, scheduled for 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 21, at the Metropolitan Seventh-day Adventist Church in Plymouth. (See details inside.)

"This event is a great way for those interested in vegetarian cooking to taste more than 40 different creations and to talk to the chefs who prepared the dishes," she said.

Weaver said she became a vegetarian while attending a church boarding school as a teenager. "That was 20 years ago, and now, with a degree in physical education and nutrition, I

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## For holiday desserts in a hurry, serve Port

### FOCUS ON WINE



ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

Over the next several weeks, area wine merchants will be promoting Ports because the 1991 vintage Ports are arriving. The 1991 vintage is the first to be declared since 1985. Pre-release tastings we've done show the 1991 Ports to be overly fruity in their youth, but with the requisite richness to mature to the quality of the acclaimed 1977 vintage.

Arrival of the 1991 Ports offers an opportunity to buy a case for cellaring and enjoyment well into the next century. But what Ports can be drunk now, especially as holiday liquid desserts?

To answer that question, it's necessary to understand that Port (Porto) is divided into two categories: wood-matured Port, aged in wood as the name implies, and vintage Port, which ages in the characteristic black glass bottle. Vintage Ports are produced in years with nearly perfect weather conditions. They represent just 2 percent of Port production. Their rarity makes them expensive.

Wood-matured Ports, on the other hand, are the norm of Port production and come in a variety of styles. They are bottled at optimum drinking potential and should be consumed within 18 months to two years after bottling. They retain their freshness for several weeks after being opened. They do not need decanting because any sediment (fines) was thrown in the cask during the wood maturation period. To make a study of which styles you prefer, we sug-



VINEYARD BRANDS

Port: Warré's Sir William is a 10-year Tawny. Warré's Nimrod is a step up in flavor and in richness.

gest focusing on one producer and working your way, bottle by bottle, through the line to gain an understanding. Warré's Ports, which are medium weight, offer a tasty challenge for such a learning adventure. Warré's, founded in 1670 and today owned by the Symington family, is the oldest of all British Port shippers. The Symingtons have been Port producers and shippers from father to son for more than a century. They also own Graham, Dow, Gould Campbell, Smith Woodhouse and Quarles Harris Port houses. We're limiting our discussion in this column to Ports produced from red grapes. They fall into the following types - Ruby, Tawny, Vintage Character, Late

### Wine Selections of the Week

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, we have several red wines as well as whites to compliment turkey and the many varied tastes at a festive Thanksgiving Day table.

- From Meridian Vineyards, winemaker Chuck Orman offers two spectacular chardonnays:
  - 1991 Meridian Vineyards Santa Barbara Coast Chardonnay (\$11)
  - 1991 Meridian Vineyards Edna Valley Chardonnay (\$16.50)

Red wines match as well (and maybe better) as white at the holiday table. Try:

- 1991 Chateau Souverain Merlot (\$11.25)
- 1991 Fisher Vineyards Merlot (\$11.50)
- 1990 Silverado Limited Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$18)
- 1989 Beringer Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$43)
- 1990 Bollini Merlot, Trentino, Italy (\$9)

Bottled Vintage, 10- and 20-Year-Old Tawny and Single quinta (estate).

### Ruby Ports

Ruby Ports are full, fresh, vigorous and sweet. They are a blend of different years with an average age of three years. Warré's Warrior Port (\$11) averages eight years old. It's fruity and easy drinking. While falling into the category of a Ruby Port by color, Warrior is more properly referred to as a Vintage Character Port because of its complexity.

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