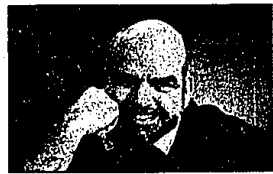


MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1994

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TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

Casino food safe bet, odds favor you in Vegas

Planning any late winter or early spring travel? If you're headed to sunny Las Vegas, you might be interested in hearing about what I encountered recently. It could help clear your mind of any mishaps along the way. Not that yours truly is a travel expert, but experience has taught me many lessons.

I'm writing this column somewhere over Utah heading back to the wintry Midwest after spending four glorious days in Las Vegas. The Janes Gang - momma, dad, twin sister Mary and a host of cousins - descended on Glitter Gulch hoping momma would win the slot tournament at the Westward Ho, and we would return with our pockets bulging.

Momma didn't win, and we were all bulging, not from winning Megabucks or Quartermania, but from experiencing one of Las Vegas' finer qualities, the all-you-can-eat buffet. Before we regress to the buffet, allow me a few insights on "air" fare.

Travel insights

I firmly believe you get what you pay for. When you pay a little over \$220 for round trip airfare prime rib and fresh grilled tuna are certainly not expected on the in-flight catering menu.

Having experienced charter air service in the past, my expectations were not those of one flying first class. Suffice it to say that the four hours spent on the charter were as pleasant as the tub of chicken and pasta (made with overcooked noodles and lunch meat-style chicken chunks) complete with a plastic fork (no knife).

There is only one thing to say about charter airline food folks, and that is simply to forget it and bring your own.

Casino cuisine

On a much more positive, and somewhat surprising note, I am pleased to report that there seems to be a changing of the guard in corporate food service offices throughout the casinos. Don't be misled here folks, you can still find "beef ala Dutch" (the ingredients still undefinable to this writer) and leather tough roast beef carved by someone wearing a white jacket and a hair net in any casino buffet. You might even have to bypass the "stuffed sole" sitting under a heat lamp, but on Friday night, Harrah's chefs were charming, much to my surprise, fresh Alaskan salmon filets, and the tab was only \$5.95.

Saturday night at Circus Circus rivaled Harrah's with steamed crab legs, and they weren't snow crab either, while the Mirage breakfast buffet was replete with fresh fruit, hot and cold cereal assortment and sausage that actually looked edible.

It wasn't served on a plastic plate or smothered in what Las Vegas think is country gravy. For the uninitiated, let me pass along a little secret - some casinos actually use the rendered grease from cooking your sausage and bacon to make their gravy.

One last word on casino food and that is simply that anyone who travels a half round the dog deserves exactly what they get. If the slots don't pay out, your gut certainly will. If the thought of dining during normal times and waiting like a pen of cattle in the buffet line concerns you, the best times to buffet are between normal hours, Las Vegas offers some consistently good restaurant dining experiences.

Again, as with air travel, you get what you pay for. Remember that the person serving you on that cheap sandwich probably couldn't cut the mustard at a hotel. Service can be spotty if downright nonexistent.

Pietro's offers center strip visitors a particularly enjoyable Italian dining experience, but for good food and a great value, cab it over to Warren Kilar's Garlic Cafe. If you, if the slots you'll find it in everything from soup to ice cream there. One of my Las Vegas contacts snuck me a privy copy of the new menu for the Planet Hollywood restaurant soon to open in the Forum Shops at Caesars Palace.

Movie memorabilia lovers will go wild, but so will those who enjoy cutting edge cuisine from La-La land. Look for a March opening. Old downtown Las Vegas sandwich lovers will certainly appreciate the hot pastrami sandwiches at the Four Queens (momma's favorite) and if you go there, go at night when the lights are as wild as the city itself.

Dining experiences abound everywhere in Las Vegas from the 49 cent breakfast to the \$50 dinner, but remember, if you fly there via charter, pack your own lunch.

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

LOOKING AHEAD

- What to watch for in Taste next week:
- Hearts everywhere beat with love for Sanders hot fudge.
- Tasty sips from wine columnist Eleanor and Ray Head

BIG LOSERS

Lose weight gradually to win battle of the bulge



BY BARBARA WILSON
STAFF WRITER

The words successful and loser are seldom applied to the same individuals. In the case of people who have managed to lose weight and maintain that loss, however, the term "successful losers" fits.

There are a score of diet plans on the market, each competing for the money and the attention of those who have battled the bulge most of their lives.

Some of the support offered by these programs is helpful to those who need a little extra hand-holding, but dietitians agree the best plan is a well-balanced diet with an eye to preparation, fat content, snacking and exercise.

"Forget the word diet," said Annapolis Hospital dietitian Cinde Rutkowski. "For long-

lasting weight loss, it is best to make reasonable changes to the daily food plan and keep track of the foods you eat."

Strict diets can set people up for failure and then even more weight gain, according to Robin Ferris, director of the Institute for the Study of Eating Disorders in Novi.

"Gradual weight loss is the best," Ferris said. "Understand that a half pound loss a week is just fine and don't put such high expectations on yourself."

Rose Marie Noble of Canton Township and Cheryl Keller of Southfield are determined, this time, to maintain their

weight. Noble lost 62 pounds and Keller lost 214 pounds using the Weight Watchers plan.

"I don't really feel like I gave up anything, as a matter of fact I usually feel quite full," Noble said. "I'm learning to watch what I eat and to prepare foods with lower fat."

Keller admits she felt hungry when she first started the plan, but said things are getting a little easier now. With another 66 pounds to lose, Keller tipped the scale at 416

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Exercise
is an important
part of all diet plans

Dig into catalogs to plot gourmet garden

BY ELEANORE AND RAY HEALD
SPECIAL WRITERS

If you'd like to make your summer dinner table a place of delight and discovery, you need to start planning. If you've only planted packaged seeds from a local garden supply center, you may want to expand your horizons by investigating heirloom seeds available through catalogs.

Will Horwath of Southfield is an avid gardener. "It has always been a joy for me to watch things grow," Horwath said. "Weeding was never a chore."

Horwath makes a point of choosing vegetables that are unique. "I grow things you can't get at a produce market in high season like tomatillos. They make incredible salsas. Silver Queen corn doesn't transport well even when Michigan's commercial farmers grow it so that's a good one to choose. There's nothing like the flavor of fresh-picked vegetables. Everyone realizes this about corn, but it's true for all vegetables."

Horwath emphasizes the beauty of a garden. "Eggplants are pretty to grow, especially the small Oriental varieties suitable for stuffing," he said. "Where else, but in your own garden, can you get a zucchini as big as your little finger with the flower still on the end? Grow red cabbage, it's beautiful."

As soon as the ground can be worked, Horwath plants snow peas and spinach, but because Michigan's growing season is short, a part of his garden focuses on vegetables that can be harvested during the fall, and frequently into early winter if plants are covered with straw.

"I refer to these vegetables as the cabbage and tuber varieties including potatoes, onions, celeriac, carrots, leeks and parsnips," he said. "It's nice in the fall and early winter, when everything's dying, to continue picking a vegetable from a garden."

Horwath also grows what are affectionately called winter greens including Bok choy (Chinese cabbage), Swiss chard (both red and green), broccoli, kale and collard greens. "When frost hits cabbage and tuber crops, they don't die, they get sweeter," Horwath said.

Because Oakland University professor Bob Christie savors the taste of homegrown tomatoes, he plants "long keepers" in his Rochester Hills backyard garden. "You need to be conscious of fall weather patterns and monitor the first frost," he said. "But if you cover long keeper tomato plants on a frosty night and pick as late

Seed sources for short-season vegetable varieties and heirloom vegetables with superior flavor:

- The Cook's Garden, P.O. Box 535, Londonderry, VT 05148 (802) 824-3400
- The Natural Gardening Company, 217 San Anselmo Ave., San Anselmo, CA 94960 (415) 456-5060
- Nichol's Garden Nursery, 1190 North Pacific Highway, Albany, OR 97321 (503) 928-9280
- Seeds Blum, Idaho City Stage, Boise, ID 83706 (208) 336-8264
- Seed Savers Exchange, 3076 N. Winn Rd., Decorah, IA 52101 (319) 382-5990
- Shepherd's Garden Seeds, 30 Irene St., Torrington, CT 06790 (203) 482-3638
- Territorial Seed Company, 20 Palmer Ave., Cottage Grove, OR 97424 (503) 942-9547

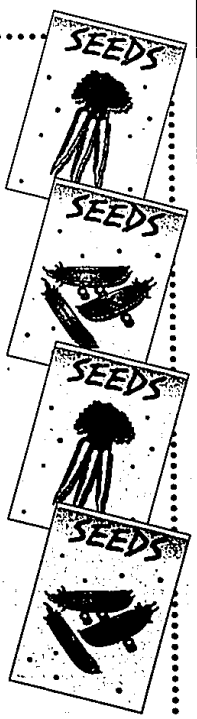
Herb Plant Source

Fox Hill Farm, 444 W. Michigan Ave., Box 7, Parma, MI 49269 (517) 531-3179. Fox Hill Farm has a mail-order shopping list featuring 400 varieties of herbs that are greenhouse propagated in 3-inch and 4-inch pots. Proprietor Marilyn Hampstead advises ordering early to assure the best selection. Plants will be shipped when it is time to plant.

Gardening Bulletins

Available from your County Cooperative Extension Service, gardening bulletins are free unless a price is listed. For more information, call (810) 858-0880 in Oakland County or (313) 494-3011 in Wayne County.

- Home Vegetable Garden (E529), 35 cents
- Home Vegetable Garden Variety Recommendations (E760A)
- Home Vegetable Garden disease, Insect and Weed Control (E-760B), 80 cents
- Family Vegetable Garden Series of 26 bulletins (E824, 1-26) and Vegetable Tips (E-1769), 50 cents



See **CATALOGS**, 2B