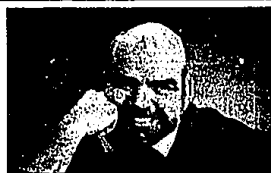


TASTE

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MONDAY, MARCH 14, 1994

TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JAMES

Markets stock up on exotic vegetables

Excuse me folks, but was I sleeping when someone secretly stocked my favorite grocery and produce store with an abundant assortment of vegetables with exotic names like rapini, enoki, and jicama?

Exotic choices

At Chimento's market in Livonia, I almost stumbled over gigantic portobello mushrooms bigger than a Frisbee.

I remember having to drive to LaColomona/Honey Bee Market in the heart of Detroit's Mexicantown for fresh chili peppers. Now Papa Joe's in Rochester stocks poblanos, jalapenos, habaneros, and other other varieties with enough firepower to light up the west side.

The jicamas were as abundant as coconuts at Nino Salvaggio's in West Bloomfield, while fresh raw horseradish was in great supply for Passover meals at the Shopping Center Market in Southfield.

I used to think that kiwi was exotic. Now, my produce market is a phone call away from ordering the gooseberries that my Uncle Earl would always request in a pie my sister Rose made with gooseberries gleaned from a northern farmer.

Either the popularity of iceberg lettuce is fading, or folks in Canton are on a Caesar salad kick. At Bob's Market in Canton, there were two feet of space for iceberg lettuce, and over six feet of space afforded romaine lettuce.

World markets

What's making all this possible? We might be on the information super highway, but overnight air transport and expanding world trade markets have opened the door to exotic mangoes from southeast Asia and mustard greens from India. Parsley root, originally from The Netherlands, is now grown exclusively in, get this folks, New Jersey!

Scientific researchers have found ways to keep a tomato shelf stable for almost 30 days. They've discovered a way to use the spores from morel mushrooms to be able to grow them year 'round in Mason, Mich.

Air express, world trade and scientific research certainly has helped expand our taste buds. The popularity of ethnic cuisines, a new appreciation of our own country's native regional products, and growing awareness of sound nutritional principles certainly must mean something to produce buyers nationwide, who are offering us more choices than ever before.

All of this is fine and dandy, and it certainly has expanded the taste horizons of the Janes Gang, but what about you?

Asking questions

When it comes to knowing the difference between arugula and zapotes, sooner or later the savvy shopper will have to begin asking questions.

Chances are nil that you might catch Julia Child on Good Morning America discoursing on tomatoes the day you need to buy a tomato.

Then again, if you ask the kid at the store with an earring making \$4.15 an hour will be able to help you choose a ripe loquat, you've been sniffing too many prickly pears.

Ask for the produce manager when you see something that intrigues you. Consider it a free lesson in world trade, local geography and the fabled art of uncovering the uncommon vegetable.

A good source is Elizabeth Schneider's "Uncommon Fruits and Vegetables," (Harper & Row, copyright 1988). Your local library is another logical source, and the new computer card catalog makes researching fun and fun.

When you see something new at the market, check it out and give it a try. Just think of all those things your mother made you try that are an important part of your culinary regimen.

First timers might want to pick up a jicama, peel it and slice it into sticks as you would a carrot. Chill for about 30 minutes and taste what you've been missing.

I just couldn't believe my eyes when I checked momma's recipe box and found a recipe using nopales, also known as cactus pads. The recipe came from her snowbird friend Jean. They're available locally at Mexican markets and can be bought fresh or canned.

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:

- Families prepare to celebrate the Jewish festival of Passover.
- Touted as softer than cabernet sauvignon, merlot is the stylish "in" varietal among premium red wine consumers.



JIM JAGIELSKI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Traditional meal: Anna Gavin passes a plate of steamed carrots to her son Patrick as the family sits down to a traditional Irish meal. Sean, 7, (left), Mike and Mick wait their turn. Dinner includes baked Shannon salmon, boiled potatoes, and nutty blarney buns for dessert.

■ Anna Gavin, a nursing student and mother of three boys, doesn't have time to fiddle around the kitchen. Her traditional Irish dishes are easy.

BY KEELY WYGNON
STAFF WRITER



It's hard to believe the sumptuous dinner of baked Shannon salmon, steamed carrots, boiled potatoes, Irish minted peas and nutty blarney buns took Anna Gavin of Bedford less than an hour to make. For a little holiday sparkle, she put mint-flavored ice cubes in glasses of apple juice for her

family to enjoy.

"The salmon is delicious, different and quick," said Anna. As the busy mother of three boys and a second-semester nursing student at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, she doesn't have time to fiddle around the kitchen.

Anna leaves fiddling to her husband, Mick, and son Mike, 17. Sean, 7, plays the bodhran, a goat skin Irish drum. Son Patrick, 15, is a gold medal gymnast and member of the boys competitive team at the Michigan Academy of Gymnastics in Westland.

Married for 13 years, Mick and Anna met at the Gaelic League Irish American Club in Detroit where she was giving tin whistle lessons.

Mick Gavin, the youngest of nine children who grew up in East Clare in southwest Ireland, comes from a family of musicians. He plays fiddle

and button accordion.

Anna was born in Detroit and plays piano, guitar and tin whistle. Her father, a history professor at the University of Detroit, was raised in Corktown. Anna, who earned a fine arts degree from the University of Detroit, remembers childhood visits to her grandmother in Corktown, learning about Irish literature from her father, and going to basement parties where Irish musicians played.

Mick came to the United States as a musician, and later fell back on floorcovering, the trade he learned in

Ireland, to support his family. Gavin, owner of Mick Gavin's Floorcoverings, spends his days taking care of business. In his spare time he plays the fiddle, passing his love of Irish music on to his sons.

"I enjoy it. It has made my life wonderful," said Mick, who performs with other musicians in the metro Detroit area.

Father and sons are busy rehearsing for an Irish festival of music, song and dance 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. Thursday, March 17, at the Bonnie Brook Country Club, 19950 Telegraph (be-

tween Seven Mile and Eight Mile) in Detroit. The price is \$6; children are free. There will be continuous entertainment, a cash bar, and corned beef and cabbage dinners will be sold. For more information, call 537-3489.

"It's a family event," said Gavin, explaining how the annual festival began nine years ago. "We had a lot of calls over the years from people who wanted to know what was going on culturally on St. Patrick's Day."

Featured performers include Ed McGlinchey, John Sands, Charlie Wilkie, the Kitty Heinzman Ceili Dancers and members of the U.S. and Canadian Champion City of Detroit Pipe Band.

Music is just one way the Gavins have given their sons a taste of Ireland. Anna has learned how to make many of the dishes her husband cherishes, including steak and kidney pie.

"When we first got married, he didn't think dinner was dinner without potatoes," said Anna.

"I miss home-baked bread and fresh sausage," said Mick. "We had beef once a week on Sunday. My mother raised chickens and turkeys. We had a small farm and ran a little grocery store."

Trout, salmon and herring are part of an Irish menu, along with beef and lamb stews, and ham with boiled cabbage. Root vegetables—potatoes, carrots, turnips, parsnips and beets—are meal staples.

If you want to serve a traditional dish on St. Patrick's Day, serve ham with cabbage. "Corned beef was cheaper than ham, that's why they used it when they came to this country," said Mick. "Beef is an export item in Ireland. It's expensive."

See recipes inside.

St. Patrick's Day feast features hearty fare



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sampling: Pam Maloney, an officer in the Detroit Chapter of the Irish American Cultural Institute, and Botsford Inn owner Creon Smith, sample authentic Irish dishes that will be served at the inn on St. Patrick's Day.

BY LARRY JAMES
SPECIAL WRITER

I can't remember if it was St. Patrick or Patrick the bartender at my favorite Irish pub who coined the phrase "Everyone's Irish on St. Patrick's Day."

Unfa-unlately, not being Irish, I was led to believe that corned beef, cabbage, potatoes, green beer and Irish whiskey were Irish culinary traditions. The sole Irish cooking tradition passed on to me in cooking school was the simple process of making soda bread and scones, certainly classified as "no brainers" because they require basic measuring, not much handling, and no yeast to worry about.

But who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks? The Irish possess a culinary heritage of hearty, homestyle comfort foods that we all have grown to love, cherish and enjoy.

Our story begins at the Irish Import Shop at 5472 Shearer in Dearborn. Owner Jack Derrig seems to have cornered the Irish market with his noted scones, fruitcakes, shortbread and the "only USDA-approved Irish sausage in the United States," says Derrig, host of his own Irish radio show on WMZK-Radio, 690 on the AM dial.

Visiting Derrig whetted my appetite for more Irish food. I found myself totally immersed in Irish food and customs when Julie Demery and Pam and Jerry Maloney invited me to share an evening meal of fine Irish smoked salmon, brown soda bread, an Irish fondue and ice cream with an Irish whiskey sauce.

The Maloney's of Southfield and Demery of

See FEAST, 2B