

TASTE

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1994

TASTE BUYS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Local gourmet shops rescue harried hosts

It never fails to happen at least once during the holidays. Somewhere, somehow, or someone misplaced that incredible recipe or ingredient for a party, and you just don't have time to search for it.

That's why, when placed between the proverbial rock and a hard place, I always remember my secret stores. These are places I can run into and get what I need, when I need it, and not end up paying an arm and a leg.

You know the kind of places I'm talking about—local merchants with plenty of check-outs and cashiers who never ask for a driver's license, two major credit cards and rights to your first born child. Those nifty little neighborhood places that don't mind looking in the back room for some mushrooms, the blue corn chips your friends love, or a long cinnamon stick for your hot buttered rum.

Helpful merchants

In Livonia, there's Chimento's. I'll go in to buy a hunk of Parmesan and walk out with \$60 worth of groceries. When I'm up in Birmingham or Bloomfield, I go crazy over the gourmet food selections at the Long Lake Market. I've yet to make a stop at Northland without hopping on Northwestern Highway for a five minute ride to The Merchant of Vino in Southfield.

In Rochester there's another one of my favorite markets, Pappa Joe's. The newly opened Roadside Market in Plymouth gets my business, especially when I'm in need of fresh herbs and flowers. Heck, I've even driven to downtown Milford for a trip to Colasanti's Market and Snook's Meats.

These are independent retailers who will go out of their way to bring in nothing but the finest in produce, meat, gourmet goodies, wine and specialty foods.

If you have yet to discover them in your area, there's never been a better time to see them than now. In addition to keeping those gourmet retailers on the top of my list, I also wouldn't consider it a holiday without a visit to a GFS Marketplace. Tucked away in Westland, Farmington Hills, Rochester Hills and Troy, just to mention a few locations, the GFS Marketplaces are no-member-ship food service stores that allow folks like you and me to purchase what the restaurants and caterers do. For example, Rumaki lovers know the time involved in wrapping those bacon strips around tiny pieces of water chestnuts and securing it all with a toothpick. GFS Marketplace has these and other nifty hot and cold appetizers already prepared and individually quick frozen at less than what it would cost to make! Last minute entertainers will marvel at their selection of top-of-the-line gourmet desserts.

If the thought of renting serving pieces has you up in arms, you won't believe what they're making nowadays in molded plastic that again would be half the price of rentals. Just one of the many little secrets hiding at GFS Marketplace is their unbaked cookie dough—a boon to harried room moms and dads who would normally spend all night mixing ingredients, rolling and cutting cookie dough.

Choice meats

Searching for the freshest turkey, goose, or duck for that special holiday meal? Did you know that you can still see them live, smell them in all their glory and within 20 minutes, take them home all ready to roast? Al's Poultry & Seafood and Capitol Poultry down at the Eastern Market are just two of those Dicksonian places where you can still find live poultry. While down at the Market, if you ever find yourself in need of a whole suckling pig, or some of the best corned beef brisket in town, check out the helpful folks at Ronnie's Meats in the Gratiot Central Market just across the expressway from the Eastern Market. Exotic oyster and shellfish lovers will certainly appreciate the expertise of Kevin Dean and the folks at Superior Fish in Royal Oak.

I'm doing a small party for some special friends who love fresh oysters. Superior Fish will locate and fly in an assortment of Belona, Chesapeake, Olympia and Hog Island Sweetwaters, just to name a few. Ditto for live lobsters and all the paraphernalia needed to enjoy them.

See Larry Jones' family-tested recipes inside. Chef Larry is a free-lance writer for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave a voice mail message for him dial (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then mailbox number 1888.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- A strong friendship and good food makes the end of each year special for two local couples.
- Toast the New Year with alcohol-free drinks.

FAMILY TRADITIONS SHINE BRIGHTLY ON CHRISTMAS EVE

■ Christmas Eve is filled with the magic of anticipation. It's a time for sharing hope, gratitude and good food with those we love.

BY RENEE SKOGLUND
SPECIAL WRITER

"'Twas the night before Christmas..."

And all through the house, soups are simmering, cakes are baking, and roasts are roasting in preparation for an evening of feasting with family and friends. About the only thing not on the menu are sugar plums, but those are bound to dance in the heads of sleepy children later on.

For many, Christmas Eve is the focal point of the entire holiday season. Whether a cultural or religious tradition, or simply a matter of dividing time between "his" and "her" family, celebrating Christmas Eve is filled with the magic of anticipation. "Everybody waits with hope and new adventure for the new year—a big welcome," said Alice Lozinski of Livonia who works as a nurse at St. Mary Hospital.

Lozinski immigrated from Poland in 1988, bringing with her Christmas customs from the old country. On Christmas Eve, her family, which includes husband Weldomer and children David, 22, and Diana, 28, share "Opatek," unleavened wafers of bread, which symbolize peace.



Herbed beef tenderloin and meatballs

Festive and elegant: Herbed Beef Tenderloin roast is a favorite during the holidays because it's easy, elegant and delicious.

with their guests. Aunts, uncles and in-laws arrive early in the evening to participate in the 12-dish Polish feast.

In keeping with tradition, no meat is served, but it's not missed. No wonder. Mushroom, fruit and poppy seed soups, pierogi made with cabbage, potatoes and poppy seed, apple and cheese cakes fill the table. And, of course there's Lozinski's glorious nut torte. "Very moist, melt-in-your-mouth," she says.

Christmas Eve remains wonderfully predictable in the Lozinski household. "First of all, before dinner you get the holy bread

(Opatek) and exchange good wishes among each other. After dinner, especially when there's lots of children, you exchange presents. After that, you relax, talk and then leave the house at 11:30 p.m. for Midnight Mass."

After church, there's sneak previews of the Christmas ham. Lozinski doesn't plan on altering tradition. "My parents have done this, my grandparents, and I have done this for 27 years. My children do this."

Mary Callaghan Lynch, a Bloomfield Village resident who sings with the Michigan Opera Theatre, knows all about tradition. Growing up, she and any

number of her 17 brothers and sisters participated in a family Christmas play directed by her mother, Mary Callaghan. And, being a musically inclined family, the Callaghans sang lots of carols.

"We'd all sing Silent Night by candlelight and walk upstairs. My father was choir and music director of Holy Name Church in Birmingham, and the older kids would all sing in the choir. When we came back we'd have breakfast at 1:30 or 2 a.m."

Lynch now lives with her husband, Patrick, and two children, Caitlin, 14, and Patrick,

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Pop a cork, let the celebration begin!

Elegant, welcoming, celebratory, life-style enhancing, the epitome of holiday celebration and conviviality wrapped in a distinctive bottle. What is it? Champagne of course!

The one and only champagne comes exclusively from the province of the same name in France. Other countries and the United States make sparkling wine using the centuries-old, traditional champagne method (methode champenoise). Many of these products are of high quality, but cannot be considered champagne, even though some producers continue to misuse the term on the label.

Champagnes and sparkling wines come in a variety of styles. Nonvintage (NV) is a blend of wines from one year's harvest with a small percentage of reserve wines from previous harvests. It is generally aged two to three years on yeast in the bottle before being disgorged and ready for market distribution.

Vintage is a blend of wines from one harvest only. Reserve wines are not used and the vintage year can be found on the label. These wines generally age on the yeast in the

bottle about four or five years in the producer's cellar.

Prestige cuvee is a special blend (cuvee) of wines from the producer's best vineyards. Generally aged for more than five years, it has top billing from any producer.

Blanc de blancs is made exclusively from chardonnay grapes in the champagne tradition.

Blanc de noirs is a blend of red grapes, pinot noir and/or pinot meunier. As a champagne, it is rarely exported, but several California producers make very good examples.

Rose is pink as the name implies. It obtains its color from the skins of pinot noir or pinot meunier grapes.

Champagne and sparkling wines have degrees of dryness (sweetness if you like). It is established by the amount of dosage (wine and cane sugar added at bottling). From very dry to sweet, the degrees are named Brut, Extra-dry, Sec and Demi-sec. While this may seem confusing, extra-dry is slightly sweet. Brut is the driest.

Champagnes reflect a style chosen by the producer. Often called

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Champagne

Toast of the holidays: Light and elegant, Champagne is great with festive holiday desserts and appetizers. It's also a great accompaniment to brunch dishes.