

MONDAY, AUGUST 21, 1995

TASTE

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TASTE BUDDS



CHEF LARRY JONES

Butter churns up flavorful memories

Having just returned from a two week vacation in Maine, I thought it only fitting to talk about lobsters, and butter.

I loved reading Irena Chalmers' description of butter in her latest book "The Great Food Almanac," (Collins Publishers, copyright 1995, \$28).

Chalmers writes "there is something mystical about the way butter forms in golden globules simply from agitating pure white cream for a given amount of time in the dark confines of a churn."

"Butter making is in a sense an act of creation, and in declining its rich rewards, whatever our reasons, we fail to complete a ritual that has been in place around the world since prehistoric times."

I know exactly what Chalmers was referring to in that quote. On vacation a woman next to me in line at Ben's Lobster Pier requested diet margarine instead of the real stuff to dip her lobster morsels in.

Let's begin by exposing all those faux butters out there. There are about the same number of calories in butter as margarine, but butter lovers tend to eat more butter than margarine eaters do. Sprinkle on butter substitutes contain salt, rice starch, lecithin, annatto and tumeric. Natural as these ingredients might be, real butter is closer to nature. A wise man knows when food contains no sugar, no cholesterol and no calories, it also has no taste.

For the record, yes, I ate my lobster(s) with butter, but relied on the sole little soufflé cup (about 2 tablespoons) rather than requesting more. I first cut my lobster (at Ben's) it was with my hands) of course, and then dipped my fork (or fingers) in the melted butter and then appeared the lobster chunk.

Fat facts
For the record, margarine, like butter, must also contain 80 percent fat, but most margarines are made with refined and hydrogenated vegetable oils. Some might even have additional animal fat.

Real butter is only as good as the cream from which it is made. Anyone who has tasted real French butter made from Brittany cows knows what I speak. The cows are fed and milked so the butter making can be coordinated with the first possible transportation to Paris where it is made and sold immediately.

If a trip to the city of romance for butter sounds a bit indulgent, try locating a pound of Plugra butter, developed by Hotel Bar Foods in America; it is as close as it gets to real French butter in taste and texture. The only place I've been able to find Plugra is J.R. Hirt's in the Eastern Market. Then again, if you're lucky enough to get your hands on some real cream from Guernsey Farm in Northville or Caulder's Dairy in Lincoln Park, you might be able to churn some real good butter all by yourself.

Nothing reveals the quality of a cuisine so unmistakably as the fat on which it is based. Bacon arouses memories of the South, olive oil evokes Mediterranean cooking and sweet butter will bring forth memories of fine French foods.

Substituting margarine
Fat tenderizes, provides flavor, help bind ingredients together, and produce browning in baked goods. Butter is interchangeable with margarine in most recipes, but real butter should always be used for candy, puff pastry and croissants. Butter margarine blends (60 percent margarine and 40 percent butter) are available and can be used interchangeably.

The best margarine to cook with is corn or soy margarine but other blends made from vegetable oils are acceptable. Because whipped and tub margarines are softer and contain a higher percentage of air, only stick margarines should be used in baking. Reduced calorie products contain 20 percent less fat than butter, and have water and air substituted for fat. Don't use them for baking.

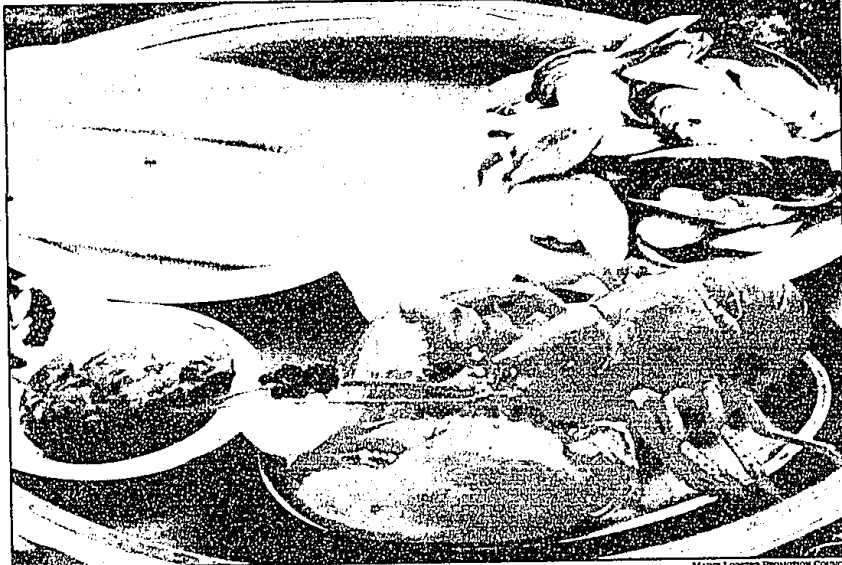
Flavor wise, reduced fat and no fat faux butters and margarine are not a personal favorite. I would rather compromise by eating a little less real butter than giving it up totally for the faux butters any day.

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

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Recipes with kid appeal.
- Back to school lunch box tips.



MAINE LOBSTER PROMOTION COUNCIL

LOBSTER IS VERY EASY TO COOK

TAKE A CRACK AT MAINE LOBSTER

AUGUST IS "MAINE LOBSTER MONTH"

BY KEELY WYCKOFF
STAFF WRITER

Turn any meal into a special event with Maine lobster. August is "Maine Lobster Month" and the perfect time to experiment with these tasty crustaceans.

"Lobster is very easy to cook," said Kevin Dean, co-owner of Superior Fish Company in Royal Oak. It's also lower in fats, calories and cholesterol than the skinless white meat of chicken or turkey.

According to a study conducted by the National Institutes of Health, a 3.5-ounce portion of lobster contains just 72 mg. of cholesterol, 98 calories, and 0.1 gram of saturated fat. Maine lobster also contains omega-3, a substance that is believed to reduce the risk of heart disease.

Dean said the most frequently asked question about lobster at Superior fish is "how do I cook them?"

Lobster can be baked, broiled, steamed, grilled, sautéed, stir-fried, boiled and even microwaved. The two most common ways to cook lobsters are steaming and broiling.

"I like to steam lobster," said

Dean. "You need a big kettle. Put a two inches of water in the bottom of the kettle, and bring it to a rolling boil. Put the lobsters in the pot, make sure the heat stays constant, and begin timing. Cook 10-15 minutes per pound."

Dean compares the taste of steamed lobster to steamed vegetables. "If you asked people what tastes better, canned or steamed vegetables, they'll say steamed. When you steam a lobster, you're trapping and retaining the flavor."

Others prefer the boiling method. To boil lobsters, fill a large kettle 3/4 full of water. The Maine Lobster Promotion Council suggests that you allow 2 1/2 quarts of water for each lobster. Bring the water to a boil.

Put in the live lobsters, one at a time and let the water boil again. Lower the heat, cover the kettle, and simmer about 15 minutes for a 1 1/4 pound lobster and 20 minutes for a 1 1/2 to 2 pound lobster. When the antennae pull out easily, the lobsters are done. You should be able to easily pierce the meat with a fork.

After you purchase your lobster,

don't run home and fill the bathtub with water. Lobsters are harvested from the icy, salt water of the North Atlantic Ocean. They should be stored in the refrigerator or in a cooler.

"Put a cool, damp cloth or newspaper on top of them," suggests Dean. "If you're storing them in a cooler, put the ice underneath the lobsters."

Cook lobster within a day of purchasing them. If you store them in plastic bags, punch holes in the bag to keep air circulating. Lobster is available fresh or frozen at many supermarkets and seafood stores. Expect to pay a little over \$7 per pound. Prices will be lower after Labor Day when the demand isn't as high, and before Christmas.

For additional recipes, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to "Friends Lobster," Maine Lobster Promotion Council, 383 Harlow Street, Bangor, Maine, 04401. If you'd like to receive a free "How to Host a Maine Lobster Bake" kit, send \$2 for shipping and handling. See recipes inside.

HOW TO EAT MAINE LOBSTER

1. Twist off the large claws.
2. Crack each claw with a nutcracker, pliers, knife or rock.
3. Separate the tail from the body and break off the tail flippers.
4. Insert a fork where the flipper were and push the tail meat out in one piece. Remove and discard the black vein that runs the entire length of the tail meat.
5. Open the body by cracking it apart sideways. Lobster meat lies in the four pockets (or joints) where the small walking legs are attached. The small walking legs also contain excellent meat, which can be removed by sucking on the ends of the legs.

Source: The Lobster Institute



Wine Selections

Seghesio Blanc is a white wine to serve well-chilled with fresh grilled seafood, mild cheeses, grilled chicken and lightly-sautéed pasta. The following are great values:

- 1994 R.H. Phillips Sauvignon Blanc - \$5.50
- 1994 Fortinet de France Sauvignon Blanc - \$7
- 1993 Zellerbach Sauvignon Blanc - \$7
- 1994 Buena Vista Lela County Sauvignon Blanc - \$7.50
- 1993 St. Bopary Sauvignon Blanc - \$8.50
- 1994 Ferrari-Carano Fume Blanc - \$12

Best-buy deals for grilled meats and vegetables, floral pastas, lamb, burgers or pizza.

- 1993 Bandera Cabernet Sauvignon - \$5
- 1994 Fortinet de France Merlot - \$7
- 1992 Louis M. Martini Zinfandel - \$8
- 1992 Round 111 Zinfandel - \$9
- 1992 Cypress Cabernet Sauvignon - \$9
- 1993 McDowell Syrah - \$10

- 1993 Ouvre Zinfandel - \$14
- 1993 Newwood Jack London Zinfandel - \$14
- 1992 Heywood Rocky Terrace Zinfandel - \$17.50
- 1991 Ferrari-Carano Cabernet Sauvignon - \$15.50
- 1993 Murphy-Goodie Merlot - \$18
- 1993 Ferrari-Carano Merlot - \$22

Seghesio Winery is 100 years young

In 1895, Angela and Edoardo Seghesio bought their first grape ranch in Sonoma County, Calif. Known today as the "Home Ranch," it is the site of the original family residence and the first Seghesio winery, which was built in 1902. Seghesio wines are known for quality and value. Chief Brian Polcyn of Muskie's Urban Pier in Auburn Hills gives Seghesio's Sauvignon Blanc high marks for its ability to match well with food. The grapes for the Seghesio Sauvignones come from vineyards planted in 1910.

Although Seghesio can boast a 100-year history in the wine business, their bottled wines have only been available via retail and restaurant sales since 1985. It is phenomenal that this wine bulk wine production, Prohibition, and the Great Depression to launch the Seghesio wine brand. Imagine that prior to Prohibition, California had 700 wineries and today, there are just 800!

When 30-year-old general manager Peter Seghesio recounts the family history, he reminds us that "Wine is our history, our tradition and our way of life." The family kept its vineyards alive during Prohibition by selling grapes to home winemakers (200 gallons were allowed per household) while the winery was closed. When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, the winery reopened, and wine production resumed.

Winemaker Ted Seghesio believes the new wine brand benefits from a long family heritage tem-



Inspecting vines: Peter Seghesio inspects an old head-pruned vine in Chianti Station block at the "Home Ranch" in Sonoma County's Alexander Valley.

pered with youth and innovation. "We are an Italian, family-owned winery, but we are not old-fashioned," he said. "Seghesio wines are not locked into a past era."

Seghesio wines benefit from grapes grown in established vineyards that Ted guides into wind. "My goal is to make a wine that is accessible when young, yet balanced to age," he emphasizes. Today's wine consumer can thank the Seghesio family for preserving their sangiovese, barbera, pinot and nebbiolo, rather than pulling out the vines during Prohibition. "Although we didn't destroy our vines, we didn't know what we had either," Peter admits. "Most of those varieties

Wine continued on next page