

Swedish from page D1

white pepper and sautéed onions.

"Chop them (onions) fine and sauté them lightly before adding them. Otherwise, it doesn't taste like Swedish meatballs," said Belfrage-Slomeana.

Sadler slipped an extra pat of butter into the frying pan as Skogfeldt shrugged her shoulders in good-natured resignation. "I'm light on butter, but she's like my husband. More butter," she said.

A confident cook, Sadler carefully turned the browning meatballs with a spatula. She's been cooking for many years. "Since I was 18. I went to Stockholm and took care of three children. My boss was a school teacher. She said I want you to start cooking. The first thing I made was meatballs. When Elisabeth got married, I taught her."

A Swedish toast

Maze finished mashing the potatoes and invited the women to sit down. She passed around small aperitif glasses and removed several small bottles of Aquavit, a Swedish schnapps, from the freezer. It's similar to vodka but stronger. Swedes down it in one gulp.

"Before you drink it, you raise your glass and say 'skål,'" said Belfrage-Slomeana. "Then we always sing 'schnapps' songs, traditional ones and humorous ones. There's no end to it."

"You have to have a meatball ready before you drink this," warned Margareta Olsson of Southfield.

Lucia pageant lights the way

In Sweden, the eldest daughter in a family wears an evergreen wreath with candles on her head and serves coffee and buns to her family for breakfast on Dec. 13. This ritual remembers St. Lucia, who carried food to the early Christians hiding from persecution in dark underground tunnels. To light the way, she wore a wreath of candles on her head.

Meatballs poised, the women—including me—raised their glasses, said a hearty *SKÅL!* (sounds like "skool") in perfect unison, then downed the contents. A fireball burst in the center of my chest.

"Do you feel the warmth?" asked Belfrage-Slomeana. "It's cold in Sweden. This keeps the circulation going."

Talk quickly turned to food from home, food not available in local specialty shops. Maze sighed. She misses the hot dogs and mashed potatoes sold on street corners in Sweden. "There's no describing what those hot dogs taste like."

She also misses creamy pear ice cream served on a stick.

"Ahhhh," said Sadler.

"Out of this world," said Olsson.

"I miss a good veal roast served with cucumbers and lingonberries or raspberry jelly. And cream sauce. The cream sauce is very important to it," said Belfrage-Slomeana.

The women talked about blood pudding, hardy Viking fare made from the blood of a pig's brain; black currants; cheeses, like the sharp *ostertoppen* and milder *bondost*; and delicious bassetbacks, potatoes sliced three-quarters down, then drizzled with lots of butter and bread crumbs before baking.

The meal ended with apple cake topped with vanilla sauce and several cups of strong Swedish coffee.

Christmas fair

SWEA members are hoping for a good turnout at their Christmas fair. The Finnish Center will be decorated Swedish style, and there'll be lots of items for sale: Christmas decorations, books, baked goods, imported foods and personalized giant gingerbread cookies.

There'll also be arts and crafts demonstrations, a children's workshop, and a traditional Lucia pageant at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. The American-Scandinavian Spelmanslag band will play lively Swedish music.

I said goodbye to my new Swedish friends and promised to attend the fair. Not only had I sampled good Swedish food during my visit, I sampled great Swedish hospitality.

See recipes on Page D3

Wine from page D1

floral, rose, nut, spice, peach, and lychee.

Like many other products, the quality of the water used to produce saké is as important as the quality of the rice. The degree of rice polishing also has an effect on quality. The outer part of the rice contains protein that deadens the saké and produces off flavors. As a matter of fact, 50-60 percent of the rice is removed during polishing since the desirable part is in the middle of the grain.

Like any other beverage, you can spend as much or little as you want, but excellent examples that will enhance your dining experience can be found between \$15-30.

Interested in learning more about sake? Try logging on to www.sakeone.com, the Web site of SakeOne Corp., Forest Grove, Ore.

Holiday entertaining

Y2K talk has got us all thinking "holiday entertaining" a lot earlier this year. If your finger-food recipe file in the "men there, done that" zone, a new appetizer book may be just what the chef ordered.

"Cocktail Food: 50 Finger Foods with Attitude" by twin sisters Mary Corpening Barber and Sara Corpening Whiteford, owners of Thymes Two Catering in San Francisco, (published by Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1999, \$16.95, ISBN 0-8118-2418-7) is a must. In addition to 50 easy, flavorful recipes, there are tips on matching hors d'oeuvres to beverages, party planning, and presentation.

Beaujolais

The last French Beaujolais harvest of the century is in, and the nouveau wines will arrive

Nov. 18. Cost will be under \$10 per bottle. King of Beaujolais Georges Dubouef describes the vintage as having the "ideal balance of soft, velvety, fruity, and harmonious elements expected of a Beaujolais Nouveau. The wine offers more to savor than in previous years and is harmonious, pleasing and captivating."

If you've never tried a Beaujolais Nouveau, Dubouef is a good label with which to start. Produced from 100-percent hand-picked Gamay grapes, it is an uncomplicated red wine meant for early consumption. Serve it slightly chilled, at about 55 degrees.

Direct wine shipping

On Sunday, Oct. 3, our wine column focused on federal and state wine legislation restricting direct shipping of wine. We suggested you contact federal and state legislators, either online at www.freeethergapes.org or by letter, consulting the blue section of your local telephone book under Political Leaders, National and State. Did you do this?

So far, we have received just one response (from State Rep. John Pappageorge, R-Troy) to our letters. He says he contacted a number of interest groups affected by the issue of direct shipment of wines. He cites the Michigan Liquor Control Commission, Michigan Beer & Wine Wholesalers Association, Michigan Licensed Beverage Association, and the Associated Food Dealers of Michigan. These are all groups interested in keeping a status quo, state-legislated monopoly and who fear that direct shipping might offer you freedom of choice. These groups are also political campaign contributors.

Do you understand what your freedom is up against?

Pappageorge also suggested that we could track down hard-to-find wines online at www.mbwva.org. We did and in three weeks had no response. So, we phoned (800) 456-2992, home of the Web site and Michigan Beer & Wine Wholesalers Association. The person in charge pointed out that this service only tracked wine already in the state. Pappageorge doesn't get it. We said you want to be able to buy wine that is not available in the state. That's your right under the Interstate Commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution, establishing free trade among states. It has been taken away from you by the Michigan legislature. Are you going to accept this?



For your convenience, sample letter content to your legislators: As an adult voter in the state of Michigan, I ask that you oppose restricting my ability to buy fine wine by direct shipment. Such legislation favors state-legislated monopoly in wine distribution at the expense of consumer access to the diversity of America's wines. Wine laws, currently restricting my rights guaranteed under the Interstate Commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution establishing free trade among states, need to be changed.

Please let me know where you stand on this consumer rights issue and what you plan to do.

Look for Focus on Wine on the first and third Sunday of the month in Taste. To leave a voice mail message for the Herald, dial (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1884.

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Festive holiday vegetarian dishes

See related Living Better Sensibly column on Taste front.

Have you or someone you know overcome an autoimmune disease through nutrition, exercise or an alternative therapy? I would love to hear your positive story. Please contact Beverly Price (248) 539-9424.

BALSAMIC-ARTICHOKE SALAD

2-3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon brown rice syrup
2 cups drained canned mandarin orange segments

1 1/2 cups chopped and drained canned unmarinated artichokes
1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley

Whisk together vinegar and brown rice syrup. Add remaining ingredients and toss well. Let stand 20 minutes. Yield 4 servings.

BUTTERCUP SQUASH, PARSNIP AND CRANBERRY BEAN STEW

1 tablespoon canola oil
1 cup sliced celery (about 2 medium stalks)

2 or 3 garlic cloves, minced
1 chipotle pepper, minced (large jalapeno pepper that has been dried and smoked)
4 large tomatoes, cored and diced
1 1/2 tablespoons paprika
1 tablespoon dried oregano
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cups peeled and diced buttercup or butternut squash
2 cups peeled and diced parsnips (about 2 large)
12-18 pearl onions, peeled
1 cup diced carrots
2 1/2 cups water

Please See RECIPE D5


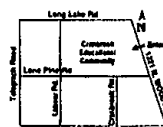
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