

HOME SENSE



LOIS THIELEKE

Bake and be merry

Throughout the year we answer thousands of questions about food preservation, cooking, baking and canning from people who call the Michigan State University Extension/Oakland County Food and Nutrition Hotline. Generally around the holidays, the questions turn to baking. I hope the following questions and answers will help you with your holiday baking.

Q. How can I avoid crystallization of the sugar when making candy?

A. Make sure the sugar is completely dissolved before it reaches a boil. Stir the sugar and liquid together thoroughly. Bring the sugar syrup slowly to a boil, stirring occasionally. Cover the pan while the syrup is coming to a boil, the condensed steam will wash down the side of the pan and help prevent crystallization.

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BEEF UP YOUR HOLIDAYS

BY RENEE BROGLUND
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On the 13th day of Christmas, my true love brought me beef! Gregg Johnson of Canton is a beef-loving, grill-happy, deep-frying man who loves to cook for his friends. This past Thanksgiving he injected a 14-pound turkey with Cajun spices and boiled it in oil. The bird cooked in 45 minutes. If he gets enough requests, he might just deep fry another turkey for Christmas.

*When it deep fries, the spices



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL HUBBARD

Picture perfect: (Center photo) This seasoned, two-pound porterhouse is dotted with butter for extra juices before heading to the broiler. (Above) Gregg Johnson checks on the progress of his buttered noodles while keeping an eye on the sautéed onions and baked beans.

kind of explode inside."

However, Johnson's first love is beef, especially steak, which he learned to cook when he was 9 years old.

"I loved steaks. I'd ask my mom to cook me steaks all the time, one for breakfast, one for lunch, one for dinner. She went out and bought a countertop broiler and left a few steaks in the fridge, and I was on my way, Jack. That was my starter kit."

Today, Johnson has perfected his mother's technique. He starts with a two-pound black Angus porterhouse, pokes both sides with a sharp knife to tenderize it, then sprinkles both sides with seasoned salt, pepper and some garlic powder.

Sounds ready for the grill or broiler, doesn't it? Wrong. Johnson always rubs a few pats of butter (real butter, buddy, not margarine) across the surface of one side of the steak for some extra juices, which he uses to sauté mushrooms.

Finally, for an extra, extra touch, he squeezes a bit of fresh lemon juice over the top. This is a man infatuated with flavor.

He broils his steak on high about eight to 10 minutes per side, flipping just once. "They're very tender and rare," said friend Terrie Poe. "I like mine well done, but he likes his rare. I always make him cook mine a little more."

Roasts

Although it's hard to beat a perfectly prepared steak for a



romantic holiday dinner for two, premium roasts - ribeye, rib-tenderloin and top loin - are perfect for entertaining larger crowds. Select roasts that are bright cherry red in color without any grayish or brown blotches. They can be stored unopened in the refrigerator three to four days before cooking.

Try dressing up your Christmas or New Year's roast with a seasoning rub prior to roasting. A rub containing liquid such as oil or mustard is sometimes called a "paste." The result of this rub-down is a crusty finish after roasting and a juicy, tender roast. Always prepare these roasts by dry heat: Roasted in

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BLEND, CRUST AND PARTS

• **Classic beef rub** - Dried thyme leaves, minced garlic and cracked black pepper.

• **Mustard and parsley rub** - Dijon mustard, fresh bread crumbs and minced parsley combined with fresh herbs, prepared horseradish, wasabi or grated Parmesan cheese.

• **Rosemary-blue cheese crust** - dried or fresh rosemary, chopped walnuts, crumbled blue cheese. Cook roast halfway, press on coating and continue baking.

• **Tropic Island rub** - Minced garlic, chopped jalapeno pepper, chopped fresh ginger, lime juice, brown sugar, dried thyme leaves, salt and ground allspice.

• **Chimichurri paste** - Chopped Italian parsley, olive oil, white vinegar, minced garlic and salt.

• **Bouillabaisse paste** - Beef bouillabaisse (crushed) or granules, olive oil, fresh or dried herbs.

• **Southwest paste** - Finely chopped dried tomatoes, minced chipotle chiles in adobo sauce, minced garlic and oil.

These rubs are equally good for less expensive roasts, such as round tip, tri-tip or eye round. Eye rounds are particularly good first, marinated in red wine, herbs, garlic and onion for six hours or overnight. Prior to roasting, remove from marinade and coat with a mixture of cracked peppercorns (black, white, pink), crushed red pepper and salt.

Source: National Cattlemen's Beef Association



Cookbook for manly taste 'buds'

BY RENEE BROGLUND
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Is there a cooking-impaired man on your Christmas list? If so, consider "Bake It Like a Man," an entertaining and practical cookbook that demonstrates the ability to bake, broil and braise has nothing to do with estrogen.

"Life under roofs is centered in the kitchen. It's where humans go for good news and bad, to celebrate birthdays, perform home surgery, and crack pecans," said Irish-born author David Bowers.

"All real human drama takes place in the kitchen. And for too long, it's been the sole domain of women. But man has an equal right to the place, and it's time he asserted himself domestically."

Yes, guys, it's home-home-on-the-range time.

The index to "Bake It Like a Man" reads like a do-it-yourself home-repair manual: Men and

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Festive bubbly: Domaine Carneros Brut Vintage Millennium magnum bottle is dressed in festive wear with a gold 2000 screened on the front.

Some fizz for holiday bubbly

BY ELEANOR & RAY HEALD
SPECIAL WRITERS

Are you planning to open a premium bottle of champagne or sparkling wine this holiday season? Here's some fizz ed.

Joy Sterling, marketing director of her family's Iron Horse Vineyards in Sonoma County, Calif., considers champagne a "subset" of sparkling wine.

"The word champagne is like Kleenex, a brand name that has become part of common speech," she said. "For the purist, Champagne is a geographic region of France, and only wine from there can legitimately be called champagne."

Call it what you will, the real difference between champagne and California sparkling wine is the fruit. California enjoys more sunlight hours, therefore the fruit is richer and more fleshy.

Please see WINE, D2

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for next week:

• **Great Pretenders**

• **Recipe to share**

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