

Sunday, June 24, 2001

## KITCHEN KAPERS



KEN ABRAMCZYK

*Don't raise a stink:  
It's only garlic and  
it's darn delicious*

**O**h, I see you put garlic on that, too." Her voice wasn't mean or nasty, she just spoke in a matter-of-fact tone. It was my wife.

We were eating leftovers. The shrimp was warmed in garlic butter, and a small piece of leftover monkfish lay a few inches away in a lemon-dill sauce. On top of the monkfish sat a few minced chips of garlic like they were just along for the culinary ride.

"Hey, it's only a little bit. Just enough to give it some flavor," I replied.

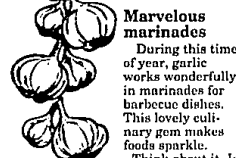
When I read Renee Skoglund's accompanying story on Italian cooking, I started thinking about pasta and, of course, garlic.

**I've gotta crush**

I can't help it. I love garlic. I try to use a little, but once I start crushing the cloves and mincing them, it's like a great garlic demon sits on my shoulder and says, "Put in a little more, just a little more..." I gladly oblige.

For me, garlic cooked in a garlic rooster with olive oil and thyme is a mainstay with any pasta dish. The garlic softens into a squeezable paste, and the taste mellows, even slightly sweetens. Roasted garlic lacks the bite of the raw version. It is delicious.

Garlic marries well in a traditional pesto with basil and pine nuts or a non-traditional form of marjoram pesto. Throw tomatoes in there and dinner is served.



## Marvelous marinades

During this time of year, garlic works wonderfully in marinades for barbecue dishes. This lovely culinary gem makes foods sparkle.

Think about it. Is there a more versatile food used in so many sauces, salads, spreads and appetizers and with pork, beef, chicken, lamb and seafood? What would Caesar salad be without the garlic clove rubbed on the wooden salad bowl? Or Italian or Polish sausage without the minced offerings of garlic?

A few years ago while fishing with friends in the Upper Peninsula, I marinated chicken quarters (yes, we didn't catch much fish that day) with a paste mix of crushed garlic, rosemary, kosher salt, pepper, onion and poultry seasoning with apple cider vinegar. The chicken was delicious, but I have yet to repeat that performance here over a gas grill. The original version was cooked slowly over the coals of an apple-wood fire.

Maybe the food simply tasted better because of the big open sky, primeval forest, and clean air.

Garlic should be used in marinades for shish kebab. Cut up a nice sweet onion and skewer the beef (or lamb, if you care to splurge) along with mushrooms, green peppers and cherry tomatoes in a burgundy-sauce mix with dried onion soup mix and garlic. Grill and put on a bed of rice, and you're in business.

Or take a flank steak and marinate it in Italian dressing overnight with a few (OK, several) crushed cloves of garlic. Soak it to seal in the marinade and cook it rare. Your guests will declare you a genius.

Sure, you've been to parties where there's some party proper who complains about the garlic taste of the food. Yes, large amounts of raw garlic can be irritating to the digestive tract. And yes, garlic breath can be offensive to the meek. Many avoid garlic for fear of offending a relative, neighbor or, heaven forbid, a hot date.

Please see KITCHEN KAPERS, D2

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Schoolcraft Salon Team
- Focus on Wine

## An Italian Kitchen

Café  
Cortina  
chef  
experiences  
the heart  
of Italy

Compare: Adrian Tonon  
and Chef Jeff Hoffa  
prepare a special family  
meal during their visit  
to Italy.



BY RENÉE SKOGLUND  
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It's a cool, rainy morning, but inside the kitchen of Ristorante Café Cortina in Farmington Hills, temperatures are rising as Chef Jeff Hoffa fires up the burners in preparation for the lunch crowd.

He maneuvers a huge pot of cooked pasta over to the sink, toppling the contents into a colander and splashes them with cold water. A cloud of steam rises. One false move could have resulted in a serious burn.

"I've been cooking 12 to 14 years. Now cuts and burns are very rare. We're down to one a

year," he says.

What isn't rare is all the delicious calamari, gnocchi, ravioli and veal dishes Chef Hoffa prepares on a daily basis. Only now, thanks to a trip to northern Italy in April with René Tonon and her son, Adrian Tonon, owners of Café Cortina, Hoffa hopes to infuse his creations with a bit more authenticity and passion.

"We're really trying to make this like your typical kitchen in Italy. We want you to feel like you are in another country."

But more passion? Is it possible? The compact, lively Hoffa, who trained under the famed Jimmy Schmidt of the Rattlesnake Club, bursts with passion. Ask him about Italy and his hands - no, his whole body - gesture animatedly as he relives the sights, smells and tastes.

"In Italy the rosemary plants are growing on the side of the road like trees," he says. "I'm saying, 'Wow, is that rosemary? It's wild, man.'"

**Fresco, fresco, fresco**

The Tonon family maintains a homestead in Carpesica, near Treviso in Venice. The home is set against a backdrop of mountains and is surrounded by a vineyard and patches of scoppetini, a small, grass-like herb that tastes like a cross between Swiss chard and spinach. It's used in preparing risotto dishes.

Adrian Tonon brought back some scoppetini seeds to plant in Café Cortina's famed backyard garden.



Gathering herbs: Chef Hoffa and Tonon of Café Cortina gather herbs of scoppetini on the grounds of the Tonon homestead in Carpesica.

Authenticity in taste has been the hallmark of the restaurant, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

It was time for Hoffa to visit Italy, said Adrian. "Just for him to go and experience it with his eyes, taste the flavors with his palate.... Words can express just so much and then you must feel it, live it. You just can't replace that."

Hoffa didn't just experience Italy, he had a love affair with it. The duck breasts imported from France were huge, the fish looked as if it was just caught, and the dairy products were simply the best, he said. "The cream is very thick and tastes just like it came out of the cow. And the eggs were so fresh. Everything just tasted richer."

Please see ITALIAN, D2

## HERBED RISOTTO (CARLETTI)

- 1/4 cup onion (finely chopped)
- 1 cup Arborio rice
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 4 cups chicken broth
- salt to taste
- fresh ground pepper to taste
- 1 cup fresh carletti (you can use most herbs)
- 2 tablespoons butter

Heat olive oil over medium heat in a pot that will hold the rice and broth.

Next, add onions and stir until they are translucent.

Then add the herb of your choice. (If you are using basil or rosemary, you do not need an entire cup.) Add 1 cup of chicken broth and cook herbs until all the flavors and aromas have been released.

Put in rice and stir. Allow rice to get coated with the herb mixture before adding the broth.

Pour enough broth in the pot to cover the rice. Allow to cook while stirring or about 5 minutes.

When rice has absorbed all of the broth, add another cup. You want to add just a cup at a time as you may not need all of the liquid.

Finish with salt, pepper and butter. Garnish with fresh grated Reggiano Parmigiano.

Serves four.

## ESPRESSO SEMI FREDDO

- 3 cups heavy whipping cream
- 6 eggs
- 1-1/2 cups sugar
- 1 cup espresso

First make the espresso so it has time to chill.

Next whip heavy cream with 1/2 cup of sugar until cream stiffens. Be careful not to overwhip. Must be of a smooth consistency.

Please see RECIPES, D2

## Vineyard alchemy thrives at Cinnabar

Fourteenth century alchemists believed they could transform ordinary metals into precious silver and gold with the aid of the mineral cinnabar. An one might image, this purple-red compound of mercury and sulfur was highly coveted.

While time proved this get-rich-quick scheme wrong, the magic of alchemy exists in the mind of scientist-turned-winemaker Tom Mudd, proprietor of Cinnabar Vineyards & Winery in California's Santa Cruz Mountains.

Before he was bitten by the "wine bug," Mudd, a civil engineering Ph.D., was a researcher at Stanford Research Institute (SRI) International, specializing in laser spectroscopy of aerosols.

Like many proprietors before him, he caught the wine bug by first picking some grapes at harvest parties. Then, he planted a one-acre vineyard as a hobby. To learn to make wine better, he enrolled in enology and viticulture classes at the University of Cal-

fornia Davis.



BY RAY & ELEANOR HEND

When interesting research projects dried up at SRI, Mudd decided it was time for a career change and went in search of the perfect place to plant a non-hobby vineyard. From a helicopter, he spotted a Santa Cruz Mountain ridge top. Not bothered that it sits right on the Santa Andreas fault, he thought that the climate, soil and elevation were perfect.

In the summers of 1984 and 1985, 22 acres of Cinnabar estate vineyards were planted. The earthquake proof winery and three caves were completed in 1987.

## Mountain advantage

Aside from the fact that Cinnabar in the Santa Cruz Mountains overlooks Silicon Valley, there are distinct advantages garnered from the struggle to grow wine grapes in a mountain region. It is generally impossible to bring irrigation to mountain vineyards, so the vines are dry-farmed, using a survival of

the fittest mentality.

Once vines that survive have sunk deep tap roots to access water, they also benefit from the special mineral content - the alchemy thing. Mountain sites frequently enjoy a long growing season, often extending into mid-November.

Mountain-grown grapes have small berries and a high surface to volume ratio that translates to intensely-flavored wines.

Although Cinnabar produces a chardonnay and merlot from grapes sourced in California's Central Coast and uses a generic California label on a reserve chardonnay and a red wine blend called Mercury Rising, the best wines carry the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation. For a taste of the mountain with a touch of alchemy, these are the wines to look for.

■ 1998 Cinnabar Santa Cruz Mountains Chardonnay \$23 showcases tropical fruit accented with apple, pear and spice hints. The wine is crisply styled for seafood and poultry, yet finishes with a deliciously

## Wine Picks

Mountain vineyards in California are not the place to grow sauvignon blanc. But there are plenty of spots where this grape scores in spades. It's a perfect summertime wine with shrimp, mussels, sole, scallops, sea bass, chicken, game hens or roast turkey. Try: ■ Richer sauvignon blanc styles: 1999 St. Supéry White Heritage Napa \$20 and 1999 Beringer \$12.

■ Crisp, zesty sauvignon blanc: 2000 St. Supéry Peak \$15; 2000 Geyser Peak \$10; 2000 Fazer Echo Ridge \$9; and 2000 Montevina Fume Blanc \$7.

See WINE, D2