

Ornamental tradition alternative to gift giving

BY KEELY KALESKI
STAFF WRITER

When your brothers and sisters marry and have children, causing your immediate family to grow by leaps and bounds, what do you do about gifts?

Some families decide to draw names, other agree to buy only for children age 16 and under. Others like the Agostini Family, come up with fun alternatives. "We set up a three-foot tree, and everyone goes and picks out a nice ornament, something they wouldn't buy for themselves," said Frank Agostini explaining his family's tradition. "All of the ornaments are placed on the tree at our family brunch - there's usually about 30 or so."

Then everyone draws a number. The person who draws the highest number picks an ornament from the tree, but the next person to pick a number

can take that person's ornament if they want, or one from the tree. The reason you want to draw number one is you can take the last ornament off the tree, or from anyone who picked before you. The game ends when the last ornament is taken off the tree.

"It's a fun thing, and gets everyone involved. There's a sense of competition, but everyone's a winner. You find out who's ruthless and who's nice. It's like playing a game. Couples will work together to get the ornaments they want."

The tradition started about five years ago, and has become a much anticipated event. "Every year the ornaments get better and better," said Agostini. "We've already got ours, we bought them while we were on vacation."

Kaleski@oe.hometown.com | (248) 901-2587

Recipes perfect for holiday brunch

BY KEELY KALESKI
STAFF WRITER

The best recipes are ones you share. These "Tried and True" recipes from the newly published "Tried and True Favorites: Top 300 Recipes," from www.allrecipes.com, by Allrecipes.com, Inc., Seattle, Wash., Oct. 2002, \$17.95, paperback.

Allrecipes.com is a community-based recipe Web site where home cooks share family recipes.

"Tried and True Favorites" is a collection of 300 recipes, everything from appetizers to pastas, entrees, cookies and candies. There's even a chapter of vegetarian recipes.

I liked the friendly tone of the book, and a lot of the recipes. They're easy, don't require hard-to-get ingredients, and best of all, are fairly tested. Every recipe has an introduction by the contributing home cook.

Here's a sample of recipes from the cookbook. I thought they'd be appropriate for Christmas brunch.

Share your favorite recipes with readers - send, e-mail or fax recipes for consideration in

Taste to Keely Kaleski, Assistant Managing Editor Features, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009, e-mail kkaleski@oe.hometown.com or fax (248) 644-1314.

CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST SAUSAGE CASSEOLE

1 pound ground pork sausage
6 slices white bread, toasted and cut into cubes
8 ounces mild Cheddar cheese, shredded
1 teaspoon mustard powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
4 eggs beaten
2 cups milk

Crumble sausage into a medium skillet. Cook over medium heat until evenly brown; drain.

In a medium bowl, mix together cooked sausage, toasted white bread, Cheddar cheese, mustard powder, salt, eggs and milk. Pour into a greased 9 by 13-inch baking dish. Cover and chill in the refrigerator 8 hours, or overnight.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cover and bake 45-60 minutes. Uncover and reduce temperature to 325°F. Bake for additional 30 minutes or until set. Serves 5. Recipe submitted by M.K. Meredith.

SLOW COOKER CRANBERRY PORK

1 (16 ounce) can cranberry sauce
1/3 cup French salad dressing
1 onion, sliced
3 pounds pork tenderloin

In a medium bowl, combine the cranberry sauce, salad dressing and onion. Place pork in a slow cooker and cover with the sauce mixture.

Cook on High setting for 4 hours, or on Low setting for 8 hours.

Pork is done when the internal temperature has reached 160°F. Serves 6.

Recipe submitted by Dawn.

OVEN ROASTED RED POTATOES

1/2 (1 ounce) packages dry onion soup mix
2 pounds red potatoes, halved
1/3 cup olive oil

Preheat oven to 450°F.

In a large plastic bag, combine the soup mix, red potatoes and olive oil.

Close bag, and shake until potatoes are fully covered.

Pour potatoes into a medium baking dish; bake at 40 minutes in the preheated oven, stirring occasionally. Serves 8.

Recipe submitted by Donna Lasater.

CHAMPAGNE PICKS

Luxury champagnes are an extraordinary taste experience. Because it's featured in the 20th James Bond film, *Die Another Day*, which opened in November, interest in Champagne Bollinger peaked this year.

Here's a fact you won't learn from the film: Bollinger estimates there are 56 million bubbles in a bottle of their Champagne.

Begin counting with NV Bollinger Special Cuvee, \$45, hallmarked by richness, flavor depth and persistent length.

The style is influenced by barrel fermentation and addition of reserve wines that are aged in magnum with natural cork closures.

For the holidays this year, Bollinger introduced two enticing super sparklers: 1995 Grande Annee, \$90, and 1990 RD, \$190.

■ From Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte try NV Brut Premier Cru, \$27; NV Blanc de Blancs Premier Cru, \$36; NV Brut Rose Premier Cru, \$36; or if you like the taste of an older champagne, the 1992 Grand Cuvee Palme d'Or, \$120.

■ NV Champagne Ruinart Brut, \$48, is exceptionally balanced, light and very fresh, a quintessential aperitif pour that consistently ranks at the top in NV Champagne ratings.

All wines mentioned are available in the metro-Detroit area. If a retailer does not stock a specific wine, ask that it be ordered from the distributor.

HEADLS

FROM PAGE B1

cious, fruity and crisp with delicate bubbles and fresh, lightly fruited flavors. Sushi is a perfect food match.

■ Bessarat de Bellefont Cuvee des Moines Rose \$40 has a pretty pink-copper color. Very dry and elegant, it's strawberry and raspberry fruit flavors linger long on the palate. Pair it with Mediterranean-style foods.

■ Bessarat de Bellefont Cuvee des Moines Blanc de Blancs \$60 is the most elegant of the three wines. Crafted of 100 percent chardonnay, its citrusy aromas set the palate up for a perfectly balanced wine that will pair well with any seafood dish, especially crab cakes with a spicy tropical fruit salsa.

The Headls are Troy residents who write about wine, spirits, food, and restaurants for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave them a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047, mailbox 18648.

RAIL

FROM PAGE B1

leaving one-half border. Sprinkle with watercress. Layer turkey, cheese and onion evenly over tortillas. Roll up jelly-roll style. Wrap each with plastic wrap and refrigerate 30 minutes. When ready to serve, cut diagonally into one-inch pieces. Skewer with fillings to serve.

Happy New Year

What are you cooking on New Year's Eve? Send recipes, along with stories about your New Year's Eve culinary traditions, to Keely Kaleski, assistant managing editor/features, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. We'll be sharing the recipes with readers in an upcoming edition of Taste. E-mail recipes to kkaleski@oe.hometown.com or fax (248) 644-1314.

TABLE

FROM PAGE B1

windows and put your serving platters on top."

To illustrate how you might want to create the setting for a holiday brunch, Agostini created an L-shape with an eight foot banquet table and card table, and covered them with tablecloths.

His color theme was green, red and gold.

Two poinsettias, purchased at Costco, were placed on top of cloth covered milk crates to make them look a lot taller than they really were.

Then he took an assortment of different size boxes, pots and pans, and covered them with cloth to create a variety of levels to place serving dishes on. Make the most out of a small space.

"Throw a cloth over a step ladder and put dishes on the steps," suggests Agostini. "Instead of tablecloths, buy a good white sheet. Create heights out of whatever you have in your house, even a high chair."

He spray painted the bottom of gift boxes with white spray paint, added a sprinkle of gold glitter, wrapped them with holiday paper, and put a decorated paper plate, napkin and eating utensils inside.

The box is a lot sturdier than a paper plate, and easier to carry. Guests can also place the box in their lap and eat while sitting on the couch if you run out of chairs.

Spray paint an old wicker basket gold and add a ribbon and holly.

"The sky's the limit," said Agostini.

"Have your kids decorate the basket with fake jewels; when their kids are kids they'll cherish the basket."

Fill personalized buckets with ice and bottles of sparkling water, juice and splits of champagne so guests can help themselves to drinks.

The sparkly red votive candles are disposable, burn for five hours, and available at Gordon Food Service in packages of 24.

"Gold ribbon can add a lot of color for a little money," said

Agostini. "You can also put pine cones, confetti, or cranberries on your table."

If you're going to entertain a lot, Agostini recommends designating an area of your house as an entertainment closet to store napkin rings, serving platters, bowls, and other items.

"Save the boxes you get gifts in," he said. "After the holidays you might want to have a Super Bowl party. You could make serving trays out of them. Kids love that kind of stuff; use your imagination."

"You'd be surprised at what you can pick up at Salvation Army Thrift Shops, Big Lot, Frank's Nursery & Crafts, Michael's, Gordon's, Costco, Sam's Club, flea markets and garage sales," he said. In time, you'll have a collection of fun pieces to display food on like the funky fish platter that Agostini put his shrimp cocktail on.

"You don't have to spend a lot of money," he said. "You just have to be creative. It's all about little touches."

kkaleski@oe.hometown.com | (248) 901-2587

CELEBRATION

FROM PAGE B1

restaurant.

"Tell them you want to serve it the next day, and they'll prepare the dish to be reheated. We assume when someone orders something to go that it will be eaten

soon, but if someone calls and tells us they want a Greek salad that will be served the next day we'll put the beets on the side."

To dress up ears of cooked frozen corn, Agostini added chopped pimiento to bring out the color. Sauté green beans in butter, add toasted almonds, a shot glass of Amaretto and

flame to burn off the alcohol.

Brunch can be whatever you want it to be, said Agostini. From smoked salmon and bagels with cream cheese to stir-fried chicken.

Include some heritage dishes like grandma's pot roast, but most of all, have fun.

kkaleski@oe.hometown.com | (248) 901-2587

Yellow Tail Aussie Wines
\$5.99
750 ml.

Haywood Cab/Chard/Merlot
\$6.99
750 ml.

WESTBORN MARKET SPECIALS

Santa Is Coming to Westborn, Livonia
Dec. 15th - 12-4 P.M.

Sweet Seedless CLEMENTINES \$4.99 box
California BROCCOLI 89¢ large bunch
TRA Salad Time
AMERICAN SALAD 2/\$3
Ready to Eat Mini CARROTS \$1.69 2# bag

Tall & Tender ASPARAGUS \$1.99 lb.
Holiday GIFT BASKETS \$3.99 and up
• Wreaths
• Arrangements
• Cedar Hooping

Fresh Cut MIXED BOUQUETS \$6.99 ea.
Gift Baskets \$3.99 and up
• Wreaths
• Arrangements
• Cedar Hooping

Bone In TURKEY BREAST \$1.99 lb.
U.S.D.A. Choice RUMP ROAST \$1.99 lb.
U.S.D.A. Choice BONELESS STEW BEEF \$2.99 lb.

Bareman's Rich & Creamy YOGURT 2/\$1
Harvest of the Sea SALMON STEAKS \$5.99 lb.
RAW SHRIMP \$7.99 shell on Tail on

Twice Baked POTATO w/CHEDDAR 2/\$3 (just heat & serve)
Healthy Choice HONEY SMOKED TURKEY \$4.99 lb.
Hoffman's HARD SALAMI \$4.99 lb.
Dinner Bell BROWN SUGAR HAM \$4.99 lb.
Domestic SWISS CHEESE \$2.99 lb.

27639 WOODWARD AVE. BURLY - 248-647-1000
14928 MIDDLEBURY LIVONIA - 734-924-1000
Just south of Five Mile (on the west side)
Westborn MARKET
We reserve the right to limit quantities. Prices good through Dec. 11th, 2002

The Motor City Lyric Opera Presents

Amahl and the Night Visitors

A children's opera for the holidays

Sponsored by your Chrysler and Jeep Superstores

Show Times:
 Thursday, Dec. 19 - 7:30 p.m.
 Saturday, Dec. 21 - 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.
 Sunday, Dec. 22 - 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.

The Music Hall - 350 Madison Avenue
 Downtown Detroit.

Purchase tickets at the Music Hall Box Office.
 Phone: 313-963-2366 or online at www.ticketmaster.com.
 Jeep is a registered trademark of DaimlerChrysler.

\$10 Students
\$20 Adults

All performances at