SECTION C

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The Buffalo News

Wednesday, August 28, 2013













Why do waiters keep grinding pepper?

By L.V. Anderson

NEW YORK – After exploring the debate over whether restaurants should always have salt shakers on their tables, we at Slate wondered: What's the deal always have sait snakers on their aims, we at Slate wondered: What's the deal with waiters who grind black pepper directly from a pepper mill onto your plate? Black pepper isn't a rare or expensive ingredient, and it's not so perishable that it needs to be ground seconds before consumption. Plus, as Sara Dickerman has argued in Slate, pepper doesn't complement everything – unlike salt, it's not a universal flavor enhancer, and it can easily overpower subtler flavors. So where does this curiously popular tableside service come from?

It probably started in the early 20th century. The pepper mill wasn't even invented until the second half of the 19th century— Peugeot (yes, that Peugeot) began manufacturing its first model in 1874. By the turn of the century, the pepper mill was making the century, the pepper mill was making the second of the century.

century, the pepper mill was making its way to refined American tables: A century, the pepper min was making its way to refined American tables: A 1903 publication called "The Steward Handbook and Guide to Party Catering" referred to the French-inspired "fashion of much silver brica-brac" on tables at dinner parties, including a salt cellar for each guest and a single pepper mill to be controlled by the host. This imbalance might have had more to do with timid American palates than anything else – at the time, heavily spiced foods were frowned upon by trendsetters – but it presages the trend of pepper-mill-wielding restaurant servers.

In the 1910s, America's restaurant scene began changing in several significant ways, as Andrew Haley chronicles in "Turning the Tables." In the 19th century, there had been two kinds of restaurants is ow-end places for working restaurants is ow-end places for working restaurants.

restaurants: low-end places for working men, which were cheap, sold mediocre men, which were cheap, sold mediocre-food and put no emphasis on service, and high-end French restaurants, staffed by impeccably trained waiters. At a place like this, each waiter would be assigned to a single table each night and would be expected to hover near the table for the entire meal to respon to patrons' needs. Waiters at this time had a lot of power over the quality of a customer's meal: Food was served à la carte, and servers determined

See Pepper on Page C2

Pick of the pierogi

BUT JUDGING A PIEROGI COMPETITION WAS A CHALLENGE







from "Buffalo's Best Pierogi" competition, at top, clockwise; poppyseed coconut by Dorothy Cepuchowski; State Sen. nædy, a judge; Philly cheesesteak entry; judge Lynn Rosati; a hot stuffed pepper sample; and judge Jeremy Kaczynski. Above, from left: the prize-winning Hawaiian delight by Nancy Koniezury; firefighter Jason Crowe, a judge; and a bacon cheddar jalapeno by Chris Klinshaw.

BY CHARITY VOGEL / NEWS STAFF REPORTER

or somebody with Polish blood in her veins, this should have been the easiest gig ever. Judge a pierogi competition? Piece of cake.

In our house, we make well over 100 pierogi for Christmas alone. It are the pierogi for Christmas alone. It are the pierogi for Christmas alone. It with filling at the hands of my grandmother, Stanislawa, known as Estelle – her husband, my grandfather Aloysius, ran a well-known tavern on the city's East Side. So, really, pierogi deliberation seemed

like no big lift.

Right?

Not so fast. The sixth annual "Buffalo's
Best Pierogi" competition, held recently
at the Dozynki festival at Corpus Christi
Catholic Church on Clark Street, proved
more challenging than expected.
One of a small group of judges, I sat at a
table with other hungry folks, plastic forks
poised, water bottles at the ready.
Then the plates began to arrive.
Across the table, State Sen. Time
Kennedy – who admitted to buying frozen

Kennedy - who admitted to buying frozen

pierogi, which was actually rather brave considering the setting – sampled and marked a ballot, as did a former winner of this contest, who said the tenderness of the dough was key.

Judging with me was my husband, a fellow News reporter who also has Polish-American ancestors. (Would he maintain that nothing, but nothing, could measure up to his wife's homemade version? I wondered.)

See Pierogi on Page C2

'Silver Palate' cookbooks struck gold for Lukins

Sheila Lukins was a person who could be introduced successfully to strangers with just two words: chicken Marbella. This dish, from 1982's "The Silver Palate Cookbook," became a go-to recipe for two generations of home cooks. It epitomized her food philosophy: bold flavors, accessible ingredients, easy cooking. Lukins would go on to author or

Likhis would go in to atturnor or co-author seven more popular cook-books and serve for 23 years as food editor of Parade, a Sunday magazine distributed in many of the nation's newspapers, including The Buffalo News, before her death in 2009 at age 66 from brain cancer.

"She changed the way everyday Americans cooked every day." wrote Dorie Greenspan, the baker and cookbook author, in an email from Paris. "I think of "The Silver Palate Cookbook as the first cookbook that helped home cooks use the ingredients that chefs were useful inversibility that today. were using, ingredients that today were using, ingredients that today seem commonplace, but that were then new and exciting. The book put balsamic vinegar in kitchen cupboards, pesto in weekday pastas and chicken Marbella in every pot." Before "The Silver Pialace Cookbook," co-authored with Julee Rosso (and with Michael McLaughlin), there was The Silver Pialace, a gourmet takeout shop launched by the women in 1977 on New York's Upper West Side. And



before that? "Two women's personal desperation," recalled Lukins and Rosso in their foreword to the book.

Trying to be all a woman could be in the 1970s – and that definition grew exponentially through the decade – and do that while preparing "creative, well-balanced meals daily and an occasional dinner party at home" was proving too much for

them – and Lukins was a caterer. If this was happening to them, they reasoned, it had to be happening to others. That insight was confirmed when customers mobbed The Silver Palate on opening day. "We knew we were doing exactly what we wanted to do, and people liked it," Lukins and Rosso recalled in "The Silver Palate Cookbook," which itself proved that their "big ideas" – and flavors – could translate to a national scale. "The Silver Palate Cookbook"

to a national scale.
"The Silver Palate Cookbook"
became one of the best-selling cookbooks of all time. Some 2.7 millior
copies are now in print, according
to Suzanne Rafer, executive editor,
director of cookbooks for Workman
Publishing in New York City.

"It was a cookbook you wanted to read," Rafer says. "They made a lot of people happy – and well fed." Lukins and Rosso followed up with 1985's "The Silver Palate Good Times Cookbook" and "The New Basics Cookbook" in 1989. Both sold millions of conjes. millions of copies.

The Silver Palate was an estimated

The Silver Palate was an estimated \$10 million-ayear business by 1985, the Los Angeles Times recalled in Lukins' obfustary. The pair sold the business in 1988 and began to pursue solo projects. A few years later, there was a widely publicized falling-out. But by the time Lukins and Rosso teamed up in 2007 to launch the spiffed-up 25th anniversary edition of "The Silver Palate Cookbook," the feud was apparently forgotten.

CONTINUED FROM THE TASTE COVER

Try making some of 2013's contest entries

PIEROGI • from CI

"Mmmm," he said, biting into the first entry, a bologna-and-onion-stuffed pocket topped with cheese.

stuffed pocket topped with cheese.
I knew I was in trouble. This was
going to be difficult.
Later on, verification came
from Chris Byrd, organizer of the
contest, which got started in 2007
and this year included 24 entrants.
Byrd told me that weighing the
merits of pierogi is not easy to do
especially when you are raised on a

certain type that a grandmother or beloved aunt made. "Everybody's grandma's recipe is the best, you know?" Byrd joked.

That's part of the reason why the contest is divided into four catego-

contest is divided into four catego-ries: traditional, nontraditional, dessert and commercial. Prize winners received 'gold' rolling pins, certificates and harvest beer. As it turns out, it is very hard to decide whether a lobster-filled pierogi is better than one made to call up memories of Polish white borscht, with flavors of saussage an

borscht, with flavors of sausage and chopped hard-cooked egg. Next year, if you want to enter, applications will be taken beginning in June, said Byrd. See the Corpus Christi website for more informa-tion (www.corpuschristibuffalo.org.)

Now read on, for some of the recipes that were entered in the 2013 contest.

Smacznego!

Hot Stuffed Pepper Filling

- hot Hungarian peppers, seeded and chopped into small pieces cup cheddar cheese

- cup gorgonzola cheese cup Parmesan cheese cup shredded mozzarella
- 8 ounce package cream che pound hot Italian sausage
- potato flakes, as needed

Saute peppers and sausage until browned, drain fat and let cool. Add cheeses and mix. If too thin, add dry potato flakes to thicken. — Deborah Wisholek, Luckwanna

- Pigs in a Blanket Filling
 pound ground beef
 pound ground pork
- cup rice



Sharon Cantillon/Buffalo News

pounds. potatoes large onion tablespoons butter Salt and pepper

Boil the sauerkraut for 30 minutes to soften. Drain and squeeze out extra liquid. Peel and cook the potatoes. Grind the potatoes and sauerkraut together in food mill. Chop onion and saute in butter till

soft, but don't brown. Add sauerkraut

ounce chive and onion cream

medium potatoes garlic cloves, finely chopped stick butter

Boil potatoes until fork tender. Mash potatoes, mix in half stick of butter and garlic. Melt rest of butter in pan.

Add lobster, season with salt and

pepper. Cook for 13 to 15 minutes over medium heat then add to

over medium heat, then add to mashed potatoes. Mix together,

gradually adding cream cheese.

– Sarah Polonkiewicz, Orchard Park

erry Cheese Filling

pounds cream chees

cup powdered sugar cups cherry pie filling cup dried cherries

tablespoon vanilla

For filling: Soak dried cherries in water or liquid of your choice,

mixture, mix together and warm.

Add salt and pepper as needed. – Mary Beth Morse, Getzville

ounces lobster meat

Salt and pepper

Lobster Filling

cheese

Sharon Cantillon/Buffalo N Nancy Konieczny of Akron receives the golden rolling pin for winning the dessert category with her Hawaiian delight. At left is her granddaughter, Eva Casale.

- cans fire roasted tomatoes

- green peppers, chopped onions, chopped head cabbage, chopped Salt and pepper

The day before you make pierogi, mix together and bake in a tightly covered casserole dish for 2 hours at 235 degrees. - Linda Fell

Sweet and Sour Pulled Pork and Cabbage Filling

- and Cabbage Filling
 3 to 5 pound pork shoulder
 2 tablespoons canola oil
 3 cups apple cider vinegar
 1 cup brown sugar, or to taste
 2 apples, cored and chopped
- head cabbage, shredded
- cup mayonnaise

- cup honey mustard ablespoons lemon juice cup orange juice Salt and pepper to taste

In a large pan, heat canola oil. Salt and pepper pork shoulder. Brown pork on all sides in skillet.

Transfer to ovenproof dish.
Roast covered at 325 degrees until
done, 3-5 hours.

Put vinegar and apples in crock-

Put vinegar and appies in croce-pot. Add sugar to taste. Add pork and cook until tender, 4-6 hours or more. When cool, shred. Mix slaw: cabbage, mayo, mustard, lemon and orange juice. Mix slaw into pork. Stuff pierogis. — Shawn Heltz, Hamburg

Sauerkraut and Potato Filling

drain and chop. Soften cream

drain and chop. Soften cream cheese, using a mixer mix cream cheese with powdered sugar, add dried cherries and cherry pie filling, last add vanilla. It is best to chill before assembly Make into pierogi, and boil. Melt 2-4 tablespoons butter in frying pan. Add pierogi and lightly brown. Just before they're done add 1 teaspoon sugar and toss to caramelize slightly. Serve warm with whipped cream or sweetened sour cream. – Paula Sepanik, Elma

Margarine Dough

- cups flour stick margarine, melted cup milk eggs, beaten

- ounces sour cream

8 ounces sour cream
Place ingredients in a large
container and knead until smooth,
refrigerate at least I hour or more.
Place filing on a rolled circle and
fold in half, pinch edges. Place in
a pot of salted boiling water until
pierogi float to the top. Refrigerate,
freeze or prepare in a pan with
butter and onions. — Linda Fell

Sour Cream Dough I

- cups flour tablespoon oil egg yolks ounces sour cream Hot water

Mix ingredients, adding hot

Mix ingredients, adding hot water as necessary to incorporate into smooth mixture. Knead on flat surface until smooth looking. Let rest for an hour covered with wet towel. Roll dough to 45 inch thickness. Place filling, fold dough over and cut out filled pierogi with a glass. Boil 10-12 pierogis in boiling water until they rise to top. Remove and place in cold water, then drain and let dry on wax paper before frying. Makes 2 to 3 dozen. Makes 2 to 3 dozen. – Deborah Wisholek, Lackawanna

Sour Cream Dough II

- cups flour cup milk
- cup sour cream
- eggs teaspoon salt
- Sarah Polonkiewicz, Orchard

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Getting into the grind

how much (and what quality) meat and

how much (and what quality) meat and vegetables you got.

But near the beginning of the 20th century, new midrange establishments began appearing to cater to the middle class. These new restaurants, which might serve ethnic food (like Italian) instead of the traditionally revered French cuisine, invented the practice of putting your entire entrée—meat and sides—on a single plate designed and prepared by the chef. This innovation diminished the role of the server, who no longer controlled the quantity and quality of food served. As a result, servers had to find new ways to earn

server, who no longer controlled the quantity and quality of food served. As a result, servers had to find new ways to earn their tips – and personalized flourishes, like grinding pepper directly onto diners' plates, created the sense that waiters plates, created the sense that waiters shad an important role to play. Other factors may have contributed to the rise of tableside pepper-grinding, too. In the late 19th and early 20th century, unscrupulous vendors sold adulterated foodstuffs: milk thinned with water, grass clippings passed off as basil, flour mixed with chalk. (Such tainted products were eventually outlawed by the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906.) Grinding pepper in front of patrons could be a way for midscale restaurants to demonstrate that their pepper was pure and not cut with charcoal. And because chefs moved around a lot, trends spread quickly among restaurants: The iconic red-checkered tablectoths, candles in wine bottles, and singing waiters were already standard in Italian restaurants in the 1990s. It's very possible that tableside pepper-grinding got its footbod in the marketplace in the same way.

Fears about charcoal-infused pepper have faded from the public mind, and it's generally accepted that servers deserve fair compensation even though they no longer personally slice your meet for you. But pepper-grinding has persisted, acquiring a hit of a ridiculous image along the way. Then-New York Times restaurant critic Frank Bruni wrote a nine-paragraph rant against the practice in a 2006 column about a new though they not control and the paragraph rant against the practice in a 2006 column about a new though they not can mine paragraph rant against the practice in a 2006 column about a new though they not can be a 2006 column about a new though they not can be a 2006 column about a new though they not can be a 2006 column about a new though they not can be a 2006 column about a new though they not can be a 2006 column about a new though they not can be a 2006 column about a new though they not

Times restaurant critic Frank Bruni wrote a nine-paragraph rant against the practice in a 2006 column about a new Italian restaurant in TriBeCa ("How is a diner expected to know whether he or she wants more pepper if a dish hasn't been tasted yet?"). But Bruni's chances of putting a dent in the practice were slim - after all, tableside pepper-grinding had already survived the greatest indignity imaginable: Being performed from between Adam Sandler's legs, in a "Saturday Night Live" sketch from 1994.

7 Day Menu Planner | By Susan Nicholson

After holiday weekend, Reuben wraps to the rescue Thursday Meanwhile, cook the rice accord-

Family Sunday
No need to go to the islands for Caribbean chicken and rice salad (see recipe). Serve the whole-meal salad with lemon poppy seed muffins (from a mix). Make an easy blueberry pie for dessert. Bake a frozen piecrust according to directions; cool. Combine 116-ounce) air blueberry jam (or spread) and ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon; microwave on high 1 minute or until mixture liquefies. Stir in 2 cups fresh blueberries. Spoon mixture into shell, Chill; slice and garnish with light whipped cream and serve. light whipped cream and serve. **Plan ahead**: Make an extra pie for Mon-

(Labor Day).

opping list: Slivered almonds, olive chicken breast ton-3-

Shopping list: Slivered almonds, olio, clicken breast tenders, packaged yellow rice, cilantro, sweet onion (such at Vidalia or another variety), fresh jalapen pepper, jerk seasoning, oranges for juice and zest, arrowroot, coarse sait, orange sections (fresh, canned or chilled), fresh baby spinach leaves, lemon poppy seed muffin mix, frozen piecrust, blueberry jam or spread, cinnamon, fresh blueb ries, light whipped cream.

ries, ignt winped cream.

Budget Monday

Celebrate Labor Day with root beer
pulled pork sandwiches (see recipe) on
whole-grain toasted buns. Serve with
your potato salad and coleslaw. For dessert, slice the leftover pie and top it with
fat-free vanilla ice cream.

Blue about 5 328 agough pulled pook

fat-free vanilla ice cream. Plan ahead: Save enough pulled pork, buns and potato salad for Tuesday. Sav ice cream for Tuesday and Saturday. Shopping list: Bone-in pork shoulder, envelope onion soup mix, coarse salt, envelope onion soup mix, coarse salt, pepper, canned root beer, barbecue sauce, whole-grain buns, potato salad, coleslaw, fat-free vanilla ice cream. Heat and eat Tuesday
No one will mind eating leftover pulled pork for dinner. Add the leftover potato

salad along with pickles, olives and carrot sticks to munch on. Top the leftover ice cream with fresh peaches. **Shopping list:** Pickles, olives, carrot sticks, fresh peaches.

Kids Wednesday

No kid can resist spaghetti and meat sauce. Buy any jarred meat sauce and spoon it over spaghetti. Top with a little freshly grated Parmesan and dinner is ready. Add a chopped lettuce salad, whole-grain rolls and watermelon cubes

Shopping list: Meat sauce, spaghetti, rmesan, lettuce, whole-grain rolls, atermelon cubes.



Pulled pork sandwiches for Labor Day.

Express Thursday

With the swiftness of super woman, you'll have Reuben wraps on the table. Spread burrito-size tortillas with reduced-fat Russian dressing. Top with deli cole-slaw, thinly sliced deli corned beef and reduced-fat Swiss cheese. Roll, halve and eat. Serve with deli three-bean salad. Nectarines are dessert.

Nectarines are dessert.

Shopping list: Burrito-size tortillas, reduced-fat Russian dressing, deli corbeef, reduced-fat swiss cheese, deli thr bean salad, nectarines.

Meatless Friday With its good flavor and simplicity, you With its good flavor and simplicity, you can't go wrong with meacroni soup with beans and cabbage. Cook 1½ cups elbow meacroni according to directions, drain. Meanwhile, in a Dutch oven, heat 1 tablespoon canola oil on medium-high. Add 1 medium thinly sliced onion, 1 pound thinly sliced Savoy cabbage, 1 teaspoon minced garlic and ¼ t (19-ounce) cans rinsed cannellini beans and 1½ cups water; heat to boiling. Add macaroni; heat through and serve.
Make a lettuce salad and top with sliced hard-cooked eggs and tomato wedges.
Serve with crusty bread. For dessert, try fresh plums. Shopping list: Elbow macaroni, canola oil, onion, Savoy cabbage, garlic, pepper, vegetable broth, canned cannellini beans lettuce, eggs, tomatoes, crusty bread, fresh plums.

fresh plums.

Easy entertaining Saturday
This baked grouper (see recipe) was a hit with our guests. Serve it with rice tossed with petite green peas (frozan). Add a bibb lettuce salad and sourdough bread, For dessert, a dab of leftower ice cream over brownies and drizzled with chocolate sance will cap off a fine meal.

Shopping Hist: Olive oil, onions, green bell pepper, canned crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, coarse salt, black pepper, skinless grouper filet, lemon pepper see, soning, cayenne pepper, rice, petite green peas (frozen), bibb lettuce, sourdough bread, brownies, chocolate sauce. peas (frozen), bibb ieuuc, bread, brownies, chocolate sauce

The Recipes Caribbean chicken and rice salad (Sunday) Makes 6 servings

Preparation time: 25 minutes Cooking time: less than 20 minutes,

- cup slivered almonds, divided
- teaspoons olive oil, divided ounces chicken breast tenders,
- cut into bite-size pieces (8-ounce) package yellow rice cup cilantro, chopped and divided cup sweet onion, finely chopped
- (such as Vidalia or another fresh jalapeno pepper, seeded
- and finely chopped teaspoon jerk seasoning cups fresh orange juice, divided
- teaspoon arrowroot (see NOTE) teaspoon coarse salt
- teaspoon orange zest (orange part only) cup orange sections
- (fresh, canned or chilled) cups fresh baby spinach leaves

Heat a large skillet on medium-high. Add almonds and cook, stirri until golden; set aside. In same skillet, heat half the oil and cook chicken 4 minutes, stirring, or until almost cooked through. Remove to a warm plate and cover to finish cooking.

ing to directions. Toss hot rice with ¼ cup chopped cilantro; set aside to

keep warm.

For the dressing: Heat the remaining oil in a pan. Add onions, jalapeno pepper and jerk seasoning, and cook 8 minutes or until onions are softened. Add 1 cup of orange juice and boil 5 minutes to reduce. Combine the arrowroot and remaining ¼ cup orange juice and stir into sauce to thicken. Add the salt and orange zest. Toss the cooked chicken, orange sections, half the almonds, remaining ¼ cup cilantro and spinach together. Add the hot rice and the dressing and

Add the hot rice and the dressing and toss again to mix thoroughly. Serve topped with remaining almonds.

Note: Arrowrowt is a flavorless thickening agent. Look for it on the spice aisle or near the flour aisle.

Per serving: 305 calories, 19 grams protein, 7 grams fut (21 percent calories from fait, 0.9 gram saturated fat, 43 grams carbohydrate, 36 milligrams cholesterol, 656 milligrams sodium, 3 grams fiber.

Root beer pulled pork sandwiches (Monday)

Makes 10 servings Preparation time: 20 minutes Cooking time: 10 to 11 hours on low; 15 to 20 minutes on high

- (5- to 6-pound) bone-in pork
- shoulder, trimmed (1-ounce) envelope onion soup mix teaspoon coarse salt
- teaspoon pepper
- (12-ounce) can root been

cups barbecue sauce, divided

Place port on cutting board and sprinkle with onion soup mix; rub all over pork. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place in a 4-quart or larger slow cooker. In a medium bowl, whisk together the root beer and 1/2 cup barbecue sauce. Pour over pork. Cook on low 10 to 11 hours or until internal temperature is about 100. degrees. Remove pork to a cutting board and let it cool slightly. Pour and reserve about 34 cup of juices from slow cooker. (Pour a cup of liquid; discard fat for about ¾ cup.) Use 2 forks to shred pork, discarding any

fatty pieces. Place all the pork back into cooker with reserved juices. Add into cooker with reserved juices. Add remaining barbeue sauce. Stir to combine. Re-cover; cook on high 15 to 20 minutes or until hot and bubbly. (Adapted from "The Recipe Girl Cookbook," Lori Lange, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.)

Per serving: 458 calories, 37 grams protein; 20 grams fat (41 percent calories from fat), 71 grams saturated fat, 27 grams can bothydrate, 152 milligrams cholesterol, 767 milligrams choles

milligrams sodium, no fiber

Baked grouper (Saturday)

Makes 6 servings Preparation time: 15 minutes Cooking time: 40 to 45 minutes

- $tablespoons\ olive\ oil$ small onions, cut into 6 wedges
- green bell pepper, cut into strips cup canned crushed tomatoes
- tablespoons tomato paste (see NOTE)
 - Water (if needed)
- teaspoon coarse salt to taste
- teaspoon black pepper to taste pounds skinless grouper filet, cut into 3-inch pieces

1 teaspoon lemon pepper seasoning 2 to 3 pinches cayenne pepper

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet on medium. Add onions and bell pepper; cook and stir 10 minutes or until softened. Stir in crushed tomatoes and tomato paste; cover. Reduce heat to low and simmer. Cook 10 minutes, stirring simmer. Cook 10 minutes, stirring often, or until onions are very soft. (If mixture becomes too thick, thin with some water.) Season with the salt and pepper to taste. Put filets in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, folding under thin ends. Season with lemon pepper

ends. Season with lemon pepper and sauce and bake 20 to 25 minutes or until fish is opaque throughout. Note: For convenience, look for tomato paste in a tube. Per serving: 179 calories, 23 grams protein, 6 grams fut (29 percent calories from fut), 0.9 gram saturated fut, 8 grams carbohydrate, 42 milligrams cholesterd), 366 milligrams sodium, 2 grams fiber.