

Jane Snow Cooks



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Spirited Recipes and Stories

Jane Snow



Ringtaw Books  Akron, Ohio



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Foreword

I know reporters who dodged bullets in Vietnam. One former colleague joined the Ku Klux Klan undercover to get a story. Others have braved fire, floods and hurricanes.

I, too, have faced danger in the pursuit of journalism. In December of 1990, Jane Snow led WNIR radio host Stan Piatt and I into battle. Or should I say a food fight. Staring at us that dreary afternoon were 158 fruitcakes. ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-EIGHT FRUITCAKES! Were we nuts? Yes, and candied cherries and chopped dates, too. We met the enemy and we swallowed him. It took all we had not to spit him back out.

More than four hours later, we declared victory. We found one fruitcake worth eating. That recipe is in this book. The other 157 entries are still buried somewhere in the bowels of the *Beacon Journal*. I believe they have a half-life of 74 years so the building should be safe again sometime this millennium.

Why did Piatt and I put ourselves in harm's way like that? Because Jane asked.

And when the subject in Akron was food, everybody did what Jane said. We went to the restaurants she liked. We used the cooking tips she provided. We prepared the recipes she recommended. She was a community's palate for almost three decades. And we ate well. Maybe too well sometimes.

Most of you remember Jane as a food critic; I prefer to think of her as a damn fine journalist no matter what the topic she covered. She was every bit as detailed in her work as the best investigative reporters. That's why four times she was a finalist for the James Beard Award, the nation's most prestigious honor for a culinary writer, and twice a winner.

But now I have put myself in danger once again. This essay stands between you and more than 200 pages of commentary and Jane's favorite recipes. It is a virtual history book of cooking in the Akron area.

You'll learn the secret of sauerkraut balls and Canova's chili. You'll discover why folks in Barberton used to say that if the Colonel had made chicken this good, he'd have been a general. (As a native Kentuckian, I can assure you the Colonel never thought of using four pounds of lard to fry his birds. Nor serving them with hot sauce. Might have messed up his suit.)

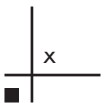
You'll taste the red velvet cake before you even get to the cooking instructions. (I always thought the cake got its name from the wallpaper that used to hang in Casa Mimi's and so many other area restaurants.)

So I'm going to get out of your way right now, because I've seen how much you like to eat. And how surly you can be when you're hungry.

Turn the page and start cooking.

Bon appétit.

Stuart Warner is a former columnist, reporter and Pulitzer Prize-winning editor at The Beacon Journal and The Plain Dealer in Cleveland.



Introduction

Workers at a Northeast Ohio auto factory once staged a month-long protest when they couldn't get the *Akron Beacon Journal's* Food section delivered at work.

"A lot of us are bachelors," a protestor told me by phone. "We need your recipes! Other recipes are too complicated."

When my food section started arriving with the *Beacon Journal* again, the guys removed the tape from coin-box slots, but for years I kept them in mind each time I chose a recipe. It had to be delicious, of course, and clearly explained, with ingredients that weren't impossibly expensive or difficult to round up. And if I could streamline the steps or reduce the number of utensils required, I'd do it.

During my two-plus decade career as food editor of the *Akron Beacon Journal*, I printed thousands of recipes. This book is a compilation of the very best—a one-of-a-kind collection of great-tasting, user-friendly recipes, many of them with a uniquely local flavor.

In these pages you'll find the storied cheesecake recipe from Lou & Hy's Deli, the delicate Almond Crèmes that beat out hundreds of other entries in a holiday cookie contest, and a grilled chicken recipe that brought my friends to their knees.

To track down recipes, I scoured restaurant kitchens and food factories, interviewed hundreds of chefs and home cooks and judged recipe contests galore. When I couldn't find a recipe my readers wanted, I created one myself. That's how I was able to share recipes for the legendary Cannova's Chili, Ken Stewart's white French dressing and Barberton Fried Chicken.

Along with those recipes and more, I've included stories about eating my way through Ohio and beyond. On one memorable road trip, I cooked a 2½-pound roast on the manifold of a car (it tasted awesome). On a journey to France, I ate every item sold in a tiny bakery in the Loire Valley, then returned home and recreated the pastries in my kitchen. The recipe for a custard-filled brioche from that trip is in this book.

I occasionally wandered far afield in search of recipes and trends. I interviewed a sun-weathered barbecue expert in a field in South Carolina, a hazelnut farmer in a grove in Oregon, and a New Orleans chef

on a riverboat over a plate of crawfish. They all had stories to tell and recipes to share. Many of the recipes have remained favorites. An explosively flavored lemon-walnut chicken salad from chef Joyce Goldstein in San Francisco is still the best I've tasted, and I know I'll never find a better recipe for crab cakes than the one I got in Baltimore.

But still, there's no place like home. Where else in the world can you find hot rice, sauerkraut balls and kidney bean salad, sometimes all at the same meal?

These foods are woven into the culinary fabric of the Akron area, and for more than two decades I had the time of my life sharing them with you. It's a joy to share them with you once again.

Jane Snow Cooks





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Chapter 1

Local Favorites

Just as the rubber industry shaped the Akron area's history, the quirky local foods consumed by workers and burghers alike have helped shape its personality.

A citizenry has to have a sense of humor to name a deep-fried nugget of breaded sauerkraut its official food, as residents did in a regional vote in 1996.

An independent streak is required to think of kidney bean salad as one of the major food groups. The mayonnaise, relish and bean mixture is found on restaurant menus across the region and on picnic tables in parks and backyards.

And how about the way we cling to Art's bean soup and Kaase's creamed chicken in a potato basket decades after the restaurants have closed? We're either loyal or stubborn, take your pick.

These and many other unique foods are woven into the region's culinary fabric, contributing their flavor notes to the richness and diversity of the local culture. Where else in the world can you find Barberton chicken, hot rice or Cannova's chili?

We still relish the devil dogs sold from bakery trucks in the 1950s, and we've never gotten over our fascination with red velvet cake—or, unfortunately, those miniature meatballs simmered in grape jelly. But we won't go there.

This chapter celebrates the foods that define our region, from Waterloo Restaurant's glorious coconut-cream pie with its tender-crumby crust to the tart-sweet coleslaw we serve with fried chicken.

If you've ever yearned for one more hunk of Budd's banana-pineapple cake or a bowl of Bangkok Gourmet's suave coconut-Siamese ginger soup, dig in.

Coconut-Siamese Ginger Soup

Coconut milk, lime and chicken broth form the backbone of an explosively flavored soup that's a bit exotic yet deeply comforting. The soup was wildly popular at Akron's first Thai restaurant, Bangkok Gourmet. Chef-owner Sue Fogle shared the recipe.

2 (14-ounce) cans coconut milk (not coconut cream)	½ cup canned straw mushrooms
½ stalk lemon grass, cut into 1-inch pieces	2 cups chicken broth
3 kaffir lime leaves	½ teaspoon salt, or to taste
2 pieces (1-inch long) Siamese ginger, peeled	1 tablespoon nam pla (fish sauce), or to taste
2 tablespoons Thai chili paste	Lime juice
10 ounces boneless chicken breasts, sliced into bite-sized pieces	Coriander leaves, green onions and red-hot Thai chili powder for garnish

Bring coconut milk to a boil in a large saucepan. Add lemon grass, lime leaves, Siamese ginger and chili paste. Stir well, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Add chicken, mushrooms, chicken broth, salt and fish sauce. Simmer 10 minutes longer.

To serve, ladle soup into bowls. Add a dash of lime juice (about ½ teaspoon) to each portion. Top with a sprinkling of chopped coriander leaves and green onions. Add a pinch of Thai chili powder if more heat is wanted.