

THANKSGIVING CLASSICS FROM NEW ORLEANS

SAVEUR

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FARE

landowners to sell excess wine for their own profit. To alert neighbors, the farmers hung an upside-down broom outside their barns, a practice that continues today (The term *Strauss* comes from the German word for bouquet, which is what the brooms were thought to resemble.) Over

What's more, at least 70 percent of the wines, meats, cheeses, and vegetables served at a *Strauss* had to come from the farm.

We visited a handful of *Straussen* that day. Our favorite was located outside the village of Merdingen, on a farm owned for generations by the *Gretzmeier* family. Our host, *Elvira Gretzmeier*, a petite woman in her early 40s, ushered us to a long communal table. We ordered *käsespätzle*, a casserole of tiny spätzle dumplings baked under a blanket of house-made emmentaler cheese, along with freshly baked flatbread called *flammenkuchen*, which was slathered with a wild onion and herb sauce, and a platter of homemade liverwurst, speck (cured, smoked ham), and *schwarzenmagen* (headcheese) that had been made from the meat of the family's hogs. While we ate, *Gretzmeier's* husband, *Heinrich*, filled our glasses with his full-bodied *späburgunder* (a.k.a. pinot noir). As I dipped into the delicious spätzle, I considered campaigning to change the old laws that keep *Straussen* closed for most of the year. After all, I still had a few hundred of them left to visit. (See THE PANTRY, page 106, for a guide to *Straussen*.) —*Liz Tarpy*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Ah! on Thanksgiving day...

What moistens the lip and what brightens the eye?

What calls back the past, like the rich Pumpkin pie?

—John Greenleaf Whittier

time, farmers started serving food, too, and eventually laws were enacted that differentiated *Straussen* from other dining establishments and strictly regulated how they operated: they could do business for only 16 weeks per year and sell only local wine.

METHOD

Käsespätzle

(Giant Dumplings with Emmentaler)

Spätzle means little sparrows in German. Heat oven to 450°. Halve 2 heads of garlic crosswise with a knife and brush with 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil; wrap with foil. Roast until soft, 1 hour. Let cool and squeeze roasted garlic cloves from their skins into a bowl; mash with a fork to a paste. Add 1/2 cup milk, 1/4 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves, 1/4 cup finely chopped basil leaves, 2 tbsp. melted unsalted butter, 1/4 tsp. kosher salt, and 3 beaten eggs; stir until smooth. Put 2 cups flour into a large bowl; form a well in center. Slowly pour in the garlic-milk mixture, stirring with a fork to form a smooth batter. Bring a 5-qt. sautépan of salted water to a boil over high heat. Set a perforated spätzle-making disk (see page 106) over the pot. Working in batches, scrape batter through holes into water. Cook until dumplings rise to surface, about 1 minute. Using a slotted spoon, transfer dumplings to a baking sheet. Heat 4 tbsp. unsalted butter in a 12" ovenproof skillet over high heat. Add dumplings; cook, stirring, until lightly browned, 6-8 minutes. Meanwhile, heat broiler; put rack 5" from heating element. Sprinkle dumplings with 1 cup grated emmentaler cheese; broil until melted; about 2 minutes. Serves 4.

AGENDA

NOVEMBER

13-15

DUMPLINGS & DYNASTIES:
THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN
CHINESE CUISINE

New York City

Explore contemporary Chinese food culture at this conference, hosted by the James Beard Foundation. Featuring a gala dinner with creative chefs and a weekend of events like dim sum-making workshops and tours of dumpling factories. Information: www.jbchina2008.com



NOVEMBER

13-23

56TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL
GOURMET INTERNATIONAL

Puerto Vallarta and

Zihuatlan, Mexico

Each November, food lovers descend on Mexico's western coast for lectures, demos, and dinners merging traditional Mexican and global foodways. Past collaborations between local cooks and guest chefs have produced such dishes as mole poblano brûlée. Information: www.festivalgourmet.com

NOVEMBER

15

Birthday:

ELIZA LESLIE

Philadelphia, 1787

In *Director for Cookery*, in its various editions (1837), Eliza Leslie, an expert in her time on matters of etiquette and cookery, combined entertaining tips with concise recipes. The result? Her renditions of classics like white gingerbread and beefsteak pudding made her cookbook the most popular American kitchen manual of the 19th century.



NOVEMBER

17

Anniversary:

FIRST POWERED MIXER
INVENTED, 1885

On this day in 1885, Rufus M. Eastman, a Boston inventor, patented the first electric-powered mixer. Though it was a landmark forerunner to blenders and food processors, the invention may have been a bit ahead of its time. Eastman's machine was never manufactured, and electric mixers didn't catch on in America until the 1930s.

NOVEMBER

21-23

OLIVE & OLIVE OIL FESTIVAL

Borja, Spain

During the olive harvest, visitors flock to this hillside Andalusian town by the thousands to share the bounty. The festival includes lectures, tours of local museums, and dinners of olive oil-infused local favorites like stuffed chupitos (scudfish), bacalao (salt cod) with tomato, and picado de morcilla (blood sausage). Information: www.opain.info



FARE

doing Stretch's chicken," says Annette Wroblewski, who took over the Belmont's kitchen in 2001, after Verdicchio, her stepfather, passed away and her mother retired.

Tonight, John Cuomo's son Jimmy is behind the bar, as he has been most nights since the summer of 1969. "Everything passes through the Belmont sooner or later," he says. "If I told the stories I knew, there'd be murders and divorces all over." Another thing Jimmy won't tell you is the recipe for chicken savoy. When I mention it, he shakes his head without taking his eyes off the register. "No point in even asking."

"I got a table for ya!" John finally yells, pointing to an open white-and-red-checked tabletop in the next room. A poster of Joe DiMaggio with Stretch himself hangs on the wall, surrounded by timeworn photos of other regulars. The menu holds many temptations, but I've come for the chicken: it arrives atop a puddle of caramel-colored vinegar. I grasp a thigh and crunch through the seasoned skin into the juicy meat. Ever hopeful, I again ask my waitress for the cook's secret. She crosses her arms before spinning toward the kitchen. "I have my integrity," she answers. "I have my principles." —*Michael Amer*

METHOD

Stretch's Chicken Savoy

Walk into the Belmont Tavern, and the intoxicating smell of this dish—roasted chicken laced with garlic, herbs, and red wine vinegar—hits you immediately. We tried to get the recipe from several staffers but gave up: after chef-owner Annette Wroblewski said, "If I tell you, then we'd have to kill you on your way out the door." We think our version is pretty close. Heat oven to 500°. Season one 3-4-lb. chicken, cut into 8 pieces, with kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste and set aside. In a small food processor, finely chop together 4 cloves garlic along with 1/2 cup finely grated pecorino, 3 tbsp. olive oil, 1 tbsp. dried oregano, and 1 tsp. dried thyme. Set herb paste aside. Heat 1 tbsp. olive oil in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken, skin side down, and cook until golden brown, 6-8 minutes. Turn chicken pieces over with tongs. Using spoon, smear chicken skin with herb paste. Transfer skillet to oven and cook until well browned and cooked through, 20-25 minutes. Remove skillet from oven; pour out fat. Add 1 cup red wine vinegar; spoon vinegar sauce over chicken. Transfer chicken to a platter and pour vinegar sauce over it.

FRIEND OF A FARMER



LAST NOVEMBER, some friends and I were driving through the farmlands and vineyards of the Kaiserstuhl region of southwestern Germany in search of homemade spätzle, the dish of tiny egg-and-flour dampplings that's the preferred comfort food in these parts. We passed row upon tidy row of pruned grapevines before spotting a turnoff where an upside-down broom was planted in the ground: the age-old symbol signifying that a *Straußen*, or farm restaurant, was nearby.

There are 600 *Straußen* in this agricultural corner of Germany; the casual eateries, which are open for just a few months each year during the spring and fall, occupy a swath of territory that runs along the Rhine River from the Freiburg area north to the Rheingau wine-growing region. Despite the large number of *Straußen* in operation, they've remained something of a mystery to most outsiders because they operate from farmers' homes and barns, often far from well-traveled areas. *Straußen*-hopping, though, is an enduring harvest-time tradition here. *Straußen* originated in the ninth century A.D., when Charlemagne, who reigned over this part of Europe, allowed vintners working for