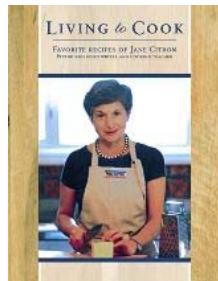


Jane Citron's cookbook fights cancer

Thursday, October 29, 2009

By Bob Batz Jr., Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



The late Jane Citron's son Alan says that for the release of her new cookbook, they're bringing out "the big guns."

One is acclaimed chef Thomas Keller (French Laundry, Bouchon, Per Se), who's coming in to the champagne book launch reception Nov. 14 to speak about Pittsburgh's contributions to the culinary landscape.

Another is Bob Sendall, the All in Good Taste Productions caterer, who will serve cocktails and hors d'oeuvres from the cookbook at the event, to be held at Crate in Green Tree.

Jane Citron is a big culinary figure, too.

Over the three decades she was teaching cooking and writing about food for the Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and Pittsburgh Magazine, many students and readers asked her for a collection of recipes. But she didn't start putting one together until just before she died of colon cancer in 2006 at age 73.

Now her family has edited and published them as "Living to Cook." Proceeds from the release party and from sales of the cookbook (\$26.95) will be donated to the Jane and Carl Citron Endowed Chair in Colon Cancer at the University of Pittsburgh and the UPMC Cancer Centers Patient Assistance Fund.

Local colon cancer research is a cause for which the Citron family has helped raise more than \$1.5 million, including with an annual spring Cooking Up A Cure dinner. This year, All-Clad upped its support for the charity, which Alan Citron says is getting close to announcing the endowed chair's first recipient.

"This kind of took on a life of its own," says Mr. Citron, of Fox Chapel, one of her three sons.

His wife, Susan, functioned as the editor of the book, which does not mention how Mrs. Citron died. Son Rodger wrote the three-page introduction about how she lived and cooked; it's as nostalgic as the family photos that grace the insides of the cover. One of the snaps shows Mrs. Citron with Chef Keller, who really liked her; she introduced him to Greene County farmer Keith Martin's now famous Elysian Fields lamb. (From 1991 to 2006, Alan Citron notes, his mom and dad, Carl, spent August in the Napa Valley, where she frequently dined at and visited the French Laundry.)

Mrs. Citron's voice -- knowledgeable, subtle, elegant -- comes through in the head notes on many recipes, which range from pizzas and chili and meatloaf and cream-cheese brownies (a favorite of Alan's) to fancier fare such as Magret de Canard with Cranberry Cassis Sauce and Ancho Chile Fudge Pie.

She introduces Veal Scallops Parmesan, a birthday favorite of Alan's, with, "In the early days of my marriage, veal was very popular and the centerpiece of many dinner parties. Today, that is no longer the case, but I cannot resist including this wonderful veal recipe. ... And I must confess, every so often, I enjoy making and serving this dish today."

If you go

"Living to Cook" release

When: 5 to 7 p.m. Nov. 14

Where: Crate, 1960 Greentree Road, Green Tree

Tickets: \$175 (include a copy of the book, an All-Clad copper-core petite brasier and Thomas Keller's signature Bouchons, brownie-like cakes (retail value \$211))

Proceeds benefit the Jane and Carl Citron Endowed Chair in Colon Cancer and the Patient Assistance Fund.

RSVP: Melanie Tennant by Nov. 4: 724-743-6814 or mtennant@allclad.com

Also, on Thurs., Nov. 19, the Ladies Hospital Aid Society's Fall Luncheon features caterer Robert Sendall demonstrating recipes from, and signing copies of, "Living to Cook." The event, which includes lunch, runs from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at LeMont, Mount Washington; tickets are \$75, or \$600 for a table of 10. RSVP by Nov. 13: 412-648-6106.

The foods reflect raising a family and entertaining in her Squirrel Hill home, and the fun she had outside it, starting with the years she lived in San Francisco while her husband served in the Army from 1955 to '57. Many recipes she brought back from the family's travels to France, Italy and more exotic locales such as Vietnam, and she shared them in her cooking classes starting in 1978.

She also shares a few of her mother's recipes, as well as a few favorites from local restaurants, including the Lima Bean Soup from the late Gazebo in Shadyside.

As Alan Citron puts it, "My mother's life was food," and everyone from students to pros such as Chef Keller recognized her talent and passion.

Now it can help this good cause. She knew about the endowed chair, Mr. Citron says, and "she was very supportive of that."

"Living to Cook" will be available starting Nov. 16, including at endcoloncancer.org or by calling 724-310-1020.

Cha Ca

PG tested

Many of Jane Citron's recipes are souvenirs of her travels, including this one from the first Vietnamese meal -- "undoubtedly our best," and she elaborates -- that she and her sister and her husband had at the Cha Ca fish restaurant in Hanoi. It "characterized the cooking and flavors of exotic Vietnam." I substituted homegrown bok choy for the chard (she doesn't specify how much) and cooked the onion with those greens instead of adding it raw. I soaked my rice vermicelli in hot water for about 10 minutes and then cooked it briefly with the greens and onions. But it's a highly adaptable recipe and the sauce is fabulous.

-- Bob Batz Jr.

- 1 pound mild white fish (sole, snapper, sea bass or other fish that can be fried)
- Rice flour to coat fish
- Vegetable oil (to depth of 1/4 inch in a large frying pan)
- Greens (Swiss chard)
- 1 large mild white onion, sliced
- 1 bunch cilantro, leaves and small stems chopped
- 1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced
- Warm peanuts
- Rice vermicelli
- Spicy Fish Sauce (recipe below)

Dredge fish with rice flour and fry on both sides in hot oil. Push fish to the side of pan or place on a plate. Add coarsely cut Swiss chard greens and saute a few minutes to soften.

Arrange sliced onions, cilantro, scallions and peanuts in separate dishes. Cook rice vermicelli according to directions, then toss with onions. Place mixture in a bowl, top with fish and greens, then sprinkle with cilantro, scallions and warm peanuts. Serve with the following sauce, a version of the Vietnamese nuoc cham.

Serves 4.

SPICY FISH SAUCE

- *PG tested*
- 2 small cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 small fresh red chili pepper, seeded and minced
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1/4 cup rice vinegar
- 1/4 cup Vietnamese fish sauce (nuoc man) or Thai fish sauce (nam pla)

Combine all ingredients, blend well and serve with fish.

-- *"Living to Cook" by Jane Citron (\$26.95)*

Bob Batz Jr. can be reached at bbatz@post-gazette.com and 412-263-1930.

Looking for more from the Post-Gazette? Join [PG+](#), our members-only web site. You'll get exclusive sports content, opinion, financial information, discounts from retailers and restaurants, and more. Our [introduction to PG+](#) gives you all the details.



First published on October 29, 2009 at 12:00 am