

FARE

Explorers and Experimenters from the World of Food, plus Book Review, Agenda, and More

AGENDA

DECEMBER

2

Anniversary:

ROYAL SMITHFIELD SHOW

1799, London

Around the turn of the 19th century, a group of agriculturists decided to organize a national livestock show near the site of the centuries-old Smithfield meat market, in the heart of London. Today, the show, held in Somerset County, boasts more than 500 entries in 100 different classes—a great chance for Brits, and tourists, to be reminded of where their meat comes from. Information: 44/174 9822 200.

DECEMBER

3

Birthday:

ELLEN RICHARDS

1842, Dunstable, Massachusetts

Home economics may not be the most sought-after career these days, but that doesn't make Ellen Richards any less of a role model. Sure, she was given to pontificating—"Dirt is a sin," she once pronounced—but Richards, the first woman to graduate from M.I.T., was a pioneer in bringing the rigors of science into the kitchen. A tireless crusader against malnutrition and poor kitchen hygiene, she served as the president of the American Home Economics Association from 1908 to 1910.



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9

GLÖGGPROVNING

Stockholm, Sweden

Every December, Stockholm's Wine and Spirits Historical Museum sets



Prize Herd

For making authentic bistecca, not just any cow will do

ISN'T IT HARD TO EAT THEM now that you know they are so cute?" Cesare Casella asked impishly, his signature bouquet of fresh herbs poking from his breast pocket, as I bit into a piece of his bistecca alla fiorentina. It was the first time he was offering the dish at Maremma, his New York City restaurant, and he knew I'd waited

two years for a taste—ever since I'd seen the framed pictures of the doe-eyed and, admittedly, cute cows in the entranceway of Beppe, his former restaurant.

Most cookbooks will tell you that bistecca alla fiorentina is simply a porterhouse or T-bone grilled over hot coals and drizzled with lemon juice and olive oil. But Casella's steak, though prepared in the

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aside a day for promoting and imbibing glögg, the notoriously potent mulled brew of red wine and brandy or aquavit infused with cloves, orange peel, nutmeg, cinnamon, and cardamom. Listen to an expert re-



count glögg's history; sample a cup of the stuff from a huge, simmering pot; and nibble on honey and pepper cakes and gingerbread. Information: 46/8 744 7072.

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10

COMMUNITY OLIVE PRESS DAY

Glen Ellen, California

The old-country tradition of collectively squashing the fruit of local olive groves at harvesttime continues in the Sonoma Valley. Participants are invited to bring their freshly picked olives, whether a single bag of them or the produce of multiple trees. Wine is on hand, naturally, and attendees can enjoy olive oil tastings, cookies, and hot apple cider as the harvest is pressed into a communal olio nuovo. Information: 800/965-4839.

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COLONIAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

Darien, Georgia

You won't find any Meals Ready to Eat at the first annual Christmas dinner held in the soldiers' barracks of Fort King George. What you will find in this carefully restored 18th-century colonial-era garrison are brunswick stew, scotch eggs, turnip greens, and other period-appropriate dishes made from recipes found in 18th-century British cookbooks. Authenticity is the order of the day beyond the kitchen, too: the floors are dirt, two fireplaces supply heat, and candles provide the only light. Information: 912/437-4770.

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17

COMMUNITY CHANUKAH PARTY

Taos, New Mexico

For 15 years, the Taos Jewish Center has been promoting neighborly food sharing and good home cooking. This year, its holiday-season potluck honors perhaps the best-loved of Hanukkah foods, the latke. Standard



Cesare Casella at his restaurant, Maremma, with three Chianina steaks.

traditional manner, was anything but ordinary. The meat—Casella uses various prime cuts—had a deep claret color and a rounded flavor that was long on the tongue and light on the palate.

Casella makes no secret of how he achieved such perfection. Just as genuine coq au vin calls for Burgundy wine, a true bistecca alla

fiorentina calls for a Tuscan cow, specifically a Chianina. Named for Tuscany's grassy Val di Chiana, this ancient and majestic breed was praised by Virgil for its beauty.

Steaks from purebred Chianina are hard to find in America. Most Chianina in this country are cross-bred with Angus (the animal is called Chiangus) to maximize

quality and yield. The cost of rearing the large-boned purebreds, which, when grass fed, take twice as long to bring to harvest as other cattle, limits the number of breeders to a passionate few.

Casella raises his herd at a ranch in Hurleyville, New York, that provides care for people with disabilities; they help tend the cows as part of their therapy. The animals get royal treatment: in the summer, they are led daily to fresh paddocks to ensure that they always forage on nutritious new growth, and in the winter they live in open barns with lots of comfortable bedding.

Only one of the more than 50 cows in the herd Casella co-owns with the ranch ends up destined for Maremma each month. Demand is so high that Casella e-mails select customers ahead of time so that they can reserve a steak. (Those who miss out have to settle, if one can call it that, for bistecca made from organic dry-aged prime Black Angus.)

The chef has named many of his Chianina for the heroines of Puccini's operas. "Puccini and I are both from Lucca," he says. "But while his heroines die tragically, my cows do very nicely." (For information on Maremma, see *THE PANTRY*, page 99.) —*Sophie Menin*

JOHNNY APPLE REMEMBERED

R. W. Apple Jr., 1934–2006

On October 4, R. W. Apple Jr., known as Johnny to friends and colleagues, passed away, in his 72nd year, full of facts, fervent opinions, and foie gras. Widely recognized as one of the greatest and most prolific journalists of his time, he roamed the world for the *New York Times* for more than 40 years—always toting a small peppermill and never departing from a bylined locale without having reconnoitered the local gastronomic enticements. Apple came late to food writing, but like a good-time Charlie who arrives at a dull party just as it is winding down, he was a buoyant, insatiable presence that was most welcome. A contributor to *SAVEUR* since 1995—the food and wine of Trieste (November 2002) and Thanksgiving with Guy Savoy in Paris (November 2000)



were among the many subjects he covered for this magazine—he explored not only the culinary essence of a place but also the culture surrounding it. Apple was an immodest, irrepressible, and spherical sybarite—some might say a caricature of a sybarite. But above all he was a newspaperman, and like his journalistic forebears—A. J. Liebling, Waverley Root, Ernest Hemingway—he took advantage of that position to further his education in all things edible. "I travel to eat," he once explained. The son of a grocer in

Akron, Ohio, Apple made his final exit while mulling over the foods to be served at his memorial service. In a letter to his staff, Bill Keller, executive editor of the *Times*, wrote, "He was himself to the last." —*Bryan Miller*