

FOOD & HOME

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HINTS FROM HELOISE

Peanut butter treats

Dear Heloise: Instead of scraping the jar for that last bit of peanut butter, I stick the jar in the microwave for a few seconds, allowing the "dregs" to reach a very soft to liquid stage. Timing depends on the amount left in the jar, so keep an eye on it.

I mix the softened peanut butter into pancake batter. Even 1 or 2 tablespoons adds noticeable flavor. I also use this mixture to make "poor man's crepes," spreading them with a thin layer of jam or jelly. — **Betsy S., Fredericksburg, Va.**

Betsy, poor man, rich man, old man, young man (and gals) — this sounds delicious to me! I make "peanut-butter milk" by pouring some low-fat milk into what's left in the jar. I add a teaspoon of honey and a dash of cinnamon. Add some ice, and I'm set! — **Heloise**

Turnip trouble

Dear Heloise: Once again, I am going to have to toss a batch of turnip greens! Although I rinsed and drained them thoroughly, some sand or grit remained. Do you have any hints for this problem? — **Karen C., Clinton, Miss.**

Karen, don't throw out the greens just yet! Washing (really, rinsing, since you don't use soap) turnip greens can take some time. But they are worth it when you are eating them along with a slice of corn bread and a cut-up red, ripe tomato. Fill the sink or a very large pot with cold water. You should cut up the greens first, removing the stems and ribs. Let them soak a short while, then rinse thoroughly to remove all of the grit. Do repeat this process a few times to get out all of the sand and grit. Some folks add a glug or two of vinegar to the water — they say it helps release the grit. Sure can't hurt. Good luck! — **Heloise**

Freezing parsley

Dear Heloise: Many recipes I want to try call for fresh minced parsley. I hate buying a bunch for just a couple of teaspoons or tablespoons full.

Now I get one bunch of parsley. I pull the leaves off and place them, about a cup at a time, in the mini food chopper. I put them into a section of an ice-cube tray and add cold water to cover. Once frozen, pop out the cubes and store in a plastic, zipper-top bag in the freezer. When needed, take out one or two cubes and place them in a strainer over a cup to thaw. — **John**

'I Am the Walrus' ... goo goo g' joob

By **JOHN BECHTEL**
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The Walrus is a popular local eatery snuggled into a non-descript strip plaza two blocks from the governor's mansion in our state capital. The exact address if you want to GPS your way there is 1136 3rd St., Bismarck, ND 58501. It is easy to find if you are driving directly into Bismarck from Minot: Follow 83S across I-94, where it turns into State Street. Follow State Street around the Capitol Square, keeping to your right, at which point State Street turns into E. Boulevard Avenue. Continue on E. Boulevard Avenue to N. 3rd Street, turn right, and one half block on your left will be this almost invisible strip plaza that you could look at and not see if you weren't looking for it. In the middle of that non-descript plaza is a non-descript store front with a few beer signs on reflective glass. You've arrived. It's worth the trip. You really don't know Bismarck until you've eaten here at least once.

This place is local, so for the best experience pretend you're local, meaning smile, be friendly and don't act like you're a food critic there to inspect the place. This is a place where friends go to be with friends. The establishment is owned by a waitress who, backed by some investors who were regular patrons, bought out the previous owner. The lesson being, never pigeon-hole yourself: if you are a server, don't think of yourself as a server. You never know what you will become. The second lesson being, be nice to everyone; you never know who will be your boss or business partner next. Her name, by the way, is Jill R. Sanford, and she may have come from humble beginnings but she has her marketing and graphic arts down pat. She has a business card, logo and website worthy of downtown Chicago. For the record, Jill is no patsy or front person for wiser people with all the money. She bought out her partners in three years and runs a thriving establishment with good food, great beer and a funky team spirit. Jill runs the show, but she hasn't lost the common touch or forgotten her roots. She has deep connections with her staff, which more than likely makes her job as an owner twice as hard. It's hard to be a boss and a friend, too. She makes it work.

The place from the outside looks like a beer joint or a college bar, and you half expect to find pool tables once you are inside. The way in is a long hallway, and then you turn left into a long, narrow dining room, with half of that space elevated two or three steps. It reminded me of a similar place in Philadelphia where all the



The Walrus restaurant in Bismarck.



Jill Sanford is the owner and general manager of The Walrus.

Carolyn Ferguson/Special to MDN

Walrus

Brian says every kitchen has its own smell, and at The Walrus it's garlic. Brian is clearly a creative spirit, and he and two other cooks are constantly involved in R&D (Research and Development). I loved it! This is not the sort of place where you would expect the kitchen help to be thinking in terms of R&D. Like everything else at The Walrus, don't judge this book by its cover. And speaking of books, Brian, without any formal culinary training, has learned a great deal from books. He is an avid reader, and has learned a lot from books like Anthony Bourdain's Kitchen Confidential, books by the Culinary Institute of America and others. Brian speaks passionately about the joys of learning and informs me that

servers were opera singers and took turns putting their serving trays down to sing a few arias. No opera here, but the place is named after a song, "I Am the Walrus" written by John Lennon in 1967 after the death of Beatles' manager, Brian Epstein. A student fan had written in saying that his teacher was requiring the class to study the lyrics of the Beatles songs in an effort to fathom their higher meaning. So Lennon put together a mishmash of lyrics for this song and said, let them try to make sense of that! There's more to the story. Google the lyrics and you'll laugh. Jill says the former owner was

an ardent fan of the Beatles. Goo goo g' joob.

Last year, The Walrus was named the Bismarck Italian Restaurant of the Year, which is amazing because no one who works there thinks of it as an Italian restaurant at all. Brian Hare, the philosopher-chef of the establishment, considers their fare more French American, but he admits the menu mirrors the taste of the neighborhood it is in. I walked my dog in the neighborhood, and it is clean, pristine even; a working class neighborhood that obviously has pride. The houses are modest as are the cars in the driveways; remarkable con-

sidering that at the end of the block are the manicured Capitol Grounds and the governor's mansion.

R&D at The

See WALRUS — Page C2

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Walrus

Continued from Page C1

all the best cooks and chefs are very well read. When I asked him his opinion on the difference between a cook and a chef, he said whatever you call them, the best are passionate about what they do; they just love to prepare food. This is not a job where they punch in and punch out. He said his team tries to do something a little different every day.

Brian says at many restaurants, when the day is done, everyone boogies out at closing, but not at The Walrus. They are a team, and a family, and they often hang around to decompress and talk about their day.

I won't say too much about the menu because you can read most of it online, but whoever writes the menu deserves a Nobel prize for literary inventiveness. Whenever we visit, we always get the beer sampler, which is four small glasses

for \$7. This time we had the Fur Trapper from Montana, Des Chutes Red Chair from Oregon, Fargo Sodbuster (from guess where), and Laughing Sun Whipping Post, Bismarck's own pale ale. Thin crust pizza is a big favorite at The Walrus. Try the Polar Bear pizza, the Green Thumb entree or the Cajun Chicken tetrazzini. If you are an advocate of Chef Brian's philosophy about learning, this is a place to try new things. You will like some things better than others, but that's what it's all about. I had a Rib Eye Oscar with creamy garlic potatoes and mixed vegetables. They didn't rush our meal, spaced our course out and didn't overcook the steak. The vegetables were grilled with seasoning, and not the usual bland steamed variety. For me, perfect!

They have 10 on-tap beers that are standard, that are always available, and they have 31 other craft beers that constantly change; every few days as a matter of

fact. To facilitate your selection, the beers are categorized: Easy going brews; Fruit/ciders/wheat; Brews with bite; Suds from the dark side; Reds, ambers, Scottish and Bocks.

This place isn't library quiet; go there in the middle of the afternoon for that; at about 5:30 the crowd moves in, and there is often a line down that narrow hallway all the way to the sidewalk. The tables are close enough together you'd think Jill's paying New York rent for the space, and most of the time every chair is occupied, at least during rush hour. Lots of families, kids and senior citizens. It is handicapped accessible, but navigation can be challenging during rush periods. If you're in a hurry and don't mind sitting at the bar, service there can be faster. No one is rushed to leave, but the waiting line moves quickly. This is a happy boisterous place and is not recommended for the grumpy, unless of course you're ready to get over it.

When Jill bought the place, she says she was terrified for at least 18 months. She was afraid some of the equipment would break and she wouldn't know what to do. She was afraid the customers would stop coming. What if the staff didn't show up? She says everyone wants to own a restaurant, but no one wants to run one. She calls her staff Team Walrus. Many of them have been with her from the beginning and others have left and returned. They are family; like all families, sometimes dysfunctional, but always family. Shawn Sanford, her brother, a history teacher with five kids of his own, is often there to help out, and to ease the aloneness of ownership.

I will of course return to The Walrus, not only for the fun, food and craft beer, but also to indulge in more of Chef Brian's philosophy. We talked a little about what it's like to have something returned to the kitchen because the patron was dis-

satisfied. Brian admitted he hates it; it hurts his feelings and wounds his pride, and he wakes up the next morning still thinking about it. It would be like someone contacting me to tell me I'm a terrible writer. That would hurt my feelings, too.

What helps me get through the tough spots is to come at life from a viewpoint of abundance, not a world of want. If you come from an attitude of abundance and you have a disappointing experience at a restaurant, you keep your perspective. This was not your last meal. It has no enduring impact on your life. It was what it was. A minor disappointment. What did it cost? Maybe \$20, maybe \$40? What price do you put on a bad day? What size disappointment will throw our whole day or even a few moments off balance? Or much worse, throw us into a funk or a rage? Scientific studies have demonstrated that human memories are full of surprises. How many times have we

gone back to something only to find it wasn't as good as we remembered it? If we are in a restaurant with a really fun group with hilarious, joyful, highly animated conversation, how long will we remember the forgotten paper napkin?

If you would like to indulge your own philosophical nature, particularly with regard to the world of food, I recommend you watch the movie Chef, released less than a year ago. It's on Netflix. It is well done, funny and provides a delightful inside view of the chaos in a restaurant kitchen, the world of cooks and the passion of chefs, the tensions between restaurant owners and creative staff and not losing sight of the fun and passion of living. It has romance and a delightful story about a father and his son. And you will understand why I and this column are not about restaurant criticism.

As always, your comments, stories, and sugges-

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The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress becomes negative when a person faces continuous challenges without relief or relaxation in between.

Stress can lead to physical symptoms including headaches, upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, and problems sleeping. Research suggests that stress also can bring on or worsen certain symptoms or diseases.

Don't get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life, Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.

- **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to be a priority. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.
- **Do something you enjoy every day.** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy.



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