

# TASTE!

Your essential guide to food & beverage

SECTION D

## Comfort in a cup



Kathy Briscoe (left) of Spring Lake smiles as server Jennifer McDowell, 27, of Wall pours tea at Country-by-the-Sea Tea Room in Avon. The tea room provides a calming atmosphere for its patrons.

STAFF PHOTOS: MARY FRANK

## A warm and comforting beverage, tea offers calm from the storm

By **SUSAN BLOOM**  
CORRESPONDENT

For those of us still trying to shake off the inevitable food and activity frenzy of the holidays or dig out from the gloom of winter, take heart — a tasty cup of tea delivers instant warmth and a much needed respite from the hectic pace of today's modern lifestyle.

"There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea," author Henry James wrote.

No one knows this better than Jane Wehr, owner and hostess of the Victorian Tea Room in Ocean Grove, where traditional afternoon tea — complete with a choice of several dozen different teas as well as an extensive menu of finger sandwiches, meat pies, bread, cheese and scones — is served.

"The tradition of afternoon tea is all about etiquette and elegance," Wehr said. "It emphasizes the art of pouring and enjoying tea and homemade sweets and savories amidst lovely Victorian decor and amenities such as doilies, creamer covers and linen."

A late afternoon three-course meal, afternoon tea usually involves the pouring of tea in a precise fashion accompanied by

the serving of a three-tiered tray laden with meats and finger sandwiches on the bottom tier, desserts and scones in the middle and items such as fresh fruit, chocolate-covered strawberries or chocolate truffles on top.

Clotted cream or Devonshire cream, lemon curd and preserves typically accompany the scones, and soothing music often plays in the background.

"It's these special touches and no-rush atmosphere that help people relax and enjoy the pleasure of tea with friends for a couple of hours," Wehr said.

Country-by-the-Sea Tea Room in Avon, located within an antique shop, similarly succeeds in using tea to deliver a bit of calm to its patrons. Owner Jan McDowell offers a changing roster of 10 teas daily, although "English Breakfast, cinnamon spice, and anything with vanilla in it are by far our most popular," she said.

Patrons can choose from a variety of homemade soups, sandwiches and sweets, but perhaps the best part of the experience is the simple opportunity to enjoy a moment of solitude or kinship over tea within the shop's relaxing setting.

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## Mix sweet and tart apples

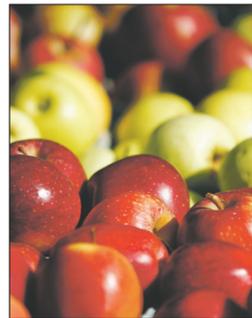
**Q.** What varieties of apples are considered good for baking? I have a recipe for baking squash with apples and think the apple will make a difference. The recipe only says baking apple. Would you please give me a specific name such as Granny Smith, McIntosh, Gala, etc.?

Mary Brick

**A.** When making recipes that mix squash and apples, Sam Mancuso, executive chef at Wegmans in Ocean Township, said it is always best to mix a tart apple with a sweet variety.

And while you are mixing up your apples, do the same with the squash. Especially in the winter, experts say.

"I like combining my apples," Mancuso said. "Some provide a sweet wonderful flavor, and others are tart, such as the Granny Smith."



FILE PHOTO

There are many varieties of apples suitable for cooking.

When baking with apples, it is important that they keep their form as well as flavor, Mancuso said. The Granny Smith is renowned for its ability to hold its shape when cooked and to deliver a fresh, tart flavor, he said.

It is best to choose sweet apples such as the Gala, Honeycrisp and Pink Lady apples and mix them with the tartness of the Granny Smith, Mancuso said.

"That gives you a nice combination of sweet and tart," he said.

Squash, like apples, are interchangeable, and there is a large variety of squash to choose from during the fall and winter months, Mancuso said.

Fall fruit, such as apples, pair nicely with winter squash, he said. Butternut and acorn squash go naturally with apples, Mancuso said.

"They are all products of the fall season," he said.

Squash is a great vegetable because when you roast it, it caramelizes and brings out a sweet flavor, he said.

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## Wine 2011: Look forward to good prices, choices

By **MICHELLE LOCKE**  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Riesling will rise. The market for wine in Asia will boom on. Customers will continue to hunt for vintage values. And the market for fine wine will continue to rumble back to life.

That's the sort of year industry observers say the world of wine will bring us in 2011.

In 2010, the economy remained a top issue for American high-end

winemakers, many of them in California. They saw sales of wines priced at \$30 or more a bottle slammed when consumer spending collapsed.

"Since so much of the economy of high-end wine is attached to a robust economy and wealth creation, we have clearly seen a difficult couple of years for Napa and other high-end growing areas," said Barry Schuler, former chairman and CEO of America Online and now proprietor of Meteor Vineyard in the Napa Valley.

Now, "the market's definitely com-

ing back," which means producers have to decide what to do next, he says. "I think people are looking at Asia, where all of a sudden there's an interest in fine wine and high-end wine, both from collectors and young entrepreneurs who are acquiring some wealth for the first time."

Here at home, meanwhile, consumers who had been staying away from premium wines — or, if they were going to shell out \$50 or more, sticking to tried and true brands —

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AP PHOTO

Shafer Vineyards wines are lined up for viewing. The vineyards' president, Doug Shafer, expects to see consumer confidence in buying fine wines to continue to grow in 2011.

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