

Food — Fashions

Abe, at 81, bares secrets of formidable Wolf pack

By Mary-Jane Tichener

Genial Abe Wolf makes what may well be the best planter's punch in the world.

The usually modest dean of Berkshire bartenders admits it. Abe, his wife, Sara, and son, Lenny, own the Log Cabin, a Lenox steak house.

Abe's planter's punch is made with fresh orange juice — about three ounces, fresh lemon juice — about two ounces. "Use a fine Jamaican rum, like Meyer's — two ounces," Abe says, "a few dashes of Angostura bitters and sugar. You shake it, pour it into a tall glass filled with cracked ice, top it off with port wine and a few dashes of Demerara 151-proof rum on top of that, then decorate it with fruit. If you like rum, try it. It's a potent drink."

"I never wanted people to know what's in it, but I guess it's no secret any more. It's a recipe given to me by a bartender when we opened at 48th Street in New York."

Born in New York 81 years ago, Abe, who looks 20 years younger, has been in the restaurant business all his life, at first in New York City and for almost 20 years at the Log Cabin.

He first worked for his father, Louis Wolf, who had come to New York from Germany and started a small restaurant the year Abe was born, 1895.

"It was located on the lower East Side, near Police Headquarters," recalled Abe. "I had the privilege of even serving Teddy Roosevelt. He used to come there for lunch when he was police commissioner of New York City in the early 1900s. Prices were naturally very cheap then, but the food was good. Then when dad died in 1968 my brother, Manny, who was older than I by six years, took over."

The restaurant was open all through prohibition. Yes, liquor was sold. "We went through it

all without being disturbed — ever," Abe says. "There were no payoffs in those days, never. Manny's personality was so fine that people gravitated to him. Even the prohibition agents liked him."

Abe, who holds the emblem of the American Society of Bartenders, learned the fine art of mixology from scratch.

"I picked it up after World War I," he says. "I was with the American Expeditionary Forces with Ferning in France and Germany, and when I got back, I tried other things and they didn't work out, so I returned to the restaurant field."

Abe got his planter's punch recipe from an old-time bartender named Tony Wier. "He was on in years already, but he had a great following. He used to come to work in a fancy vest and spats and a cane. He knew a lot of people — a lot of people from newspapers and stage and screen people. Ed Sullivan used to come in to see Tony."

What's the most popular drink? Abe says that most people like martinis, Manhattan and daiquiris. "They stick to the standards, but the young element likes the different, fancier drinks." Abe mentioned a Tequila sunrise, tequila and orange juice with grenadine floated on top. "Sombros are gone over very well — coffee brandy or Kahlua and milk on ice — and Singapore gin slings are popular. That's made with lemon juice and gin with cherry brandy and a few dashes of Benedictine."

There's not a drink you can stump Abe on. His three bartenders never need to refer to the bartender's manual. "Instead of referring to a book, they'll ask me, but they seldom have to — they're well trained."

The Wolf trio divides the restaurant management. "I handle the liquor, Lenny orders the food and Sara handles the pa-

trons," Lenny's wife, Mary, pitches in, too, when she's needed.

Lenny, too, learned the restaurant business from the ground up at Manny Wolf's in New York. "We kept him in the kitchen for a couple of years and didn't allow him to work in the dining room," says Abe. "We sent him to culinary school at the Waldorf-Astoria, where he learned all about food and its preparation."

After prohibition the original Wolf family restaurant moved uptown to 40th Street and 3rd Avenue, where it operated successfully from the day it opened under the name of Manny Wolf's. The restaurant, name and all, was sold in 1948.

Lenny was responsible for the Wolf's move to the Berkshires. While he was staying with his cousin, Regina Frank, and her husband, Dick, in Pittsfield, he decided he was through with the big city.

One day he called up on the telephone and said that he was buying the Log Cabin. "Abe recalled, "That was on July 22, 1967, at the height of the Tanglewood season."

Lenny transformed the rustic Lenox restaurant, built in 1922, from a snack and sandwich place to one with a big city menu of steaks and chops and a gigantic salad. "The only thing we'll brag about is our own salad and the dressing," Abe says.

Although the Wolfs have added another dining room to accommodate the dinner patrons, sometimes as many as 300 in an evening, the place is still not large. It seats 100. "Being small, we can personalize it," Sara says. "We can know most of the people who come in here. It's been a repeat business, and customers bring others."

Steady customers include celebrities as Leonard Bernstein, Sam Levenson, Myra

Loy, Harry Belafonte, Eddie Fisher and Arthur Fiedler. Celebrity or no, everyone gets the royal treatment.

Sara claims there are no difficult people. "I don't give them a chance to be difficult," says Sara. "The minute they walk through that door, I try really hard to make them feel really welcome. And they feel that way."

Open each evening at 5 except Mondays, the restaurant closes at 10 on weeknights and 11 on Saturdays. Reservations are important, especially on Saturdays.

The place has a club-like atmosphere, especially on New Year's Eve. There's no band and no dancing. "People create their own fun," says Sara, who gives the merry makers noise-makers and hats and seats them for three separate sittings, from 5 to 7, 7 to 9 and 9 to closing.



Abe Wolf, at his sparkling Log Cabin bar, visits with Mr. and Mrs. Dana Baldwin of Canaan, N.Y.

Lombardo's cake doesn't rise to occasion

By Lee Leahy

Guy Lombardo says that when he goes he's going to take New Year's Eve with him.

Guy has kept Americans dancing for half a century with his "sweetest music, this side of heaven." In observance of the occasion, hundreds of well-dressed and equally well-behaved celebrants will honor him on Dec. 31 at New York's Waldorf-Astoria where he and his Royal Canadians will be playing.

The first tier of tables in the ballroom, at \$125 per person, the remaining tables are \$90 and \$100.

Although Guy will never be aware of it, his anniversary al-

ready has taken a big bite out of my budget. I tried "Guy Lombardo's Golden Anniversary Cake" — twice.

The first effort was so unimpressive that I decided that my old can of baking powder had lost its power. The cake, in the 10-inch sponge cake pan it called for, was a mere inch and a half in height. It looked as if it should be decorated and used as a Christmas wreath.

Later that year, Elmo Lanzini invited Guy to visit the candy factory. When Guy was preparing to leave he looked back down the busy production line and said to Lanzini, "When I was a boy one of my dreams was that someone would turn me loose in a candy factory. Now someone has."

The recipe was sent by the Lanzini Candy Co. Supposedly, 83-year-old Elmo Lanzini, America's oldest active master candy maker, created the special cake. A key ingredient is Guy's favorite candy, Lanzini's Cashew

Nut and Rice Crunch.

The Lanzini Candy Co. became aware that they had an important customer when a certain "G. Lombardo" began ordering Cashew Nut and Rice Crunch by the case. They checked. Sure enough, someone had introduced the famous band leader to the candy while he was on tour. He was buying it by the case and sharing it with his friends as gifts.

There isn't going to be a next time for me. But if you would like to follow Gould's suggestion, here is the recipe:

Guy Lombardo's Golden Anniversary Cake

4 egg yolks
1/2 cup cold water
1/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 cups flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Arlen Gould, president of Lanzini, could find nothing wrong with the recipe. He thought the difference in altitude might be the reason for the failures. He must think the Berkshires are as high as Mt. Everest. He suggested using more eggs the next time.

There isn't going to be a next time for me. But if you would like to follow Gould's suggestion, here is the recipe:

Filling and Decoration

1 1/2 cups heavy cream
1 tbsp. sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 cup Lanzini's Cashew Nut and Rice Crunch crushed

Whip chilled cream with wire whisk or electric beater until it begins to thicken. Add sugar

Abe Wolf

Clipped By:



WW1CC

Mon, Sep 2, 2019