

PHILIP SARAF'S PHILOSOPHY

Food Without Seasoning Like Canvas Without Paint

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SAVANNAH, GA. — Food without seasoning is like a canvas without paint."

Whether Philip Saraf is blending colors on a canvas or adding herbs to a sauce, he is an artist.

From the minute you enter his apartment located just off one of those beautiful squares Savannah is noted for, you realize that each object in the apartment was selected with much care and attention. Virtually each one has a story related to either the place he acquired it, or the person from whom it came.

A GOOD example is the arrangement beside the antique chest in the living room. Standing in front of a small child's chair is a pair of worn out, cowboy boots. Upon inquiry you learn that they belonged to a neighbor's small son who was a good friend of Saraf's. When the child's mother decided that the boots were ready for the trash pile, Saraf retrieved them.

He's especially glad he did now since the family has moved out of state. The boots complete with holes in the soles remind Saraf of very pleasant memories and of many happy times he spent with the young neighbor.

On the walls of his apartment are many paintings he has done, not only of the Savannah but the countryside surrounding it. He likes to

pack his easel and paints in his stationwagon and drive out into the countryside. Often a rundown cabin, or an abandoned boat may attract his attention. Other times he may happen upon a cane mill in operation and decided to capture it on canvas.

HIS WORK has been hung in the Savannah Art Festival and the Forsyth Art Festival.

He laughed as he explained an encounter he had when he was working on a painting in one of the squares near his home. Setting up an easel and hauling out a palette and starting to work attracts a certain number of curious people. Saraf says that while some people might feel that his hearing deficiency that causes him to wear a hearing aid is a handicap, he turns it into an advantage. When the curious begin to interfere with his concentration he simply turns off his hearing aid.

The preparation of food to Saraf is just an extension of his artistic talents. His reputation for serving delicious and unusual food is well established. Even in his small kitchen he surrounds himself with both antique utensils and gadgets interspersed with those he uses everyday. While on open shelves he arranges his spices, herbs, pickles, relishes, etc. in a colorful display.

BUT THE most important thing is the delicious food that

he prepares with those ingredients. He is of Syrian extraction and one of the favorite dishes he serves to guests is Stuffed Grape Leaves. His variation is to use the basic stuffing and stuff squash, tomatoes, cabbage peppers, zucchini. The result is a platter that is absolutely beautiful. He always serves a big crock of homemade yogurt with this. On the night we visited, he accompanied this with a salad tossed with his own salad dressing and Flat Bread.

Joining us for dinner were Mr. and Mrs. Felix Turner. Turner is pastor of the Bull Street Baptist Church and Mrs. Turner is a home economist with Savannah Gas Company.

Saraf does not follow recipes other than to read them through and go from there. These are several that he prepared recently and are some of his favorites. Here is how he did them the last time he prepared them; he does not promise he will do them again ... exactly the same way.

Stuffed Grape Leaves

- 1½ pounds ground lean lamb shoulder lamb bones
- 1 pound grape leaves, fresh or preserved
- ¾ cup rice
- juice of 3 lemons
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon whole peppercorns
- ½ teaspoons allspice

Mix uncooked rice with raw ground lamb in large bowl. Add 1 teaspoon salt, crushed peppercorns, allspice and a quarter of a cup of water.

If preserved grape leaves are used, rinse well.

Place leaf, greener side down, flat on board, stem toward you. Place 1 heaping teaspoon of stuffing on it, distribute across the leaf so that you can tuck in the ends and roll as a package. Roll firmly yet loosely enough to allow rice to swell.

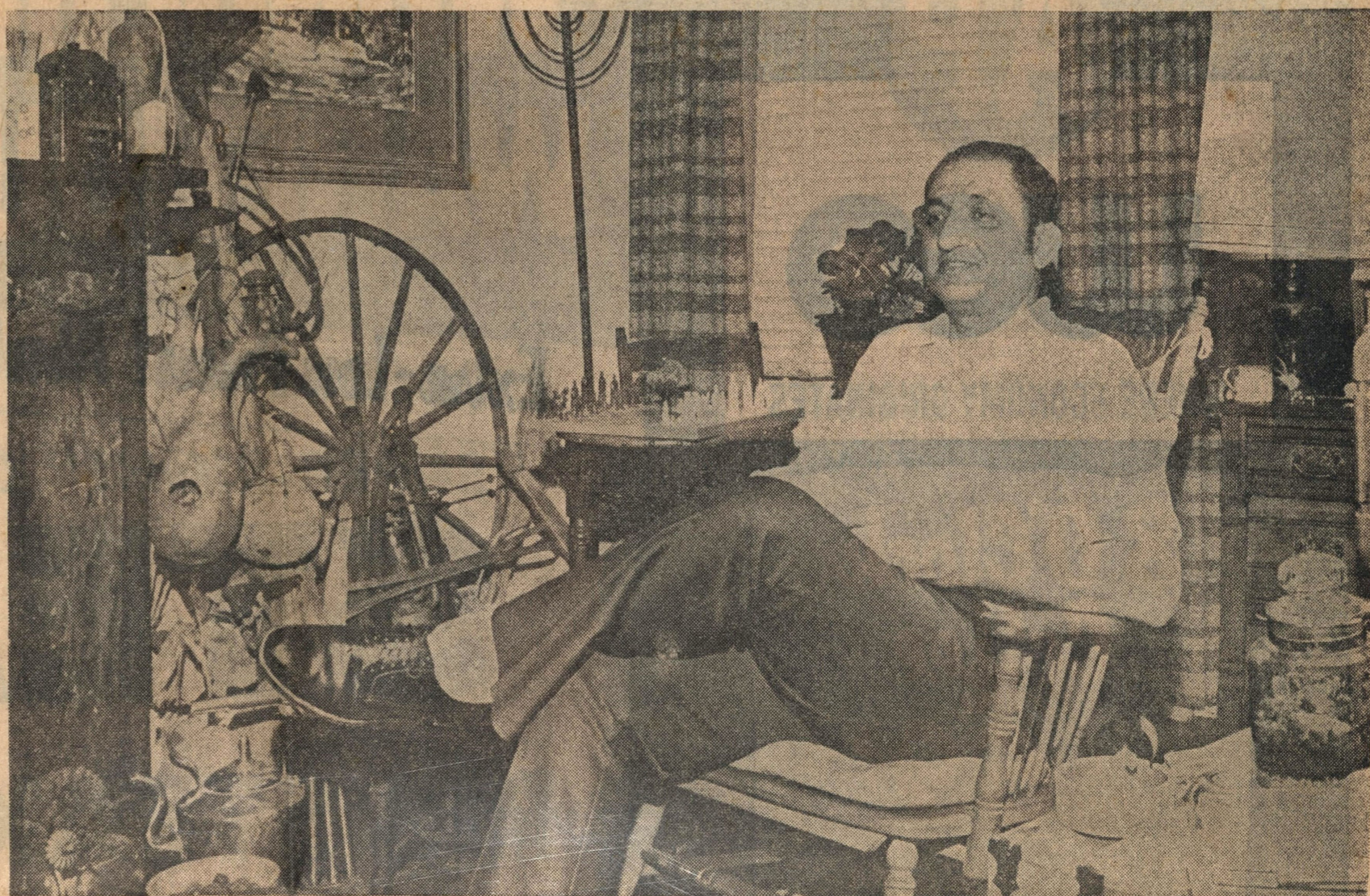
Wash lamb bones, place in bottom of kettle and cover with a few grape leaves. The bed of bones will serve a double purpose to keep the rolls from sticking to the bottom of the kettle and to give subtle extra flavoring.

After you make the rolls, arrange them in neat rows, close together. Place the second row of rolls in opposite direction.

Invert a medium sized dish on top of rolls to keep them in place while cooking. Add enough water to cover, to which 1 teaspoon of salt has been added. Cover kettle and cook over medium heat for 35 minutes. Add lemon juice, cook 10 minutes longer. Serve hot with yogurt.

Variation: for last 30 minutes of cooking, add crushed dry mint.

On the night of our visit Saraf stuffed not only the grape leaves but used the



PHILIP SARAF RELAXES WITH COFFEE IN HIS LIVING ROOM, SURROUNDED BY ITEMS COLLECTED OVER THE YEARS Living in Historic Savannah, Many of the Items Collected Come Complete With a Story Attached

same stuffing for cabbage leaves, zucchini, yellow squash, tomatoes and bell peppers.

Saraf tries to get lamb ribs when ever he can to use for the bones, it gives the dish extra flavor.

Salad Dressing

- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1 tablespoon monosodium glutamate
- ½ teaspoon fresh peppercorns, ground
- 1 teaspoon fresh mint leaves

Blend well with mortar and pestle. Put into jar and add: 2 tablespoons wine vinegar, juice of 2 lemons, 2 teaspoons olive oil and ½ to ¾ cup corn of peanut or vegetable oil. Shake well.

Chicken Juliette

- 2 whole chickens, cut up
- 1 small bottle capers
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 cup mushrooms
- ¾ cup butter
- 1 can tomato soup (or mushroom soup)
- 1 cup sherry or white wine

Place chicken in very low oven, cook for three hours, basting with pan juices often.

While the chicken bakes, cook mushrooms in butter until brown. Add garlic and let cook a few minutes. Add rest of ingredients and pour over chicken, let cook an additional 30 minutes.

Remove chicken to serving dish and serve sauce along with chicken.

For special occasions, Saraf heats an additional cup of white wine, pours over the chicken and flames it, just before serving.



PHILIP SARAF SELECTS SPICES AND HERBS FROM A DISPLAY IN HIS KITCHEN Antique Kitchen Utensils Blend With Those He Uses Everyday



MRS. TURNER SERVES HUSBAND FELIX Homemade Yogurt Accompanied Syrian Dish