

Crossing guard's secret weapon

What a winter! Putting this statement in a more abbreviated form it would be appropriate to ask "what winter?"

From bright sun and 15 C one day to 70 km/h wind gusts and -10 C the next.

From shirt sleeves and shorts to ear muffs and parkas.

During the entire month of January, the weatherman displayed mood swings sufficient to drive CTV's Tom Brown crazy.

Me, too. Like the parents and children who use the student crosswalk at Millard Street and Glad Park Avenue, I never know quite what to wear. Regardless, I don't stray far from home minus my usual three sweaters over a pair of warm woolies.

It's oft been said cold feet support cold bodies. The same can be said for cold hands. However, for me, Connie Passafiume, a teacher at Markville Secondary school in Markham, has solved this problem. In appreciation of a minor goodwill gesture, this kindly person presented me with a pre-Christmas gift of Little Hotties. When shaken and tucked inside a pair of gloves, these small bags, containing salt, water, iron powder and activated charcoal will keep hands warm as toast. Their temperatures, averaging 57 C, will last up to eight hours.

Like most conveniences of this kind, labels are attached that warn against direct contact with the skin. Misuse can cause burning. Also direct contact with the eyes and mouth can initiate injury. And last but not least, they're not to be used while under the covers. In short, they can become hot - up to 74 C or 165 F. To reach this maximum takes 20 minutes.

In addition to crosswalk duties, the Little Hotties have proved themselves extremely comforting while delivering newspapers. While making the rounds, one's hands are continually exposed to the elements. But warmth awaits inside each glove.

So whatever oddities old man winter throws my way, be it rain, sleet or snow, there's a solution. My hands say "thanks".

PEACE TREATY IN ANNUAL KINGDOM

As with humans, last month's wacky weather affected the bird and animal kingdoms too.

The "January" mild spell transformed our squad of backyard squirrels from beavies of contorted crazies into groups of pleasurable playmates. Even the blacks and the grays, always arch rivals, forgot their divisiveness and declared temporary peace. It was good to see.

Our feathered friends were bitten by the love bug, too. A sharp-shinned hawk, usually an adversary to all things smaller than itself, shared company under the feeder with a dozen mourning doves. Later, a couple of crows came to call, mingling harmoniously with chickadees, nuthatches and goldfinch. A flock of robins shared breakfast of half-frozen crabapples.

For but a week, all was right with the world - Stouffville's wild world.

But the greatest surprise occurred at the height of the mild spell. I rose at 3 a.m., as is my practice and switched on the back lights. There, gorging on handouts of lettuce leaves and potato peelings were two rabbits, two skunks and two raccoons. And none seemed disturbed by the flash of interference.

Had a groundhog joined the troupe I wouldn't have been surprised.

And so it was, a month like we may never experience again. An extremely unstable weatherman, but birds and animals surviving together.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

—STUFFED— PORK TENDERLOINS

If you are in business yourself, you will know that when you implement a new idea you get, at best, a headstart in the race, not an outright win. Sooner or later people take your ideas and use them as their own, sometimes with tweaks, and sometimes just as blatant copies. A lot of our original ideas have been copied over the years, but not this one. We are one of only a few stores who use the particular machine that we make these with - and I'll need to leave it at that - like the Caramilk secret! Suffice it to say that these are a unique product, both in presentation and flavour, and you'll need to see us to get them. We're pretty friendly! How to cook them? Simply bake them in a 350° oven for 45-50 minutes, depending on the thickness - and perhaps glaze them for the last 10 minutes. It's pretty easy. Reg. \$10.95/lb

1/3 OFF THIS WEEK

WE'VE GOT FLOWERS

Greg, our flower guy, has made sure we have lots of florist-quality roses for the 14th. We're carrying our three favourite long-stemmed rose varieties: the beautiful cream rose "Vendela", the crimson red "Freedom", and hot pink "Purple Cezanne". These are some of the longest lasting rose varieties available, (7-14 days). For \$39.99 a dozen they will be dressed up beautifully with greens and baby's breath, just as they should be. If you place your order a few days in advance we can deliver anywhere in the GTA and surrounding areas (delivery charge varies). If roses aren't your style, we'll also be offering our large premium Phalaenopsis orchids at \$12.99 each or two for \$24.99. The love of your life deserves only the best, and, that's what we offer!

—CHINESE— NEW YEAR BAKING

Upcoming is Chinese New Year, which has become a big deal in our neighbourhood. We've made an assortment of items which use the colour red, a lucky colour. The New Year is the Year of the Snake, which signals intuitiveness, introspection, refinement, and being somewhat enigmatic. We'll be baking...

STRAWBERRY JELLYROLL Our famous jellyroll - light, white sponge rolled with fresh diced strawberries and whipped cream. Decorated with strawberries and a "lucky red packet" made from fondant, if you'd so desire. **\$15.95**

STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE Creamy cheesecake filling with strawberries, tossed with a bit of spices and Grand Marnier and topped with a profusion of glazed strawberries. **\$15.95 & \$24.95**

MANGO MOUSSE CAKES White sponge layered with light mango mousse, finished with white chocolate shavings and diced mangoes and blackberries. **\$22.95**

RED PACKET COOKIES We are painting rectangular sugar cookies red, then decorating them with cherry blossoms and a Chinese prosperity symbol. **\$2.99** unwrapped and **\$3.49** wrapped in cello with a red ribbon.

25% OFF THIS WEEK

WHAT'S COOKIN' AT THE DELI

The first course will be soup, and we'll have two of them this week. The first is a fresh soup, which is Sweet Potato and Maple. For this, we use sweet potatoes, Yukon golds, sweet onions, celery and 'spices'. The other is frozen, and it's one of our most popular, Curried Squash and Apple. They will both be featured at retail less 25%, regular retail being \$7.95. They will usually serve 2-3 people.

—AND—
Next, we'll be serving salad, which will be our Bruschetta Pasta. This is simply rotini that has been tossed with our fresh Bruschetta - a great fresh salad that is good cold, better at room temperature, or best warmed with freshly grated Parmesan and a few of our pitted black Gaeta olives. Reg. \$1.99/100g 1/2 price this week

—AND—
Next, we'll have Stuffed, Air-Chilled Chicken Breasts, with our Black Forest Ham and Swiss Emmenthal. This is not Cordon Bleu, which is the breaded variety, as it's been oven roasted. Regular is \$4.19/100g, and it will be featured at: **25% off this week**

—AND FURTHER—
Since Valentine's Day falls on a Thursday this week, and you won't have sufficient time to do your dinner plans for that biggest of romantic days, we'll let you know what's available for the occasion, and you can save all the energy that you would have used in the kitchen. We'll be making... Bacon-Wrapped Sea Scallops, Individual Beef Wellingtons (or larger ones on order), Salmon Wellingtons, Grilled Beef Tenderloins, and Salmon 'Oscar', which is stuffed with shrimps. It will be best to order what you'll need in advance - and this can be done through my assistant, Mabel, at 905-940-0655.

WHAT'S BAKING FOR VALENTINE'S

Last week was all about football, but the next couple of weeks are about LOVE... and romance...and hearts... and pink & red... strawberries & raspberries and of course, chocolate.

Our romantic selection will be available from this Thursday until Valentine's Thursday, February 14th, and for the following weekend for those who celebrate then.

HEART-SHAPED CAKES We are making our CHOCOLATE GANACHE, CHOCOLATE FROSTED, RASPBERRY GANACHE, STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE and PINK VANILLA CAKES in a heart-shape. All decorated for Valentine's with chocolate roses, fondant flowers and chocolate hearts. Mini size for two and a larger "family size". **\$7.95 to \$18.95**

ROMANTIC CUPCAKES Selection includes Chocolate with chocolate frosting, Vanilla with pink icing, Red Velvet with pink cream cheese icing, Chocolate Raspberry with raspberry butter cream and an injection of ganache, and Strawberry with an injection of strawberry mousse topped with strawberry butter cream. **\$2.99 to \$3.49**

STRAWBERRY MOUSSE CAKES Pink sponge cake layered with strawberry mousse, finished with strawberry butter-cream and white shavings. Topped with white chocolate dipped strawberries. **\$22.95**

RASPBERRY MOUSSE CAKES Raspberry mousse layered with chocolate cake and finished with raspberries, chocolate hearts and chocolate shavings. **\$22.95**

TUXEDO STRAWBERRIES Dark and white chocolate-dipped large, long-stemmed strawberries complete with a bow-tie. **\$2.49 each**

STRAWBERRY AND RASPBERRY TARTS Handmade crusts filled with our custard and topped with fresh berries. **\$2.49 each**

AMARENA CHERRY FRANGIPAN FLANS Amarena cherries baked in almond cream on a shortbread crust (Evan's favorite). **\$10.95 and \$22.95**

PINK MERINGUE HEARTS Large individual heart-shaped pink meringues drizzled with dark chocolate. **\$2.95 each**

VALENTINE'S COOKIES Gingerbread and sugar cookies painted in all different shades of pinks and reds, available individually, \$2.99, in containers \$17.95, or lovingly wrapped, \$3.49 each

RED VELVET CAKES Our popular red velvet cakes are done with pink cream cheese icing this week, topped with chocolate and fondant hearts. **\$15.95 and \$24.95**

We are also making Crème Brûlées in Chocolate, Raspberry, White Chocolate, Amarena Cherry... Chocolate, Raspberry and Strawberry Mousse in ramekins... Pink Heart-shaped Shortbreads, Individual Trifles with Pink Cake and Raspberries and Strawberries... Mini Cheesecakes in various flavours... Strawberry Puff Pastries... and whatever else our romantic minds will dream up...

—WHAT'S FOR DINNER?—
For all you meat and potato lovers, which would include me, we have you covered. The entrée this week is Pot Roast and Gravy, and what you can do with that is the obvious, which would be to serve it with mashed potatoes, or the less obvious, make some hot Roast Beef Sandwiches. And don't forget the side of peas! I used to absolutely love these sandwiches when I was a kid, and I'm sure that I'm not alone. Regular **\$17.95**

25% OFF THIS WEEK

SPECIALS IN EFFECT UNTIL CLOSING SUNDAY, FEB. 10th

Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:00-8:00

Sat. 8:00-6:00 - Sun. 9:00-6:00

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