

# Old West Side News

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## Jiffy Mix

It's used to make pizza, coconut pie, corn dogs, pancakes, campfire biscuits, and a million items more. It's the duct tape of cooking mixes. It's JIFFY!

In nearby Chelsea, Michigan lives the Chelsea Milling Company, home of Jiffy Products and a not-so-small family company that refers to itself as "Team Jiffy."

The mission statement reads: "The mission of Team Jiffy is to achieve 100% product integrity with quality people caring about one another and the communities served."

The values, the packaging, the illustrations, the web site—all reinforce a theme of retro, mid-western wholesomeness. One look at that Jiffy box sends you back in time by decades. Is the blue checkerboard print on the front of the box intended to reference a 1950's apron, or does it just seem that way?

Chelsea Milling Company has been a presence in the town of Chelsea for over 120 years. Fourth generation president, Howdy S. Holmes is the grandson of Mabel White Holmes, who first introduced a prepared baking mix in 1930. The company takes pride in serving the community and supports charitable efforts through product donations and financial contributions.

Talk about sourcing local products: Jiffy even mills their own wheat, the majority of which comes from within 150 miles of the plant. Over a million bushels of wheat are stored in the 135 foot concrete silos which distinguish the Main Street plant. Jiffy products contain mostly corn, wheat and what they call "lesser ingredients" of sugar, shortening and leavening. Since Jiffy makes no products containing ground nuts or tree nuts, its mixes are safe for those who may have allergies to these foods.

### Old West Side Spring Meeting

*Bach School Multi-Purpose Room*

*Wednesday, April 25th, 2012 at 7:30pm*

*Shannan Gibb-Randall, Landscape Architect, of InSite Design Studio will offer her expertise.*

Landscaping and Planting Workshop: bring your questions, triumphs, problems and examples.

Subjects are what you bring, sustainable plantings, changing planting zones in the US, working with terrain and soils, rain gardens and resources.



Jiffy makes twenty-two different kinds of baking mixes for the retail market, and even manufactures their own boxes. On a single busy day in October, when the plant is in full swing, 1.5 million boxes of Jiffy products will roll out of the little plant. Cardboard boxes are printed in Marshall, Michigan using recycled cardboard stock and soy based ink. The printed sheets are then sent to the Chelsea plant where they are assembled, glued and filled at an astonishing rate.

One day's output from the Chelsea plant would fill a two-lane highway running from Chelsea to Chicago. This fun fact is available on the [www.jiffymix.com](http://www.jiffymix.com) website. Hosted by an animated box named Corny (nickname for Corn Mix), the site's virtual tour of the manufacturing plant is a high quality cartoon that's fun for adults and children.



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Don't stop with the video of a dancing box. An in-person tour of the plant is great fun, and you come away with some free Jiffy Mix to boot. A destination of many a Cub Scout and Brownie field trip, the Chelsea Milling Company will allow you to tag along on a tour even if you are not with a group; even if you don't have a kid in tow. Anyone who took a childhood visit to the Kellogg plant in Battle Creek, Michigan will find their 'smell memory' triggered as they experience the aroma of toasted and milled corn.

Factory tours are an American institution, and the smells are some of the best parts. Crayola Crayons, Wonder Bread, Strohs Brewery, each of these factory tours had a distinct aroma, and so does the Chelsea Milling Company.

Jiffy Mixes may be simple combinations, but their contribution to the food scene should not be underestimated. Inexpensive, economically sized, and ripe for creative interpretation, the various mix types include cakes, frostings, pizza, muffins, cookies, buttermilk pancakes and the all-purpose baking mix. Most products range from a low of 38 cents to a high of a couple of bucks. College students and those on tight budgets will surely place a box of Jiffy Muffin Mix right up there with the familiar pack of ramen noodles or box of instant mac and cheese. I'm told that a box of Jiffy mix is the quintessential prize at the senior citizens center bingo game!

Order Jiffy's free cookbook and you'll be treated to an entire chapter on outdoor cooking, titled Campfire Recipes. Did you know that Jiffy mix folded around hot dogs, are called Canoes. Kamper Ropes have you placing lengths of Jiffy dough inside aluminum foil and cooking the treats inside hot coals. You've got to love this stuff.

The familiar little box is not limited to camping trips and college menus. Celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck included Jiffy products in a 2009 challenge to create a dinner for four for only \$15.00. The Jiffy website offers dozens of unique recipes and a recipe exchange with other Jiffy aficionados on the "Jiffyville Community" page. An Oklahoma publication put the Jiffy pie crust mix to the test in 2009 and found the 65 cent box of piecrust mix to be the number one winner in an "upper crust taste off." Coming in at second place was homemade crust. Comments on the Jiffy crust included "light, flaky, crisp." It seems that value and good taste can combine in a Jiffy.

The Holmes family business places a high priority on being a responsible employer and community member. *Crain's Detroit Business* covered Howard 'Howdy' Holmes' May 2011 keynote speech during a Crain's Second Stage Workshop for emerging entrepreneurs held at MSU's Management Education Center in Troy. Reflecting on his business and personal philosophy, Howdy Holmes described his 1987 return from twenty years in professional motorsports to the leadership of Chelsea Milling. At the time of his return, fourteen of their eighteen



products were not profitable, and the company had not had a price increase in eight years. Holmes said: "The scariest thing of all was that no one thought there was a problem." To address what he saw as problems, Holmes upgraded mechanical systems and training. He consistently communicated with employees and notes that he even brought in business psychologists to help him present his ideas. "Business is easy," Holmes said. "It's people that are complicated. But it's not magic; we just said, 'be nice to people'. You treat customers and employees as if they were the last person on the planet."

I spoke with Howdy Holmes himself, and he reminded me that the business practices employed by Chelsea Milling are purposeful. "Our product size, for instance, is meant to be a single-shot, single-use. The average American home is 2.7 people. Most of the world lives paycheck to paycheck and this motivates us to formulate a business plan to serve these families." Howdy continued to explain that the real goal of Jiffy is service. "Profit is a nice by-product, but service is our mission." In explaining the decisions which ultimately contribute to the price of a product, Howdy told me "We look at our products as staples. You won't see Jiffy come out with a flavor of the month muffin mix or a celebration cake. Our products are meant to be basic, staple products to which the cook can add."

Howdy is clearly a hands-on president, and when I asked him about his favorite stories or feedback from consumers, he mentioned how often he hears from the owners of small restaurants or Bed and Breakfasts. "I hear numerous stories about how an owner has used our corn muffin recipe as a base and added personal ingredients. That product then develops a reputation as an 'old family recipe', which it is!"

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## **Old West Side Children's Festival**

**Coming Sunday, June 3, 11-1 at Wurster Park.**

**Questions? Contact Rachel Thompson, 930-0880**

## **Help with the Fortieth Old West Side Homes Tour**

The OWS Homes Tour Committee needs volunteers to help plan for and/or work at the Tour on September 23rd.

(734) 945-0229 or [information@oldwestside.org](mailto:information@oldwestside.org)

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### ... Jiffy Mix

Howdy has heard lots of stories about nontraditional uses for Jiffy's Corn Muffin Mix. The Audubon Society has told him that they find that "birds love it." One happy customer even reported that when mixed with water instead of milk, the Corn Muffin Mix was used successfully to fill holes in drywall!

Keeping it local since 1887, Jiffy Mix's annual sales are about one hundred million dollars per year. Jiffy buys almost all commodities from Michigan and connecting states. These decisions reduce costs on transportation and fuel. Jiffy has a history of doing no advertising and offering no coupons. They have only recently entered the markets of food service and institutional feeding. Jiffy has created an easily recognized brand by maintaining the look of the little blue box, but is increasing investment in R & D with the July 2012 opening of a new Research and Development building in Chelsea.

Howdy Holmes proudly told me that "Wall Street refers to Jiffy as 'iconic and hip'." Add to that financial success and living your values, and a business couldn't ask for more.

— Diane Nafranowicz

## Community Supported Agriculture Farms in the Ann Arbor Area

### Frozen Fruits and Vegetable CSA

- Locavorious

### Garlic CSA

- Dyer Family Farm Garlic CSA

### Hops CSA

- Knox Hops

### Meat CSAs

- Old Pine Farm (pork, beef, chicken, lamb, buffalo, emu)

<http://www.oldpinefarm.com>

- Bending Sickle Community Farm (pork, goat, chicken)
- Two Creeks Organics (chicken only)
- Two Tracks Acres (pork, chicken)

### Prepared Meals CSA

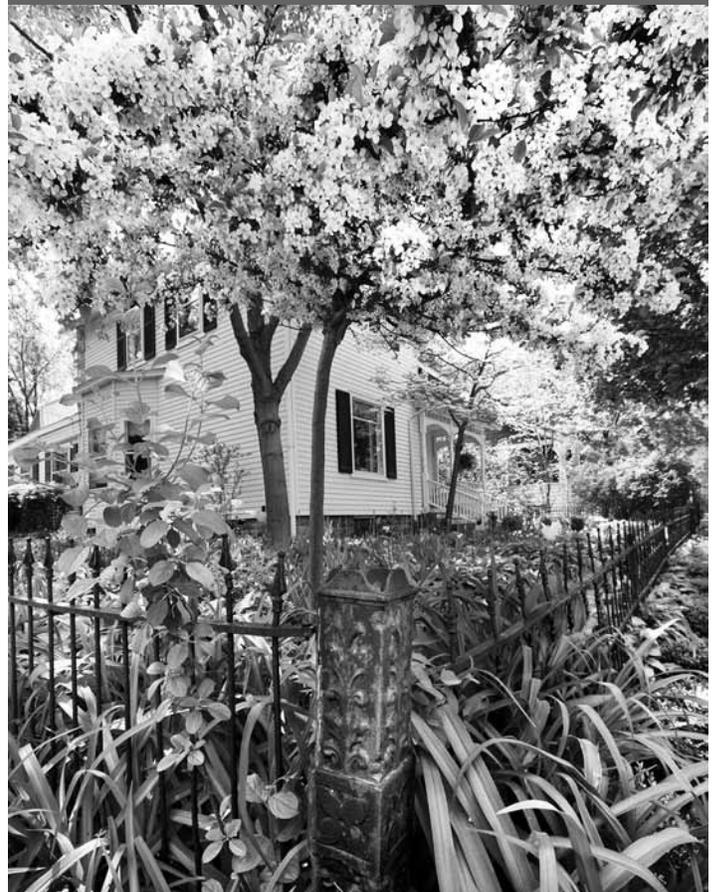
- Harvest Kitchen

### Produce CSAs

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- Capella Farm
- Carpenter's Greenhouse and Organic Produce
- Community Farm of Ann Arbor
- Down on the Farm
- Green Things Farm
- Hand Sown Farm
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- Madaras Garden Studio
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- Pregitzer Farm Market
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- Tilian Farm Development Center CSA
- Two Creeks Organics
- Valley Family Farm
- Zilke Vegetable Farm
- Staple Foods CSA
- Stone Soup Staple Foods CSA
- Winter Greens CSA
- Brines Farm

— Kim Bayer

# A SECOND LOOK



"Springtime! or Springtime?!"

— Susan Lawless



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#### Contributors:

Kim Bayer, Christine Brummer, Linda Diane Feldt  
Susan Lawless, Diane Nafranowicz, Grace Shackman

**Design and Layout:** Gavin Eadie

**Suggestions and Submissions:**

Christine Brummer or  
information@oldwestside.org

**Distribution:** Richard Cronn

**Sponsorships:** Kent Jocque  
352-2992, [kjocque@gmail.com](mailto:kjocque@gmail.com)  
\$30 for sponsorship panels (2½" by 3½").

**OWS Garden Club:** 747-9248

**OWS Historian:** 662-2187

**Contractor referral:** 665-4044

### Old West Side Association Board

**Christine Brummer**  
President, 996-2564  
[cbrumme@attglobal.net](mailto:cbrumme@attglobal.net)

**Barbara Murphy**  
Vice President, 665-2349

**Richard Cronn**  
OWSNews Distribution, 769-8593

**Barbara Hall**  
Treasurer and  
Lurie Terrace Concerts, 668-7558

**Stephen Borgsdorf**  
Fall Forum Coordinator, 929-9683

**Sonia Schmerl**  
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**Alison Stupka**  
Special Projects, 996-8570

**Marylou Zimmerman,**  
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OWS Association memberships are  
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\$7.50 for non-residents and  
\$10 for businesses.  
Send checks to:  
Membership, OWS Association,  
P O Box 2114, Ann Arbor 48106

# A Jiffy Recipe and the Novice Baker



*Diane Nafranowicz would love to interview you about your OWS cooking: [nafrano@umich.edu](mailto:nafrano@umich.edu) or 326 Mulholland, 48103*

I love hearing from readers, but don't do so nearly enough. When I do receive feedback, it is often because I've touched on a personal memory or experience that a reader has shared. A review of my Chicago trip triggered a response from a Windy City native. A column about kitchen fumbles resonated with someone who recalled her first job struggling in a summer camp's kitchen. However, the responses that surprise me the most are from readers who don't try a recipe because it seems too complex. This information often comes in the form of "Oh, you finally published something that was easy enough for me to try."

For the novice cook, a packaged product may provide a boost of confidence in attempting something seen as risky. In reality, something like Jiffy Baking Mix contains very few ingredients and those ingredients are easily duplicated at home. It's true that I rarely use pre-made mixes in my cooking, but it's not true that you cannot begin with a packaged product, such as a Jiffy mix, and come up with something wonderful. Boxed mixes can create a shortcut, or feel like a shortcut. I feel no shame in acknowledging that I always keep a few boxes of cake mix in my pantry. These little "insurance policies" are great for cranking out some emergency cupcakes.

Two Jiffy products combine to make this month's featured recipe: Jiffy Corn Muffin Mix and Jiffy Golden Yellow Cake Mix. Jiffy products, and many packaged baking mixes for that matter, are quite economical. Another piece of feedback I've heard from the novice cook is that they are fearful of wasting expensive ingredients. Nobody likes a flop (and I've had my share), but in most baking trials, even an imperfect pan of brownies gets gobbled up in a nanosecond. If you are a novice baker, just don't make dessert for the boss as your first attempt at baking!

I've found Jiffy mixes to be surprisingly low priced. As I've noted in this month's cover article, buying local ingredients, limiting their product line, downsizing package volume, and doing no advertising helps to keep Jiffy's

costs low. Jiffy products are 'right sized'. As an example of this, a box of Jiffy cake mix yields 6-8 cupcakes, while a box of Duncan Heinz cake mix advises that it makes 24 cupcakes. The ingredients in this month's cake cost less than four dollars, making each serving about fifty cents. It's also economical with time: putting this cake together was a five-minute process.

Cornmeal Cake is based on the traditional Italian confection of a cornmeal cassata. Usually, polenta (coarsely ground corn meal) is used in combination with olive oil to make a cake which is simple in flavor, and has a slightly grainy texture from the roughness of the corn meal. Enhanced with anything from rosemary and honey to lemon zest, almonds, and candied fruits, these cakes are moist and delicious. Very different from a typical American cake, the Italian style dessert is dense and lightly sweet, but lacks frosting, layers, and an overly sugary taste. The fruit on the bottom can be switched out with fresh berries or canned fruit of your choice.

I'm told by my newbie cooking friends that flexibility in flavorings and ingredients can feel intimidating. What if I use almond extract instead of vanilla and it doesn't turn out? What if I choose fresh blueberries instead of raspberries; will the result be successful? Most recipe substitutions are offered to make the cook feel more in control, not less. If you don't have the pocketbook for fresh raspberries in April, try canned peaches. If you never stock Greek yogurt or crème fraiche, but have sour cream, try that. Not everything substitutes well: you'll experience a complete flop if you substitute no-fat "faux" margarine for butter. The recipes I create and publish, including this one, offer only substitutions which work well, and are designed to make your life easier. If you feel stressed about successful substitution and too many choices, I suggest that you make the recipe the first time using the recommended ingredients. Once you're happy with the results, experiment and personalize. My cake will then become your cake.

— Diane Nafranowicz



## Peach Streusel Cornmeal Cake

- 1 9-oz box Jiffy Cornmeal Muffin Mix
- 1 9-oz box Jiffy Golden Yellow Cake Mix
- 1 Tbsp butter, melted
- 4 Tbsp brown sugar (divided)
- 2 15-oz cans sliced peaches
- 1 Tbsp juice/syrup from the canned peaches
- ¼ cup sour cream
- ¼ cup milk
- 1 Tbsp oil (corn, canola, vegetable or olive)
- 1 tsp cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place melted butter and 2 T brown sugar in the bottom of a 9" x 9" baking pan. Drain canned peaches and reserve 1 Tbsp of liquid for later use. Spread peaches evenly over the butter and sugar in the baking pan. In a large bowl, place box of cake mix and box of muffin mix. Combine with a spoon and then remove 1 cup of this dry mix and set aside for later use. To the dry mix remaining in the bowl, add sour cream, milk and the tablespoon of retained peach juice. Mix with a spoon for 2 minutes and then pour this batter

over the peaches. Some parts of the peaches may still remain visible under the batter. Into a small bowl, place the cup of retained dry mix. Add to this mix the oil, cinnamon, and remaining 2 T brown sugar. With a fork, blend this crumble; it will be dry and have a large crumb texture. This "streusel" mixture is then strewn on top of the batter in the baking dish. Bake for about 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool for at least 20 minutes and cut into 8 pieces.